Cover Photo: Cindy Walker

NEW BEGINNINGS

New Beginnings:

unless a seed falls into the ground and dies . . .

Word in the World

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NOTE FOR CONTRIBUTORS:

The purpose of this Journal is to engage theology in the issues and realities of contemporary religious life in a secular, pluralistic society undergoing fundamental institutional change. In doing this, we solicit papers not only from graduate students in Theology but also from faculty members who wish to participate in our endeavours. Relevant work from other disciplines will be considered. Although our primary call is for papers, we also solicit personal reflections, stories, artwork, poetry, and any other material operative within the different modes of the theological project. Former graduates of the Theological Studies program are especially encouraged to submit material for consideration. Submissions should be made to: World in the World, Annex D, Concordia University, 1455 de Maisonneuve West, Montréal, Québec, Canada, H3G 1M8. We require two hard copies as well as an electronic copy of the paper. Please do not send originals. If you have an idea for a paper and wish to talk to one of our editorial staff, please visit us at: http://www.concordia.ca/artsci/theology/news/word-in-the-world.html or via e-mail at: submissions.witw@gmail.com. We reserve the right to determine the suitability of each paper for the Journal. Editorial modifications may be made for language, space considerations, or for thematic unity, although we are always careful to maintain the integrity of the author's work.

Word in the World

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IMAGES

Cover, Cindy Walker

A note on the artwork

Cindy Walker is a graduate student in Concordia's Art Education Program.

Abbie Perkins is a painter, photographer, designer and freelance editor.

Fallow Field in Autumn, oil on wood panel, Abbie Perkins
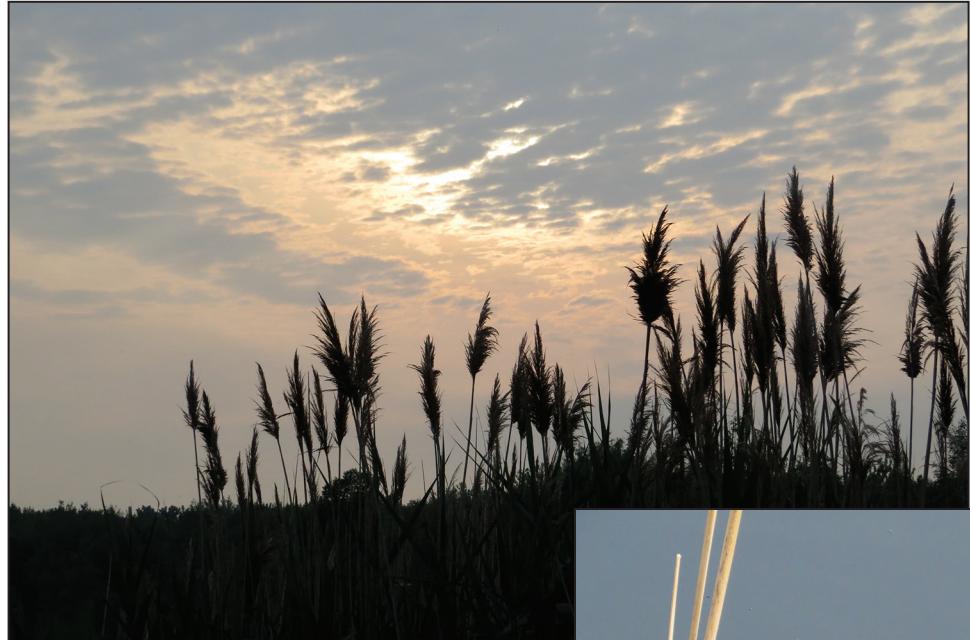
Last Rays of Summer, Photograph, Karen A. Snair

A Perch to Ponder From, Photograph, Karen A. Snair

Word from the Chair

Word in the World has a long history in Concordia University's Department of Theological Studies. Throughout the past ten years, many graduate students have profited from participating in overseeing this academic journal which also provides the opportunity to both submit and often publish their academic and creative work. It is certainly a privilege for our department to have a journal which receives submissions from many students, both within and outside the University.

That being said, maintaining and nurturing this tradition is by no means an easy feat. Our committee comprised four busy students who were also committed to raising families and working at part-time jobs. The miracle is that together, we somehow found enough time to produce this journal along the way and part of the success owes itself to the spirit of collaboration which developed as we all became committed to producing the latest issue of *Word in the World*.

While the future of *Word in the World* lies in the hands of the students who follow us, we can only bear witness to what our committee has learned through our own experience: that active participation in the many facets of graduate life enriches our personal experience and prepares us for future careers in academics, publishing, and provides solid leadership opportunities. The time we have spent on this journal has greatly added to our education as graduate students. We encourage all those studying at Concordia to become active members of their department and student organizations to ensure the continued success of this great community.

Finally, thanks are due to the many people who helped bring this journal to fruition. Dr. Lucian Turcescu, our Chair, always with an open ear and heart provided tremendous support for the publication and continuation of *Word in the World*. Dr. Paul Allen, our academic advisor, took the time to review the articles during a busy time and his input is much appreciated. The former committee members, Karen Snair, Rachelle Cournoyer and Natalia Marshall-Ryan also gave their time and advice as our team gradually took over and moved into production. Last, but not least, we dedicate this edition to our department secretary, Concetta Di Fruscia. Without a doubt,

Joseph Vietri, Chair of *Word in the World*

and

Lynn Barwell, Vice-Chair and Secretary of *Word in the World*

Editorial

Hereward Senior

Brent Thomas Walker

New Beginnings:

unless a seed falls into the ground and dies . . .

In order for new beginning to emerge, for progress to be experienced, that which preceded must give way. Thus the theme for our journal this year, "New Beginnings" which was framed within the haunting wisdom of T.S. Elliot's perennial axiom "In my end is my beginning." This is not only a deep metaphorical reality, but a reality that expresses itself in practical ways and every day circumstance. In order for a new journal to emerge, a new executive was necessary. This requires trust on behalf of the previous executives: to hand down the privilege of keeping the tradition of the *Word in the World* — alive.

Throughout each of our individual journeys to complete a Master's Degree in Theological Studies, death giving way to life was a recurring theme. This perpetual cycle was experienced individually as we progressed semester to semester, often dying to preconditioned ideas as new worlds of understanding opened up. We are sincerely grateful to the many diverse, dynamic, and stimulating professors who serve to make Concordia's Theological Department such fecund territory for living theology. Consequently, new ways of reflecting on traditional theological assertions were explored.

Two articles "Paul and Slavery" by Clara Vienna, and "The Impact of St. Paul and St. Augustine on Dante's Paradiso" by Derek Bateman, interpret Paul's theology from the vantage point that spans human experience between Paul's era and our modern times.

In addition, the article "Reflections on Human Operations: Dallaire and Lonergan" by Terry Provost, incorporates the dynamic of experience in the cognitive process to explore human knowing. Drawing from

Rose petals symbolizing tongues of flame burst from the oculus of the Pantheon on Pentecost Sunday in Rome,
Photograph, Rachelle Cournoyer

the long-standing tradition of Lonergan's methodology embraced by Concordia's Theology Department, Provost explores new ground in re-visioning our horizons.

Lynn Barwell's "Maternal Blessings of the Holy Spirit," revisits the early Syrian tradition of Holy Spirit as Mother to reflect on contemporary understandings of motherhood as expressions of the divine—expressions without which, a deeper comprehension of God cannot be discerned.

Brent Walker's "Creatio Ex Nihilo: God, Creation, and Nothing Else" revisits the early Father's articulation of creation and brings to life its relevance in the ongoing discussion between "Creation vs. Evolution." By rediscovering that "nihilo" actually means 'no-thing' but God was present in creation, both evolution and divine acts of creation can be explored without fear of denying God as ultimate Reality.

Finally, two stories by Karen Courtland Kelly and Orit Shimoni, as well as a poem by Lynn Barwell, attest to the universal story of our lives. Each of us, in our individual experience of being human, tells a story of how we access meaning in frequently unexpected ways.

Interspersed throughout the text are visuals by Rachelle Cournoyer and Karen Snair, along with provocative artwork from Cindy Walker and Abbie Perkins. These visuals also speak to the perennial story of death giving way to life, and the 'unforeseeable' encounters with divine grace that interrupts and moves us to sacred ground we could not get to on our own.

On behalf of the entire Executive Committee, we trust that the rich academic experience afforded us by Concordia's Theology Department is faithfully imparted through the selection of text and visuals gathered for this edition of Word in the World.

Windows of the Soul #1, graphite on paper, Cindy Walker

Paul and Slavery: 'Master' and 'Slave' as Transcended Terms

Clara Vienna

Introduction

Paul and Slavery

In this paper I will attempt to bring to light a deeper understanding of the complex relationship of the apostle Paul to slavery. My main source will be Paul's letter to Philemon (Phm). Reading this letter, I was surprised that Paul did not seem to stand against the institution of slavery. Whereas in Galatians, he states that "there is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female – for all of you are one in Christ Jesus."[1] In Philemon, Paul seems to simply accept the situation of slavery. Is Paul only challenging social classes in his theology, but in practical issues just adopting the norm of the society he was living in? Is his theology just about nice ideas which have no impact in real life?

This was my question regarding Paul and slavery when reading Philemon, and the personal confusion and irritation that arose in me. Through this paper, we will see that Paul is not inconsistent and that, although he does not seem to stand against the institution of slavery per se, his letters and theology indeed challenged the social system of his time. But before going further in the justification of this position, we have to identify two important problems.

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[1] Galatians 3: 28, my translation, which I will use every time I quote verses from Philemon.

Problem of our main source

First, Paul's letter to Philemon which will be our basic source for an analysis of Paul and slavery is anything but simple. We do not really know what the situation was like behind Paul's letter. We do have some clues in the letter, but nothing is explicit. We can understand that Paul is writing this letter to a slave-owner that he knows personally, Philemon, about his slave Onesimus. But then, a great number of questions arise: is Onesimus a runaway slave? If he is not a runaway slave, why is he away from his master's house? How has he come in contact with Paul? What was the problem that brought Paul to write this letter? What was Paul trying to do with his letter? Related to this problem, as John Barclay ironically underlines , "At the very least one would have to acknowledge that Paul could have made his request a lot clearer than he has."[2] Consequently, in order to answer these numerous difficult questions, we can only raise hypotheses which scholars have done in abundance and try to figure out which one is the most plausible which we will do later in this paper.

Problem of anachronism

The second problem that arises when considering Paul's position on slavery, is a historical problem. We live twenty centuries after Paul. And, the historical situation that surrounds us, is anything but similar to Paul's. We live in a post-abolitionist context, and this leads us to think "that Christianity (as we understand it) is fundamentally opposed to the institution of slavery."[3] But this understanding is due to our own modern "lens" that makes it difficult for us to clearly see the world as the Ancients saw it. We continuously have to be very careful with our own presuppositions when coming to a text, but this time it is not only about personal presuppositions, but about cultural presuppositions that we have to be clear of in order to avoid an anachronistic and skewed view of first-century "Christianity".[4]

Now that we have identified the two major issues of our problem a) related to our main source: the complexity of Paul's letter to Philemon and b) to our formulation of the problem: the anachronistic skew which we are always tempted to adopt, we will begin with a contextualization of first-century slavery. As we have underlined, the importance of context to understand a specific problem is crucial. So, we will try to understand what slavery was like at the beginning of our era: what was its role, how was it interconnected with other sectors of society and so on.

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[2] Barclay, J. M. G. 1991. "Paul, Philemon and the Dilemma of Christian Slave Ownership." *New Testament Studies* 37, no. 2: 174.

[3] Barclay, 164.

[4] This again is an anachronism, as "Christianity" did not exist *per se*, but we will use the term for convenience. Cf. the so called New Perspective on Paul (1970-80s), which placed Paul back in his Jewish context (e.g. the opposition "conversion" (from one religion to another) vs "call"(staying in the same religion, i.e. Judaism). Cf. the works of Stendahl or E.P. Sanders for instance.

