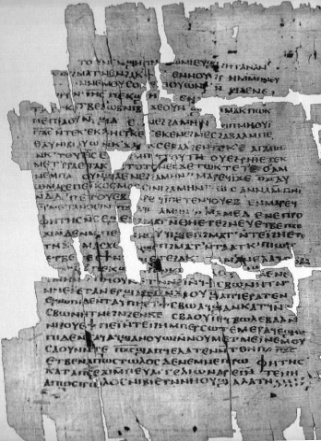
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| Christadelphian EJournal |
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| Of Biblical Interpretation |

**Vol. 7, No. 3, Jul 2013**

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**Editorial**

What persuades one person will not persuade another and it doesn’t matter whether we think of truth or error in making this point. The human being is capable of knowing truth but as a species we are prone to making mistakes and not seeing that we are wrong. In spiritual terms this is *tragic* because we can end up believing the wrong things all our life.

The situation into which we are born cannot be changed; if we had been born in a Muslim country we would have been Muslim; if we had been born in India, we would have been Hindu; the same point can be made for eastern religions, tribal religion and Christianity in its various guises. This situation compounds the tragedy we have because we may be ‘of the dead’ and be totally unaware. (Of course, this is a general truth.)

However, this might not be such a dangerous and tragic world spiritually were it not for the fact that God requires of us both belief and love. If acceptance and eternal life were a matter only of love, then the moral code of ‘Love God and love thy neighbour’ shared by many religions would not create the tragic situation that we have today. It is because there is one God and he requires us to believe what he has actually said that we are born into a dangerous world.

In the 1970s, two books were published in the UK entitled *Knowing What You Believe* and *Knowing Why You Believe*. The book titles carry essential advice, but it is essential to also know ‘what you do **not** believe and why you do **not** believe’. Belief is the more difficult virtue to practise; love springs naturally and it can be moulded by Christian ethics—it has direct relevance in relationships which are things we naturally like. Commitment to a set of beliefs is less relevant to daily life and so the commitment can wane and mutual tolerance can take over as this fosters what we value most—our relationships with one another.

The potholes and obstacles to right belief are already there in the road; we cannot remove them by wishful thinking. The best we can do is to be self-aware about our own nature; examine teachings to see if they be ‘of God’ and talk to one another about what is true and false. Our greater failings lie not in the failure to love but in the failure to believe and hold to the Truth.

**Articles**

**Song of Songs (Part 1)**

**P. Wyns**

**Introduction**

The Song of Songs (or Canticles) is a collection of passionate, sometimes erotic love poems, ostensibly celebrating the love between a man and a woman. Over the centuries, Song of Songs has been treated with various hermeneutical approaches— allegorical, dramatic, literal-historical, cultic or ritualistic, dream view, typological etc. The lack of consensus on authorship and the large number of interpretive approaches are evidence that Songs is not understood very well.[[1]](#footnote-1) These two articles will adopt an intertextual approach and attempt to contextualize Songs within its historical setting.

Part 1 of this study examines the question of authorship and what the superscription tells us, and it considers whether the Hebrew of the book indicates a date of composition. The next article (Part 2) will aim to demonstrate that that Song of Songs belongs to the reign of Hezekiah and that “Northern Israelite” linguistic features are a consequence of Hezekiah’s courtship of the northern tribes. Comparisons will also be made with Psalm 45 (‘Song of Loves’) identified by Rendsburg as ‘Israelian Hebrew’ (northern origin). The fact that Ecclesiastes shares many of the same linguistic features suggests a similar provenance (i.e. an era of Uzziah-Hezekiah) but that will be left for a future article.

**What is the historical setting of Songs?**

Many would answer that it was written by Solomon and comes from the period of the early Monarchy (ca. 900 BCE)—however, numerous scholars (based on linguistic evidence) opt for a much later date, even as late the Persian period (Achaemenid rule) 539-323 BCE.[[2]](#footnote-2) This would seem (to me) to be far too late, but how do we account for the unusual linguistic features? Moreover, what do we make of the superscription ascribing Solomonic authorship to Songs? Is there perhaps evidence that points to a different period of composition, somewhere between early monarchy (i.e. Solomon) and late post-exilic (i.e. Ezra/Nehemiah)? Solomonic authorship is not an intractable problem but the linguistic question is far more difficult to resolve, as we are of necessity reliant on conclusions reached by specialists in ancient near eastern linguistics.

**Superscription**

Our first subject for analysis is the **superscription**. J. Reese asserts that,

…the attribution ‘to Solomon’ affixed to the Song is an editorial superscription that links this poetry to Israel’s famous poet and sage rather than a declaration of authorship. No hint of actual author or authors appears in the text.[[3]](#footnote-3)

However, scholars such as Delitzsch, Raven, Steimmueller, and Young have all held to Solomonic authorship;[[4]](#footnote-4) others (Smith, Driver)[[5]](#footnote-5) date it to the late Monarchic period (pre-exilic, before 600 BCE); and T. Longman believes that the superscription should read “which concerns Solomon” rather than “by Solomon”. He makes the following points about the superscription hmlvl rva ~yryvh ryv,[[6]](#footnote-6)

1. The relative pronoun *’ašer* occurs only Song 1:1; elsewhere in the book we have the relative particle *še* (e.g. Song 3:7). This supports the idea that the superscription was a later addition to the book.
2. The preposition *l* used with Solomon’s name does not necessarily indicate authorship.[[7]](#footnote-7) The semantic range of the preposition is wide, and it theoretically could be translated “of”, “to,” or “concerning”.

P. Hunt offers the interesting observation,

The use of *’ašer* only in the opening verse might suggest an archaizing *post facto* pseudepigraphic device for the book’s title, perhaps in order to render a paronomasic construct on Solomon thus: *ašer lî-* and *šelomoh: š-l: š-l-m* [this also appears in the opening of *Proverbs* [1:1]: *mishlê šelomoh: m- š-l: š-l-m*], a possible poetic opening gambit.[[8]](#footnote-8)

But even if the superscription is artistic, as Hunt suggests, this does not in itself give us sufficient grounds for pseudepigraphy—we need to analyze the whole book to support that conclusion.

The scholarly discussion is inconclusive. The Targum understands the superscription as authorial but the Vulgate omits it altogether. The superscription could be editorial, but this does not mean the editor is not a contemporary of Solomon, perhaps an amanuensis. The relative pronoun is unique to the superscription but then this could be nothing more than a reflection of the fact that it is a superscription and not part of the poetry; the relative particle could be used for poetic reasons. However, Hunt’s suggestion of a paronomasic construct in v. 1 is suggestive of artistry in the superscription over and beyond a pedestrian editorial superscription.

The LXX translation (o[ evstin tw/| Salwmwn) does not support ‘concerning’ as the earliest interpretation of the Hebrew that we have; were this correct, we would have had the preposition peri.;[[9]](#footnote-9) but, as it stands, the Hebrew preposition could be taken as an indication of authorship or simply that the Song concerns Solomon.

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**The Language Problem**

All languages develop over time; the English language developed from Anglo-Frisian dialects and Anglo-Norman and picked up French, Latin and Greek at a later stage. Writing can be dated if the history of the language is understood. Such things as syntax, vocabulary, phonetics and morphology require analysis and this is a rather specialised field. Scholars have identified several strands:

* **ABH** (Archaic Biblical Hebrew) sometimes called “Old Hebrew” or “Paleo Hebrew”—examples are the Song of Moses (Exodus 15) and the Song of Deborah (Judges 5).
* **SBH** (Standard Biblical Hebrew) sometimes called BH (Biblical Hebrew) or EBH (Early Biblical Hebrew) 8th to 6th centuries BCE; this forms the bulk of the Hebrew Bible.
* **LBH** (Late Biblical Hebrew) from the 5th to the 3rd centuries BCE corresponding to the Persian Period (*post-exilic*)—examples are Ezra and Nehemiah.
* **DSS Hebrew**, (Dead Sea Scrolls Hebrew) sometimes called Qumran Hebrew from the 3rd century BCE to the 1st century CE corresponding to the Hellenistic and Roman Periods *before* the destruction of the Temple.
* **MH** (Mishnaic Hebrew) from the 1st to the 3rd or 4th century CE, corresponding to the Roman Period, from example, the Talmud.

F. W. Dobbs-Allsopp is one of a group of scholars, who after careful analysis of word-order, syntax, Aramaisms and loan-words (mainly Persian) assigns Songs of Songs to post-exilic LBH, nevertheless even Dobbs-Allsopp concludes his monograph with a remark from Pope (Pope 1977:27):

This position is not incontrovertible, of course, as Pope rightly observes,

The dating game as played with biblical books like Job and Song of Songs, as well as many of the psalms, remains imprecise and the score is difficult to compute.[[10]](#footnote-10)

Adding to the complex mix of linguistic identifiers is the recently proposed **Israelian Hebrew (or IH)**, a proposed **northern dialect** of biblical Hebrew (BH). It is offered as an alternative explanation for various irregular linguistic features of the Masoretic Text (MT) of the Hebrew Bible. It competes with the suggestion that such features are Aramaisms, indicative either of late dates of composition, or of editorial emendations. Although IH is not a new proposal,[[11]](#footnote-11) it only started gaining ground as a challenge to older arguments for late dates for some biblical texts since about a decade before the turn of the 21st century: linguistic variation in the Hebrew Bible might be better explained in synchronic rather than diachronic terms, meaning that various biblical texts could be significantly older than many 20th century scholars supposed. The work done by Rendsburg is particularly interesting; C. L. Seow offers the following review:

Gary Rendsburg has recently distinguished himself as a Hebrew dialectologist. In this new monograph, he proposes a set of linguistic criteria by which one may identify psalms that are written in the northern Hebrew dialect, which he calls ‘Israelian Hebrew’ (IH). By these criteria he concludes that Psalms 9–10, 16, 29, 36, 45, 53, 58, 74, 116, 132, 133, 140, and 141 are all of northern origin, and as a by-product of his investigation, he isolates a list of linguistic features of IH, representing by far the boldest attempt yet to define such a dialect.

Rendsburg begins by identifying the sources for reconstructing IH. These include not only texts that are universally accepted as originating in the north (e.g., Hosea), but also accounts which concern northern figures (various narratives, tribal blessings, Balaam’s Oracles), various passages that scholars have from time to time attributed to northern sources or are said to manifest an abundance of northern linguistic features (Nehemiah 9, Deuteronomy 32, Proverbs, Job, Ecclesiastes, and Song of Songs). Texts that have linguistic or poetic affinities with Phoenician, Aramaic, or the Transjordanian dialects are all said to reflect IH.…By identifying clusters of “IH features,” then, Rendsburg concludes that the psalms in question are all of northern provenance.…

Rendsburg’s contribution cannot be gainsaid. Some linguistic features that have hereinto been regarded too conveniently as archaisms, or as late and foreign intrusions into Hebrew, must now be reevaluated as such. More importantly one is reminded not to harmonize or standardize Biblical Hebrew too readily.[[12]](#footnote-12)

The following summary of the language of Song of Songs is offered by J. A. Cook:

The language of Song of Songs is striking in several ways. Most notable is its use of the relative conjugation *še* to the almost complete exclusion of *’ášer* (which occurs only in Song 1:1). Only the book of Ecclesiastes has more occurrences of *še*; however it employs *’ášer* with almost equal frequency. This feature has been taken to be indicative of Aramaic influence or late date, especially in light of the similar, almost exclusive use of *še* in Mishnaic Hebrew. However, such conclusions are problematic in light of the appearance of *še* in archaic Hebrew poetry (Judg 5:7), and the judgement that *še* alternatively may be indicative of a Northern Hebrew dialect.

Evidence of foreign influence in Song of Songs is found in its occasional Aramaic spellings and foreign loanwords. The Aramaic spelling of *n†r* (“keep guard”), verses Hebrew *ncr*, is found in several places in the book (Song 1:6; 8:11, 12), and in one passage the Aramaic spelling *BérôT* (“juniper”), versus Hebrew *Bérôš* (Song 1:17), is used. The word *ParDës* (Song 4:13), often translated “park” or “enclosures,” is a Persian loanword; *aPPiryôn* (Song 3:9), variously translated “palanquin” (NSRV) or “chariot” (NIV), is possibly a Greek loanword.

The other striking linguistic feature is the number of *hapax legomena*, thirty-seven in all. Given the size of the book, it contains the highest proportion of such terms of any book in the OT. In addition, F. E. Greenspahn…classifies fourteen of these as “absolute *hapax legomena*” – that is, forms built on roots that are not used anywhere else in the Bible…[[13]](#footnote-13)

Cook’s conclusion is especially enlightening:

Alternative explanations must take into account variation arising from possible diglossia (i.e., the coexistence of a literary language and a colloquial language) and other differences in registry, the affect of genre and subject matter on language, and the difficulty of distinguishing between archaic language (i.e., the use of older forms of language) and archaisms (i.e., the intentional use of older forms of language in mimicry of earlier compositions). Similarly, judgements on “loanwords” are notoriously difficult to make, in terms of what sort of influence one language might have had on another and in terms of dating.

These questions are often driven by ideological concerns, such as what are acceptable and unacceptable dates for biblical compositions, an undue pessimism about finding answers to these questions, or an *a priori* commitment to the lateness of all biblical culture and writings.[[14]](#footnote-14)

R. Alter also expresses reservations about late dating based on language:

When it was more the scholarly fashion to date the book late, either in the Persian period (W. F. Albright) or well into the Hellenistic period (H. L. Ginsberg), these differences might have been attributed to changing poetic practices in the last centuries of biblical literary activity. Several recent analyses, however, have persuasively argued that all the supposed stylistic and lexical evidence for a late date is ambiguous, and it is quite possible, though not demonstrable, that these poems originated, whatever subsequent modifications they may have undergone, early in the First Commonwealth period.[[15]](#footnote-15)

I. Young contends that Persian loanwords employed in Qoheleth (Ecclesiastes) cannot be used to date the book to the Persian period, as “Persianisms” also occur in pre-exilic books.[[16]](#footnote-16) Young suggests that a probable route for such words was *Assyrian deportations* of Iranians to the vicinity of Judah in the late eighth century BCE. Young concludes his paper with the words,

Let me sum up the argument of this paper. Linguistic evidence is just that: evidence. It is permissible to use it as one of a series of arguments in attempting to date biblical texts. However, linguistic evidence cannot be decisive.[[17]](#footnote-17)

**Conclusion**

(1) The superscription could just be an indication of the subject of the poem (Solomon) and not an ascription of authorship.

(2) Hebrew lexicography and syntax alone cannot determine the dating of a book; alternative hypotheses are possible. It needs to be supported by other evidence—socio-historical and intertextual.

**Did the NT writers know they were writing Scripture?**

**T. Gaston**

**Introduction**

The New Testament, together with the Old, is the inspired Word of God. However the question of what inspiration entails and by what method the writers were inspired is not clear cut. In what way is Scripture ‘breathed out’ by God (2 Tim 3:16)? What does it mean to be ‘carried along’ by the Spirit (2 Pet 1:21)?

In this essay I want to explore a related question, which may suggest an approach that begins to answer these questions. I wish to examine the question of to what extent the NT writers were cognizant of the fact that they were writing Scripture, by which I mean, the written words of God. D. Moody Smith suggests that “the authors of NT books would have had no inkling that their writings would become part of something called the New Testament or the Christian Bible, which did not reach exactly its present form until the fourth century”.[[18]](#footnote-18) In contrast, S. Voorwinde writes “at times the New Testament writers seemed plainly aware that they or others from amongst themselves were writing Scripture”.[[19]](#footnote-19)

Of course, the NT writers are not available to be interrogated and they did not leave behind a running commentary on their process of composition. The only sources available to us are the NT books themselves, supplemented by a few historical notices in other early Christian texts. In this essay I do not intend to examine every NT book, but rather to explore how one might go about deciding whether a NT writer knew he was writing Scripture.

**Modes of Inspiration**

Before turning to the NT books themselves, it will be useful to outline some possibilities for the mode of inspiration and in each case, whether the inspired writer would be cognizant (or not) of that inspiration. What are described below are hypothetical modes of inspiration—speculations about how inspiration might work in practice.[[20]](#footnote-20)

* **Dictated Messages *–***It might be that God, through the Holy Spirit, specifies directly the words that are to be used (perhaps analogous to an executive dictating to his secretary). In this case the writer is conscious of receiving a message from God and writing it down.
* **Delegated Messages** – It might be that God, through the Holy Spirit, gives the writer instructions about what is needful and the writer conveys that message to the best of his ability, though in his own words. In this case the writer is conscious of writing on behalf of God, though is also mindful of his own input.
* **Prompted Messages** – It might be that God, through the Holy Spirit, provides a spark of genius or a moment of clarity that gives the writer the prompt to write something. In this case the writer is, perhaps, less aware of the direction of God (and consequently may be freer in what he writes).
* **Telekinetic/Ecstatic Messages** – It might be that God, through the Holy Spirit, overtakes the conscious functions of the writer and causes him in some unconscious state to write. In this case the writer would be entirely unaware of what he was writing when he was writing it (but, presumably, would recognise the intervention of God afterwards).
* **Samesayer Messages** – It might be that God, through his foreknowledge, knows that a certain person, in a certain circumstance, will freely choose to write a certain message. In this way writer could write a message that is the same that God would have chosen for him to write; God by choosing that individual and those circumstances has chosen that message. The writer would not be aware of receiving a message (because he would not have received a message) and nevertheless would write the words of God.

This seems to me to be an adequate representation of the spectrum of possibilities for inspiration, though no doubt further nuances and variations could be put forward. These hypothetical scenarios demonstrate that inspiration can be conscious or unconscious, whilst still being directed by God.

**Definition of Scripture**

In his article, “When did the Gospels become Scripture?”, Moody Smith explores the question of whether the gospel writers knew that they were writing Scripture. One aspect that significantly hampers his analysis is that he does not work with a fixed definition of Scripture. Whilst stating clearly that he does not regard ‘Scripture’ to be the same as ‘canon’ (i.e. the list of books recognised by any particular church), he oscillates about what constitutes writing Scripture, whether it be writing with liturgical purpose, or intending to continue the biblical narrative, or writing in an authoritative manner. This lack of clarity hampers his attempts to examine whether the gospel writers were aware that they were writing Scripture.