The institution of slavery in the first century

To understand the place of slavery in first century Greco-Roman society, we will have to do what Bruce Malina and Jerome Neyrey call "cultural anthropology." From their perspective, "cultural anthropology" is concerned with "describing different cultures in a comparative way and with understanding the respective ways in which persons in different cultures are perceived and evaluated."[5] It is not easy to understand what it meant to be a slave in the first century and what relationship such a social role implied as this is not explicitly described by the texts we have. Slavery seemed "normal" to the writers of the texts. Slavery was considered a given by the surrounding culture, a normal part of life. As de Vos says, "the normal pattern of social interactions…is seldom recorded. After all, our historical sources frequently record only the unusual, the unique, and the extraordinary."[6] So to understand in depth what slavery meant in first century societies, we have to try to understand what these societies took for granted as *normal*.

A normal part of society

In the time of Paul's writing of Philemon, slavery was a normal accepted part of society. Biblical scholar Fitzmyer explains,

> In the ancient world the condition of a *doulos* or *servus* (male) or doule or serva (female) was not always regarded as inhuman or degrading, for slavery was an integral part of their economic structures. Along with husbands, wives, sons, and daughters, male and female slaves were components of the *familia* in the Roman world and of the *patria* in the Greek world.[7]

Thus every household had some slaves. As Barclay says, "even a … modest household might be expected to include two or three slaves."[8] This number could amount to hundreds in wealthy houses, because slaves did everything, "we find slaves as janitors, cooks, waiters, cleaners, couriers, child minders, wet nurses and all-purpose personal attendants, not to mention the various professionals one might find in the larger and wealthier houses."[9] So in comparison to the impression of the abnormality of slavery we have in our twenty-first century, slavery was in the first century a central part of the normal life of the Greco-Roman world, as well as an essential part of their economy.

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[5] B.J. Malina and J.H. Neyrey, Portraits of Paul : An Archaeology of Ancient Personality, quoted by de Vos C. S.2001. "Once a Slave, Always a Slave? Slavery, Manumission and Relational Patterns in Paul's Letter to Philemon." *Journal For The Study Of The New Testament* 82, 92.

[6] De Vos 92. [Once I have already given the full reference for an article, I will just give the name and the date of the book/article; cf. in bibliography for more details.]

[7] Fitzmyer, J. A. 2000. *The Letter to Philemon : A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*. New York; London: Doubleday, 1-43, 25.

[8] Barclay, 166.

[9] Barclay, 166.

No rights

Although slavery was a central and normal part of the society, it was still a violent institution. Karin Neutel points out that:

> The notion that slavery in Antiquity was somehow more benign than in recent slave societies has persisted among classicists as well as biblical scholars of the twentieth century. The incorporation of the work of Keith Bradley and Orlando Patterson in New Testament scholarship, however, has led to an increasing awareness of its violent character.[10]

Neutel goes on to give some examples of these recent works: "Patterson's view of slavery as a form of social death and Bradley's emphasis on the controls and incentives used to manipulate slaves, have helped to clarify the degrading nature of slavery in the ancient world, including in Paul's time."[11] In fact, a slave was regarded as a possession of his owner and had no rights, "Legally, the position of slaves was unambiguous: they had no legal rights at all (e.g., they could not inherit goods or seek redress for injustices suffered) and had to do whatever and go wherever their owners instructed."[12] Seneca sums up the complete powerlessness of slaves: *servus… non habet negandi potestatem*,[13] literally the slave has no right to say no, that means, he has to agree to whatever his owner orders. Slaves were, for instance, also used sexually: "…many slaves, both male and female, were…expected to provide sexual favours for their owner or his/her guests."[14]

Run away

It is thus not surprising that slaves were trying to get out of these harsh conditions. One means of escape for them was to run away. Flight was in fact quite a common practice in Greco-Roman society. As Barclay mentions, "our sources indicate that this was a major problem for owners in the Greco-Roman world, who might take various precautionary measures like chaining slaves or affixing tags round their necks"[15] to avoid this possible situation. In fact, the slave was considered a thief, "a stealer of himself,"[16] as Nordling says, in addition to the amount of work that would have been done by him. To run away was consequently considered a crime, and, in Roman law, the person who found a runaway slave had to return it to his/her[17] master[18]; if he did not do so, he was also considered a thief: a thief of someone else's property.[19]

[10] Neutel Karin B. 2013, *A Cosmopolitan Ideal. Paul's Declaration « neither Jew nor Greek , neither Slave nor Free, nor Male and Female » in the Context of First-Century Thought*, Risksuniversiteit Groningen, Ipskamp Drukkers Enschede, 129.
[11] Neutel, 129
[12] Barclay, 166. Cf. W. W. Buckland, The *Roman Law of Slavery* (Cambridge University, 1908) 10-72 on the slave as *res*.
[13] Quoted by Barclay, 167.
[14] Barclay, 167.
[15] Barclay, 169-170. To see some texts found about these collars, cf. Nordling's article: "Onesimus Fugitivus : A Defense of the Runaway Slave Hypothesis in Philemon." *Journal For The Study Of The New Testament* 41,1991: 106.
[16] Nordling, 115.
[17] I will from now on use the masculine for reasons of convenience.
[18] Cf. note n° 4 Barclay: 170.
[19] As Fitzmyer explains: "to harbor a slave was a crime (…), because it involved *furtum* (theft) of the property of another." 28.

This, however was not always the case, and some people used these opportunities to take their piece of the cake. In fact a real slave catcher business existed, "Your slave would run away to a *fugitivarius* (slave-catcher). The latter would approach the owner, tell them that with much effort, he might perhaps discover the fugitive, and declare himself prepared to buy him right now at a low figure. You had no choice but to accept, whereupon the slave catcher could resell or even manumit the slave."[20] These slave-catchers or *fugitivarii* used the bad conditions of slavery to benefit from the situation, and would even "induce slaves to steal from their masters and then abscond."[21] They knew that, if slaves were caught and brought back to their master, anything could happen: "we can well imagine what a fugitive might, in normal circumstances, expect from his master: flogging and branding were common and there was in practice no limit to the punishments an angry master might impose."[22] It could go even as far as crucifixion! As Garnsey says, "'crucifixion was the standing form of execution for slaves'"[23]

[20] Fitzmyer, 28.
[21] Fitzmyer, 28.
[22] Barclay, 170.
[23] Nordling, 116 quoting Garnsey, *Social Status*, p. 127; sources, n.2.

Manumission - Reinforcing the system

Another way of getting out of slavery existed: manumission, which means "the freeing of a slave by the slaveholder."[24] Manumission would be done by a slaveholder in order to reward a good slave. As de Vos says, "…manumission was normally the reward for years of loyalty and obedience."[25] Another reason to free a slave could be, as Barclay suggests, "to gain a favourable reputation for generosity."[26] For, as he underlines, "simple gratitude and generosity are not to be discounted, but an element of self-interest was almost always involved as well."[27] Financial reasons could also come into play, for as we have seen with the slave-catcher "the master could demand a manumission price which would compensate for his loss and enable him to purchase another slave."[28] So the practice of manumission was in fact reinforcing the system of slavery rather than undermining it.

Freed, not free

On the slave's side, to be freed did not always (or even often) mean to be free. In fact, a freed slave did not become a free man/woman, but

[24] Karin B. Neutel, *A Cosmopolitan Ideal. Paul's Declaration "neither Jew nor Greek , neither Slave nor Free, nor Male and Female" in the Context of First-Century Thought*, Risksuniversiteit Groningen, (doctorat), 2013. Ipskamp Drukkers, Enschede, 133.
[25] De Vos, 98.
[26] Barclay, 168.
[27] Barclay, 168.
[28] Barclay, 168.

a freed man/woman *apeleutheros*[29] and not *eleutheros*, as Neutel emphasizes.[30] Barclay points out that the freed man was in fact still legally bound to his master, "the freedman could find himself saddled with a range of continuing obligations."[31] In fact, there existed so-called *paramone* contracts, which specified "the terms by which a freedman 'stay[ed] with' his former owner or another specified beneficiary."[32] Moreover, as de Vos shows, even if no *paramone* contract was set up, the freedman would still feel socially obliged to his former master, because of the authoritative, patriarchal, and patronage culture he was living in. This was the mold he was placed in by society from his birth.

> After having lived in an environment in which they [the slaves] showed deference, submissiveness, acquiescence and obedience for many years, surely the attitude of slaves towards their former master, or their relationship with him or her, would not have been any different after manumission.[33]

De Vos shows in his article that "manumission or not manumission" is not a good question, as it would not change anything in the *actual* relationship slaves had with their former masters [even if it did change the circumstances of their children, which is important]: "the act of manumission did not significantly change the circumstances

of most slaves, or how they were perceived or treated."[34]

No real change

So for the slave himself, to be freed or not did not really change much in his experience, for even if he was freed, he would not have the status of a free man; on the contrary, he would stay legally, or at least culturally, obliged to his master. For the master, manumission could increase his power in showing generosity and possibly let him have a new slave if a manumission price was requested and would free him from his former obligations toward his slave. For masters took care of their slaves in order to have them healthy and in the best condition to work. So manumission would free the master from his responsibility towards his slave, while still being able to enjoy some of the services the former slave was providing. So, in one sense, the people who seemed to benefit most from manumission were in fact the masters: "masters could ensure that they retained important advantages from their former slaves while being rid of the responsibility of their maintenance!"[35] Therefore, even though manumission gave the impression of advantaging the slave, it was really the master who benefited.

Now that we have a better insight into slavery in the first century, its crucial importance, the status – or

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[29] Again, I'll use the masculine from now on.
[30] Neutel, 134.
[31] Barclay, 169.
[32] Barclay, 169.
[33] De Vos, 98.

[34] De Vos, 100.
[35] Barclay, 169.

non-status slaves had in this society, and their means to get out of the system,[36] we will now be able to analyze our main source: Paul's letter to Philemon, keeping all the information we have mentioned in consideration, in order to see how Paul situated himself in the broader historical and cultural context. In other words, within the aforementioned social context, the question then becomes: will Paul challenge the social construct of slavery in this letter to Philemon?

Paul's letter to Philemon: preliminary remarks Authenticity

Before going directly to the analysis of Paul's position regarding slavery in Philemon, I would like to give some more general information about Paul's letter to Philemon. Phm[37] is one of the seven "undisputed" Pauline letters: this means it is a letter that most scholars consider authentically Paul's. As Fitzmyer says, "from Marcion on, the Pauline authenticity of the Letter to Philemon has been generally admitted."[38] Marcion included Phm in his canon and the epistle is also present in the Muratorian Canon.[39] However, there are a few interpreters who have denied its

authenticity: "Because of its close connection with Colossians, which was thought to belong to the second century, the Tübingen school denied its authenticity, although Baur admitted its noble Christian spirit."[40] O'Brien continues: "The Dutch radical W.G. van Manen also took this line but such an approach may rightly be consigned to the eccentricities of NT scholarship."[41] So, we will adopt the less eccentric position, and consider Phm a genuine Pauline letter.[42]

Between Intimacy and Publicity

Philemon is the shortest of Paul's remaining letters. It is only 335 words[43], having 25 verses not divided into chapters. It is thus the shortest book of the New Testament, and the shortest of the whole Bible. Phm is also the letter which is the closest to Greco-Roman private letters in style. Kümmel writes, "The letter, which of all Paul's letters, stands closest in form to an ancient private letter, displays in its personal features the signs of a genuine true-to-life quality".[44] However, O'Brien says that, although it is a personal letter, "this fact … does not indicate

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[36] Although, as we have seen, these means did not really go against the system but seemed, on the contrary, to reinforce it.

[37] From now on I will use the common abbreviation Phm to speak of Paul's letter to Philemon.

[38] Fitzmyer, 8.

[39] Cf. Fitzmyer, 8.

[40] O'Brien, P.T 1982. "Colossians, Philemon", *World Biblical Commentary* 44 : 269.

[41] O'Brien, 26.

[42] Verse 19 says "I Paul write it with my own hands", which does not mean it is necessarily a Pauline letter, as this autograph could also be a literary device "to make it sound authentic" (cf. Fitzmyer 8-9).

[43] Cf. O'Brien, 265.

[44] W.G. Kümmel, *Introduction*, 349--50.

that the letter is simply a piece of private correspondence."[45] First, there are more than two persons addressed. Paul is not writing only to Philemon, even though he is the main addressee; other people are mentioned in the greetings: "the beloved Apphia", "Archippus our fellow soldier", and even "the assembly in your [Philemon's] house". Consequently, three persons and a whole community are present as recipients of the letter, or, at least, of some parts of it. But the subscription is nevertheless "*kata Philemoni*", "*Ad Philemonem*" or "*Epistola beati Pauli apostolic ad Philemonem.*"[46] Why?

The address of the letter shows that the main part of the letter, the body (Phm 8-20/21), is in fact addressed to one individual: Philemon. The use of the second person singular pronoun shows it perfectly: already in verse 8 we have, "T*herefore, although I have all boldness in Christ to command you (soi) that which is appropriate.*"[47] In English, we cannot see the difference between the singular or the plural form of the second person; but in Greek two different forms exist, and it is clear here (and through the whole body of Phm) that the second person singular is used. Consequently, the main part of the letter is addressed to Philemon, although other persons are mentioned in the greetings. These persons appear again in

verses 22b and 25, when second plural forms appear again.[48] So, in the beginning and in the end of the letter, Paul addresses a whole group of people, but his main concern is regarding Philemon.

A Letter of Petition

With regard to the genre, the letter has been described as a "letter of petition (*Bittschrift*)."[49] This means that Paul was asking for something in his letter; and, as Philemon is the main addressee of the letter, that Paul was asking Philemon something. We can add to that, that Paul was asking Philemon to do something on behalf on another person: Onesimus, who appears in verse 10: "I appeal to you *on behalf of* my child, whom I begot while in prison, *Onesimus*". Onesimus is a slave, as the substantive δουλος appearing in verse 16 indicates. So, Phm is a letter of petition from Paul to Philemon on behalf of his slave called Onesimus. Knowing that, the question that then comes to mind is: how was Paul trying to induce Philemon to do something?

Paul's pretended non-authoritarian position

Paul's position in front of Philemon is rather ingenious. In verse 1, he does not present himself as Paul "the apostle" which is the case in most of his letters.[50]

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[45] O'Brien, 265.
[46] Cf. Fitzmyer 7. The Latin subscriptions come from manuscripts of the Vulgate.
[47] I will always give my translation of the verses.
[48] Fitzmyer, 82.
[49] Fitzmyer, 7.
[50] In Ga, 1 Co, 2 Co and Rm; not in 1 Th and Phm.

This gives us the hint that he does not want to underline his apostolic authority. His apparent attitude of modesty continues in verses 8 and 9a that start the body of the letter.[51] "*Thus, although I am emboldened enough in Christ to order you to do what is proper, I would rather appeal out of love.*" This sentence is constructed on an antithesis: Paul rejects the position of authority that would bring him to "order" (ἐπιτάσσειν) Philemon what he should do in this case, and rather chooses to "appeal" (παρακαλᾶ) to him out of love. In verse 14, we can observe the same phenomenon: "*[But] I did not want to do anything without your consent, so that the good you do might not be forced but come of your own free will.*" Fitzmyer makes the following theological comment: "Paul touches here a delicate human problem: that the good that humans do must come from them spontaneously and of their own free will, and not because of any necessity or constraint."[52] As Fitzmyer notices, Paul puts himself in a "delicate" position: he wants Philemon to do something, but does not want it to seem forced. In other words, he wants Philemon to choose doing what he wants him to do. Furthermore, this ambiguity turns to a more authoritative position towards the end of the letter. In

verse 20, an optative, and even an imperative, appear: "*Yes, my brother, may I profit* (ὀναίμην; optative aorist middle 1sg) *from you in the Lord. Refresh* (ἀνάπαυσόν; imperative aorist active 2sg) *my heart in Christ!*" And, in verse 21. Paul unequivocally speaks of "obedience": "*Having confidence in your obedience, I write to you, knowing that you will do even beyond what I say.*" So, Paul goes from a low position where he claims to not want to force Philemon to do what is proper, to a higher position where he commands Philemon's obedience. Barclay notices it very well: "... there is plenty of evidence ... of Paul's diplomatic skill, exerting authority while appearing to leave the matter entirely in Philemon's hands. Pressure is applied in all sorts of subtle but significant ways."[53] This subtle pressure arrives to a climax with Paul's announcement to visit Philemon, that gives the implicit message: "pay attention, I will see soon how you answered my request!" This threat appears in verse 22: "*Also, prepare a guest room for me, for I hope that through your prayers I will be restored to you.*" Paul has found his way to apply pressure on Philemon, without the overt appearance of doing so. As Barclay says, "...in both cases [in both passages where Paul seems to renounce his authority (8-9a; 14)] the reality of Paul's authority is made quite clear at the very moment it is graciously renounced..."[54] In other words, Paul knows how to

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[51] The structure of the letter would be : 1--7 Introduction and Thanksgivings; 8--21 : Body ; 22--25 : Conclusion and Greetings.
[52] Fitzmyer, 112.

[53] Barclay, 171.
[54] Barclay, 171.

use his authority without giving the impression of doing so.

Now that we have seen that Phm is a letter of petition, from Paul to Philemon, on behalf of the latter's slave Onesimus, and that Paul is using his rhetorical skills to induce Philemon to do something, we can raise the question: what was he asking for? This is in fact one of the hot spots over which exegetes have been struggling. As Barclay says, "we are left with the peculiar paradox of a letter which is framed, with consummate skill, to induce Philemon to act in the way Paul wants and yet leaves extraordinarily unclear what exactly is being requested."[55] So, what Paul is trying to ask, is not easy to determine. Neither is the historical context that lies behind Paul's letter: what was the situation like? what urged Paul to write his letter to Philemon?

The Letter to Philemon and Paul's position regarding slavery

In order a) to reconstruct what the context was behind the letter, and b) what Paul's request in the letter was, we will have to take the text of Phm into consideration, and often even the Greek text, for this is not enlightening.

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[55] Barclay, 171.

Historical context: Paul in prison

First, Paul seems to be in prison when writing Phm: in verse 1, he presents himself not as an apostle, as we have seen, but as a "*prisoner of Christ Jesus*". The genitive "δέσμιος Χριστου Ἰησου" is certainly metaphorical; but is it only metaphorical? This is not certain, as Paul repeats the same expression in verse 9 (δέσμιος Χριστου Ἰησου), and continues with the same lexical field when using the term "chains" in verse 13: "*during my imprisonment for the gospel* (εν τοις δεσμοις του ευαγγελίου; literally meaning "in the chains of the gospel", or "in the chains for the gospel"[56]). Hence, it is likely that Paul was really in prison during the time he wrote the letter to Philemon. Phm and Philippians[57] are in fact often called "the prison epistles". Consequently, Paul seems to be in prison while writing Phm. What about Onesimus?

Onesimus' conversion through Paul

The slave Onesimus (as seen in v.16) has been "begotten" by Paul while he was in prison: "*I appeal to you on behalf of my child, whom I begot while in prison* (εν τοις δεσμοις), *Onesimus*"[58]. What does this mean? The metaphor surely

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[56] The genitives are always subject to interpretation, as they can be understood as genetivus subjectivus, genitivus objectivus, genitivus partitivus, genitivus qualitatis etc.
[57] Ephesians and Colossians are also generally considered as deutero-pauline.
[58] Phm 10; my translation.

means that Onesimus has been converted by Paul, while the latter was in prison. As O'Brien explains, "Paul was using the imagery of spiritual parenthood which he employed elsewhere[59] and which had its counterpart in Judaism, ultimately deriving from the O.T."[60] Fitzmyer gives a small theological comment: "The conversion of Onesimus was God's work, but God often works through human agents; in this case, through Paul, who regards himself as a father in Christ to Onesimus."[61] A special relationship was built between the spiritual father (Paul) and his spiritual child (Onesimus) whom the father doesn't hesitate to call his "*very own heart*" (v.12). τα ¦μ σπλάγχνα is a strong expression: the word σπλάγχνα "literally means entrails, bowels, inward, i.e. the viscera used figuratively as the set of human emotion ..."[62] So, Onesimus, who is described by Paul as his very own bowels, seems to have been converted to Christ through the apostle while in prison. So the question that follows is: how did Onesimus happened to be in prison?

Runaway or not runaway slave?

As Fitzmyer says, "we are not told how Onesimus and Paul have met. Again, one can only speculate."[63] Consequently, in order to understand Onesimus's situation, we have to look at the hints that Phm gives us. First, we have verse 12 that gives us the following information: *"I am sending him, that is, my very own heart, back to you"*. If Paul is sending Onesimus back to his master Philemon, this means that Onesimus must have been away from his master. Why has this occurred? This is one of the other hot spots, over which scholars have been arguing: did Philemon send Onesimus to bring Paul a message, and Onesimus overstayed? Did Onesimus run away? Did Onesimus leave his master's house in order to ask Paul, *amicus domini*, to use this authority to plead for a better treatment? These are the three possibilities that Fitzmyer considers[64]. Barclay expresses the situation in an alternative way: "Logically there are only two possibilities: if Onesimus was away from home, this was either with or without his master's permission."[65] This means that Onesimus has either run away or not.

The runaway hypothesis is the "traditional explanation"[66] given to Phm's historical situation, and although it has been questioned, recent articles have defended it, e.g. Nordling's article "Onesimus Fugitivus: a Defense of the Runaway

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[59] For entire communities in 1 Co 4 :15 ; Gal 4 :19 ; for individuals in 1 Co 4 :17 (2 Tim 1 :29).
[60] O'Brien, 291.
[61] Fitzmyer, 107.
[62] Fitzmyer, 100.

[63] Fitzmyer, 13.
[64] Fitzmyer, 17-20. He, himself, now stands for the third hypothesis (after having stood for the traditional runaway hypothesis) that is the *amicus domini* hypothesis.
[65] Barclay, 164.
[66] Barclay, 17.

Slave Hypothesis in Philemon."[67] We will try to determine our own point of view on the question, and to do so, we will go back to the text of Phm. As Barclay emphasizes, "The fact that the letter makes no explicit reference to Onesimus' running away is no conclusive evidence that he did not do so."[68] So let us take verse 15: "*For perhaps he has been separated* (εχωρίσθη) *for a while for the very reason, that you may have him back for eve*r." This verse has been used to defend the runaway hypothesis: to its exponents, Paul is using a passive verb to point out God's action ["has been separated", εχωρίσθη, whose hidden subject is God[69]] in order to divert the attention from Onesimus' wrongdoing (his flight). The verse would then indirectly mean: "it is not Onesimus who decided to run away from you, Philemon, but it is God who used your slave's flight to your benefit". Whether or not this interpretation is adequate, we will continue our analysis to have a broader picture before deciding if the runaway hypothesis has to be kept or not.

Stealing or not a stealing slave

Other verses point at possible other wrongdoings on Onesimus' part, i.e. verses 18-19: "*If he has wronged* (δίκησέν) *you in any*

matter or owes (ὀφείλει) *you any-thing, charge that to me. I, Paul, write this with my own hand; I will repay it -not to mention that you owe me even your own self*." These verses have been interpreted in two different ways, which lead to an opposite understanding of the historical situation behind Phm: either the sentence is a false conditional, or a "true" conditional. Either the case that Paul calls to mind is only fictive, or the conditional is used to present something real as if it was not. In other words, either Onesimus has really "wronged" (δίκησέν) his master Philemon, and probably robbed him (as he "owes" (ὀφείλει) him something) or this is just a possible idea that Paul evokes. But if this is the case, why would Paul evoke such a strange idea, if there were no substantial reality behind? So it seems that there is something true and real lying behind Paul's condition. Some scholars who do not think so, say that Paul could have then be clearer in his allusion. However, as Nordling says, "…we should not expect him (Paul) to badger Philemon with painful reminders of details already known too well."[70] I find this position convincing, and would argue that Paul uses a false conditional to speak about the real offense Philemon has done, i.e. having robbed his master Philemon, and presumably run away with his goods.

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[67] Nordling, J. G. 1991. "Onesimus Fugitivus : A Defense of the Runaway Slave Hypothesis in Philemon."*Journal For The Study Of The New Testament* 41, 97-119.

[68] Barclay, 164.

[69] Form that is therefore called a "divine passive".

[70] Nordling, 107.

The request: manumission or not manumission?