I hope to avoid this same methodological problem by starting with a clear definition of Scripture as the written words of God. For my purposes it is not strictly relevant whether a book was written for use in liturgy or was written with authority; the determining factor is whether the author *intended* to write down (what he considered to be) words of God.[[21]](#footnote-21)

**Explicit Statement**

Clearly it would be helpful for our purposes had the NT writers included a statement in their texts to the effect “I am writing Scripture” (or indeed, “I am not writing Scripture”). Whilst such a statement occurs in no book of the Bible, many OT books say something similar. For example, the book of Haggai begins “In the second year of Darius the king, in the sixth month, on the first day of the month, the word of the Lord came by the hand of Haggai the prophet to Zerubbabel ...” This leaves us in no doubt that the author (or the editorial scribe, amanuensis, etc.) intends to make a record of the words of God and thus, by definition, write Scripture.

As far as I can see, only one NT writer is explicit in this way about his intention to write Scripture. In Revelation, John clearly believes that he is a recording a revelation from God (Rev 1:1). He records a vision he has received (Rev 1:10), which includes instructions from Jesus to write the book (Rev 1:19). He describes the book he is writing as a prophecy (Rev 1:3; 22:7, 18-19). John is profoundly aware that he is writing a book of divine revelation in response to a divine command; John believes he is writing Scripture. None of the other NT writers are explicit in this way.

Another indicator we might look at is the stated purpose of a text. If a writer had been prompted to write by divine command or by special revelation then we might expect this to be explained in any statement about the purpose of the book. Whilst not all NT books disclose their stated purpose, there are some clear examples.

Luke begins both *Luke* and *Acts* with a preface, which seems to disclose his purpose in writing. In Luke 1:1-4, he addresses a certain Theophilus, stating that he has undertaken to write “an orderly account” for Theophilus, that he might “have certainty”. Whether Theophilus was a real person (of some dignity) or “Theophilus” is pseudonym for God-fearers in general (I favour the former option), Luke’s stated purpose is to provide an account of Jesus that will corroborate the information already received. Luke also details his method, explicitly mentioning “eyewitnesses” and those who preached the word; Luke, having investigated these sources, is compiling his account from those testimonies. Acts 1:1-3 seems to reinforce this conclusion, where Luke, again addressing Theophilus, writes of the “many proofs” by which Jesus demonstrated that he was alive; Luke seems intent on providing substance to the Christian claims. In both prefaces Luke discloses only mundane motivations for writing; he does not mention any super-mundane prompt.

As a second example, we might consider Paul’s first letter to the Corinthians. It is written in response to reports from Chloe (1 Cor 1:11) and to a letter he has received (1 Cor 7:1), and written in anticipation of a visit he intends to make (1 Cor 4:19-21; 11:34; 16:5). It is not intended as his final and complete word to the Corinthians, but as sufficient to their needs until he comes and resolves their other problems. Again, only mundane, not super-mundane, motives are acknowledged.

**External Testimony**

We have a few early testimonies regarding the writing of the NT books, primarily from Papias though only fragments of his works are extant. For example, Papias records that Matthew “composed the sayings in the Hebrew tongue, and each one interpreted [or translated] them to the best of his ability” (Papias, fr.3 = Eusebius, *HE* 3.39.16). Two (relatively late) testimonies to the work of Papias mention that it was Papias who wrote the gospel as John’s dictation (Papias, fr.15 = *Catena of Greek Fathers commenting on the Gospel of John*; Papias, fr.16 = *Codex Vaticanus Alexandrinus* 14). Neither of these testimonies reveals what Matthew or John thought of the works they were composing are scripture.

Testimonies regarding the gospel of Mark are a little more forthcoming. Papias writes that “when Mark was the interpreter of Peter, he wrote down accurately everything that he recalled of the Lord’s words and deeds – but not in order” (Papias fr.3 = Eusebius, *HE* 3.39.15).[[22]](#footnote-22) This testimony represents Mark’s intention as giving an accurate record of Peter’s memories of the Jesus. Papias describes Mark as Peter’s *hermeneutes,* usually translated “interpreter” but could mean “translator” or even “secretary”.[[23]](#footnote-23) A more detailed version of the story is relayed by Clement (quoted by Eusebius, *HE* 2.15) who says that Mark was prevailed upon by his fellow Christians to write down what Peter had taught them orally. He continues that the Spirit revealed to Peter that Mark had written his gospel and Peter authorized the gospel to read in the churches. If this latter story were true (and that may be reasonably doubted) then it would suggest that Mark wrote under his own direction but his work was later confirmed as Scripture by Peter, moved by the Spirit.

**Textual Criticism**

Moody Smith raises an apparent problem with the scriptural status of Mark caused by the commonly accepted solution to the Synoptic Problem. If, as is commonly accepted, Matthew and Luke borrowed from Mark (and a hypothesized source, known as Q) does that mean that these evangelists sought to replace Mark? And if so, does it follow that Matthew and Luke did not regard Mark as scripture? Now this problem can, of course, be avoided if one denies this source hypothesis but even if one accepts this hypothesis it is not an obvious consequent that Matthew and Luke denied the scriptural status of Mark. Overlap of material is a feature of the Hebrew Scriptures (e.g. 2 Sam 22 / Ps 18; Isa 36-39 / 2 Kgs 18:13-20:19; Jer 52 / 2 Kgs 24:18-30). Indeed the books of Kings and Chronicles represent an Old Testament synoptic “problem”. So we need not suppose that Luke sought to replace Mark, as though it was not Scripture.

**Internal Indicators**

In the absence of explicit acknowledgment of inspiration, either internally or externally, one might look to internal indications as to how the writer understood the text he was writing. However, it is not immediately clear what those indicators might be. For example, scholars have sought to classify the genre of Luke mainly as either Jewish historiography or Greek biography, [[24]](#footnote-24) but it is not clear that writing either of these genres would be an indicator of writing Scripture or not. Josephus wrote Jewish historiography and yet considered himself to be (in some sense) inspired.[[25]](#footnote-25) A. Perry points to many examples of literary conventions in the OT, concluding that “the inclusion of common forms of writing within the Jewish Scriptures did not exclude a genre assignment of ‘Scripture’ in Luke’s day”.[[26]](#footnote-26) The use of a genre, or literary conventions, does not imply a purely human authorship.

A more reliable basis might to be look for indications that the writer was emulating previous Scripture (i.e. the OT). Perry believes there are such indications that Luke is writing Scripture, or more specifically, Jewish scriptural history. These indications include: continuing story elements, imitating scriptural episodes, adopting a Jewish scriptural (Septuagintal) style and writing theological history.[[27]](#footnote-27) Assuming these examples stand up, they would suggest that Luke was intentionally attempting to continue the scriptural narrative.

One might point to similar indicators in Matthew, such as his opening lines, “the book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ”, which intentionally mirror the Genesis record (Gen 5:1; cf. 2:4; 6:9; 10:1; 11:10; 11:27). The inclusion of a genealogy in itself, particularly one from Abraham tracing the history of Israel, seems another element characteristic of Hebrew Scripture.[[28]](#footnote-28) The narrative elements selected by Matthew, from the death of the innocents to the flight to Egypt to the temptation in the wilderness might be seen as a recapitulation of the history of Israel, presenting the life of Jesus as a scriptural narrative. And likewise John, opening his gospel “in the beginning ...”, appears to intentionally frame his narrative as a creation narrative to complement the Genesis narrative.

Nevertheless internal indicators would seem to cut both ways. Just as one might write in such a way to emulate existing Scripture, one might also write in a mundane way seemingly inconsistent with the writing of Scripture. For example, Paul uses his letters as an opportunity to convey personal messages, such as greeting his kinsmen (Rom 16:7), confirming his travel plans (1 Cor 16:5-8), requesting his left-luggage (2 Tim 4:13) and booking a room (Philem 1:22). These are hardly divine pronouncements neither are they consonant with OT scriptural writing.[[29]](#footnote-29)

**Authority**

It may be, however, that the NT writers did not state “this text is Scripture” because the original readers would have assumed it to be authoritative because of who was writing it. For example, Paul believes that he writes with authority. He thinks that any true prophet would recognise within (some of) his writings are the commands of the Lord (1 Cor 14:37). When giving instructions about marriage, he thinks he has the Spirit of God (1 Cor 7:40). He believes that his initial preaching of the gospel was assured by the Holy Spirit (1 Thess 1:5). He believes that, in some sense, the Holy Spirit witnesses to his truthfulness (Rom 9:1). And, most importantly, he believes that in some sense the Spirit has revealed things to the early Christians (including himself; 1 Cor 2:10) and that the Sprit will continue to reveal things (Eph 1:17). Whilst nowhere does Paul explicitly ascribe any of his letters to inspiration, he does believe that the Lord is working through him.

Paul considers himself to be an apostle (1 Cor 15:9; 2 Cor 11:5). Paul says the apostleship was received from Christ (Rom 1:5). Mark records that Jesus specifically appointed the apostles “that they might be with him and he might send them out to preach” (Mark 3:14), and their preaching was confirmed by miracles (Mark 6:7-13; cf. Matt 10:1-15; Luke 9:1-6). Similarly, Luke records that following the ascension, the apostles preached and their testimony was confirmed by miracles (Acts 4:33). He says that the apostles were directed by the Spirit (Acts 1:2). Paul believes God has appointed apostles before any other spiritual service (1 Cor 12:28; Eph 4:11; cf. Eph 2:20), that they have received a special revelation (Eph 3:5). Luke associates apostles with the prophets as those sent by God (Luke 11:49), Jude says they issue prophesies (Jude 1:17) and the early churches considered their teaching to be authoritative (Acts 2:42; 15:23; 16:4). Peter writes that the apostles deliver the commands of the Lord (2 Pet 3:2). The NT conception of apostleship was as a divinely appointed and divinely guided role, carrying with it divine authority to make prophecies, pronouncements and commands.

This same conception of apostolic authority is found in early non-canonical Christian texts. The *Didache* equates apostles with prophets, using the terms interchangeably (11). Ignatius takes the doctrines of the apostles to be authoritative, on a level with commands of the Lord (Ign. *Mag* 13). Though he is writing letters as a bishop to other churches, he rejects the idea that he has authority to issue authoritative teaching himself; “should I issue commands to you as if I were an apostle?” (Ign. *Tral* 3; cf. Ign. *Rom* 4).

This being the case, an apostle would not need to explicitly state that he was writing Scripture, because when writing as an apostle he was known to be writing with authority. Eight of Paul’s letters are explicitly addressed as from an apostle (Rom 1:1; 1 Cor 1:1; 2 Cor 1:1; Gal 1:1; Eph 1:1; Col 1:1; 1 Tim 1:1; 2 Tim 1:1), and readers would no doubt have assumed as much for his other letters. Similarly, the two letters of Peter are explicitly from an apostle (1 Pet 1:1; 2 Pet 1:1). James was an apostle (cf. Gal 1:19) and would have been known as such to his readers; this is presumably the same for his brother Jude (though unstated). Our earliest testimonies (see above) attest that Mark wrote his gospel on behalf of an apostle (i.e. Peter) and the beloved disciple, whether the son of Zebedee or the Elder, also carried apostolic authority (cf. Papias, fr.3.4). Luke is almost certainly referring to the apostles when he writes of those “ministers of the word” upon whose testimony he bases his gospel (Luke 1:2).

**The Way Forward**

Muslims have a very straightforward conception of Scripture; an angel dictated the Koran to their prophet Mohammed. The Koran attests to its own scriptural status (and stands or falls on the accuracy of those claims). It seems impossible to take a similar ‘dictation view’ of the New Testament; it simply strains credulity to believe that an angel dictated to Paul “bring the cloak that I left with Carpus at Troas”. If we are going to reach a better understanding of the process of inspiration then we need to found it on a better conception of what Scripture is, and that means a better conception of what the New Testament claims to be.

My proposal is that the New Testament claim to be Scripture rests on the apostolic authority of its authors. Just as Peter was moved by the Spirit on the day of Pentecost and gave his testimony to the good news to those gathered in Jerusalem, in the same way the NT writers gave an enduring testimony through the books they authored. Just as Peter could give authoritative witness to the resurrection, ascension and lordship of Jesus, so the NT writers can give authoritative witness to the gospel message. Having received the Spirit from on high, the apostles were directed and guided by it in all their works for the sake of the gospel, including authoring NT texts.

We can now return to the titular question. Did the NT writer know they were writing Scripture? The NT texts do not self-reference themselves as Scripture (except possibly Revelation); they do not necessarily parallel other scriptural genres and manifest apparently mundane reasons for writing. However, a number of the NT writers—Paul, most overtly—seem conscious of writing with apostolic authority and the NT conceives of apostleship as being directed by the Spirit. In this sense the NT writers, inasmuch as they were apostles or wrote on behalf of apostles, knew they were writing authoritative texts.

This suggests a way forward for future research on the subject of inspiration and the authority of Scripture. For example, by exploring the way the Spirit worked through the apostles in their ministries we may discover suitable analogues for the way the Spirit worked in their writings. Did the Spirit reveal secrets to the apostles, as it revealed the crime of Ananias and Sapphira to Peter (Acts 5:1-11)? Did the Spirit speak directly to the apostles in words (Acts 8:29; 10:19)? Or direct them non-verbally (cf. Acts 16:7)? Did the Spirit supplement their own wisdom (Acts 6:10)? It is these sorts of examples that will provide a better understanding of the mechanism of inspiration.

Apostolic authority may also provide the clue to how the canon of Scripture was decided. As discussed, the early Christians made a distinction between the writings of the apostles and those of other Christians. Similarly those in later years who sought to fabricate scriptures (e.g. Gospel of Peter) did so under the name of an apostle. The Church may have rubber-stamped the list of NT books, but the contents of this list were already determined *de facto* by the criterion of apostleship.

**Using Jewish Sources in NT Interpretation**

**A. Perry**

**Introduction**

Scholars often support an interpretation of a NT text or idea by referring to Jewish writings; the argument is a contextual one—they say that ‘here in this text’ we find the same or a similar idea to that which is in the NT, therefore ‘this’ (‘my’) interpretation of the NT is correct. The purpose of this essay is to put these Jewish writings into a framework that allows us to assess the value of them as evidence of first century thought.

**Selecting Second Temple Material**

Obviously material extant in Jesus’ day is relevant in describing the Judaism(s)[[30]](#footnote-30) of the time, but scholars also select material from the immediately following centuries and it is the use of these texts that has to be tentative. Why is this?

*Second Temple Writings*

Scholars dispute the dating of writings that are extant in the first century CE, and they debate the date of writings belonging to the second century CE. Whichever writings are chosen, the principle assumption is that they are thought to include traditions of interpretation that reflect the first century.

The literature is substantial and one principle of organization is thematic; the writings may encode influential ideas, but they may also be idiosyncratic. The literature can be treated in three groups: i) material concerned with the *past*, principally Scriptural interpretations; ii) material concerned with contemporary events, principally sapiential or philosophical writing; and iii) material concerned with the *future*, principally writings that invoke restoration themes.

Representative writings for would be: *2 Baruch*, *4 Ezra*, *Liber antiquitatum biblicarum*, *Testament of Job*, *Jubilees*, *Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs*, *Testament of Abraham*, *Testament of Moses*, *1 Enoch*, *2 Enoch*, *Psalms of Solomon*, *Martyrdom and Ascension of Isaiah*, *Sibylline Oracles*, *Assumption of Moses*, as well as Sirach, and the Wisdom of Solomon.[[31]](#footnote-31) Any of these writings would supply Jewish-Palestinian ideas extant in the first century. Josephus’ writings are referenced for history, since he is by far the major (and often only) source for Palestinian history. Philo’s writings are referenced for philosophical interpretation, but his Alexandrian locale limits his value for Palestinian views.[[32]](#footnote-32) The Dead Sea Scrolls date from the before and after the beginning of the common era, and their value lies in their contribution to the understanding of the biblical text, biblical interpretation of the ‘last days’, and the workings of a Jewish sect.[[33]](#footnote-33)

*Rabbinical Writings*

B. D. Chilton describes the standard approach to rabbinical materials:

Mishnah, Midrash and Talmud present us, in the main, with intramural rabbinic discussion. Targums provide us with some insight into how those discussions found expression in a more public, less expert context, i.e., in the worship of the faithful.[[34]](#footnote-34)

Accordingly, we should divide our treatment into two parts. Scholars use early Tannaitic material to illuminate Jewish views in the first century (i.e. the Rabbis from the 2nd and early 3rd centuries CE). The main documents to include predominantly early Tannaitic material are the *Mishnah*, *Tosefta*, *Mekilta*, *Seder Olam Rabbah*, *Sifre*, *Sifra* and *Abot de Rabbi Nathan*.

Regarding the *Mishnah*, the received view is that it came into existence as a written document towards the end of the 2c. and that it mainly cites Tannaim subsequent to Bar Kokhba;[[35]](#footnote-35) similarly, *Sifra* is typically dated to the late 2c./early 3c.[[36]](#footnote-36); Of the *Mekilta*, J. Z. Lauterbach comments that it “shows itself to be one of the older Tannaitic works”.[[37]](#footnote-37) H. W. Basser concludes that *Sifre* is Palestinian in origin, written around the same time as the *Mishnah*, utilising earlier Tannaitic traditions grounded on the work of R. Akiba.[[38]](#footnote-38) Y. Elman summarises scholarly views about the dating of *Tosefta* and offers the tentative opinion that “conceptually, it seems pre-Amoraic” (i.e. not from rabbis of the late 3rd century CE and later), and that its language points to an early date.[[39]](#footnote-39) C. J. Milikowsky accepts the traditional ascription of *Seder Olam Rabbah* to R. Jose ben Halaphta.[[40]](#footnote-40) A. J. Saldarini argues for a pre-Mishnaic *’Abot R. Nat.*, commenting on a pre-Mishnaic *Pir‡ê Abot* that this developed in two directions represented by the two manuscript traditions (A) and (B), of which (B) is the earlier—3c.[[41]](#footnote-41)

Our interest with these documents should be in both what they ascribe to the Tannaim *and* in their anonymous statements. A reasonable working hypothesis is the tradition (*b. San* 86a, *b. Yev* 82b) that R. Nehemiah (mid-2c.) is the author of anonymous statements of the *Tosefta*, R. Meir (early 2c.) anonymous statements in the *Mishnah*, R. Judah (mid-2c.) anonymous statements in *Sifra*, R. Simeon ben Yohai (early 2c.), anonymous statements in the *Sifre*, and that these works were based on the teachings of R. Akiba (early 2c.). The earlier the Rabbi, the safer it is to use their comments for our reconstruction of first century Judaism (particularly Pharisaic).

The classification and dating scheme for the Jewish Midrashim by M. D. Herr is still used today.[[42]](#footnote-42) Citations in the Midrashim attributed to Tannaim by Amoraic and Post-Amoraic Rabbis can also be used for first century opinion, but they carry less weight. But the citations belonging to the Amoraim and later Rabbis, or those which are insufficiently identified, with the citation lacking a patronym, these should not be used, for example, *Pesikta Rabbati*, *Midrash TanHuma*, *Pěsi‡ta dě-Rab Kahána*, and *Pir‡ê de Rabbi Eliezer*:[[43]](#footnote-43) With regard to later anthologies of Midrashim, such as *Aggadat Bereshit* (10c.) and *Midrash ha-Gadol* (14c.), which have been used by NT scholars, following G. Stemberger’s dating[[44]](#footnote-44) we should exclude them form our picture of the first century.

*Targums*

Targumic traditions developed in the day-to-day synagogue application of Scripture (where Hebrew had ceased to be the vernacular), and they are a witness for identifying *common* theological conceptions. However, the Targums as we have them are professional translations,[[45]](#footnote-45) which involved rabbinical schools *after* the first century. Accordingly, their value as evidence of first century thought is qualified. However, as G. Vermes notes, the Targums have an advantage as to evidence compared with other rabbinical literature because the Aramaic texts were “probably subjected to a less thorough updating than the *Mishnah*, *Tosefta*, Talmud and halakhic Midrashim”.[[46]](#footnote-46) The Palestinian Pentateuchal Targums, *Neofiti*, *Fragment Targum*, *Pseudo-Jonathan*, along with the Pentateuchal Targum *Onqelos* and *Targum Jonathan to the Prophets* are of some value for bible interpretation in the first century.[[47]](#footnote-47)

It has been held that the Palestinian Targums “preserved many exegetical traditions which would have circulated in the Jewish community of the first century”.[[48]](#footnote-48) However, an early date for the Palestinian Targums *as a whole* cannot be an unqualified assumption in any comparative investigation.[[49]](#footnote-49) Following M. J. McNamara,[[50]](#footnote-50) we can say that the language of *Neofiti* and *Fragment Targum* suggests a third century CE date, includes earlier tradition, and does not preclude there having been a “proto-Palestinian” Targum in the first century from which *Onqelos* and *Neofiti* derive. Following S. A. Kaufman, we can assume that *Pseudo-Jonathan* is a late post-Talmudic composite Targum based on *Onqelos* and Palestinian Targum traditions.[[51]](#footnote-51) McNamara’s (2004) latest summary of scholarship is that, “it is now generally recognized that *Pseudo-Jonathan* should not properly be classified as representing the Palestinian Targum…it is the work of a scholar and was not intended for synagogue use”.[[52]](#footnote-52) This is the best position on this Targum, and it is important because NT scholars have made critical use of *Pseudo-Jonathan* in their use of the Targums as evidence of first century thought.

Scholars locate *Onqelos* in either Babylon or Palestine.[[53]](#footnote-53) B. Grossfeld adopts the latter view speculating that there was a *Proto-Onqelos* “containing older Palestinian traditions which were preserved throughout the final redaction process in Babylonia”.[[54]](#footnote-54) McNamara notes that several scholars date the language of *Onqelos* to the early 2c.[[55]](#footnote-55) On this basis, we can assign *Onqelos* greater weight as evidence of first century views. Our assumption would be that the Palestinian Targums, including *Onqelos*, represent *alternative* though not necessarily competing traditions.

The date and place of origin for *Targum Jonathan to the Prophets* has been assigned to Palestine and late first century or early second century. Because of the linguistic affinity between *Onqelos* and *Targum Jonathan*, the two Targums are often given the same provenance.[[56]](#footnote-56) L. Smolar and M. Aberbach, after reviewing scholarship on the question of dating, conclude that *Targum Jonathan “*is a late first century-early second century work which originated and was first developed in the land of Israel before being brought to Babylonia where it was redacted prior to the Arab invasion”.[[57]](#footnote-57) This would be our assumption, and as such, it admits *Targum Jonathan* as evidence of first century Judaism.[[58]](#footnote-58)

**Conclusion**

NT scholars often reference Jewish writings in their exegesis and in making historical claims. They may or may not be specialists in Jewish literature, either of the Second Temple, or of the rabbinical period. Equally, their views may be out of date since, for example, targumic scholarship has moved on since the 1980s in its consensus opinions. Jewish interpretations are of comparative historical interest and they serve to act as a brake on the Christian theologizing that goes on with the NT.

**The New Perspective on Paul**

**G. Jackman**

[Editor’s Note: This is an extract from the beginning of a revised edition of *Re-reading Romans in Context* by G. Jackman and it is available via [www.lulu.com](http://www.lulu.com) at £5.66 plus P&P].

Christadelphian approaches to the Letter to the Romans have largely followed the tradition which prevailed in Protestant circles for something like four centuries after the Reformation. That tradition was based upon a two fundamental assumptions:

* The Letter to the Romans is essentially a treatise rather than a letter, presenting a systematic statement of the gospel rather than an engagement with any specific questions or problems or with any particular circumstances among its recipients in Rome.

Brother John Carter formulated this view clearly on the first page of his work on Romans, published in 1931:

...it [the letter] does not appear to have been written to meet difficulties in the church to which it was addressed ... Romans is a statement of Paul’s teachings concerning the principles of God’s dealings with men ... As it is a statement of principles, comparable to a treatise as much as to a letter, it can be studied independently of a knowledge of local conditions and the need for it being written.[[59]](#footnote-59)

* The principal concern of the Letter is the theme of justification by faith, which was thought to be the decisive issue in the thinking of the apostle.

This view found clear expression in William Tyndale’s preface, much influenced by Martin Luther, to his translation of Romans:

The sum and whole cause of the writings of this epistle, is, to prove that a man is justified by faith only: which proposition whoso denieth, to him is not only this epistle and all that Paul writeth, but also the whole scripture, so locked up that he shall never understand it to his soul's health. And to bring a man to the understanding and feeling that faith only justifieth, Paul proveth that the whole nature of man is so poisoned and so corrupt, yea and so dead concerning godly living or godly thinking, that it is impossible for her to keep the law in the sight of God.[[60]](#footnote-60)

It was consequently held that the essential argument of Romans is found in chapters 1-8, while chapters 9-11 were regarded as, and sometimes openly stated to be, a ‘digression’.

This second conviction about Romans was buttressed by two widely accepted ideas about Paul himself and about the views that he was thought to be challenging in the letter:

* The focus on justification by faith was a consequence of Paul’s own experience of a desperate and unavailing struggle to keep the Mosaic Law, of which chapter 7 was held to provide a graphic picture. Paradoxically, however, the same chapter was (and still is) often also read as a picture of the Christian believer’s struggle against sin, i.e. of Paul’s experience *after* his ‘conversion’. The prevalence of this reading derived, in part at least, from Luther’s sense of unworthiness and of struggling unavailingly against sin before his ‘discovery’ of the ‘justification by faith’ through his reading of Romans 1: 17-18. That experience strongly coloured his own view of the Letter and came to be ascribed to Paul also.
* The notion of ‘justification by works’, which Paul challenges in Romans, was identified with ‘Judaism’, the essence of which was assumed to be that Jews considered themselves able to achieve ‘righteousness’ unaided, by means of their observance of the Mosaic Law, and therefore not dependent on divine grace.

Since the middle of the nineteenth century all these assumptions, both about Romans and about Paul and Judaism, have been called into question. The process of questioning, as far as Romans was concerned, can be dated back to an influential essay by the German theologian F. C. Baur in 1836, entitled ‘Zweck und Veranlassung des Römerbriefs und die damit zusammenhängenden Verhältnisse der römischen Gemeinde’ (‘Purpose and occasion of the Letter to the Romans and the related conditions in the Roman church’),[[61]](#footnote-61) which challenged what Douglas Moo calls ‘the prevalent tendency to consider Romans as a timeless theological manifesto’, suggesting instead that it must, like the rest of Paul’s letters, be ‘directed to specific issues in the church addressed’. [[62]](#footnote-62) One of the first of those to take up and develop Baur’s initiative was Paul S. Minear, who on the first page of his short book on Romans wrote:

It is customary to view the epistle as a treatise in systematic or dogmatic theology, moving from one doctrinal theme to another. I think it reflects a primary concern with pastoral problems and therefore presents a continuous argument designed to meet specific situations in Rome. Many readers suppose that the message is quite independent of the occasion; in principle the letter might have been sent anywhere without altering the ideas. I think Paul would have found such an attitude inconceivable. Again, it is customary to suppose that the most significant passages are to be found in the early chapters... I am convinced that ‘the peculiar feature of this letter is that its main message comes at the end [quoting Willi Marxsen].’ [[63]](#footnote-63)

Over the past thirty years or so, detailed study of ‘Second-Temple Judaism’, particularly the work of E. P. Sanders,[[64]](#footnote-64) has provided a better grasp of the conception of righteousness which prevailed among his Jewish compatriots. This in turn has led to a major reappraisal of Paul’s writings, leading to a revised view on the part of many scholars which has come to be known as ‘the new perspective on Paul’ or simply ‘the new Paul’.[[65]](#footnote-65) One aspect of this reappraisal has been a questioning of the traditional view of Paul’s own spiritual development, especially with regard to his supposed agonising sense of guilt and unavailing quest for righteousness prior to his encounter with the risen Lord on the road to Damascus.

It seems to me that the ‘new perspective’ has a good deal to teach us about Paul and his writings. One reason for attempting to expound Romans, as I shall be doing here, is to provide for Christadelphian readers an introduction to this alternative way of viewing the great apostle. In the first section of what follows I shall focus on the question of why Paul wrote his Letter to the Romans, examining not only what he himself says in the letter but also its contemporary context, including both Paul’s own circumstances and conditions among the Christians in Rome, as far as we are able to gauge them from the letter itself and other evidence. These factors must, I believe, be taken into account in reading Romans and can help us better to grasp Paul’s argument. Romans needs, I suggest, to be read as a letter, addressed to real readers and concerned with both their practice and their attitudes. In other words, Romans is less a treatise than a work of persuasion – and the style, as we shall see, reflects this.

As far as the letter’s central theme is concerned, I will argue in chapter 1 that both the contextual factors and the evidence of the letter itself support the view that it is not justification by faith which is for Paul the central issue but rather the co-existence of Jews and Gentiles within the young Christian community, as it also was in the other letter where ‘justification’ plays an important part, Galatians. Paul’s task is to help Gentile and Jewish Christians alike to see their place within the overarching saving purpose of God and, as he says in the very significant final exhortative passage in chapter 15, to ‘live in such harmony with one another, in accord with Christ Jesus, that together you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ’, and to ‘welcome one another as Christ has welcomed you, for the glory of God’ (15: 5-7).

This is not to say that justification by faith is not *a* central theme but rather that it is deployed and expounded in the service of a more pressing and practicalpurpose, that of uniting a church in danger of collapsing into parallel but separate Jewish and Gentile sections. It is significant that the two letters, Romans and Galatians, which expound justification by faith at any length are precisely the ones which deal extensively with the Jew-Gentile issue.

The ‘new perspective’ has, I think, helped us to grasp better what the real issues were between Paul and his critics. In the Galatian situation the problems emerged in their most acute form, with Gentiles being urged to submit to circumcision. The following passages from a commentary on Galatians published in 1994 illustrate the influence that the work of Sanders *et al* and the ‘New Perspective’ has had upon the understanding of that letter:

In Galatians Paul develops his argument for justification for faith in order to correct a social problem: Gentile believers have been excluded from fellowship with Jewish believers because they did not observe the law ... Jewish Christians did not have a legalistic view of their own relationship to God; they knew that they had right standing with God not because of their observance of the law but because of their faith in Christ. Their problem was not legalism; it was ethnocentrism. They were convinced that the blessing of God was given to the people of God, and that only the Jewish people were the people of God. So they were insisting that all Gentile Christians had to become part of the Jewish nation before they could enjoy the full blessing of God.[[66]](#footnote-66)

Though the specific form that the problem took in Romans was somewhat different, as we shall see, this account of the central issue is valid in relation to that letter too.

Having sketched in a context and suggested the reason (or reasons) for the writing of Romans and its central theme, it is obviously necessary to demonstrate that the Letter does indeed support that approach, and I shall be attempting to do this in chapters 3-7. Before doing so, however, I will also try to clarify in chapter 2 what Paul means by ‘justification by works’ in the light of contemporary Jewish attitudes. The question of Paul’s own spiritual development is an important element in that discussion, and I shall be suggesting that the popular view of Romans 7 as a picture of Paul’s own pre-conversion experience is contrary to Paul’s intentions.

Romans 7, along with its counterpart, chapter 8, will also figure prominently later on in my analysis of the letter itself. The picture of a despairing, unavailing struggle against sin that we find there is surely not intended to be read as a picture of life in Christ – we find that rather in chapter 8. It seems to me that we have been less than faithful to Paul in discussing these chapters because we have been reluctant to take seriously the centrality of the Spirit in the life of faith.

Overall, I hope to show that looking at the letter contextually enables us to make better sense of it than did the older view – and by ‘better’ I mean one which explains more satisfactorily not only why Paul says what he does but also how the letter as a whole hangs together. It is not the intention to provide an exhaustive, ‘verse-by-verse’ commentary but rather to show how Paul’s argument reflects the context that has been outlined.

Two other conclusions will also emerge from my analysis of Paul’s argument. First, I hope to have demonstrated in chapter 6 that Romans 9-11, often found puzzling and ‘difficult’, does genuinely constitute the climax of Paul’s expository argument, for it is here that he attempts to set the very different experiences of Jews and Gentiles within the overarching purpose of God. This historical interpretation complements the more ‘theoretical’ theological argument of the earlier chapters. Secondly, my chapter 7 shows that Romans 12-15 provides not simply general and somewhat random exhortations, but rather a compelling and practical response to the specific situation in which his readers in Rome found themselves, however valuable it might also be for other, later readers – and one which arises out of the argument developed in chapters 1-11. This means that, rather as Minear suggests, the climax of the letter as a whole, as distinct from its expository section, is indeed at the end, in chapters 14-15, confirming the view that, like all Paul’s other letters, it is ultimately a *pastoral* letter, concerned with practical problems facing its readers.

A reading of Romans which emphasises its bearing on issues then current may be thought disappointing by those who are accustomed to taking this letter as a succinct summary of the gospel – in spite of its obvious shortcomings for that purpose. And ‘salvation by works or by faith’, as traditionally understood, is in any case hardly a burning issue today. By contrast, reading Romans in the context of the church *then* can help us, however odd that might sound, to better grasp what its significance might be for the church *now*, and I have attempted in chapter 8 to indicate what that significance might be. When we grasp what the real problems among the Romans were, we find, I think, very significant parallels with our own day. Moreover, the *manner* in which Paul deals with those problems – for it is truly a pastoral letter – provides a model for how we should deal with ours.

**Columnists**



**Intertextuality**

**R. Dargie**

**Sheep without a Shepherd**

**Introduction**

As we read of the life and times of Jesus and the disciples, it gradually begins to dawn upon the consciousness that many of the incidents recorded in the Gospel records were happenings which were already pre-figured in the OT.

So these Gospel incidents, rather than being random chance events in the life of Jesus, would appear to be planned to enact in NT times matters of faith and spirituality that had already been dealt with by various OT writers.

The feeding of the 5000 is a case in point. There are clear “strategic” inter-textual links with David in Psalm 23,[[67]](#footnote-67) Elisha in 2 Kings 4, and with the writings of the prophet Ezekiel in chapter 34 of his prophecy. But before proceeding further we have to make a preliminary observation.

The feeding of the 5000 is directly related to the “righteous shepherd” qualities of Jesus. The subject of righteous and unrighteous shepherds is a biblical concept of vast proportions with scriptural comments from Genesis through to Revelation – indeed, the text in Ezekiel 34 is wholly dedicated to this one subject.

So, in this column will not cover the biblical panorama of righteous and unrighteous shepherds; but rather address the clear and direct inter-textual links between 2 Kings 4, Psalm 23 and Ezekiel 34, and ask the question why these passages? All scripture references are to the KJV.

**The Feeding of the 5000 - a well-documented event**

The feeding of the 5000 is recorded in all 4 gospel records, (Matt 14:13-21, Mark 6:30-46, Luke 9:10-17, John 6:1-15), and must be distinguished from the feeding of the 4000, which took place later in the ministry of Jesus (Matt 15:32-39, Mark 8:1-9). There is therefore plenty of corroborative “inter Gospel evidence” from which we can work. This evidence forms the basis for the three analytical tables which follow. These tables summarise the “touch points” between our target OT passages and the various Gospel records.

**David the King - Shepherded by God (Psalm 23)**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Ps 23:2 | ...in green pastures | John 6:10 | ...now there was much grass in the place. |
| Ps 23:2 | ...he maketh me to lie down... | Mark 6:39 | ...sit (recline) by companies |
| Ps 23:2 | ...he leadeth me beside the still waters. | John 6:1 | Jesus went over the **Sea of Galilee**[[68]](#footnote-68) |
| Ps 23:3 | ...he restoreth my soul. | Mark 6:42 | ...they did all eat and were filled. |
| Ps 23:4 | ...yea though I walk through the valley. | John 6:3 | And Jesus went up into a mountain |
| Ps 23:5 | ...thou preparest a table before me. | Mark 6:42 | ...they did all eat and were filled. |
| Ps 23:5 | ...my cup runneth over. | Mark 6:43 | ...and they took up twelve baskets full of the fragments |

Psalm 23 would appear to have been written around the events of Absalom’s rebellion. The evidence for this whilst not compelling is circumstantially strong. The expression in verse 5 “thou preparest a table in the presence of my enemies” seems to accord with actions of Barzillai who met King David at Mahanaim as David fled from Absalom. Barzillai, through the ways of providence, supplied David and his entourage with every sustenance so this would seem to accord with a table prepared in a wild place with David’s enemies in the immediate environs, (2 Sam 17:27-29).