Now that we have determined the context that lies behind Paul's request to Philemon (Paul and Onesimus have met in prison, where Onesimus is, because he has fled from his master and robbed some of his goods) we can tackle his actual request: what was Paul intending to do, by writing this letter? What was he asking, as the letter has been described as a "petition letter?" As Barclay said, "... one would have to acknowledge that Paul could have made his request a lot clearer than he has."[71] Paul's request is in fact not among the clearest, and is another hot spot in exegetical research: what was Paul pleading for?

The problem

To try to answer this question, let us take a look at verses 15-16a: "*For perhaps he has been separated for a while for the very reason, that you may have him back for ever, no longer as a slave, but more than a slave, as a beloved brother*." What is meant by the statement that Philemon has to receive Onesimus "no longer as a slave, but more than a slave, as a beloved brother" οκέτι ὡς δουλον υπερ δουλον, ἀδελφὸν γαπητόν? Is Philemon invited to free Onesimus, so that he wouldn't be a slave anymore? Or will Onesimus stay a slave, but be regarded as "more than a slave"? The sentence is, once again, not really clear. To sum up the problem in a Shakespearian manner, we could say with de Vos: "...to manumit or not to manumit, that is the question."[72]

Verse 21 has been used to defend the manumission hypothesis. As Paul writes there: "*Having confidence in your obedience, I write to you, knowing that you will do even beyond what I say* (περ λέγω)." If Paul did not take manumission into consideration in the previous parts of the letter, this would be the passage where we should have no doubts that Paul is actually hinting at manumission regarding Philemon's obedience. It is on the small word "beyond" that everything is at stake: does this "beyond" what I say" imply manumission?

Manumitting a bad slave?

As Barclay has shown, both manumitting and not manumitting would present problems: "manumitting was a reward for hard work, not for running away".[73] It would be strange for Paul to ask for manumission, when knowing that the normal reaction of a master to his slave's flight was punishing him harshly: "...he (the slave) could be scourged, branded, mutilated, or fitted with a metal collar, perhaps even crucified, thrown to beasts, or killed."[74] Fitzmyer supports his

[71] Barclay, 174.

[72] De Vos, 90.
[73] Barclay, 176.
[74] Fitzmyer, 28.

terrifying list with P. Oxy. 14.1643.[75] So manumitting a bad slave, who had presumably run away with some of his master's goods, would be totally abnormal for the time; and Paul would probably have insisted more on the point, if he wanted to make such a strange request. Moreover, what would the other slaves of Philemon think, if he manumitted a "bad" slave? Barclay writes, "How outraged they would be that they should have to remain in slavery while their delinquent fellow-slave got his freedom!"[76] We could extend this idea to Philemon's social relationships. As de Vos has shown, Greco-Roman society was a society of honour and power; so what would Philemon's social circle think of such an incoherent master's behaviour? All this suggests that Paul was not asking for manumission in his letter to Philemon.

Being slave and brother

On the other hand, however, how could Philemon receive Onesimus back as his slave and see him as a "beloved brother" (v.16) at the same time? As Barclay shows, "In the context of the home, it is hard to imagine masters and slaves being able to pretend that they were of equal status. If a Christian slave refused to obey an order if he felt "led by the Spirit" to do otherwise, would a Christian master have to accept this recalcitrance?"[77]

Beyond this question of obedience, a more crucial question would be, as Barclays shows: "How would slaves fare at the Lord's Supper? … would the masters on the occasion of the Lord's Supper break social etiquette by eating with their slaves, allowing them the same quality of food and wine?" Barclay continues: "Even if we can imagine such a possibility, it is interesting to note that the Corinthian Christians were clearly unable to break the social conventions in this context and that the best solution Paul can imagine is that all should eat their own meals at home before they gathered (1 Cor 11. 17--34)."[78] The problem is thus really complex, and there seems to exist no easy solution, be it manumitting Onesimus or not manumitting him.

Not asking for manumission… No change

Moreover, as de Vos has shown, manumission would maybe even not make any difference:

> The act of manumission did not significantly change the circumstances of most slaves, or how they were perceived or treated. And manumission, in and of itself, almost certainly would not have changed the actual relationship that they had with their former masters. Consequently, the structural and legal change of manumission would have made no significant change to the relational dynamic between Philemon and Onesimus.[79]

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[75] Dated A.D. 268.
[76] Barclay, 176.
[77] Barclay, 178.

[78] Barclay, 179.
[79] De Vos, 100.

As we have previously seen, Greco-Roman society was a collectivist, authoritarian and patriarchal culture, in which stereotyped character were found. For instance, slaves "were, by definition, lazy, negligent, wilful, cowardly, and criminal;"[80] stereotypes that are also found in Greek comedies. De Vos imagines a Greco-Roman dictum that would be: "once a slave, always a slave."[81] To de Vos, Paul is not appealing to manumission, for he knows that it would not make any significant change. De Vos reads verses 15-16a ("*For perhaps he has been separated for a while for the very reason, that you may have him back forever, no longer as a slave, but more than a slave, as a beloved brother*") as asking for more than just a legal change in Onesimus' status; because just a legal change would not profoundly affect the relationship with his master Philemon. De Vos says:

> ...Paul's concern would appear to have been a *perceptional* and *relational* one rather than a structural one. While he does not seek to alter the fact that legally and structurally they remained master and slave, he wants to bring about a fundamental change in the nature of their relationship as master and slave.[82]

So, Philemon and Onesimus would stay master and slave, but would have to change the way they consider one another – which is even harder, one imagines.

Pliny's letter to Sabianus

The hypothesis that Paul is not asking for manumission, but for a change in Philemon's and Onesimus' relationship can be supported by a document that has survived: Pliny the Younger's letter to Sabianus. In this letter, Pliny asks his friend Sabianus for compassion regarding his former slave's behaviour. What is worth noting, is that Pliny is writing on behalf of a *freedman*! As de Vos says,

> the fact that this letter, written on behalf of a freedman who was estranged from his former master, is the closest parallel we have to a letter written on behalf of a slave who was estranged from his present master (Phm), amply demonstrates the fact that the structural change of manumission would have made little significant difference in relationships between slaves and masters.[83]

Here we find de Vos' argument again, now grounded in a historical document we have: manumission would make no difference, as Pliny's letter to Sabianus shows.[84]

No longer as a slave

The idea that Paul is not asking for manumission can also be supported linguistically, if we underline the importance of the comparative preposition "*as*" in verse 16a: "*no longer as a slave, but more than a slave, as a beloved brother*". O'Brien makes this commentary, "...had Paul wished

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[80] De Vos, 95.
[81] De Vos, 95.
[82] De Vos, 85.

[83] De Vos, 85.
[84] Pliny the Younger, *Ep. 9.21.*

to describe the latter (Onesimus' manumission) and therefore suggest that the runaway slave was to be freed, he would have simply written δουλον, 'a slave', instead of ñς δουλον, 'as a slave'"[85]. O'Brien continues, "In other words, whether Onesimus remained a slave or not, he could no longer be regarded as a slave. A change had been effected in him independent of his possible manumission."[86] So this literary analysis of the construction of the verse and the importance of the two words "as" show that Paul doesn't plead for Onesimu's manumission.

The step Philemon has to make

Another argument to support the non-manumission hypothesis that can be evoked is psychological and pedagogical one: Paul does not appeal for manumission in his letter, because Philemon himself should be the one to make the decision to free his slave or not. As Barclay says:

> …he (Paul) wants to leave the decision in this matter to Philemon. This, it is argued, is not simply because Philemon must be allowed to decide how he will exercise his legal rights and responsibilities, but also because Philemon must be left to work out what is demanded by love. As Lohse writes: Philemon "is encouraged to let love do its work, for love is resourceful enough to

find the right way in accomplishing the good."[87]

Philemon would have to make the step; Onesimus' manumission should be a personal decision made with intimate conviction. So Paul would in fact leave the matter entirely in Philemon's hands. But this would be a rather new way of handling things for Paul, for he usually did not hesitate in telling his communities directly how to behave and how not. So this argument may not be the strongest one to support the non-manumission hypothesis.

The shortness of time

A stronger argument against the non-manumission hypothesis is the eschatological one. As we know, Paul was deeply concerned with the coming of Christ, the *parousia*. His view of this world was that it would soon pass away. So it was of no importance, and even useless to Paul, to even consider manumission, as everybody would soon leave this world to see God's glory revealed in his son Jesus Christ. Barclay makes this point:

> Among the factors which those verses and their context highlight are…the shortness of time he anticipated before the present scheme of things would pass away ([1 Co] vv. 29-30). Since, at least at that time, Paul expected the parousia before most of his generation died (1 Cor 15. 51-2), there was little point in advocating manumission since its main beneficiaries were the

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[85] O'Brien bases his assumption on the works of Lightfoot, Vincent, Lohmeyer, Bratcher and Nida, cf. O'Brien 297.
[86] O'Brien, 297.

[87] Barclay, 175.

future generations descended from freedmen and the whole system of slavery was soon to disappear.[88]

Seen from this point of view, the problem is, in fact, quite different. De facto, as we have seen, the main beneficiaries of manumission were not the freedmen: manumission did not really affect their status, as they continued to be legally, or at least socially, bound to their master. Their children, however, would benefit from their parent's manumission, as they would be born free. Since Paul's view of the world was that it was going to disappear soon, with everyone in it, parents and children, it would be nearly irrelevant for him to ask for manumission.

"Stay as you are" (1 Co 7)

Neutel makes the same argument as Barclay, when comparing Paul's letter to Philemon to two other Pauline passages: 1 Co 7 and Ga 3:28 (which is the main focus of her doctoral thesis). In 1 Co 7: 20-22, Paul insists on the fact that "each man (should) stay in that calling in which he was called" (v.20). As Neutel suggests, Paul gives a general principle of conduct that he claims to decree in all communities: that everyone should stay in the position in which they were called… He formulates and reformulates this principle and…illustrates it with two examples, circumcision and slaves. These examples reflect the divisions named in the baptismal formula

[Ga 3:28; 1 Co 12:13, which are marriage/ethnicity/slavery]. The overarching subject of marriage and celibacy deals with male and female, while the two examples deal with the division between Jew and Greek (through circumcision), and slave and free. The relative importance of these social distinctions is denied in each case.[89]

Neutel's argument is that Paul considers marriage or celibacy, circumcision or non-circumcision, slavery or freedom, as irrelevant categories with regard to the inclusion in Christ through baptism: "…'in Christ' their position has already changed"[90] Neutel says. And this is the essential part – all other social distinctions are not relevant.

… But still asking for a Change — News of a Profound Change

What is essential, is the new belonging of Onesimus to Christ: his "conversion"[91] in prison through Paul, his new status as a "Christian"[92], which is the news Paul brings to Philemon in his letter (as Philemon can't know what has occurred to his slave Onesimus during his absence). In verse 10, when Paul presents Onesimus, he first says that he is his "child", whom he has "begotten while in prison", before

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[88] Barclay, 184.

[89] Neutel, 236.
[90] Neutel, 237.
[91] Again, I use the word "conversion" for convenience, although it is incorrect, as Onesimus did not "convert" to another religion, but simply began to follow to Christ.
[92] I'll use this adjective again as it is convenient, although we know that "Christianity" did not exist *per se* at that time.

even giving his name, and making Philemon know who he is speaking about. This presentation is carefully structured: Paul first underlines the relationship he has with Onesimus, and the essential change the latter has undergone, before giving his name, that could bring anger to his master Philemon, when just hearing the name of his runaway slave. As Fitzmyer says, "he (Paul) names him only after he has shown that the slave is now a Christian; thus he renders Philemon more favourably disposed to his 'child'"[93], and I would like to add, to the request he is making on his behalf. So the fundamental change that has happened is Onesimus' "conversion"[94] to Christ. This should have consequences, to which Paul is appealing, as we will see.

A change with direct implications

The fundamental change Onesimus has experienced, Philemon has undergone too: Paul has also been his spiritual father, as he directly reminds him in verse 19b: "a*nd I won't remind you that you owe me even your own self*". The rhetorical "more"[95] is used by Paul to show Philemon that he has been in a similar situation to

Onesimus: he too has been "converted" by Paul; he too is Paul's child, and as Onesimus has just also become Paul's child is consequently Onesimus' brother too. This is why Philemon is asked to receive him "*no longer as a slave, but more than a slave, as a beloved brother*" (v.16b), a beloved brother in Christ. Onesimus' conversion is then the central argument Paul uses to bring Philemon and Onesimus together. As both have been converted through Paul, as both are spiritual children of Paul, they are consequently "brothers", and brothers in Christ. So they have to behave in a Christian way – that means forgiveness and reconciliation, rather than anger and punishment. This is what Paul is appealing to not manumission He wants a more profound change in the relationship between Onesimus the slave (and even runaway slave) and Philemon the master, because Onesimus the runaway slave and Philemon the master are brothers in Christ. As Neutel says:

> If the letter [Phm] is indeed an attempt to mediate between Philemon and Onesimus, then Paul's mediation strategy is based on Onesimus' conversion. Because he has now become a believer, his relationship to Philemon has undergone a fundamental change, making any previous history indeed a thing of the past. If we can pinpoint the content of Paul's plea, it would have to be that Philemon accepts the consequences of Onesimus' faith, receives him back accordingly and lets the past rest.[96]

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[93] Fitzmyer, 106.
[94] Cf. note n° 92.
[95] It is a "rhetorical more" because Paul plays with a comparison to the financial debt that Onesimus has regarding his master Philemon, in order to say that the financial debt that Onesimus has to Philemon is nothing regarding the spiritual debt that Philemon himself has regarding Paul.

[96] Neutel, 144.

As Neutel points out, Paul's main concern is about the future[97] and not about the past. Paul's refrain could be, "Let the past (Onesimus' wrongdoings and Philemon's anger) be past, let us look at the future (your reconciliation)." Paul's way to mediate the conflict between Philemon and Onesimus, by looking at the future rather than at the past, is an excellent way to handle conflicts although it is not necessarily easy for the persons involved in the conflict. This future-focused position of Paul also makes Neutel say ironically that all the exegetical attempts to reconstruct the historical context laying behind Phm are pointless: "Paul's lack of interest in these past events hinders the attempts of scholars to reconstruct them."[98] In fact, Paul's concern is about the future, and about the future of Philemon and Onesimus' relationship.

Slaves of Christ, free men of Christ

We can also link Paul's plea to Philemon to receive Onesimus back as a "brother" (v.16), and not only as a slave, with another of Paul's passages that we have already taken into consideration, 1 Co 7, and also with the famous verse of Ga 3:28. As Neutel says:

> That Onesimus is now no longer a slave, but has become Philemon's brother in the Lord has strong

similarities to Paul's claim in 1 Corinthians that slaves are freed and free people are slaves of Christ (1 Corinthians 7:22), and to the baptismal saying that there is "*neither slave nor free*" in Christ. All these statements connect a change in the status of slave and free, particularly a denial of slave status, to belonging to Christ.[99]

1 Corinthians is indeed interesting in relationship to our main question regarding Paul and slavery. In 1 Co 7:22 Paul says that "*For he who was called in the Lord being a bondservant is the Lord's free man. Likewise he who was called being free is Christ's bondservant.*" A symbolic inversion has to take place, but the bondservant will legally remain a bondservant, as the free man likewise will remain a free man. Paul's letter to Philemon has a parallel message: Onesimus has to be received back as a brother, but he is probably going to stay a slave. The social structures will probably stay as they are. A more profound change has, however, occurred, Onesimus' conversion to Christ, and has to occur. There are consequences of this conversion, both for Philemon and Onesimus.

A fundamental change in all settings

We can consequently agree with de Vos (as seen before) that "Paul's concern would appear to have been a perceptional and relational one rather than a structural one. While he

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[97] We must not forget that, what Paul awaits most, is situated in the future, although in the near future: the parousia.
[98] Neutel, 144.

[99] Neutel, 140.

does not seek to alter the fact that legally and structurally, they remained master and slave, he wants to bring about a fundamental change in the nature of their relationship as master and slave."[100] A change has to occur, and "in *all* settings", this is what verse 16b shows. Let us consider the full sequence of verses 15-16: *"For perhaps he has been separated for a while for the very reason, that you may have him back for ever, no longer as a slave, but more than a slave, as a beloved brother; he is such to me, but how much to you, both in the flesh (σαρκ) and in the Lord."* These two short expressions, 'in the flesh' and "in the Lord" are crucial. They mean that in every situation, "in the flesh" and "in the Lord", Onesimus has now to be regarded as a brother by his master Philemon.

So it is in this way that we can agree with O'Brien, stating that "the relationship between the two men [Philemon and Onesimus] is deepened, so that the terms "slave" and "master" are transcended. And although Onesimus' earthly freedom may be of positive value, finally it is of no ultimate significance to him as a Christian as to whether he is slave or free. In the end what matters is to have accepted God's call and to follow him."[101] I liked O'Brien's idea that the terms "slave" and "master" have to be transcended, both by Philemon and by Onesimus, to which Paul is appealing in his letter to Philemon.

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[100]De Vos, 102.
[101]O'Brien, 270.

Conclusion: "Master" and "Slave" as Transcended Terms

So, to go back to our initial question: if Paul was incoherent in his thinking, as he was saying that there was "neither slave nor free" in Ga 3:28, but seemed not to stand against slavery in Philemon, we can say that this questioning was tinged with anachronism and induced by a misreading of Paul. First, it was anachronistic: although "what strikes the modern reader of such Pauline passages is his failure to speak out against the social institution of slavery in general and the injustices that are often involved, not only for the individual so entrapped but also for his wife and children,"[102] as Fitzmyer says, Paul would have been twenty centuries ahead of his time if he actually would have stood against the institution of slavery *per se*. As Barclay says, "it was impossible to imagine a slave-less society, except in a utopian dream-world where food cooked itself and doors opened of their own accord."[103] However, such utopias did exist in the Therapeutae and Essenes communities for instance, according to Philo and Josephus, but these were communities living separated from society, in the desert.[104] Paul was not far

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[102]Fitzmyer, 32.
[103]Barclay, 177.
[104]Cf. Barclay who makes this point p.177. Also cf. Neutel p. 172.

from this ideal, as his communities actually contained both slaves and free men. But standing totally against slavery is a step too far that would not have fit Paul's theological thinking. Fitzmyer underlines it:

> The unity of Christians in Christ Jesus is an effect of faith and baptism and results in Christian equality. That equality "in Christ Jesus" does not cancel out all cultural, political, or social distinctions. It is rather a unity that transcends the distinctions such as they are. This is made clear by 1 Cor 12:13-14, where Paul says, *"Just as a body is one, though it has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so too is Christ. For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and we all were made to drink of one Spirit."*[105]

Fitzmyer also quotes 2 Cor 5: 17, *"Whoever is in Christ is a new creation; things of old have passed away, new things have come to be."* He makes this analysis: "This [verse] expresses the Christological foundation of the way that Paul regards the new Christian status."[106] So Paul is interested in profound changes that occur due to the consequence of one's 'conversion'[107] to Christ.

So after this journey through Paul's letter to Philemon and his view of slavery, we have arrived at the conclusion that Paul did not ask for Onesimus' manumission in Phm. However, he did stand for a change in the relationship. This change

had to begin with forgiveness, with accepting the "wrong-doer" slave as a "brother" (v.16). Nordling broadens the theological implications of such a position and makes an analogy of Paul's appeal and God's behaviour: "Paul begs Philemon to accept the former thief and runaway as brother in the Lord, just as God accepts the repentant sinner for Christ's sake. The radical nature of Christian forgiveness is thus contrasted with the harsh laws of this world." And he continues: "The theologically minded apostle apparently seized an opportunity to apply the gospel to a specific problem …"[108] Later on he says: "the theological dimension of Philemon assured the letter's eventual inclusion in the NT[109], and thus its preservation."[110] So, if Paul's letter to Philemon was preserved, it is, according to Nordling, due to its theological content, that we have analyzed through Paul's relationship to slavery. This problem goes far beyond a historical question, as we have seen, and embraces Paul's entire theology and view of a belonging to Christ as a new identity, that transcends all other social identities and classes.

To sum up Paul's position regarding slavery, we can say that it

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[105]Fitzmyer, 32.
[106]Fitzmyer, 32.
[107]Cf. note n° 95.

[108]Nordling, 118.
[109]A point that was highly disputed by scholars: why would such a "personal" letter be included in the canon? But as seen previously, it is not only a "personal" letter. Cf p.10.
[110]Nordling, 119.

is not a revolutionary position. As Neutel shows, however, "Paul [was] not considered a 'social conservative' in contrast to other 'social progressives' of his time, he [was] labelled a conservative in contrast to modern values."[111] which is clearly a wrong way of interpreting the past, if induced by an anachronistic comparison. But Paul's position is not a conservative one either. In fact, in Paul's view, every situation has to be challenged and transcended by the Gospel – including slavery. As the introduction to Phm in the French TOB[112] says, "tout ordre social se trouve radicalement mis en question par l'Evangile du Christ et son message d'amour."[113]

Openings

After this analysis on Philemon, there is much still to explore. Our starting question in this paper was Paul's relationship to slavery, and hence our focus was historical, back to the source. But it would be of great interest too to analyze the different receptions, interpretations and understandings of Paul's letter to Philemon, e.g. Luther's interpretation of it, or how Phm was used both by abolitionists and anti-abolitionists to defend their position regarding slavery. It would also be meaningful to draw a contemporary

interpretation of Phm in relationship to slavery as present today in our society. Because, even if we live in a post-abolitionist society, slavery still exists, and people are still economically, politically or culturally enslaved[114]. Truly there are still people working against their will and for nothing, people forced to give their health, their youth or their freedom to satisfy other people's needs. It is likely that we are these 'other people,' without sometimes even knowing it – or wanting to know it. So these servile relationships we live in have also to be challenged by the message of the Gospel, that Paul has spent his life spreading, orally, or by his letters.

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[111]And as Neutel shows, "Paul is not considered a 'social conservative' in contrast to other 'social progressives' of his time, he is labelled a conservative in contrast to modern values" (Neutel 130.). Which is a wrong way of interpreting the past with an anachronistic comparison.

[112]TOB meaning *Traduction œcuménique de la Bible*.

[113]TOB, Société biblique française, le Cerf, 2004, p. 1691.

[114]Cf. the book *Disposable People : New Slavery in the Global Economy* by Kevin Bales, that Desmond Tutu has called "a well-researched, scholarly and deeply disturbing exposé of modern day slavery with well-thought-out strategies for what to do to combat this scourge. None of us is allowed the luxury of imagined impotence. We can do something about it." Cf. also the following web page where you can find out "how many slaves work for you", filling in a survey that calculates your "slavery footprint": http://slaveryfootprint.org.