Also, the “valley of the shadow of death” could well be a reference to David’s crossing of the brook Kidron in 2 Sam 15:23, as he made his way out of Jerusalem to flee into the wilderness. Interestingly, the name Kidron means ‘dusky’ or ‘shadowy’ from a Hebrew root which means ‘blackness’, ‘darkness’ or ‘mourning’.[[69]](#footnote-69)

The expression “thou makest me to lie down in green pastures beside the still waters” is consistent with the resting and recuperation of one who is being hotly pursued by his enemies, but under the shepherding of God has found a place of safety coupled with rest and sustenance to achieve physical and mental restoration.

Finally, and perhaps more conclusively, Ps 23:6 ends with David stating that “and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever”. Interestingly, some commentators argue that this expression should be rendered rather “I will *return* and dwell in the house of the Lord forever”. [[70]](#footnote-70) If this treatment is correct, then David a King in exile, was surely praying that he might be preserved and allowed back to Jerusalem to walk again in the precincts of the tabernacle. This would seem to fit the Absalom circumstances quite well.

If we now extrapolate these OT passages into the NT feeding of the 5000 we find at least 7 clear references the purpose of which we can posit answers for on at least two levels. Firstly, at the Jesus (as anointed) level we find the comfort that David received of God is expressly being re-presented here as available to Jesus in his ministry. The fact that Jesus enacted this miracle must have provided collateral comfort to him as God’s anointed as well as being a very effective teaching “tableau” for the progression of the Gospel message.

This collateral comfort was a necessary and required sub-text to this incident since, like David, Jesus would face the ultimate crisis in Gethsemane on the slopes of the Mount of Olives. But unlike David who ascended Olivet and then fled towards the Jordan River, Jesus would with courage and great fortitude await the mob that sought to arrest him.

Secondly, at the disciple level, the obvious Psalm 23 overtones of this incident must have conveyed to the discerning disciple that history was repeating itself, or about to repeat itself in the life of Jesus as the anointed, and ergo Jesus must therefore be the son of God. In other words, whatever the future held for Jesus personally, God would always preserve him as he had David – even presumably raising him, Jesus, from the dead if this was required, which as history would prove it assuredly was planned.

**Elisha Feeds a Multitude (2 Kings 4:42-44)**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 2 Kgs 4:42 | ...brought the man of God (Elisha the Prophet) of the first fruits | John 6:14  John 6:4 | ...this is of a truth that prophet that should come into the world.  ...and the Passover a feast of the Jews was nigh[[71]](#footnote-71). |
| 2 Kgs 4:42 | ...twenty loaves of barley. | Mark 6:38 | ...five (loaves) and two fishes |
| 2 Kgs 4:43 | ...what should I set this before an hundred men? | John 6:7 | ...two hundred pennyworth of bread is not sufficient for them! |
| 2 Kgs 4:43 | ...give the people that they may eat | Mark 6:37 | ...give ye them to eat. |
| 2 Kgs 4:44 | ...and they did eat and left thereof | Mark 6:43 | ...and they took up twelve baskets full of the fragments |

There are obvious parallels between the ministries of Elijah / Elisha and John Baptist / Jesus. It should not surprise us therefore, that a miracle of Elisha feeding a multitude (in this case with twenty loaves) is recorded for our instruction. The first conclusion we can draw is that Elisha is here pre-figuring the later work of Jesus who replicates the miracle of Elisha but on a grander scale. This perhaps underlines the fact that Scripture records that Jesus had the Holy Spirit without measure, which matches the type of the “double portion” given to Elisha but in practical effect exceeds it.

Although the Elisha incident is only 3 verses long, the details recorded are significant when placed alongside the features of the Gospel records.

Firstly, in the Kings’ record the man brings the offering of first fruits to Elisha rather than a priest. Other than confirming the breakdown of the Levitical processes in Israel, it also shows that Elisha had in effect replaced the Mosaic provision with another order of service based more on Melchizedek than Aaron we would suggest. Elisha was perceived therefore as a prophet / priest, which we know from the NT, was pre-eminently the position and status of Jesus.

Also the offering of first fruits being 3 days after Passover was redolent of resurrection and in this context it is interesting to reflect on the words of the people in John 6:14, “...this is of a truth that prophet [-priest] that should come into the world”. I interpret this as meaning we have seen John Baptist (Elijah) as the forerunner, this Jesus must now be the greater Elisha. For those disciples who had been listening to Jesus and who also knew their OT references (2 Kgs 4:42 in particular) there was real potential that through the mention of “first fruits” they might make the connection with the rising on the third day after Passover with the death and resurrection of the latter Elisha. In conclusion of this section, we also note that, perforce, the separate miracles of Elisha and Jesus (though separated by hundreds of years) took place at more or less the same time in the annual calendar.

The second interesting feature of the Elisha miracle is the “template” of action and reaction. By this I mean the words spoken and the actions enjoined upon the participants of both incidents. In the Elisha miracle a faithful man arrives bearing a first fruit of grain in the form of 20 loaves of bread, (in the Jesus miracle a small boy with 5 loaves and 2 fishes).

However, Elisha turns to his servitor and says “give unto the people”. Elisha (other than presumably blessing the bread) does not directly involve himself in administering the bread to the recipients but rather challenges his disciple to undertake this task, who not unsurprisingly draws attention to the paucity of bread for the number of recipients. As the table above shows this pattern is repeated in the Jesus miracle, with no direct action by Jesus other than a challenge to a disciple. The reaction is the same—this time with Phillip the disciple expressing doubt that so great a multitude could be provided for by any normal means.

Perhaps the lesson being taught here (in both incidents) is that it is **for the disciple** to first recognise and meet the need that is clearly evident with whatever he has to offer, be it small or great, and whether it appears adequate or not. Whenever the disciple does this in faith, then the increase to meet the need will be forth coming through divine means /intervention. Also, with respect to the 20 loaves, 5 loaves and 2 fishes, neither Elisha nor Jesus created the bread or fish from nothing. The bread fishes etc. were provided by others as freely given offerings presumably from an attitude of faith without seeking pecuniary reward. We could pose questions here: what if the man / small boy had not willingly brought and shared their food? How would the miracle have unfolded then? These are questions for which no definitive answer can be found – and the value of these questions is more perhaps in their internal reflection on whether these selfless offerings were purely fortuitous occurrences, or divinely planned / foreseen happenings.

The final learning point is doubtless the fact that in both incidents there is an excess of food which is surplus to the requirements and this becomes manifestly evident at the conclusion of the miracle. This presumably is another learning point for the discerning disciple and would teach the need for faith and belief in the power of God to cover all eventualities, and whilst success in this regard may not be evident at the commencement of a task, by the time the task is finished it will certainly be.

**Ezekiel Rounds on the False Shepherds of Israel**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Ezek 34:2 | ...should not the shepherds feed the flocks | Mark 6:36 | ...for they have nothing to eat |
| Ezek 34:4 | The diseased have ye not strengthened neither have ye healed that which was sick | Matt 14:14 | ...he healed their sick. |
| Ezek 34:5 | ...they were scattered because there is no shepherd. | Mark 6:34 | ...they were as sheep not having a shepherd. |
| Ezek 34:6 | My sheep wandered through all the mountains and upon every high hill... | John 6:3 | And Jesus went up into a mountain |
| Ezek 34:12 | ...in the cloudy and dark day | Mark 6:35 | ...when the day was now far spent. |
| Ezek 34:13 | ...and feed them upon the mountains | John 6:3 | And Jesus went up into a mountain |
| Ezek 34:14 | I will feed them in a good pasture and upon the high mountains of Israel shall their fold be...and in a fat pasture shall they feed upon the mountains of Israel. | John 6:10 | ...now there was much grass in the place. |
| Ezek 34:14 | ...there shall they lie in a good fold... | Mark 6:39 | ...sit (recline) by companies |
| Ezek 34:15 | I will feed my flock and I will cause them to lie down | Mark 6:39 | ...sit (recline) by companies |
| Ezek 34: 25 | ...they shall dwell safely in the wilderness | Luke 9:10 | ...into a desert place belonging to the city called Bethsaida. |

Ezekiel 34 has the greatest number of “touch points” with the Gospel account of the feeding of the 5000. The references particularly to mountains, pastures and sheep that are at ease (i.e. literally lying down) – supplement those of Psalm 23 and together project images of peace, plenty and security.

The new features which are introduced by the inter-textual strands from Ezekiel are summarised as follows: (1) there is no shepherd; (2) the flock has not been tended to and has nothing to eat; (3) the flock is scattered; and (4) the flock contains sick and ailing members whose needs have not been met. The Gospel account seems to address all of these issues with alacrity. Jesus as the one true shepherd in feeding, healing and guiding his first century listeners demonstrates how a true shepherd should behave.

Ultimately, he would lay down his life for the sheep at his crucifixion. His execution was of course, procured by those who professed leadership of the nation. So, it is interesting to note that, whilst the invective in Ezekiel 34 is directed primarily to the last kings of Judah, there is a quality about it which transcends a purely single application to this time. Indeed, the intertextual use in the Gospel record would seem to convey the meaning that the words of Ezekiel 34 were very much alive and applicable to the religious authorities of Jesus’ day. And it could be even further than this, since there is little doubt that Ezek 34:12 “in the cloudy and dark day” has potential eschatological overtones coupled with Joel 2 and Zephaniah 1.

Lastly, Mark 6:35 records that the “day was now far spent”. This expression whilst true of the actual time of day when the miracle occurred has, we suggest, another level of meaning. For the Roman province of Judea and indeed the whole of the Commonwealth of Judah near and far – the “day was now far spent.”

Although the Jews had managed to ingratiate themselves into the machinations and ethos of the Roman state, the high tide of which was the manipulation of Pontius Pilate to effect the crucifixion of Jesus. The days would soon come when the Roman paramour would turn on its Jewish concubine and take away its place and nation in the events of 70CE. In the feeding of the 5000 it would appear then that the one true shepherd sent from God revealed himself to the scattered sheep of the house of Israel for one last time. The sheep that heeded the warning of the shepherd were saved (in places like Pella), but as history testifies to what took place in 70CE sadly most of the flock “... became meat to all the beasts of the field” (Ezek 34:5).

**Conclusion – Why These Passages?**

We set ourselves a question at the commencement of this column – of all the “shepherd” references that there are in Scripture, why do these three underpin the feeding of the 5000?

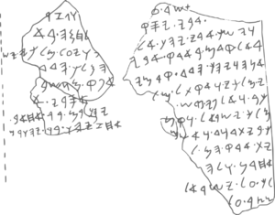
We suggest there are at least two major reasons but these are probably not exhaustive of the issue.

Firstly, at the personal level, for Jesus as Messiah, it must surely have been comforting to him to enact the words of Psalm 23 and 2 Kings 4, redolent as they are of his illustrious forbears David and Elisha. He would doubtless draw strength from their trials, sufferings and triumphs, and use these for personal reflection in the day to day challenges of his own ministry. Also, enacting and fulfilling in the first century CE the words his forbears had written hundreds of years ago must also have provided great satisfaction to Jesus that the work he was undertaking was in accordance with the great plan of God and all things were going decently and in order so to speak.

Secondly, with respect to Ezekiel 34, the invective against the leaders of Judah in Ezekiel’s day now had to be finally witnessed to the whole nation in the teachings of Jesus in the first century CE. Jesus was the ultimate “lawyer” sent from God to call the nation back to the marriage contract formed and agreed to at Sinai. Indeed, as God’s primary “legal counsel”, Jesus made a final appeal to the nation that this was now the time to repent – in respect of which, a failure to adequately respond would bring upon that nation all the covenant curses of Leviticus 26 and Deuteronomy 28-29.

The feeding of the 5000 and the Shepherd-ship of Jesus are both subjects which elevate our thinking and comfort and stimulate our reasoning senses. Rather than concluding this column with meditations of covenantal judgement we shall leave the final words to Ezekiel:-

“Thus shall they know that I the Lord their God art with them and that they even the House of Israel are my people saith the Lord God. And ye my flock, the flock of my pasture are men and I am your God, saith the Lord God” (Ezek 34: 30-31).

**Archaeology**

**J. Burke**

**The Date of the Exodus (Part 1)**

Despite over a century of detailed investigation, the date of the Hebrew exodus from Egypt remains a topic of extensive debate within scholarship.[[72]](#footnote-72) Scholarly discussion focuses on exegetical concerns such as the interpretation of chronological data in the Old Testament, the correct identification of toponyms (place names), and the relationship between textual and archaeological data.

This initial column summarizes the emergence of the two most commonly proposed dates.

**History of Interpretation**

Throughout the 19th century, Rameses II was considered the pharaoh under whom the Hebrews were enslaved, and his son Merneptah the pharaoh of the exodus.[[73]](#footnote-73) However, discovery of the Merneptah Stele, referring to Israel as a recognized people settled in Canaan by the 14th century, invalidated this view.

This new data appeared to require that Israel **had already been settled there by the end of the 13th century BC.** Placing Israel in Canaan this early in the reign of Merneptah raised obstacles for his having been the pharaoh of the Exodus. Israel obviously could not have left Egypt in the first year of Merneptah’s reign, wandered in the wilderness for forty years, and then appeared in Canaan as a settled ethnic group in his fifth year.[[74]](#footnote-74)

A revised interpretation identified Rameses II as the pharaoh of the exodus, a view which remained dominant throughout the rest of the 19th century, up to the 1920s;[[75]](#footnote-75) [[76]](#footnote-76) in 1925 a 15th century date was proposed.

This approach seems to have been pioneered initially by James Jack, who challenged the 13th-century BC date in his 1925 book, The Date of the Exodus in the Light of External Evidence. **Jack argued that both biblical and extrabiblical evidence pointed to a mid-15th century BC date**.[[77]](#footnote-77)

**Textual Evidence**

The early date rests principally on an application of the chronology given in 1 Kings 6:1, which appears to date the exodus 480 years before the reign of Solomon.

**In the four hundred and eightieth year after the Israelites left Egypt**, in the fourth year of Solomon’s reign over Israel, during the month Ziv (the second month), he began building the Lord’s temple. 1 Kings 6:1

Since there is considerable agreement that Solomon’s reign started at around 960 BCE, counting 480 years back from this date places the exodus at c.1440 BCE. A second text seen as corroborating the early date is Judges 11:26, in which Jephthah’s claim that Israel had already been in Canaan for at least three hundred years would appear to suggest an early date for the exodus.[[78]](#footnote-78)

Israel has been living in Heshbon and its nearby towns, in Aroer and its nearby towns, and in all the cities along the Arnon **for three hundred years!** Why did you not reclaim them during that time? Judges 11:26

The late date receives textual support from Exodus 1:11, which refers specifically to the Hebrews building Pithom and Rameses for the Pharaoh.

So they put foremen over the Israelites to oppress them with hard labor. As a result they built **Pithom and Rameses as store cities for Pharaoh**. Exodus 1:11

Unlike 1 Kings 6:1 and Judges 11:26, this text rests on an absolute rather than a relative date; the construction of buildings at Pithom and Rameses.

Late-date theorists argue that, since the Exodus account used the name by which the city was known for about two centuries only (c. 1300–1100 B.C**.**), **the Hebrew tradition of the exodus must also date from that period**. In such an event Rameses II would have been the pharaoh of the oppression, and his son Merneptah (1224?–1214 B.C.) the pharaoh of the exodus.[[79]](#footnote-79)

**Archaeological Evidence for the Conquest**

In the absence of direct archaeological evidence for the Hebrew settlement in Goshen, and the lack of Egyptian records describing the Hebrews as an enslaved ethnic group, or the plagues, or subsequent exodus, attempts to date the exodus using archaeological evidence focused on dating the Hebrew entry into Canaan, searching for evidence of conquest.

Attempts have been made by proponents for both dates, and interpretation of the archaeological record has been much contested. In the 1930s, archaeologist John Garstang’s excavations of Tell es-Sultan led him to conclude there was strong evidence for a Hebrew destruction of Jericho before 1400 BCE, lending weight to an early date exodus.[[80]](#footnote-80)

However, Kathleen Kenyon’s subsequent investigation of the site re-dated the destruction to around 1500 BCE, too early for the Hebrews.[[81]](#footnote-81) Efforts by Bryant Wood to defend Garstang’s dating and attribute the destruction of Jericho to an early date Hebrew conquest,[[82]](#footnote-82) [[83]](#footnote-83) have not gained any significant scholarly acceptance outside evangelical circles. Contemporary with Garstang, the archaeologist William Albright arrived at a late date for the exodus, on the basis of his investigations of Canaanite archaeological sites.[[84]](#footnote-84)

In response to acknowledged difficulties harmonizing an early date with the archaeological record, in the 1970s John Bimson proposed a Hebrew conquest during the end of the Middle Bronze Age, which seemed to fit the Biblical record more closely.[[85]](#footnote-85) However, Bimson’s interpretation was critiqued strongly by many scholars.

The critique of Bimson’s proposal came from numerous quarters. Bietak objected that his suggested alteration was only fifty years, therefore still in the sixteenth century, **and could not be stretched as far as Bimson needed it to be**. B. Halpern objected that the changes suggested by Bimson would leave a reduced time span for LB I **that could not possibly accommodate the archaeological data**.[[86]](#footnote-86)

Archaeological evidence for destruction and occupation layers supporting a late date exodus, was considered more abundant.

Archaeological evidence from Canaanite sites such as Bethel, Debir, Lachish, and Hazor **indicates destruction at 13th-century B.C. levels**, a fact generally regarded as relating to the Hebrew occupation under Joshua.[[87]](#footnote-87)

**Evidence from Philistine sites tends to favor a late rather than an early date for the exodus**. Against that, however, must be set the fact that the major Philistine occupation of the southern Palestinian coastlands only occurred around 1175 B.C., in the time of Rameses III.[[88]](#footnote-88)

**The Ongoing Dispute**

By the 1970s the date of the exodus had ceased to become a significant concern within critical scholarship, as many commentators no longer believed in the essential historicity of the event. However, the issue continued to be debated hotly among evangelical and other faith professing scholars, as well as among a minority report of critical scholars and those professional archaeologists who considered the Biblical exodus account to preserve an essentially accurate historical core.