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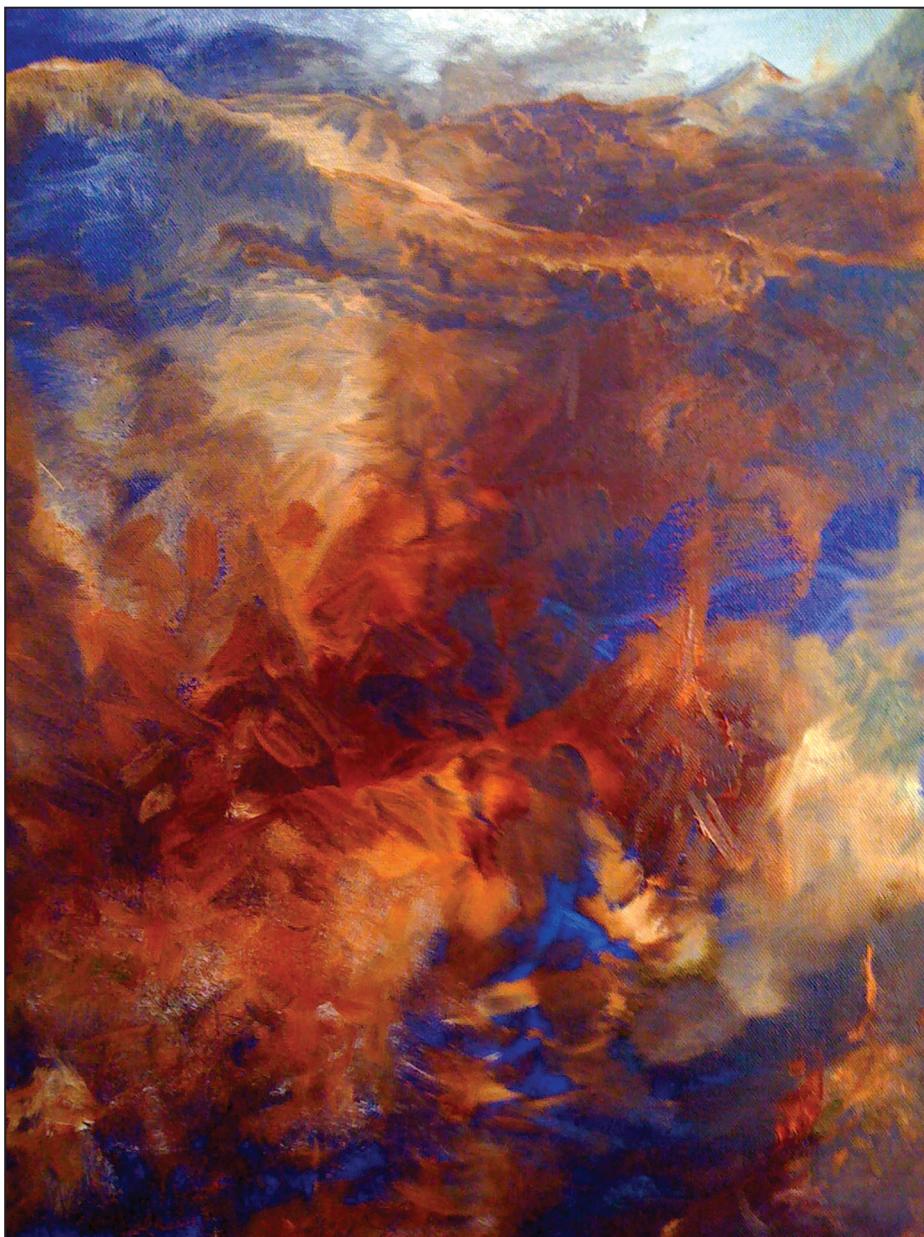
Landscape Imagined, oil on canvas, Abbie Perkins

The Impact of St. Paul and St. Augustine on Dante's *Paradiso*

Derek Bateman

The impact of Dante's *Divina Commedia* has reverberated and influenced the cultural disposition of western civilization since the manuscripts first circulated towards the end of the fourteenth century (the actual publication was on April 11, 1472). The allure of this epic poem resides in its multiplicity of ideas that encapsulate the medieval worldview that had been evolving since the early Christian era. This worldview is a complex conflagration of philosophical and theological ideas that were driven by social, political and "divine" theories that were attempting to situate and understand Man's relationship to the natural world through the lens of a dominant Christian consciousness – a consciousness that struggled with established doctrines that propagated a deeply complex Christological and soteriological concept of God. The power struggle between the social and political responsibilities of a governing body on the one hand, and the "divine" and salvific jurisdiction of the Church and its

Papal hegemony in Rome on the other, generated a dynamic within the overall power system of Europe that at times proved to be both contentious and destructive. The expanding influence of Christianity in conjunction with the marauding pagan Germanic tribes of the early middle ages through the Crusades and confrontations with the Muslim expansionism of the high middle ages and the internal Papal struggles of the late middle ages determined the socio-political cultural milieu of Dante's age.

Dante's epic brings these multifarious ideologies together in an allegorical exposition that proceeds to address the complex cosmological notions of the Middle Ages through a narrative journey that incorporates the voices of the key players in the sacred/profane dialectic that shaped the European cultural developments of the first fourteen centuries of the Common Era. These voices include the pre-Christian pagan cultural icons, early

Christian and political theorists, patristic exegetes and a multitude of post ancient ideologues who continually developed and expanded upon the doctrines and dogmas that were established in the early ecumenical councils. The establishment of the canonical writing that comprise the New Testament involved a power struggle among numerous interpretative approaches to the "event" of Jesus – a struggle that included competing "Christian," Jewish and pagan renderings of the event. The initial determination of what constituted the "orthodox" remained unstable as those alternative views (Manichaeism, Arianism Docetism etc.) continually sought to undermine the authority of the immediate post Constantine theocracy. The unabashed polemic of the politicized nature of that theocracy constitutes a pivotal thematic concern that permeates Dante's poem, and speaks to the progressive concerns that revolve around the issue of the "Church/State" dynamic.

Dante's *Commedia* engages these concerns and attempts to better understand the difficulty of reconciliation between the divine and the political/social. While the poem purports to be a "spiritual" visionary journey to the empyrean, the excursion is grounded in the liminal space that fluctuates between the sacred and the profane. Dante's pilgrim is modeled on the nefarious character of St Paul whose claim in 2 Corinthians 12:1-4 is the central trajectory that launches the epic on its quest. How this Pauline "vision"

impacts Dante's thinking and the structure of the poem itself is mainly rendered through the "eyes" of St. Augustine's exegesis of this "rapture" to the third Heaven. This essay will attempt to demonstrate that Dante was utilizing Augustine's typological determination regarding the three possible modes of engagement with God in relation to the purported Pauline visionary "rapture" in both a structural, as well as a thematic and theological sense. Paul's undisputed significance to the development of Christian orthodoxy, as well as his unavoidable political and social situation within the conflation of competing political and religious ideologies during the first century of the Common Era, made him an ideal point of reference for both Augustine's philosophical development and for Dante's theological, political and poetic encapsulation of the medieval world view within the allegorical narrative of the *Commedia*.

The context in which 2 Corinthians was written is an important factor in regards to the claim to have been raptured to the third heaven. Rival "apostles" had challenged Paul's authority and the tone of this letter is both angry and defensive. There is a political dynamic involved that speaks to the competing "powers" that are vying for the attention of the potential and indoctrinated "Christians" of Corinth. Paul chastises the opposition for their unchristian like "boasting" but then proceeds to engage in that very same endeavor:

"But whatever anyone dares to boast of—I am speaking as a fool—I also dare to boast of that" (2 Cor. 11:21). Paul's rhetorical practice allows him to engage the "opposition" on their own terms – the political. Paul, however, fuses the political with the "divine" when his boast involves the ultimate religious experience: a direct encounter with God – the ultimate authority:

> It is necessary to boast; nothing is to be gained by it, but I will go on to visions and revelations of the Lord. [2] I know a person in Christ who fourteen years ago was caught up to the third heaven—whether in the body or out of the body I do not know; God knows. [3] And I know that such a person—whether in the body or out of the body I do not know; God knows— [4] was caught up into Paradise and heard things that are not to be told, that no mortal is permitted to repeat (2 Cor. 12: 1-4).

While it is suggested that the opponents initiated this claiming to divine authentication, Paul's response surpasses his apostolic assertion to have encountered Jesus (*Acts 9:3-9*) and places him in a distinct position of divinity comparable only to that of Moses. This articulation within the Pauline corpus has challenged exegetics on numerous levels, not the least concerning the possibility of a direct encounter with God while still existing within corporeal actuality. Yet it is this visionary experience that forms the foundation of Dante's epic. Dante would have appreciated that Paul, the "radical Jew," proclaimed this momentous vision while immersed in a socio-political struggle since Dante's own political machinations and exile were dominant forces in both his life and art. Augustine, as well, was fully cognizant of the connection between the political and the ecclesiastic and spent considerable time captivated by the Pauline epistles.[1] But this singular moment in the Pauline visionary expression led Augustine to formulate a typology that addresses the sustainability of Paul's claim while formulating a response to the question regarding the nature of not only the third heaven, but the first two as well. This typology would then go on to impact much theological thought of the middle ages and would, through a series of analysis', reach out to Dante and help to shape the structural and thematic integrity of his *Commedia*.

St Augustine developed his typology regarding the "third heaven" in the twelfth book of *De Genesi ad Litteram*. Determining that it was necessary to understand the first two heavens in order to comprehend the third, Augustine concluded that the heavens should be acknowledged in a "spiritual sense" whereby he formulated an idea of three "forms of vision" constituting the *visio corporalis, visio spiritualis* and the *visio intellectualis*.[2] While Augustine's discussion concerning the "heavens" is lengthy and involves complex

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[1] Paula Fredriksen explores this Augustine/Paul relationship in her book *Augustine and the Jews: A Christian Defense of Jews and Judaism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008)

[2] Marguerite Milles Chiarenza, "The Imageless Vision and Dante's Paradiso" *Dante Studies* 92 (1972) 77.

philosophic summations, Francis X. Newman summarizes his findings as follows: "The three Pauline 'heavens' are really figures for the three kinds of human vision, that is, the three fundamental modes of awareness."[3] The *visio corpoalis* involves a relationship with God through the "external senses" while the *visio spiritualis* involves the imagination where "images have corporeal shape without corporeal substance." It is, however, the third classification, the *visio intellectualis*, that involves the level of vision that Paul is referring to whereby there is a "direct cognition of realities such as God, the angels, caritas, etc., which have neither corporeal substance nor corporeal shape."[4] This hierarchical taxonomy suggests a progressive procedure by which the individual must pass through the first two states before arriving at the "third" level. The first stage is common to many – it involves the recognition of "Godly" phenomena in the materiality of the "everyday" and is available to those people of faith and belief. The second stage would seem to be the reserve of those who expend their lives in contemplation of God and who experience "dreamlike" revelations of a divine deity that manifest in visual imagery such as is common to actual dreams. The *visio intellectualis* is, however, beyond these experiences and can only be achieved after passing through the first two "heavens" and must also involve God's direct influence – an invitation by which the "visionary" experience transcends the "image" and involves a "pure" state of mind in which the encounter is unmediated by any sensory perception. By attributing this level of "intellectual" visual experience to Paul, Augustine accepts the possibility of a "*facie ad faciem*" encounter with God. Joseph Anthony Mazzeo, in his examination of Augustine's explication of the *visio intellectualis*, claims that Augustine ascribed this kind of mystical experience to both Paul and Moses:

> It is a purely intellectual vision in which is seen the brightness of God, not through a corporeal or even spiritual figuration as through a meaningful image (aenigma) in a mirror, but face to face, or, as Moses expressed it, mouth to mouth. This is the vision of God by that "species "by which God is what he is, however little the mind, even when purified of all corporeality, is able to grasp him. This is the same transcendent vision St. Paul had and in which he saw, as we may well believe, the life in which we are to live forever.[5]

Augustine's conclusions were challenged and contested by many early theologians such as St. Gregory Nazianzen and St Gregory the Great. Both these men determined that it was not possible to see God in his "essence." St Gregory of Nazianzen employs Paul's own words in order to dismiss the notion of a 'pure' encounter with God: "For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then we will see face

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[3] Francis X. Newman, "St Augustine's Three Visions and the Structure of the Commedia" *MLN* 82 no.1 (1967) 58-59.

[4] Ibid, 59.

[5] Joseph Anthony Mazzeo, "Dante and the Pauline Modes of Vision" *The Harvard Theological Review* 50 no.4 (1957) 280-281.

to face. Now I know only in part; then I will know fully, even as I have been fully known" (1 Cor. 13:12). St Gregory the Great utilizes scripture as well as a means to argue against the "face to face" experience: "But," he said, "you cannot see my face; for no one shall see me and live" (Ex 33:20). Mazzeo suggests that St Gregory the Great acknowledged that Paul's "rapture" was beyond the ordinary, but that it was not a "direct" vision of God. Both men adhered to the belief that the "essence" of God cannot be experienced directly while still remaining within "mortal flesh."[6]

The application of philosophical notions and scriptural exegesis' to the conundrum of the Pauline "rapture" continued throughout the Middle ages and the speculations led to the production of Apocryphal texts that attempted to "narrate" the "ineffable" Pauline experience. Some of these texts, such as the *Visio Pauli* were popular in the middle ages and impacted the general apprehension and understanding of the possibilities regarding humankind's relationship with God. This popularity was consistent through to the late Middle Ages: "But its popularity remained undisturbed till the time of Dante, for there are Middle English versions of it."[7] In particular, the *Visio Pauli* not only expanded upon the Pauline "rapture," but is has been suggested that it was one of the most detailed

and embraced sources regarding the composition of Heaven and Hell: "more than any other of the apocryphal apocalypses was responsible for the spread of many popular ideas of Heaven and Hell throughout Christianity and especially in the Western church if the Middle Ages."[8] This popularity suggests that the text had wide exposure and was a means by which certain Christian concepts were disseminated to a wide and relatively uneducated populace. The narrative nature of the text would have been far more appealing to the masses than the usual erudite writings and theories regarding Paul's epistle to the Corinthians proposed by the theological intelligentsia. The text was, however, controversial in so far as it purported to "speak" about: "things that are not to be told, that no mortal is permitted to repeat" (2 Cor. 12: 4). Shippey suggests that: "St. Augustine laughed at it in his treatise *On John*"[9] and the obvious "borrowing" from the *Revelation of John* led to criticism regarding eschatological issues that suggested a diminishment of the relevancy of the "second coming."[10] Nevertheless, the impact of this text regarding the shaping of Christian concepts of the "hereafter" during the Middle Ages is palpable and its influence on Dante's

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[6] Ibid, 276-278.
[7] T.A. Shippey, *Poems of Wisdom and Learning in Old English* (Cambridge: Rowman and Littlefield, 1976), 31.
[8] J. K. Elliot, *The Apocryphal New Testament: A Collection of Apocryphal Christian Literature in an English Translation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 616.
[9] Shippey, *Poems of Wisdom*, 31.
[10] A. Hilhorst, "The Apocalypse of Paul: Previous History and Afterlife" in *The Visio Pauli and the Gnostic Apocalypse*, eds. Jan N. Bremmer and Istvan Czachesz (Leuven: Peeters, 2007), 20.

imagery is perceptible.[11] Dante's allegorical methodology and diversity of appropriation embraces both the imagery of the *Visio Pauli* and the tripartite Augustinian analysis of Paul's "rapture" in the construction and illumination of an overall Pauline theology relating to the visionary journey towards the "beatific" moment that is the aspiration of the "pilgrim" (and the poet) of the *Commedia*.

The three kinds of experience that Augustine differentiates in his exegesis concerning 2 Corinthians 12:1-4 corresponds to Dante's three canticle structure in the *Commedia*. The *visio corporalis* is most clearly defined in the dual emphasis on weight and light that permeates *Inferno, Purgatorio* and *Paradisio*. The structural integrity of the poem involves a progressive preparatory acquisition of "grace" and "faith" on the part of the "pilgrim" that is a necessary transformative experience in order for the final canto to resonate with authenticity. If Paul is the model for the experience, then the pilgrim must achieve the same level of "blessedness" that will allow for: "a new kind of vision whereby he sees with the eyes of the soul or mind, a vision whereby invisible and intelligible things are seen in their essence and immediately."[12] Once the pilgrim has achieved this state, he is able to experience the "facie ad faciem"

moment with God that had hitherto been, arguably, the exclusive domain of the "two great parallel figures of the old and new dispensations"[13]: Moses and Paul. The Inferno is shadowed in darkness and is informed with a sense of corporeality that culminates in the image of the beastly Lucifer who fell with such weight and force that the earth was transformed: "This was the side n which he fell from Heaven; for rear of him, the land that once loomed here made of sea a veil and rose into our hemisphere; and that land which appears upon this side – perhaps to flee from him – left here this hollow space and hurried upward" (*Inferno* 34: 121-126). This stage of the pilgrim's journey involves a progressive transformation that leads to a higher state of grace. The inferno is the first of three cumulative journeys in which the *visio corporalis* is fully exhausted. While the darkness (lack of light) here is the antitheses of the divine light in Paradiso, it is also the corporeal weight of the inferno that is the diametric opposite of the weightlessness that permeates heaven. The climactic moment in this canticle, in which anatomical carnal tangibility is emphasized, corresponds to the first "visio" experience and prepares the pilgrim to enter into the second Augustinian state: *visio spiritualis*. In Augustinian terms, this moment involves a vision of God, but in the most "primitive" level within the tripartite classification:

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[11] The compilation of essays in *The Visio Pauli and the Gnostic Apocalypse*. Eds. Jan N. Bremmer and Istvan Czachesz. (Leuven: Peeters, 2007), thoroughly explores this apocryphal text in relation to evolution of Pauline theology through the Middle Ages.

[12] Mazzeo, "Dante," 301.

[13] Ibid., 281.

But Augustine said that it is possible to see God in each of the three modes of vision and that is true even in the Inferno. To look upon Satan is to look upon a body stamped with the sign of God. In his three heads we discern the Trinity, in his parody of the cross we discern Christ. And so it is that the act of vision at the end of Inferno is not terminal, but leads inevitably beyond itself, just as Satan is himself a scala whom the pilgrims climb in order to ascend from Hell.[14]

The brighter and loftier setting of *Purgatorio* is immediately announced in the proem and invocation of canto 1: "To course across more kindly waters now my talent's little vessel lifts her sail" (*Purgatorio* 1: 1-2). The corporeality of the pilgrim remains, but it has been transformed as a result of the passage through the inferno and is now more prepared to deal with the diminishment of corporeal materiality such as time and space. The consistency with which the organic and physicality of the landscape depreciates is directly related to the increase in the pilgrim's "divine" awareness. Cato instructs Virgil to: "bathe his face, to wash away all of Hell's stains" (*Purgatorio* 1: 95-96) – signifying a baptismal rite which introduces the pilgrim to this new mode of awareness. The encounters in this second sub-journey will be with images that retain a corporeal shape, but no longer have corporeal substance, as they did in Inferno. The translucency of the shades in *Purgatorio* speaks to the increased "light" that foreshadows the

"brilliance" that waits in *Paradiso*. The furtherance of this state of spiritual vision is encapsulated in canto 25. In his discussion regarding the formation of the "shades," Statius draws an analogy between the "images" and a rainbow:

> There, once the soul is circumscribed by space, the power that gives form irradiates as – and as much as – once it formed live limbs. And even as the saturated air, since it reflects the rays the sun has sent, takes rainbow colors as its ornament, so there, where the soul stopped, the nearby air takes on the form that soul impressed on it, a shape that is, potentially, real body (*Purgatorio* 25: 88-96).

Again, the pilgrim is led to a climactic moment that will prepare him for the transformative evolution that will enable the passage to the third of Augustine's "modes of vision." The pilgrim's "vision of God" in this second state of awareness comes in the mediated exposure to Beatrice's unveiled smile in Canto 31:

> 'Turn, Beatrice, o turn your holy eyes upon your faithful one,' their song beseeched, 'who, that he might see you, has come so far. Out of your grace, do us this grace; unveil your lips to him, so that he may discern the second beauty you have kept concealed. O splendor of eternal living light, who's ever grown so pale beneath Parnassus' shade or has drunk so deeply from its fountain, that he'd not seem to have his mind confounded, trying to render you as you appeared where heaven's harmony was your pale likeness- your face, seen through the air, unveiled completely?' (*Purgatorio* 31: 133-145)

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[14] Newman, "St Augustine's," 66.

It is through this image – the corporeal image of Beatrice – an image that is a shade without corporeal substance that the "light" of God peeks out at the pilgrim. It is a clearer and brighter vision of God, but it is still a mediated image. Inferno ended with a vision of God in the "body" (Satan) – now *Purgatorio* ends with a vision of God in an image (Beatrice). The landscape of *Purgatorio* mediates between the shadowy corporeality of Hell and the translucent incorporeity of Heaven.[15]

Once in *Paradiso* the narrative conveys a continued diminishment of all corporeal substance. The pilgrim still needs to pass through thirty-three cantos before his purification is complete. *Paradiso* is, however, an environment that is already void of the corporeal. This is a realm that transcends time and space. It is only the pilgrim that maintains a tangible state and he is accommodated through divine benevolence. The intensification of light is, in fact, only mediated "shadows" of the only "true" light in paradise – the light of God. The pilgrim is allowed to "see" in in a realm devoid of objects at the invitation of God:

> The pilgrim sees everything in Paradise in the form of light which is gradually intensified to the point of blindness. Light has the unique attribute of being the source of all vision though itself shapeless and invisible outside the objects it illuminates. In Paradiso, however, it *does not illuminate objects but shines forth from subjects. These are the lights themselves, not shining on objects but reflecting their own vision.* [16]

Light is reflecting light substantiating the Augustinian notion of incorporeal substance and shape. The pilgrim continues his transformation and begins to shed much of his corporeal expectations. He must be brought to a point whereby the non-corporeal image is observable – a point beyond the recognition of the "spiritual" vision to a new and unique state of consciousness that allows for the assimilation of the non-substantial image of the divine.

The imagery of light and reflection in the Empyrean builds to a crescendo as the pilgrim is led towards the purity of the *visio intellectualis*. The fusion of the divine and the intellect manifests in this aggregation of luminous reflections: "From matter's largest sphere, we now have reached the *heaven of pure light, light of the intellect*, light filled with love, love of true good, love filled with happiness, a happiness surpassing every sweetness" (*Paradiso* 30: 38-42 italics added). It is a transhuman condition that must be achieved in order to see God face to face – a condition of "simplicity" that must be maintained in a sphere that is beyond material phenomenon: "The simplicity of God, the Trinity, the Incarnation are, in Augustine's word, *intellectualia* – realities that are utterly beyond space

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[15] Ibid, 71.

[16] Chiarenza "The Imageless Vision," 83 (emphasis added).

and time."[17] Even as the pilgrim approaches the final encounter, he is still transforming; he does not achieve the ultimate state of grace until the precise moment of God's "absolute" appearance. This moment, as was the case with Paul, is ineffable. The journey can be related through the allegorical rendering of finite words, but the actual moment of the concurrence – the Pauline moment of rapture – the Augustinian *visio intellectualis* –exceeds the human (corporeal) capacity of speech: "that light, sublime, which in itself is true. From that point on, what I could see was greater than speech can show: at such a sight, it fails – and memory fails when faced with such excess" (*Paradiso* 33: 54-57). Not only is the occasion beyond description, it is outside human memory. The pilgrim is "struck by light that flashed and, with this light, received what it had asked" (*Paradiso* 33: 140-141). Dante does not tell us what was seen, he can't – he can only convey that the manifestation was experienced – and then it was gone: "Here force failed my high fantasy" (*Paradiso* 33: 142). The "failure," however, is to be expected. As was the case with Paul, the "*facie a faciem*" encounter consists of "things that are not to be told, that no mortal is permitted to repeat" (2 Cor. 12: 4).

Augustine's exegesis proposes a solution to the dilemma of Paul's "vision" of God by situating the encounter within a typology that can be comprehended by rational thought. However, even with this Augustinian classification, the essential "modes" of apprehending God are dependent upon a concept of faith that bridges the gap between the rational understandings of things in general and the unknown quality of the divine. Augustine's coupling of this rationale with the concepts of faith and grace was an attempt to bring a universal quality to the possibility of varying relationships with God, and Dante explored this possibility through the allegorical and poetic process as a means by which to embellish the universality of belief through the exposure of the "divine" in a transcendent masterpiece of art.

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[17] Newman, "St. Augustine's," 76.