My October column will compare and contrast the evidence and arguments advanced for each date, together with their respective counter-arguments.

**Marginal Notes**

**Ezek 1:22 – AP**

Translating figures of speech is a difficult choice for translators if there is no equivalent figure in English. Do you render the Hebrew figure directly or do you offer a dynamic translation? The Hebrew xrqh !y[k (Ezek 1:22) is lexically ‘as an eye of ice/frost’. Translations vary, for example, the NRSV has the rather dynamic “shining like crystal” and the KJV has the equally dynamic “as the colour of the terrible crystal”. The comparison ‘as an eye of’ uses the ordinary common noun for an ‘eye’. However, in the construct state, as part of an expression, we have a **figure of speech**, as is obvious elsewhere:

…like the color of (!y[k) gum resin Num 11:7 (NRSV)

…like in colour (!y[k) to polished brass Dan 11:6 (KJV)

These are the two occurrences of the comparison outside Ezekiel and translators render the figure again dynamically in terms of colour. Other versions may not use the word ‘colour’ but an expression of appearance such as ‘the gleam of’ or ‘the appearance of’. So, the comparison is not about composition (‘ice/frost’ or ‘crystal’); it is about colour and appearance; colour is a phenomenal quality.

Within Ezekiel elsewhere the comparison is consistently used in respect of colour and appearance (phenomenal qualities). The KJV and NRSV choices for the figure are:

…like gleaming amber/ as the colour of amber Ezek 1:4

…like the colour of burnished brass/like burnished bronze Ezek 1:7

…like unto the colour of a beryl/ like the gleaming of beryl Ezek 1:16

…as the colour of amber/ like gleaming amber Ezek 1:27

…as the appearance of amber/ like the appearance of brightness, like gleaming amber Ezek 8:2

…as the colour of a beryl stone/ like gleaming beryl. Ezek 10:9

The Hebrew xrq is equally rendered as ‘ice’ or ‘frost’—either is possible, but of the seven occurrences of this figure, ‘crystal’ is only preferred for Ezek 1:22 following the lead of the LXX and possibly also the NT (Rev 4:6). This is just interpretation on the part of the Septuagint translator and it misapplies the NT; since the figure is about *appearance* and not composition, there is no reason to discard ‘ice/frost’ for ‘crystal’ just because we have a divine theophany. Of course, ‘ice/frost’ and some ‘crystal’ are not unlike in colour. We can only guess at the colour indicated by ‘eye of ice/frost’—perhaps a transparency or translucency (cf. Exod 24:10).

**News**

The **New Testament Virtual Manuscript Room** (NTVMR) from the Institute for New Testament Text Research (INTF, http://ntvmr.uni-muenster.de) is a community portal for scholarly research of New Testament Greek manuscripts. For decades, the INTF (producers of the Nestle-Aland Greek New Testament) has housed the most comprehensive collection of manuscript resources for Greek New Testament studies, and now this resource is finally coming online for public access. Over 2.1 million pages have been cataloged with nearly half a million images published in cooperation with holding institutes around the world, including P45, P46, and P47 from The Chester Beatty Library and University of Michigan, The Freer Gospels from the Smithsonian Institute, and Codex Ephraemi Rescriptus reordered from the Bibliothèque Nationale de France.

**New book**

“The March of the Rainbowed Angel - from judgement at Sinai to God’s king set on his holy hill of Zion” (ISBN 978-0-9550991-6-8), by Richard Mellowes

Available from the author at 88, Heol Trecastell, Caerphilly, Mid Glamorgan, CF83 1AF; email richardmellowes@btinternet.com. Price 6.50 GBP including postage in the UK. Additional overseas postage charged at cost.

The book discusses the location of the judgement based on Old Testament types, and then traces the work of the multitudinous body of saints along with the Lord Jesus Christ as they march into the land of Israel, defeat Gog, and establish Christ as King of kings. Christ and the saints are identified as 'The Rainbowed Angel' based on the symbology of the opening verses of Revelation 10.

**Postscript**

Good stewardship is not just about money; it is about being a good steward of the responsibilities that you are given. We can focus on the functional value of a decision and overlook the broader question of whether the decision is an example of good stewardship. It helps to have people around you that have an eye, not just on the functional, but also about whether you are being a good steward.

Self-interest can get in the way of good stewardship; you might make a decision that reflects your interest rather than that of the wider community. The problem here is that self-interest is self-justifying and you probably won’t see the decision for self-interest. This is why having people around you that might see where self-interest is being served is valuable.

This is not a recipe for decision-only-by-committee; God gives individuals responsibilities to see how they will execute the work. It is a recipe for self-awareness and the taking of advice. If we are responsible for a resource, we should manage it with an eye on the danger of thinking it is ‘our own’ forgetting that the steward is managing it on behalf of a master and for the greater good of the house of that master.

**Supplement**

**Addressing the Challenge of New Atheism  
D. J. Burke**

In 2011 Christian theologian Paul Copan published a book entitled, *Is God a Moral Monster? Making Sense of the Old Testament God*. It was intended as a rebuttal to the so-called ‘New Atheists’, an aggressive cabal of atheist thinkers united by their strident advocacy of hard atheism and their uncompromising rejection of religion as an irrational anachronism.[[89]](#footnote-89) Emerging in the mid-2000s, its leading figures were quickly identified as Richard Dawkins, Daniel Dennett, Christopher Hitchens, and Sam Harris (famously dubbed ‘the Four Horsemen’[[90]](#footnote-90)). Other notable New Atheists include A. C. Grayling and P. Z. Myers. Support for the New Atheism is strong,[[91]](#footnote-91) fuelled by the charismatic personalities of its figureheads, the slick marketing of their ideas, and the apparent reasonableness of their arguments.

The New Atheism’s challenge to Christianity can be summarised in the following arguments: (a) religious faith is irrational,[[92]](#footnote-92) (b) religion is incompatible with science,[[93]](#footnote-93) and (c) religion is harmful and dangerous.[[94]](#footnote-94) This paper will examine the challenge and propose a suitable response.[[95]](#footnote-95)

At the heart of the New Atheism’s anti-religious rhetoric lies a pugnacious rejection of faith, commonly defined by New Atheists as belief in the absence of evidence (or even against all contrary evidence[[96]](#footnote-96)). Scientific naturalism[[97]](#footnote-97) is championed as the only viable philosophical position. At first glance Christians might assume they have little to fear from yet another atheistic critique of faith, provided they don’t subscribe to some form of fideism.[[98]](#footnote-98) But the New Atheists have no interest in distinguishing one form of faith from another. To them all forms are alike; equally irrational and insupportable. Christianity is therefore potentially vulnerable to the New Atheists’ attack on the basis of arguably unverifiable claims;[[99]](#footnote-99) particularly those involving supernatural phenomena. Examples include Jesus’ resurrection from the dead, and appeals to the witness of the Holy Spirit (which can appear unacceptably subjective to unbelievers[[100]](#footnote-100)).

One of the most common arguments repeated by the New Atheists involves the claim that religion is incompatible with science.[[101]](#footnote-101) Firstly, they say, religion unreasonably requires us to accept the reality of supernatural phenomena; a superstitious relic of the pre-scientific era.[[102]](#footnote-102) Secondly, the New Atheists argue that religion’s explanation for the origins of the cosmos contradicts an overwhelming body of data confirming a purely naturalistic explanation and fails to offer a reasonable alternative[[103]](#footnote-103) (Christians who accept evolution are dismissed as hypocrites and liars[[104]](#footnote-104)). Christopher Hitchens has argued that this fundamental ‘error’ is inevitably responsible for the unacceptable nature of religious belief.[[105]](#footnote-105) Thirdly, the New Atheists portray religion as brutal, paranoid, and quick to destroy any potential threat.[[106]](#footnote-106) It is claimed that religionists (particularly Christians) have deliberately suppressed the growth of science throughout history, retarding humanity’s intellectual development for the sake of eliminating rival ideologies, retaining political power, and preserving a monopoly on knowledge.[[107]](#footnote-107)

Atheists of previous generations have been largely content to coexist peacefully with believers,[[108]](#footnote-108) respecting the post-Enlightenment view that religion is a private matter for the individual, which can be tolerated provided it is kept separate from public institutions and discourse.[[109]](#footnote-109) By contrast the New Atheists have no interest in accommodating religion regardless of how or where it is practised. This prejudice is established on the grounds that religious morality has failed,[[110]](#footnote-110) and that religion itself is inevitably damaging to society.[[111]](#footnote-111) Innumerable evils are laid at the feet of religion; from wars, holocausts, racism, child abuse and brainwashing, to ethnic intolerance, the destruction of entire civilisations, the stifling of intellect, and the celebration of ignorance. On the rare occasions when the New Atheists acknowledge positive outcomes from religion, they are quick to assert that these can be achieved perfectly well in the absence of religious belief.[[112]](#footnote-112) The New Atheists offer no sop to religious moderates, condemning them as unwitting enablers of religious extremism.[[113]](#footnote-113) In their view, all forms of religion must be defeated for the sake of humanity.[[114]](#footnote-114)

Christians can justifiably argue that the New Atheists’ attack on faith is overstated and poorly defined.[[115]](#footnote-115) Faith is wantonly mischaracterised in sweeping generalisations which owe more to the New Atheists’ need for an easy target than to Christian theology.[[116]](#footnote-116) While examples of blind, unthinking faith do exist, stereotypical fideism is far from normative. Christian faith is not an inevitably irrational belief in the unverifiable, but involves testable hypotheses and appeals to precedent. The Bible is replete with examples of individuals whose faith was firmly evidence-based,[[117]](#footnote-117) and the case of ‘doubting Thomas’—a sceptical 1st Century Christian who demanded empirical evidence for the resurrection of Jesus[[118]](#footnote-118)—shows that Christianity’s earliest believers were not credulous dupes. Even the accounts of Jesus’ resurrection make appeals to objective evidence (e.g. the empty tomb[[119]](#footnote-119)) inviting us to conclude that a miraculous event offers the most parsimonious explanation of the available data.[[120]](#footnote-120)

Christian apologists have demonstrated that faith and belief play a legitimate role in secular pursuits such as the development of science. Alister McGrath correctly observes that scientists regularly put their faith in current beliefs, only to have them corrected or even refuted by later discoveries.[[121]](#footnote-121) In short, secularists exhibit faith and belief on a regular basis—often without knowing it[[122]](#footnote-122)—but simply use an alternative vocabulary.[[123]](#footnote-123) Even the New Atheists themselves exhibit a form of presuppositional reasoning which appears suspiciously similar to faith-based assumptions.[[124]](#footnote-124)

The claim that religion and science are incompatible is rooted in the 19th Century ‘conflict thesis’[[125]](#footnote-125) of Andrew Dickson White[[126]](#footnote-126) and John William Draper.[[127]](#footnote-127) Motivated by personal and ideological prejudices, their work rode the swell of a socio-cultural transition.[[128]](#footnote-128) Polarisation of institutional power in the Victorian era[[129]](#footnote-129) rendered it particularly receptive to ideas that challenged the religious establishment.[[130]](#footnote-130) The rise of fundamentalism[[131]](#footnote-131)—which rejected evolution in favour of Young Earth Creationism and Flood Geology (later rebranded as ‘Creation Science’)—lent credence to the conflict thesis, especially among Christians. In time this gave rise to numerous myths about the alleged incompatibility of religion and science,[[132]](#footnote-132) many of them still perpetuated even within academic circles.[[133]](#footnote-133)

Yet the thesis was short-lived. Exposed by secular and religious scholars alike, its roots betrayed an untenable argument predicated on ideologically motivated historical revisionism.[[134]](#footnote-134) While still finding supporters at the popular level,[[135]](#footnote-135) the conflict thesis has been effectively refuted.[[136]](#footnote-136) Even leading atheist scientists such as Stephen Jay Gould[[137]](#footnote-137) have concluded there is no inherent contradiction between religion and science[[138]](#footnote-138)—a fact Gould says is confirmed by the prevalence of religious scientists.[[139]](#footnote-139)

The New Atheists generally bypass these developments, preferring to target Christians with an excessively literalist interpretation of Scripture. This allows them to multiply alleged Biblical contradictions and statements inconsistent with modern science.[[140]](#footnote-140) Yet attacks on the low-hanging fruit of fundamentalism ignore several thousand years of Jewish and Christian scholarship reflecting far more nuanced approaches.[[141]](#footnote-141) This is the logical fallacy of special pleading, and exposes the glib superficiality of New Atheist critiques.

The New Atheists’ charge that religion is harmful and dangerous draws on the long association of religious belief with warfare, persecution, state sponsored violence, and abuse of various kinds.[[142]](#footnote-142) However, most of these cases tell us more about the perversity of human nature[[143]](#footnote-143) than they do about the alleged evils of religion[[144]](#footnote-144) (an issue typically avoided by the New Atheists[[145]](#footnote-145)). In the case of violence by Christians we usually find the documented atrocities are in breach of traditional Christian principles rather than being motivated by them.[[146]](#footnote-146) The hijacking of ideologies and institutions in pursuit of alternative aims[[147]](#footnote-147) is hardly new, and not even limited to religion.[[148]](#footnote-148) The New Atheists preach a bright future free of religion, yet there is no historical precedent for a successful atheistic society.

New Atheist claims that religion itself is harmful generally rely on cherry-picked examples of the most extreme practices, often conflated with less controversial traditions.[[149]](#footnote-149) Accusations of close-mindedness resulting from religious dogma can likewise be supported from specific cases. But the Western world abounds with highly educated religionists who are experts in their fields,[[150]](#footnote-150) and there is a common perception that religious schools out-perform their secular government counterparts.[[151]](#footnote-151) Would this be the case if believers were as narrow-minded, and religion as mentally damaging, as the New Atheists allege?

Atheists admit that on balance, religion has delivered more good than evil.[[152]](#footnote-152) Christianity provided Western civilisation with schools, hospitals, charities, universities, an immeasurably beneficial social ethos and a rich cultural legacy.[[153]](#footnote-153) Early pagan critics ruefully acknowledged the superiority of the Christian ethic[[154]](#footnote-154) and concluded the only effective way to compete with it was to adopt it.[[155]](#footnote-155) Modern critics would do well to recognise that the benefits of religion can be validated by empirical means.[[156]](#footnote-156)

This paper has demonstrated that Christianity is well equipped to rebut the New Atheism by identifying its numerous weaknesses. These include logical fallacies and superficial misrepresentations of Christianity,[[157]](#footnote-157) confirmation bias[[158]](#footnote-158) and intellectual dishonesty,[[159]](#footnote-159) polemic masquerading as legitimate philosophical dialogue,[[160]](#footnote-160) cherry-picked arguments aimed at fundamentalism and outdated apologetics, and a persistent failure to engage with the latest Christian scholarship.[[161]](#footnote-161) It is significant that many atheist scholars find the New Atheists’ case unconvincing,[[162]](#footnote-162) and some have even proposed a new type of atheism in response.[[163]](#footnote-163)

The New Atheists’ overconfidence regularly leads them to pontificate on subjects outside their field of expertise,[[164]](#footnote-164) with predictable results.[[165]](#footnote-165) By contrast, Christians can present a wide range of modern secular historians, philosophers, scientists and medical professionals offering evidence-based conclusions which variously confirm and support the conclusions of Christian apologists.[[166]](#footnote-166)

Despite its name the New Atheism is not even genuinely new—as fellow atheists have pointed out[[167]](#footnote-167)—but merely repeats the same weary rhetoric Christians have been refuting for centuries.[[168]](#footnote-168) While the presentation is updated, the content is superficial and predictable. With its 19th Century arguments and bombastic personalities the New Atheism resembles a wheezing, old-fashioned latecomer to the dialogue between religion and unbelief, hoping an updated wardrobe will compensate for his lack of sophistication.[[169]](#footnote-169) Yet it is all in vain. Christianity has already answered the traditional arguments, made peace with science and secularism, and cast its eyes forward to the challenges of the 21st Century.

**Editorial Policies**: The **Christadelphian EJournal of Biblical Interpretation** seeks to fulfil the following objectives: offer analytical and expositional articles on biblical texts; engage with academic biblical studies that originate in the various Christian confessions; defend the biblical principles summarised in the common Christadelphian statements of faith; and subject the published articles to peer review and amendment.

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1. For a survey of the different approaches see J. Paul Tanner, “The History of Interpretation of The Song of Songs” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 154 (1997): 23-46. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. F. W. Dobbs-Allsopp, “Late Linguistic Features in the Song of Songs in Perspectives on the Song of Songs” in *Perspectives on the Song of Songs* (ed. Anslem C Hagedorn; BZAW 346; Berlin: de Gruyter, 2005): 27-77, (71). [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. J. M. Reese, “Song of Solomon” in *The Oxford Companion to the Bible* (eds., B. Metzger & M. Coogan; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), 708-710 (708). [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Gleason L. Archer, Jr. *A Survey of Old Testament Introduction* (Rev. Ed.; Chicago: Moody Bible Institute, 2007), 497. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. A. E. Hill and J. H. Walton, *A Survey of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2009), 300. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. T. Longman III, *Song of Songs* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001), 87-88. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. M. H. Pope, *Song of Songs* (AB 7C; New York: Doubleday, 1977), 295-96. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. P. Hunt, *Poetry in the Song of Songs: A Literary Analysis* (Series: Studies in Biblical Literature - Volume 96; New York: Peter Lang, 2008), 5. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. [Ed AP]: *Testament of Solomon* 3:5 and 22:1 do not help fix the Song as part of a Solomonic canon. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. *Ibid*, 71. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. As early as 1920, S. R. Driver said of the Song of Songs “that it belongs to *North Israel*, where there is reason to suppose that the language spoken differed dialectically from that of Judah” (*An Introduction to the Literature of the Old Testament*, (London: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1920), 448-49). I. Young published in 2001 orthographic evidence from one of the Dead Sea scrolls (4QCantb), attesting features of IH. (I. Young, “Notes on the Language of 4QCantb”, *JJS* 52 (2001): 122–31). By 2009, B. S. Noegel and G. A. Rendsburg had listed a total of “twenty grammatical and thirty-one lexical items” typical of IH in the MT of the Song of Songs (B. S. Noegel and G. A. Rendsburg, *Solomon’s vineyard: literary and linguistic studies in the Song of Songs* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2009), 52. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. C. L. Seow, “Linguistic Evidence for the Northern Origin of Selected Psalms – Rendsburg GA” *JBL* 112/2 (1993): 334-337 (334). [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. J. A. Cook, “Hebrew Language” in *Dictionary of the Old Testament: Wisdom, Poetry & Writings* (eds. Tremper Longman III and Peter Enns; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2008), 250-267 (265-266). [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. R. Alter, *The Art of Biblical Poetry* (San Francisco: Harper-Collins, 1985), 185; also see Pope, *Song of Songs*, 22-34. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. Young gives twdlp“steel” (Nah 2:4) and ~yrwrp (“precincts” 2 Kgs 23:11) as examples of Persianisms in pre-exilic books. [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. I. Young, “Biblical Texts Cannot be Dated Linguistically” *Hebrew Studies* 46 (2005): 341-351 (349-50); see also I. Young, ed., *Biblical Hebrew: Chronology and Typology* (London: T&T Clark, 2003), 276-311 (284-285). [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. D. Moody Smith, “When did the Gospels become scripture?”, *Journal of Biblical Literature* 119/1 (2000): 3 [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. S. Voorwinde, “The Formation of the New Testament Canon”*, Vox Reformata* (1995) [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. For further detail see chapter 5, “Inspiration”, in A. Perry, *Biblical Investigations* (Tyne & Wear: Willow, 2011). [ED AP]: These modes of inspiration are not exclusive and can be part of a complex mix. The foundation for them is that the prophet is in a ‘speaking for’ relationship with God. [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. [Ed AP]: Intentionality is quite a strong condition to lay down for the writing of Scripture; a weaker condition is that the writer (prophet) be in a formal relationship with God as someone authorised to speak for God. [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. Papias ascribes these words to John the Elder, a disciple of Jesus. [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
23. Cf. Bauckham, *Jesus and the Eyewitnesses*, (Grand rapids: Eerdmans, 20060), 205-210. [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
24. See Perry, *Biblical Investigations,* 85-7; R. Bauckham, *Jesus and the* Eyewitnesses, 114-154. [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
25. Moody Smith, “When did the Gospels become Scripture?”, 9. [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
26. Perry, *Biblical Investigations*, 90. [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
27. Perry, *Biblical Investigations*, 87-9. [↑](#footnote-ref-27)
28. Cf. Moody Smith, “When did the Gospels become Scripture?”, 7. [↑](#footnote-ref-28)
29. [ED AP]: This cuts both ways. There are genres in the OT that are not in the NT—legal precision is not mundane but it is *particular* to the society for which it is formulated; likewise, much prophecy is very much of the historical moment at the time, unlike the book of Revelation. [↑](#footnote-ref-29)
30. Research has moved away from the distinction between ‘Diaspora Judaism’ and ‘Hellenistic Judaism’, see P. Borgen, *Early Christianity and Hellenistic Judaism* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1995), 15 n. 1, and scholarship there cited. [↑](#footnote-ref-30)
31. The standard edition in English is *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha* (ed., J. H. Charlesworth; 2 vols; New York: Doubleday, 1983, 1985), but each work will have its own ‘critical’ edition for serious work. [↑](#footnote-ref-31)
32. The standard bilingual editions are those of the Loeb Classical Library, but again, new critical editions of Josephus are being produced. [↑](#footnote-ref-32)
33. The most convenient paper bi-lingual edition is *The Dead Sea Scrolls: Study Edition* (eds., Florentino García Martínez and Eibert J. C. Tigchelaar; 2 vols; Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1997). [↑](#footnote-ref-33)
34. B. D. Chilton, *The Glory of Israel: The Theology and Provenience of the Isaiah Targum* (JSOTSup 23; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1983), 4. [↑](#footnote-ref-34)
35. See J. Neusner, *The Mishnah: A New Translation* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988), xvi. [↑](#footnote-ref-35)
36. See J. Neusner, *Sifra: An Analytical Translation* (2 vols; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1988), 1:31-32. [↑](#footnote-ref-36)
37. J. Z. Lauterbach, ed., *Mekilta de-Rabbi Ishmael,* (3 vols; Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1933), 1:xix. [↑](#footnote-ref-37)
38. H. W. Basser, ed., *Pseudo-Rabad: Commentary to Sifre Deuteronomy* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1994), xxi-xxv; *Pseudo-Rabad: Commentary to Sifre Numbers* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1998), xiii-xv. [↑](#footnote-ref-38)
39. Y. Elman, *Authority and Tradition: Toseftan Baraitot in Talmudic Babylonia*, (New York: Ktav Publishing, 1994), 1-6, 275-281 (276). [↑](#footnote-ref-39)
40. C. J. Milikowsky, ed., *Seder Olam: A Rabbinic Chronography* (Ph.D. Diss., Yale University, 1981), 12-17. [↑](#footnote-ref-40)
41. A. J. Saldarini, ed., *The Fathers According to Rabbi Nathan*, (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1975), 12-16. [↑](#footnote-ref-41)
42. M. D. Herr, “Midrash”, *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, (ed., C. Roth et al; Jerusalem: Keter Publishing, 1971), 1507-1514. [↑](#footnote-ref-42)
43. See W. G. Braude, *Pesikta Rabbati* (trans. W. G. Braude; 2 vols; New Haven: Yale University Press, 1968), 3, for its Amoraic characteristics and date; J. T. Townsend, *Midrash TanHuma* (trans. J. T. Townsend; New York: Ktav Publishing, 1989), xii, for its Amoraic character; J. T. Townsend, *Pěsi‡ta dě-Rab Kahána* (trans. J. T. Townsend; Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1975), xlix, for its dating and preferences for citation of authorities; and G. Friedlander, *Pir‡ê de Rabbi Eliezer* (trans. G. Friedlander; London: Kegan Paul, 1916), liv-lv, for its dating. [↑](#footnote-ref-43)
44. G. Stemberger, *Introduction to the Talmud and Midrash* (trans. M. Bockmuehl; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1996), 311-312, 354-355. [↑](#footnote-ref-44)
45. The standard English editions are those in *The Aramaic Bible Series* (ed., M. J. McNamara; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1988—). For an overall introduction to the Targums, see P. S. Alexander, “Jewish Aramaic Translations” in *Mikra: Text, Translation, Reading and Interpretation of the Hebrew Bible in Ancient Judaism and Early Christianity* (ed., M. J. Mulder; Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1988), 217-253. Chilton cautions that “allowance must be made for the influence, and even the direct composition, of the Rabbis within the extant witnesses” in his “Reference to the Targumim in the Exegesis of the New Testament”, *The Society of Biblical Literature 1995 Seminar Papers* (Chico: Scholars Press, 1995): 77-81, (78). [↑](#footnote-ref-45)
46. G. Vermes, “Jewish Literature and New Testament Exegesis: Reflections on Methodology” *JJS* 33 (1982): 361-376 (361). [↑](#footnote-ref-46)
47. We would exclude the Targums devoted to the *Ketubim* because of their relative late dates; see M. J. McNamara, “Interpretation of Scripture in the Targumim” in *A History of Biblical Interpretation* (eds., A. J. Hauser and D. F. Watson; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004), 167-197 (169). [↑](#footnote-ref-47)
48. R. Le Déaut, The Message of the New Testament and the Aramaic Bible (Targum) (Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1982), 24. [↑](#footnote-ref-48)
49. A. D. York in “The Dating of the Targumic Literature” *JSJ* 5 (1974): 49-62 (59), discusses the arguments for the priority of the Palestinian Targums over that of *Onqelos* and concludes, “the prior antiquity of the Palestinian Targum, must be, if not abandoned altogether, modified drastically to say simply that the PT includes some quite ancient traditions”. [↑](#footnote-ref-49)
50. M. J. McNamara, “Some Targum Themes” in *Justification and Variegated Nomism* (eds., D. A. Carson, P. T. O’Brien and M. A. Seifrid; 2 vols; WUNT 2/140-141; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2001-2004), 1:305-356 (303-306). [↑](#footnote-ref-50)
51. S. A. Kaufman, “Dating the Language of the Palestinian Targums and their Use in the Study of First Century C.E. Texts” in *The Aramaic Bible* (eds., D. R. G. Beattie and M. J. McNamara; JSOTSup 166; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1994), 117-141 (124); see also M.J. Maher, “Introduction” to *Targum Pseudo-Jonathan: Genesis* (ed., M. J. Maher; Edinburgh, T&T Clark, 1992), 1-14 (12), who comments that “both the content and the language of *Tg*. *Ps.-J* allow us to accept with confidence the view that this Targum in its final form cannot be dated before the seventh or eighth century”. Compare also G. J. Kuiper, *The Pseudo-Jonathan Targum and its Relationship to Targum Onqelos*, (Rome: Institutum Patristicum, 1972), ch. 1. [↑](#footnote-ref-51)
52. McNamara, “Interpretation of Scripture in the Targumim”, 169. [↑](#footnote-ref-52)
53. For a review of the two schools of thought, see E. M. Cook, “A New Perspective on the Language of Onqelos and Jonathan”, in *Targums in their Historical Context* (eds., D. R. G. Beattie and M. J. McNamara; JSOTSup 166; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1994), 142-156. [↑](#footnote-ref-53)
54. B. Grossfeld, “Introduction”, *The Targum Onqelos to Genesis* (ed., B. Grossfeld; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1988), 1-39 (18), and for a summary of arguments, 30-35. [↑](#footnote-ref-54)
55. McNamara, “Some Targum Themes”, 306. [↑](#footnote-ref-55)
56. For a description of the historical background to *Targum Jonathan* and its relationship to *Onqelos*, see P. Churgin, *Targum Jonathan to the Prophets* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1927), ch. 1. [↑](#footnote-ref-56)
57. L. Smolar and M. Aberbach, eds., *Studies in Targum Jonathan to the Prophets* (New York: Ktav Publishing, 1983), xxviii. [↑](#footnote-ref-57)
58. The multi-volume nature of *Targum Jonathan* requires us to be aware of the issues concerning the dating and authorship of each of the volumes; accordingly, the conclusion of Smolar and Aberbach is only indicative. D. J. Harrington and A. J. Saldarini, “Introduction”, *Targum Jonathan of the Former Prophets* (eds., D. J. Harrington and A. J. Saldarini; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1987), 1-15 (3), favour a date for the *Former Prophets* of 135 C.E., but recognise the need to take into account a period of redactional composition. B. D. Chilton, “Introduction”, *The Isaiah Targum* (ed., B. D. Chilton; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1987), xiii-xxxv (xxiv), argues that, “it is impossible to know whether a complete Targum was produced at the Tannaitic phase, and reworked at the Amoraic phase, or whether both phases were partial affairs”. R. D. Hayward, *The Targum of Jeremiah* (ed., R. D. Hayward; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1987), 38, argues that there are “sufficient grounds for discerning the origins of *Tg*. *Jeremiah* in the land of Israel during, or slightly before, the first century A.D.”. R. P. Gordon and K. J. Cathcart, “Introduction”, *The Targum of the Minor Prophets* (eds., R. P. Gordon and K. J. Cathcart; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1987), 1-25 (18), argue for a literary composition after 70 C.E. [↑](#footnote-ref-58)
59. 1 John Carter, *Paul’s Letter to the Romans*, (Birmingham: CMPA, 1931), 9. [↑](#footnote-ref-59)
60. 2 *Tyndale's New Testament*, (ed. D. Daniel; London and New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989), 223. [↑](#footnote-ref-60)
61. In Tübinger Zeitschrift für Theologie 3 (1836): 59-178. [↑](#footnote-ref-61)
62. Douglas J. Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 18. [↑](#footnote-ref-62)
63. Paul S. Minear, *The Obedience of Faith: The Purposes of Paul in the Epistle to the Romans* (London: SCM Press, 1971), Preface, p. ix. [↑](#footnote-ref-63)
64. In his influential work, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism* (Minneapolis: SCM Press, 1977). [↑](#footnote-ref-64)
65. Prominent adherents of the ‘new Paul’ view are such well-known British figures as N. T. (Tom) Wright and James D. G. Dunn. An overview of the differing readings of Paul, albeit edited by a protagonist of the ‘old Paul’, can be found in Stephen Westerholm, *Perspectives Old and New on Paul: The ‘Lutheran’ Paul and His Critics* (Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 2004). [↑](#footnote-ref-65)
66. G. Walter Hansen, *Galatians* (IVP New Testament Commentary Series; Downers Grove, Illinois/ Leicester: Intervarsity Press, 1994), 25, 26. [↑](#footnote-ref-66)
67. There are many other OT passages which also relate to this event. The main references are as follows Num 27:17, 1 Kgs 22:17, II Kgs 4:42-44, Ps 78:70-72, Isa 40:11 + 44:28 + 49:8-10, Jer 31:10-17 + 50-:6-20, Mic 5:2-5, Zech 10:2 + 11:5 + 15-17 [↑](#footnote-ref-67)
68. Author emphasis is mine – wherever the feeding took place it was adjacent to the sea of Galilee [↑](#footnote-ref-68)
69. D. Fifield, *The Praises of Israel* (3 vols; Birmingham: CMPA, 2008), 1:134: [↑](#footnote-ref-69)
70. Fifield, *The Praises of Israel*, 1:135. [ED AP]: The NET Bible textual note details the textual difficulty in the Hebrew but the two verbs in the English ‘return and dwell’ together is not possible – hence most translations amend the text to read ‘dwell’. [↑](#footnote-ref-70)
71. This reference establishes that this incident took place late March / early April time when the first spring grass was abundant and before it withered in the later summer heat. [↑](#footnote-ref-71)
72. ‘The date of the Exodus is one of the most debated topics in OT studies because of the ambiguous nature of the evidence’, W. H. Shea, “The Date of the Exodus” in *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia* (Rev ed.; 4 vols; eds. G. W. Bromiley et al.; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1979–1988), 2:230. [↑](#footnote-ref-72)
73. ‘With the identification of Rameses II as the pharaoh of the oppression, his son Merneptah, who succeeded him on the throne, naturally became the pharaoh of the Exodus. Based on this reasoning, the biblical Exodus was securely located by scholars within the 19th Dynasty of Egypt (1293–1185 BC) throughout the nineteenth century’, R. K. Hawkins, “Propositions For Evangelical Acceptance Of A Late-Date Exodus-Conquest: Biblical Data And The Royal Scarabs From Mt. Ebal” *JETS* 50/1 (2007): 31-46 (31-32). [↑](#footnote-ref-73)
74. Ibid., p. 32. [All emphasis in quotations is mine.] [↑](#footnote-ref-74)
75. ‘Up until about 1925, this position was widely held by scholars, both evangelical and otherwise’, ibid., p. 32. [↑](#footnote-ref-75)
76. ‘At the beginning of the 20th century many scholars, both liberal and conservative, placed the date toward the end of the 13th century B.C.’, R. K. Harrison, “The Exodus” in *Baker Encyclopedia of the Bible* (eds. W. A. Elwell & B. J. Beitzel; Downers Grove, Il: Intervarsity Press, 1988), 742. [↑](#footnote-ref-76)
77. Hawkins, “Propositions For Evangelical Acceptance Of A Late-Date Exodus-Conquest: Biblical Data And The Royal Scarabs From Mt. Ebal”, 33. [↑](#footnote-ref-77)
78. ‘If 1100 BC is taken as an approximate date for Jephthah’s activities**, this would place the taking of the Transjordan under Moses (Numbers 21) around 1400 BC**, about 40 years after the departure from Egypt.’, Hawkins, “Propositions For Evangelical Acceptance Of A Late-Date Exodus-Conquest: Biblical Data And The Royal Scarabs From Mt. Ebal”, 33. [↑](#footnote-ref-78)
79. Harrison, “The Exodus”, 743. [↑](#footnote-ref-79)
80. ‘Garstang identified several levels of debris there, indicating that the city had been rebuilt a number of times. He concluded that the one built about 1500 B.C. was the Jericho overthrown by Joshua’s forces (Jos 6). Garstang’s statement that Jericho had fallen before 1400 **appeared to support the time frame of 1 Kings 6:1, and was received enthusiastically by supporters of the 15th-century B.C. date**’, Harrison, “The Exodus”, p. 743. [↑](#footnote-ref-80)
81. ‘Garstang’s discoveries at Jericho have been modified seriously by the subsequent work of another archaeologist, Kathleen Kenyon. **She found no trace of Late Bronze Age walls**, which indicates that the city Garstang thought to have been conquered by Joshua was considerably earlier than his time. Unfortunately, the mound has been so ravaged by erosion and human pillaging **that it reveals almost nothing about the Jericho of Joshua’s day, and thus does not help to simplify matters**’, Harrison, “The Exodus”, p. 744. [↑](#footnote-ref-81)
82. B. G. Wood, “Did the Israelites Conquer Jericho? A New Look at the Archaeological Evidence!” *Biblical Archaeology Review* 16/2 (1990): 44-58. [↑](#footnote-ref-82)
83. B. G. Wood, “The Walls of Jericho” *Bible and Spade* 12/2 (1999). [↑](#footnote-ref-83)
84. ‘The 13th-century exodus-conquest theory was formulated by William F. Albright in the 1930s, **based largely on Palestinian archaeological evidence**, and promoted by him throughout his career’, B. G. Wood, “The Rise and Fall of the 13th-Century Exodus-Conquest Theory” *JETS* 48/3 (2005), 475-489 (475). [↑](#footnote-ref-84)
85. ‘The Late Bronze Age (LB) was characterized by a problematic lack of fortified cities. The MB in Canaan, in sharp contrast, **featured the massive and numerous walled cities that the books of Numbers and Joshua seem to suggest**, and many of them were destroyed at the end of the period’, J. H. Walton, “Date of Exodus” in *Dictionary of the Old Testament: Pentateuch* (eds. T. D. Alexander & D. W. Baker; Downers Grove, Il: Intervarsity Press, 2003), 258-272 (259). [↑](#footnote-ref-85)
86. Ibid., p. 259. [↑](#footnote-ref-86)
87. Harrison, “The Exodus”, 744. [↑](#footnote-ref-87)
88. Ibid., p. 744. [↑](#footnote-ref-88)
89. ‘The New Atheists believe that reason and religion are absolutely incompatible. This means that religion and religious people are unreasonable. It further means that religion is the source of most of the evil in the world and must be eradicated. And it means that parents who impart their religious beliefs to their children are guilty of child abuse.’ K. Swallow Prior, “New and Unimproved: Atheism’s Brash but Ineffectual Makeover” [cited 26 November 2012]. Online: http://digitalcommons.liberty.edu/eml\_fac\_pubs/19 [↑](#footnote-ref-89)
90. ‘The name “Four Horsemen” refers to Richard Dawkins, Christopher Hitchens, Daniel Dennett and Sam Harris and was first used during a 2007 debate in which they discussed their criticisms of religion and advocated critical thinking.’ A. Gribbin, “Preview: The Four Horsemen of New Atheism reunited” [cited 26 November 2012]. Online: http://www.newstatesman.com/blogs/the-staggers/2011/12/richard-dawkins-issue-hitchens [↑](#footnote-ref-90)
91. ‘But one stunning new development under the sun is that promulgating atheism has become a lucrative business. According to a recent article in The Wall Street Journal, in less than 12 months atheism's newest champions have sold close to a million books.’ P. Berkowitz, “The New New Atheism” [cited 26 November 2012]. Online: http://online.wsj.com/article/SB118454735982067207.html [↑](#footnote-ref-91)
92. ‘Dawkins insists that Christian belief is “a persistently false belief held in the face of strong contradictory evidence.” The problem is how to persuade “dyed-in-the-wool faith-heads” that atheism is right, when they are so deluded by religion that they are immune to any form of rational argument. Faith is thus essentially and irredeemably irrational.’ Alister and Joanna McGrath, *The Dawkins Delusion: Atheist Fundamentalism and the Denial of the Divine* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2007), 23. [↑](#footnote-ref-92)
93. ‘Thanks to the knowledge we have attained of how the natural order actually operates – in particular the discoveries of Charles Darwin and modern physics – [Christopher Hitchens] concludes that “all attempts to reconcile faith with science and reason are consigned to failure and ridicule.”’ P. Berkowitz, “The New New Atheism”. [↑](#footnote-ref-93)
94. ‘They assert a similar hypothesis to the following: persons who regularly turn their backs on reason in favour of faith can be radicalized and turned into dangerous vigilantes. Irrationality is part of all religions (New atheists would argue that little could be less rational than believing in a transcendent God) and so all religions can potentially gestate harmful and indeed violent adherents.’ Michael W. DeLashmutt, “Delusions and Dark Materials: New Atheism as Naïve Atheism and its Challenge to Theological Education,” *ExpTim* 120 (2009): 586-93, esp. p. 587. [↑](#footnote-ref-94)
95. The traditional ‘problem of evil’ will not be addressed in this paper, as secular philosophers now concede it has been refuted by the ‘free will’ defence. In the words of C. Meister, ‘Given a compatibilist notion of free will, God could create “free” creatures who do no evil, for he could *determine* every one of their actions. Currently, however, most philosophers have agreed that the free will defence has defeated the logical problem of evil. For even if one grants that compatibilism is true, Plantinga offers the argument as a *logical possibility* only. As long as it is logically possible that incompatibilism is true, then the necessary conclusion of the logical problem of evil is undercut.’ Chad Meister, *Introducing Philosophy of Religion* (Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2009), 134. [↑](#footnote-ref-95)
96. ‘Actually, the “leap of faith”—to give it the memorable name that Soren Kierkegaard bestowed upon it—is an imposture. As he himself pointed out, it is not a “leap” that can be made once and for all. It is a leap that has to go on and on being performed, in spite of mounting evidence to the contrary.’ Christopher Hitchens, *God is Not Great: How Religion Poisons Everything* (Crows Nest, NSW: Allen & Unwin, 2008), 71. [↑](#footnote-ref-96)
97. ‘**Naturalism:** the view that everything that exists is composed of natural entities and processes that can in principle be studied by science.’ Michael Martin, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Atheism* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2007), xvii. [ED AP]: It is worth distinguishing ‘metaphysical naturalism’ defined here from ‘methodological naturalism’ which is the method of proceeding in scientific research *as if* scientific naturalism is true. [↑](#footnote-ref-97)
98. ‘A view which assumes that knowledge originates in a fundamental act of faith, independent of rational presuppositions.’ J. D. Douglas et al., *The New International Dictionary of the Christian Church* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1978), 374. [↑](#footnote-ref-98)
99. ‘What can be asserted without evidence can also be dismissed without evidence.’ Hitchens, *God is Not Great*, 150. [↑](#footnote-ref-99)
100. This impression is not helped by Christian apologists who assert the primacy of spiritual experiences over reason and empirical evidence: ‘Should a conflict arise between the witness of the Holy Spirit to the fundamental truth of the Christian faith and beliefs based on argument and evidence, then it is the former which must take precedence over the latter, not vice versa.’ William Lane Craig, *Reasonable Faith: Christian Truth and* Apologetics (Wheaton, IL: Good News Publishers/Crossway Books, 2008, Kindle Edition), Kindle Location 151. [↑](#footnote-ref-100)
101. ‘Religion comes from the period of human prehistory where nobody—not even the mighty Democritus who concluded that all matter was made from atoms—had the smallest idea what was going on. It comes from the bawling and fearful infancy of our species, and is a babyish attempt to meet our inescapable demand for knowledge (as well as for comfort, reassurance, and other infantile needs). …All attempts to reconcile faith with science and reason are consigned to failure and ridicule for precisely these reasons.’ Hitchens, *God is Not Great*, 64. [↑](#footnote-ref-101)
102. ‘In much the same way as prophets and seers and great theologians seem to have died out, so the age of miracles seems to lie somewhere in our past. If the religious were wise, or had the confidence of their convictions, they ought to welcome the eclipse of this age of fraud and conjuring.’ Hitchens, *God is Not Great*, 140. [↑](#footnote-ref-102)
103. ‘There are many disputes between evolutionists as to how the complex process occurred, and indeed as to how it began. …However, all these disputes, when or if they are resolved, will be resolved by using the scientific and experimental methods that have proven themselves so far. By contrast, creationism, or “intelligent design” (its only cleverness being found in this underhanded rebranding of itself) is not even a theory. In all its well-financed propaganda, it has never even attempted to show how one single piece of the natural world is explained better by “design” than by evolutionary competition.’ Hitchens, *God is Not Great*, 86. [↑](#footnote-ref-103)
104. ‘Dawkins preaches to his god-hating choirs, who are clearly expected to relish his rhetorical salvoes and raise their hands high in adulation. Those who think biological evolution can be reconciled with religion are dishonest! *Amen!*’ McGrath and McGrath, *The Dawkins Delusion*, 11-12. [↑](#footnote-ref-104)
105. ‘There still remain four irreducible objections to religious faith: that it wholly misrepresents the origins of man and the cosmos, that because of this original error it manages to combine the maximum of servility with the maximum of solipsism, that it is both the result and the cause of dangerous sexual repression, and that it is ultimately grounded on wish-thinking.’ Hitchens, *God is Not Great*, 4. [↑](#footnote-ref-105)
106. ‘The attitude of religion to medicine, like the attitude of religion to science, is always necessarily problematic and very often necessarily hostile. A modern believer can say and even believe that his faith is quite compatible with science and medicine, but the awkward fact will always be that both things have a tendency to break religion’s monopoly, and have often been fiercely resisted for that reason.’ Hitchens, *God is Not Great*, 47. [↑](#footnote-ref-106)
107. ‘The argument of this book is that the Greek intellectual tradition did not simply lose vigour and disappear. ...Rather in the fourth and fifth centuries AD, it was destroyed by the political and religious forces which made up the highly authoritarian government of the late Roman empire. …The imposition of orthodoxy went hand in hand with a stifling of any form of in dependent reasoning. By the fifth century not only had rational thought been suppressed, there had been a substitution for it of mystery, magic and authority, a substitution which drew heavily on irrational elements of pagan society which had never been extinguished.’ Charles Freeman, *The Closing of the Western Mind: The Rise of Faith and the Fall of Reason* (New York, NY: Knopf Doubleday Publishing Group, 2003), xvii-xviii. [↑](#footnote-ref-107)
108. ‘Religion is bad for you. God is a deluded fantasy. Get rid of faith and grow up. These grievances are of a rather different sort than the critique of religious faith that we read within the radical theologies of the 1960s, the post-modern a/theologies of the 1980s and 1990s, or post-foundational theological epistemologies of the early 2000s.’ DeLashmutt, “Delusions and Dark Materials”, 588. [↑](#footnote-ref-108)
109. ‘The golden age of atheism witnessed the relentless advance of the sciences and the equally relentless retreat of faith from the public to the private domain. The cultural space within which religion was permitted to operate was gradually whittle down to private beliefs, which had no relevance to public policy.’ Alister McGrath, *The Twilight of Atheism: the Rise and Fall of Disbelief in the Modern World* (New York, NY: Doubleday, 2004), 88-89. [↑](#footnote-ref-109)
110. ‘Since religion has proved itself uniquely delinquent on the one subject where moral and ethical authority might be counted as universal and absolute, I think we are entitled to at least three provisional conclusions. The first is that religion and the churches are manufactured, and that this salient fact is too obvious to ignore. The second is that ethics and morality are quite independent of faith, and cannot be derived from it. The third is that religion is—because it claims a special divine exemption for its practices and beliefs—not just amoral but immoral.’ Hitchens, *God is Not Great*, 52. [↑](#footnote-ref-110)
111. ‘Violent, irrational, intolerant, allied to racism and tribalism and bigotry, invested in ignorance and hostile to free inquiry, contemptuous of women and coercive toward children: organized religion ought to have a great deal on its conscience. There is one more charge to be added to the bill of indictment. With a necessary part of its collective mind, religion looks forward to the destruction of the world.’ Hitchens, *God is Not Great*, 56. [↑](#footnote-ref-111)
112. ‘(The same unanswerable point can be made in a different way about the alleged later preachings of Jesus: when he tells the story of the Good Samaritan on that Jericho road he is speaking of a man who acted in a humane and generous manner without, obviously, ever having heard of Christianity, let alone having followed the pitiless teachings of the god of Moses, who never mentions human solidarity and compassion at all.) No society ever discovered has failed to protect itself from self-evident crimes like those supposedly stipulated at Mount Sinai.’ Hitchens, *God is Not Great*, 99-100. [↑](#footnote-ref-112)
113. ‘As Harris notes: “[T]he greatest problem confronting civilization is not merely religious extremism: rather, it is the larger set of cultural and intellectual accommodations we have made to faith itself. Religious moderates are, in large part, responsible for the religious conflict in our world, because their beliefs provide the context in which scriptural literalism and religious violence can never be adequately opposed” (Harris 2006: 45).’ DeLashmutt, “Delusions and Dark Materials”, 588. [↑](#footnote-ref-113)
114. ‘For Pullman, and indeed for the New atheists cited in this article, God is a weak, feeble, outmoded human concept which has been protected by a ‘crystal litter’ of irrational superstition, guarding God from the destructive critique of modern life. Destroying God, both is the liberation of God from this manmade conceptual framework and the liberation of humanity from an oppressive and tyrannical system which has been built up around this ideal. The end of God is the beginning of human freedom.’ DeLashmutt, “Delusions and Dark Materials”, 588. [↑](#footnote-ref-114)
115. ‘The problems begin with sketchy definitions of essential terms such as “faith,” “evidence,” and even “atheism.”’ K. Swallow Prior, “New and Unimproved: Atheism’s Brash but Ineffectual Makeover”. [↑](#footnote-ref-115)
116. ‘Faith is “blind trust, in the absence of evidence, even in the teeth of evidence.” It is a “process of non-thinking.” It is “evil precisely because it requires no justification, and brooks no argument.” These core definitions of faith are hardwired into Dawkins’ worldview and are obsessively repeated throughout his writings. It is not a Christian definition of faith but one that Dawkins has invented to suit his own polemical purposes.’ McGrath and McGrath, *The Dawkins Delusion*, 17. [↑](#footnote-ref-116)
117. E.g. Gideon’s request for miraculous proof that God would support his attack on the Midianites (Judges 6:36-40). [↑](#footnote-ref-117)
118. John 20:24-27. [↑](#footnote-ref-118)
119. The empty tomb, which was never denied by the Christians’ opponents, represents powerful evidence of Jesus’ resurrection (albeit not conclusive proof) and still enjoys widespread academic support: ‘In the study mentioned at the outset of this essay, I found that approximately 75% of the surveyed scholars accept one or more arguments for the historicity of the empty tomb. The remaining 25% accept one or more arguments against the early church's knowledge of an empty tomb.’ G. Habermas, “Experiences of the Risen Jesus: The Foundational Historical Issue in the Early Proclamation of the Resurrection” [cited 26 November 2012]. Online: www.garyhabermas.com/articles/dialog\_rexperience/dialog\_rexperiences.htm [↑](#footnote-ref-119)
120. ‘No other thesis viably opposes the conclusion that the disciples at least thought that Jesus was raised from the dead. This was what Fuller termed “one of the indisputable facts of history.” The disciples thought that they had witnessed Jesus' appearances, which, however they are explained, “is a fact upon which both believer and unbeliever may agree.” Fuller adds that “[e]ven the most skeptical historian” must do one more thing: “postulate some other event” that is not the disciples' faith, but the reason for their faith, in order to account for their experiences.’ G. Habermas, “Experiences of the Risen Jesus: The Foundational Historical Issue in the Early Proclamation of the Resurrection”. [↑](#footnote-ref-120)
121. ‘As Michael Polanyi (1891-1976), a chemist and noted philosopher of science, pointed out, natural scientists find themselves having to believe some things that they know will later be shown to be wrong—but not being sure which of their present beliefs will turn out to be erroneous. How can Dawkins be so sure that his current beliefs are true, when history shows a persistent pattern of the abandonment of scientific theories as better approaches emerge? What historians of science can fail to note that what was once regarded as secure knowledge was eroded through the passage of time?’ McGrath, *The Twilight of Atheism*, 95. [↑](#footnote-ref-121)
122. ‘Where Dawkins sees faith as intellectual nonsense, most of us are aware that we hold many beliefs that we cannot prove to be true but are nonetheless perfectly reasonable to entertain. To lapse into jargon for a moment: our beliefs may be shown to be justifiable, without thereby demonstrating that they are *proven*. This is not a particularly difficult or obscure point.’ McGrath and McGrath, *The Dawkins Delusion*, 26. [↑](#footnote-ref-122)
123. In its simplest form, faith is merely a type of trust; and what secularist would claim they have never exercised trust? McGrath offers another example from science: ‘It is certainly true that the natural sciences aim to offer the best possible explanation of the world, and that they have had considerable successes in doing so. But there are limits to this. The scientist regularly has to propose certain ideas that certainly fit in with experimental evidence, but that cannot be proved, and are thus taken on trust.’ McGrath, *The Twilight of Atheism*, 95. [↑](#footnote-ref-123)
124. ‘The New Atheists seem willfully blinded to the fact that even their conclusions are faith-based. In his review of *The God Delusion* for *The New York Review of Books*, evolutionary geneticist H. Allen Orr—who expresses admiration for Dawkins's work in evolutionary biology—attributes Dawkins's weakness in philosophical reasoning to his having a “preordained set of conclusions at which he's determined to arrive”—an approach more characteristic of the religious fundamentalist than the pure scientist.’ K. Swallow Prior, “New and Unimproved: Atheism’s Brash but Ineffectual Makeover”. [↑](#footnote-ref-124)
125. ‘The greatest myth in the history of science and religion holds that they have been in a state of constant conflict. No one bears more responsibility for promoting this notion than two nineteenth-century American polemicists: Andrew Dickson White (1832–1918) and John William Draper (1811–1882).’ Ronald L. Numbers, ed., *Galileo Goes to Jail*, *and Other Myths about Science and Religion* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009) 1-2. [↑](#footnote-ref-125)
126. ‘White, the young president of Cornell University, became a believer in the warfare between science and religion after religious critics branded him an infidel for, as he put it, trying to create in Ithaca “[a]n asylum for Science—where truth shall be sought for truth’s sake, not stretched or cut exactly to fit Revealed Religion.’ Numbers, *Galileo Goes to Jail*, 2. [↑](#footnote-ref-126)
127. ‘Draper largely excused Protestantism and Eastern Orthodoxy of crimes against science while excoriating Roman Catholicism. He did so, he wrote, “partly because its adherents compose the majority of Christendom, partly because its demands are the most pretentious, and partly because it has commonly sought to enforce those demands by the civil power.”’ Numbers, *Galileo Goes to Jail*, 2. [↑](#footnote-ref-127)
128. ‘A significant social shift can be discerned behind the emergence of this conflict model. From a sociological perspective, scientific knowledge was advocated by particular social groups to advance their own specific goals and interests. There was growing competition between two specific groups within British society in the nineteenth century: the clergy and the scientific professionals.’ McGrath, *The Twilight of Atheism*, 87-88. [↑](#footnote-ref-128)
129. ‘The clergy were widely regarded as an elite at the beginning of the century, with the “scientific parson” a well-established social stereotype. …With the appearance of the professional scientist, however, a struggle for supremacy began, to determine who would gain the cultural ascendancy within British culture in the second half of the nineteenth century.’ McGrath, *The Twilight of Atheism*, 88. [↑](#footnote-ref-129)
130. ‘The conflict model of science and religion thus came to prominence at a time when professional scientists wished to distance themselves from their amateur colleagues, and when changing patterns in academic culture necessitated demonstrating its independence from the church and other bastions of the establishment. Academic freedom demanded a break with the church; to achieve this break it became expedient to depict the church as the opponent of learning and scientific advance and the natural sciences s their strongest advocates.’ McGrath, *The Twilight of Atheism*, 88. [↑](#footnote-ref-130)
131. ‘The roots of fundamentalism go back into the nineteenth century when evolution, biblical criticism, and the study of comparative religions began to challenge old assumptions about the authority of the biblical revelation.’ J. D. Douglas et al., *The New International Dictionary of the Christian Church* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1978), 396. [↑](#footnote-ref-131)
132. Darwinian evolution is often presented as the deathblow of Christianity in the Western world, yet the truth is that leading Christian contemporaries of Darwin embraced it wholeheartedly. ‘For Richard Dawkins, Darwin first made it possible to be an intellectually fulfilled atheist. But it is easy to forget that among Darwin’s earliest sympathizers in Britain were Christian clergymen such as Charles Kingsley (1819-1875) and Frederick Temple (1821-1902).’ J. H. Brooke, “Myth 25: That Modern Science has Secularised Western Culture” in *Galileo Goes to Jail and Other Myths about Science and Religion*” (edited by R. L. Numbers; Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009), 227-232 (227). [↑](#footnote-ref-132)
133. E.g. Christianity caused the demise of ancient science; Medieval Christians believed the Earth was flat; Medieval Christianity suppressed advancements in science; Galileo was imprisoned and tortured for his support of Copernicanism. Some of these canards were popularised by prominent scientific thinkers such as Carl Sagan, who swallowed them without even checking the sources. As one critic notes, ‘The crude concept of the Middle Ages as a millennium of stagnation brought on by Christianity has largely disappeared among scholars familiar with the period, but it remains vigorous among popularisers of the history of science—perhaps because, instead of consulting scholarship on the subject, the more recent popularisers have relied on their predecessors uncritically.’ M. H. Shank, “Myth 2: That the Medieval Christian Church Suppressed the Growth of Science” in *Galileo Goes to Jail and Other Myths about Science and Religion*” (edited by R. L. Numbers; Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009), 19-27 (20). [↑](#footnote-ref-133)
134. ‘Unlike the master mythmakers White and Draper, the contributors to this volume have no obvious scientific or theological axes to grind. Nearly half, twelve of twenty-five, self-identify as agnostic or atheist (that is, unbelievers in religion). Among the remaining thirteen there are five mainstream Protestants, two evangelical Protestants, one Roman Catholic, one Jew, one Muslim, one Buddhist—and two whose beliefs fit no conventional category (including one pious Spinozist).’ Numbers, *Galileo Goes to Jail*, 6. [↑](#footnote-ref-134)
135. ‘Historians of science have known for years that White’s and Draper’s accounts are more propaganda than history. Yet the message has rarely escaped the ivory tower. The secular public, if it thinks about such issues at all, *knows* that organized religion has always opposed scientific progress (witness the attacks on Galileo, Darwin, and Scopes). The religious public *knows* that science has taken the leading role in corroding faith (through naturalism and antibiblicism).’ Numbers, *Galileo Goes to Jail*, 6. [↑](#footnote-ref-135)
136. ‘Today this stereotype of the warfare of science and religion lingers on in the backwaters of Western culture. Yet it has largely lost its credibility. …The growing realization that even many scientists who are Nobel laureates are interested in issues of faith has severely dented the case for a necessary link between science and atheism, or for the outdated stereotype of the perpetual war of science and faith.’ McGrath, *The Twilight of Atheism*, 89. [↑](#footnote-ref-136)
137. The New Atheists’ alternative argument—that belief in supernatural activity is refuted by scientific naturalism and thus religion remains in conflict with science—has been weakened by Gould’s proposal of ‘non-overlapping magisteria’, which holds that religion and science operate within two separate ‘spheres of authority.’ (‘On Gould’s view the “magisterium of science” deals with the empirical realm,” whereas the “magisterium of religion” deals with “questions of ultimate meaning.”’ McGrath and McGrath, *The Dawkins Delusion*, 40). McGrath comments that both he and Dawkins disagree with Gould on this point—albeit for different reasons—but the concept still has support among atheist and Christian scholars. Science, they say, is neither equipped nor appropriate for the assessment of faith claims and alleged miraculous events. [↑](#footnote-ref-137)
138. ‘Gould rightly insists that science can work only with naturalistic explanations; it can neither affirm nor deny the existence of God. The empirical evidence is of critical importance here. As Gould stresses, this shows that some Darwinians are theists and others are not. There is simply no valid means of settling this issue on scientific grounds. The suggestion that the Darwinian theory of evolution is *necessarily* atheistic goes way behind the competency of the natural sciences and strays into territory where the scientific method cannot be applied. If it is applied, it is *mis*applied.’ McGrath, *The Twilight of Atheism*, 109. [ED AP]: Gould here is giving voice to the methodological naturalism mentioned in my previous editorial note. [↑](#footnote-ref-138)
139. ‘Noting surveys that showed that half of all scientists are religious, Gould commented amusingly that “Either half of my colleagues are enormously stupid, or else the science of Darwinism is fully compatible with conventional religious beliefs—and equally compatible with atheism.’ P. Berkowitz, “The New New Atheism”. How they resolve the contradiction is beyond the scope of this paper. [↑](#footnote-ref-139)
140. ‘As for his claim that the Bible abounds in falsehood and contradiction, Mr. Hitchens makes great sport with an old straw man. Yes, traditions teach that Moses wrote the Pentateuch, yet the Pentateuch refers to Moses in the third person and tells the story of his death. Yes, Matthew and Luke disagree on the Virgin Birth and the genealogy of Jesus. And so on. The literalness of Mr. Hitchens’ readings would put many a fundamentalist to shame.’ P. Berkowitz, “The New New Atheism”. [↑](#footnote-ref-140)
141. ‘However, isolating the supposed religious significant of the Bible from the communities and interpretive traditions that have elaborated its teachings is invalid.’ P. Berkowitz, “The New New Atheism”. [↑](#footnote-ref-141)
142. Dawkins uses this premise to segue into a demand that Christians explain how they can justify belief in a God responsible for the Mosaic Law, which appears brutal and savage to modern sensibilities. McGrath replies, ‘Historically it is important to appreciate that these ancient texts arose within a people who were fighting to maintain their group or national identity in the face of onslaughts from all sides, who were making sense of their human situation in relation to a God about whose nature their thinking became more and more developed… Dawkins rightly demands that there should be an external criterion for dealing with the interpretation of these texts. Yet he seems unaware of the Christian insistence that there indeed exists such a criterion—the life and teaching of Jesus of Nazareth.’ McGrath, *The Twilight of Atheism*, 89-90. [↑](#footnote-ref-142)
143. ‘The simplistic belief that the elimination of religion would lead to the ending of violence, social tension or discrimination is thus sociologically naïve. It fails to take account of the way in which human beings create values and norms, and make sense of their identity and their surroundings …It is well established that prejudice and discrimination are shaped by perception and group identities. Gross simplifications about religion, exclusion and violence will simply delay and defer a solution of humanity’s real problems.’ McGrath and McGrath, *The Dawkins Delusion*, 83. [↑](#footnote-ref-143)
144. Atheist physician and social commentator Anthony Daniels (writing under the pseudonym ‘Theodore Dalrymple’) maintains that the New Atheists’ critique of religious history is simplistic to the point of being formulaic: ‘In fact, one can write the history of anything as a chronicle of crime and folly. Science and technology spoil everything: without trains and IG Farben, no Auschwitz; without transistor radios and mass-produced machetes, no Rwandan genocide. First you decide what you hate, and then you gather evidence for its hatefulness.’ T. Dalrymple, “What the New Atheists Don’t See” [cited 26 November 2012]. Online: http://www.city-journal.org/html/17\_4\_oh\_to\_be.html. [↑](#footnote-ref-144)
145. ‘The bloody history of oppression and war undertaken on behalf of the gods and God, from time immemorial, makes all decent people shudder. But Mr. Hitchens knows perfectly well that human beings are not born in Rousseauian purity and freedom, and then made savage by the imposition of the chains of religion. Therefore, he should have asked whether and to what extent the varieties of religion have inflamed or rather disciplined humanity’s powerful built-in propensity, attested to by social science, to fight and kill. But he didn’t.’ P. Berkowitz, “The New New Atheism”. [↑](#footnote-ref-145)
146. ‘Yet is [violence] a necessary feature of religion? Here, I must insist that we abandon the outmoded idea that all religions say more or less the same things. …And as Dawkins knows, Jesus of Nazareth did no violence to anyone. He was the object, not the agent, of violence. Instead of meeting violence with violence, Christians are asked to “turn the other cheek” and not to let the sun go down on their anger.’ McGrath and McGrath, *The Dawkins Delusion*, 76. [↑](#footnote-ref-146)
147. McGrath calls this ‘the human abuse of ideals’ (*The Dawkins Delusion*, 79). [↑](#footnote-ref-147)
148. The oppressive atheist regimes of Communist Russia and China demonstrate that atheist governments and institutions fare no better than religious ones, particularly when co-opted by powerful ideologues. (‘The opening of the Soviet archives led to revelations that ended any notion that atheism was a gracious, gentle, and generous worldview.’ McGrath, *The Twilight of Atheism*, 232). Arguably a better case can be made for atheism as the driving force behind moral outrageous committed under Soviet dictatorships than for Christianity as the cause of the first crusades. [↑](#footnote-ref-148)
149. For example, Hitchens absurdly equates male circumcision with female genital mutilation even though modern studies have shown that the former practice is condoned by medical professionals and substantially reduces the incidence of sexually transmitted infection rates. ‘Male circumcision appears to provide significant protection against viral STIs. In addition to the 50%–60% reduction in HIV acquisition consistently demonstrated (108–110), HPV prevalence was reduced by about one-third (61, 62), and HSV-2 incidence was reduced by 28% (62) in the trials that assessed these endpoints.’ Catherine M. Wetmore, Lisa E. Manhart and Judith N. Wasserheit, “Randomized Controlled Trials of Interventions to Prevent Sexually Transmitted Infections: Learning From the Past to Plan for the Future,” *ER* 32(1) (2010): 121-36, esp. p. 129. [↑](#footnote-ref-149)
150. Christian examples include Lord Kelvin, contributor to the foundations of modern physics; Max Planck, developer of quantum theory; Georges Lemaître, pioneer of the ‘big bang’ theory; Sir Robert Boyd, a ground-breaking leader in the field of space science; Freeman Dyson, trailblazing mathematician and particle physicist; Graeme Clark, inventor of the bionic ear; Francis Collins, leader of the Human Genome Project. [↑](#footnote-ref-150)
151. Many an atheist or agnostic parent has circumvented the religious requirements to ensure their child’s enrolment in a Christian private school. If the New Atheists are right and these institutions are little more than brainwashing centres for unthinking believers, why do so many thinking *un*believers want their children educated there? [↑](#footnote-ref-151)
152. Quoting the famous atheist Michael Shermer, McGrath says, ‘There is clearly a significant positive side to religion: “However, for every one of these grand tragedies there are ten thousand acts of personal kindness and social good that go unreported….Religion, like all social institutions of such historical depth and cultural impact, cannot be reduced to an unambiguous good or evil.” Why do so many thinking atheists endorse Shermer’s comment? Because that’s exactly what the evidence shows.’ McGrath, *The Twilight of Atheism*, 94. [↑](#footnote-ref-152)
153. ‘Interestingly, Dawkins believes that it is important that Western culture should not eliminate the Bible from educational programs. “We can give up belief in God while not losing touch with a treasured heritage.” Why, then, does he misrepresent one of the most central, influential and ethically significant parts of that “treasured heritage”—the teaching of Jesus of Nazareth?’ McGrath and McGrath, *The Dawkins Delusion*, 87. [↑](#footnote-ref-153)
154. Christianity’s success owed much to its reputation as a stabilising influence with positive socio-cultural outcomes. Pagans made an evidence-based assessment and jumped ship to the new cult. [↑](#footnote-ref-154)
155. The 4th Century Roman emperor Flavius Claudius Julianus Augustus insisted pagan leaders must counter Christianity by emulating Christian social behaviour: ‘Why, then, do we think that this is enough, why do we not observe that it is their benevolence to strangers, their care for the graves of the dead and the pretended holiness of their lives that have done most to increase atheism? I believe that we ought really and truly to practise every one of these virtues. And it is not enough for you alone to practise them, but so must all the priests in Galatia, without exception. …For it is disgraceful that, when no Jew ever has to beg, and the impious Galilaeans support not only their own poor but ours as well, all men see that our people lack aid from us.’ *Letter to Arsacius*, [cited 26 November 2012]. Online: http://www.tertullian.org/fathers/julian\_apostate\_letters\_1\_trans.htm. [↑](#footnote-ref-155)
156. ‘I challenged the accuracy of the slogan “religion is bad for you” in *Dawkins’ God*, drawing attention to the growing body of evidence-based studies that showed it was nothing of the sort. Yet while now apparently conceding this point, Dawkins is unwilling to modify his antireligious polemics.’ McGrath and McGrath, *The Dawkins Delusion*, 92-93. [↑](#footnote-ref-156)
157. ‘…many have been disturbed by Dawkins’ crude stereotypes, vastly oversimplified binary oppositions (science is good; religion is bad), straw men and hostility toward religion. Might *The God Delusion* actually backfire and end up persuading people that atheism is just as intolerant, doctrinaire and disagreeable as the worst that religion can offer?’ McGrath and McGrath, *The Dawkins Delusion*, 97. [↑](#footnote-ref-157)
158. ‘Just where in *The God Delusion* is the full discussion one has a right to expect of the significant body of scientific literature on the relationship of harmful and healthy aspects of religion—as see, for example, in the extensive research work of Kenneth Pargament and his colleagues? It’s yet another example of Dawkins pervasive cognitive bias, which accentuates the evidence he likes and overlooks or discounts that which he does not.’ McGrath and McGrath, *The Dawkins Delusion*, 92-93. [↑](#footnote-ref-158)
159. E.g. the New Atheists’ frequent resort to myths derived from the conflict thesis. [↑](#footnote-ref-159)
160. ‘New atheism, or naïve atheism, is a cultural product which is produced and consumed by well educated, middle class elites (principally in North America) who pursue this ideology less as a result of considered argumentation than as a consequence of their preconceived sensibilities.’ DeLashmutt, “Delusions and Dark Materials”, 589. [↑](#footnote-ref-160)
161. ‘The New Atheists seem to have more of a flair for archaeology than for their own materialistic naturalism. They seem fascinated by the artifacts and relics of theistic arguments that have long gone by the wayside, unaware of the evolution of evidential arguments for the existence of God that have dominated the philosophy of religion over the past three decades.’ K. Swallow Prior, “New and Unimproved: Atheism’s Brash but Ineffectual Makeover”. [↑](#footnote-ref-161)
162. ‘Even atheists are reacting: Michael Ruse, professor of philosophy at Florida State University, has said aspects of the New Atheism make him “embarrassed to be an atheist.”’ K. Swallow Prior, “New and Unimproved: Atheism’s Brash but Ineffectual Makeover”. [↑](#footnote-ref-162)
163. ‘Atheism Plus’ (stylised as ‘A+’) was created by atheist social activists in opposition to the New Atheists—widely regarded as ‘old, white, privileged’, and out of touch with the younger generation. But like the movement it criticises, A+ offered nothing new and proved alarmingly divisive among unbelievers. Atheist philosopher Massimo Pigliucci found many allies when he wryly commented that A+ is merely rebadged secular humanism and expressed his doubts about its viability. (‘I am skeptical that something like A+ can get off the ground — as much as I support its aims — for the simple reason that atheism is not a philosophy, and we should stop pretending that it is.’ M. Pigliucci, “On A+, with a comment about Richard Carrier’s intemperance” [cited 26 November 2012]. Online: http://rationallyspeaking.blogspot.com.au/2012/08/on-with-comment-about-richard-carriers.html). Aside from highlighting the continued intellectual paucity of modern atheism, this development shows that atheists still cannot agree on a coherent worldview which can be shown to be superior to religious belief. [↑](#footnote-ref-163)
164. Dawkins is a biologist, Hitchens was a journalist, Dennett is a cognitive scientist, and Harris is a neuroscientist. In short, they lack any formal qualifications which would allow them to speak authoritatively on matters of faith or religion. [↑](#footnote-ref-164)
165. ‘As the cultural and literary critic Terry Eagleton pointed out in his withering review of *The God Delusion:* “Imagine someone holding forth on biology whose only knowledge of the subject is the *Book of British Birds*, and you have a rough idea of what it feels like to read Richard Dawkins on theology.”’ McGrath and McGrath, *The Dawkins Delusion*, 21-22. [↑](#footnote-ref-165)
166. ‘New Atheist authors such as Hitchens, Harris, and Richard Dawkins often vary between catchy prose and bombastic, sometimes rambling, commentary. But one major characteristic is that their pithiest critiques are short on substance, rarely hit crucial areas, and present far too many openings that simply beg for critique. …Most of all, their factual charges aimed at the heart of Christianity are refuted by the data.’ Gary Habermas, “The Plight of the New Atheism: A Critique.” *JETS* 51/4 (2008): 813-27, (827). [↑](#footnote-ref-166)
167. ‘The curious thing about these books is that the authors often appear to think that they are saying something new and brave. …Yet with the possible exception of Dennett’s, they advance no argument that I, the village atheist, could not have made by the age of 14 (Saint Anselm’s ontological argument for God’s existence gave me the greatest difficulty, but I had taken Hume to heart on the weakness of the argument from design).’ T. Dalrymple, “What the New Atheists Don’t See” [cited 26 November 2012]. Online: www.city-journal.org/html/17\_4\_oh\_to\_be.html. [↑](#footnote-ref-167)
168. ‘Apart from Daniel Dennett’s *Breaking the Spell*, the New Atheists discussed here seem to have had little interest in anything written in the past two decades in the fields of theology, sociology of religion, or religious studies. Rather than exploring the nuances of the discipline, we find reheated definitions of religion and myth borrowed from earlier in the previous century and diatribes against religion which simply blame theism for any number of contemporary evils.’ DeLashmutt, “Delusions and Dark Materials”, 589. [↑](#footnote-ref-168)
169. ‘I have noted above how the New Atheists tend to neglect the most recent developments in the study of theology and religion. …New ways of thinking about religion and religious experience are constantly being developed by an active community of scholarly researches and practitioners. New Atheist overplays the modernist assumptions about the scope of secularity; it ignores the role played by religion on popular culture; and it simplifies the contemporary dialogue between religion and the sciences.’ DeLashmutt, “Delusions and Dark Materials”, 592. [↑](#footnote-ref-169)