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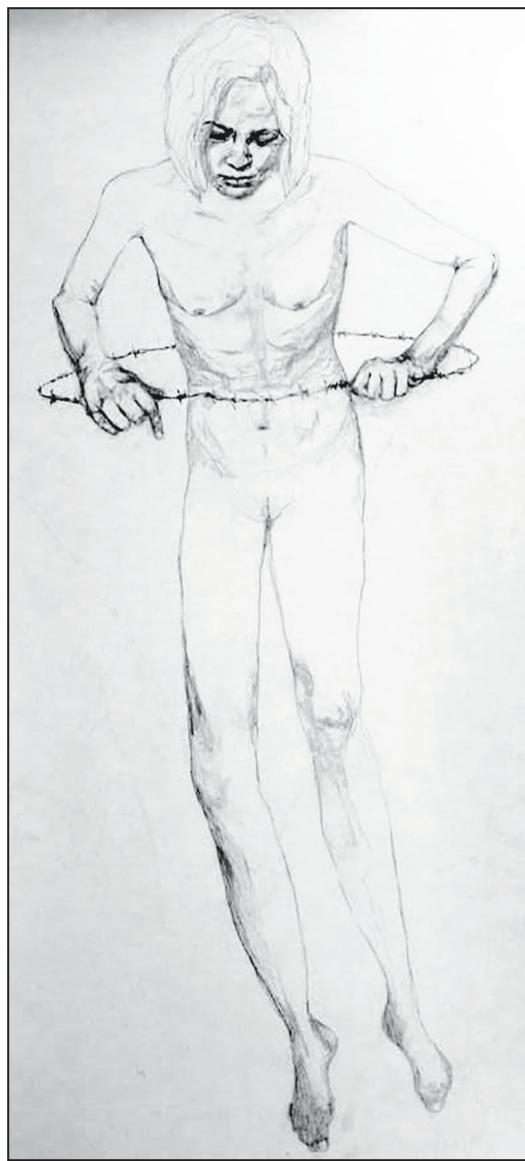
Windows of the Soul #2, graphite on paper, Cindy Walker

Untitiled, acrylic on canvas, Cindy Walker

Dallaire and Lonergan: Reflections on Human Operations[1]

–Lovingly dedicated to Winnifred Theresa

Introduction

At Concordia University on October14, 2010, Lieutenant-General Roméo Dallaire partook in the book launch for *Mobilizing the Will to Intervene: Leadership to Prevent Mass Atrocities*. At intermission, he met audience members and signed books. He then took the podium to discuss the importance of participating in the process of intervention. Although treating human rights, he broached themes of active awareness that echoed the theology of late Bernard Lonergan who considered the good a concrete manifestation of ethical cooperation. Lonergan's method is beyond the scope of this paper. But despite their different locations—secularly political and religious—both advocate optimal human flourishing through human agency informed by higher critical judgment. Both see hope in error and failure, which become opportunities for improvement.

What is this common ground where Dallaire and Lonergan reflect theoretical likeness? This is my object of exploration. I first summarise Dallaire's lecture, heavily corrupted by my biases in which I use paraphrases and a few key citations. I then discuss how Dallaire's content conjured Lonergan, and their similarities that represent a common ground relative to the transformation of the individual and communal self through agential and decisional action.

Dallaire Inspires

Focusing on intervention and citizen activism, Dallaire straightaway appealed to the audience to take their citizenship seriously by actively participating in their constituencies. Citizens should exploit the limited channels available to them to help government get rid of bad policies; and we should have an input in shaping the future. He emphasised that we should become involved and make political choices that sustain the common good. He mentioned that, at the time, the Harper Administration had cut aid to Africa, redirecting it instead to Latin America—a move perhaps of favouritism or prejudice. But such decisions, Dallaire remarked, did not emerge solely from political bureaucracy. The state apparatus comprises human bodies, persons, human beings sitting down together to ruminate on pressing issues and strategic action plans. This statement would become a refrain, effectively demystifying the abstraction associated with institutions and magnifying in its place the concreteness of human agency in life-transforming initiatives.

The plight of the thirty-three Chilean miners and their rescue as an internationally coordinated effort were indeed significant. But Dallaire saw this topic dominating the media.[2] By contrast, news of genocide survivors had lost momentum in the public eye. Displaced persons who had fled violence, who were still residing in camps for the past 10 or 15 years, were no longer newsworthy. Darfurian women who had escaped genocide, who had suffered torture and multiple rapes were not immediately approached for donations, book deals, movie contracts, and corporate gifts of cars and sunglasses as were the miners. The broadcasts of the rescue had even overshadowed Canada's loss of a seat on the United Nations Security Council. Thus during crises and in the long phase of survivorship, we see that "some humans are more equal than others," said Dallaire dryly, underscoring the reality of realpolitik in which certain groups are indeed considered more expendable than others. Ironically, in the case of the Rwanda genocide to which time sensitivity was crucial, the political inaction of ambling officials had the same effect as the acts of the despots and *génocidaires* complicit in the atrocities: The loss of human life.[3]

According to Dallaire, the world has changed in the past 20 years. Tyranny and violence had grown sophisticated. Terrorist acts are internationally coordinated and more readily diffused through social media. Torture, decapitation, killings could go viral on the Internet. Suicide bombers are now commonplace. Furthermore, foreign policy that condones economic power asymmetries between nations can

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[2] Several narratives of the miners' life-and-death experience have since been published.

[3] The term génocidaires refers to the actors involved in the mass killings of the Rwanda genocide.

ignite domestic conflict and wars. In the global networks of terrorism, diasporic as well as native-born citizens of western democracies are equally susceptible to extremist ideologies. No certainty exists as to who will become an enabler of violence and destruction. Absolute sovereignty is a thing of the past. International law stipulates that, "if your state is falling and you are slaughtering your people," said Dallaire, "other signatory states have a responsibility to intervene to preserve human life." Notions of *a domestic matter* or *mere ethnic conflict*, as the former US Clinton Administration[4] had initially intimated with the unfolding Rwanda massacres, are fading as credible justification for avoidance of intervention (Cohen 2007).

The flux of refugees to western countries attests to the connectedness of nation-states through global contraction. Problems of a pandemic scale on the other side of the world that appear distant, impersonal and forgettable may surprisingly end up in one's backyard. Political crises have a bleeding effect better resolved by attentiveness than indifference. With new media technologies,

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[4] Samantha Power (2007) notes that: "The Rwandan genocide would prove to be the fastest, most efficient killing spree of the twentieth century. In 100 days, some 800,000 Tutsi and politically moderate Hutu were murdered.... When the massacre started, not only did the Clinton administration not send troops to Rwanda to contest the slaughter, but it refused countless other options,"335. Power also noted that "70 percent" of Dallaire's time was consecrated to overcoming the impossible odds established by "UN Logistics," 343.

nation-states are watching one another, reporting and gathering intelligence. States form allegiances to maximise self-interests and geopolitical power. And even though state leaders commit half-heartedly to international law, collaboration still occurs at some level. Decisions are made about sanctions, humanitarian aid and programmes of social engineering and development. Dallaire iterated that states represent government; government consists of individuals who come together to plan action as a unified front. He expressed his disappointment of Canada's foreign policies. The loss of the seat on the UN Security Council signaled the decline of Canada's reputation as a peacekeeping nation: "We have a Charter of Rights and Freedoms on top of the Constitution," said Dallaire, a testament of Canadians' advocacy of human rights. Yet when it comes to serious political action, Canadians are, as he described, "provincial" and "village" in their scope which stops at self and national interests.

To radically change social consciousness, to incite ethical behaviours of activism, and to inculcate the ideology of all humans as equals before the law, Dallaire suggested we start to educate the younger generation differently about the importance of appreciating, owning and enacting responsibility. He lit up a PowerPoint chart, entitled HUMAN LEADERSHIP & TEAMWORK and asked the audience to think of how crucial decisions

are made, who decides and who acts. The modifier HUMAN qualified LEADERSHIP as well as TEAMWORK. Who decides that the Chilean miners are a better media story than the ongoing recovery mission in Haiti? Who decides through foreign policies that Latin Americans are worth helping over Africans? He recalled that institutions do not run themselves. Individuals decide what to do. How do politicians justify inaction during an unfolding genocide that demands immediate intervention? How do politicians rationalise that some humans are more rescue-worthy than others? Crucial decisions ending in political apathy show human rights as an ideal existing on paper rather than in practice. Dallaire urged citizens to do more collectively to find the "fullness of our potential." We should write to our "MPs" about their unjust policies, or "write to Peter Mansbridge" to cover other important issues. Individual citizens gain strength in numbers when they come together for a good cause.

In this inspirational lecture, Dallaire's philanthropy shined through. A witness to the chaos of genocide and a distinguished officer who considered his peacekeeping mission in Rwanda a failure,[5] Dallaire still retains hope in the human ability to do good and to reorient toward the just. Apathetic conduct can be reassessed in the

striving for self-betterment and social justice. He urged us to step out of our comfort zone by not only holding state leaders accountable for inane policies and inaction, but by taking up leadership in our own lives to promote human dignity and welfare. He concluded by stating that we could "lead from the rear" or "by initiative." A step toward positive change would be to sensitise the young of the equal worth of all persons before the law.

How was Lonergan beckoned in Dallaire's discussion?

Lonergan Evoked

From beginning to end, Dallaire stressed the necessity of evaluating government policies for how they endorse fairness and the good. Did certain policies preserve and value human life, or promote political apathy and decline as the principal norms of response to geopolitical crises? He consistently peeled away the bureaucratic red-tape of statecraft's dubious political decisions to get to the quick of the matter. This uncloaking he achieved by query: How do state leaders deal with international emergency? How do politicians and citizens in "developed" democracies conceive of the value of human life of other less privileged nation-states? Who decides on intervention? What does saving human lives mean to cabinet delegates far removed from the frontlines of conflict, war and suffering?

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[5] Dallaire (2004), Shake Hands with the Devil, xviii. In 1991, he was chosen to head the United Nations Assistance Mission for Rwanda (UNAMIR), also known as the UN Peacekeeping Operation" (Cohen 2007, xviii, 13, 83). See also Power, 329-333.

The eminent message was that we start to inquire as a way of mobilising our will to do, to act concertedly. Questions become all the more meaningful when asked in first or second person: How are *you* motivated to act by *your* understanding of a crisis? How can *I* help locally? And what is at stake with *my* (in)action? Posing these questions will cause anxiety, prompting the thinker to use her agency to dissipate discomfort (Lamb 1965, 184). Dallaire's approach of questioning, contemplating and carefully acting was the *modus operandi* that brought to mind Bernard Lonergan and his transcendental method. Seeking the truth through query, rethinking, assessing and intentionally acting to inscribe in reality an imagined objective is a circuit inherently embedded in the spirit of human expression. But Lonergan nuanced the functions, accentuating spirituality and moral judgment as part of the "basic pattern of operations employed in every cognitional enterprise" (1971, 4). He sequenced human operations as experiencing, understanding, affirming experience, judging and gaining insight; and claimed that these lead to the second-level state of being "attentive, intelligent, reasonable [and] responsible" (1971, 14). Also consolidated in these states are self-objectification and self-criticism in imagined scenarios. Selfhood, personhood, identity and character develop from these repeated cognitive activities and their expressions (Ricoeur 1990, 119-123). These

inner actuating rituals condition the subject by becoming "normative patterns" engrained in our ways of functioning; and these, as explains Lonergan, "[yield] cumulative and progressive results" (1971, 5) while building character (1971, 34-35). With these operations, questions are asked, observations made, descriptions mapped out and discoveries matched against correct and erroneous presumptions. Practices are then modified and ameliorated in the concrete good of order (Lonergan 1971, 44).

While the method seems so self-evident to the point of platitude, Lonergan's theorisation allows for investigation and greater understanding of the human dynamism that conditions the self ethically and morally. By intending and purposefully acting, the subject appropriates—and develops within this appropriation—an uncapped, ever maturing system of beliefs and values. The transcendental method probes the ways human beings come to think, know, judge, value, decide and intend in intersubjective experiences (1971, 18). More crucially, Lonergan calls attention to how people act out their values and beliefs in dialectical situations. To delve deeper into query, the same operations with the specific mental tasks of observing, describing, deliberating and judging recur. But a refinement begins to establish itself. Through repetition, more information will be culled, the cognitive aspects improved, and a richer understanding presented to

the contemplator (1971, 4-5). These insights will provoke changes in the subject's moral compass, for better or for worse. And I mention the latter given that Lonergan also factors in decline and error as cyclical components of human operations.

Inasmuch as these operations are innate to the human constitution, Lonergan points out how this schema has been owned and formalised in science as the model of objective empiricism (1971, 5-6). Scientists formulate hypotheses, design experiments, observe, log the data and reflect on the outcomes to adjust the next set of hypotheses, and start anew the ritual with yet more penetrating questions. We see here that religion and science indeed share basic epistemic elements (Wright 2009, 28; Taylor 2007, 1-9). However, Lonergan links these operations to the different spiritual and cognitive states—knowing, judging, meaning-making, and worshiping. These states are a complex process of sublation that propels the human spirit into still higher states of awareness where the individual becomes a responsible attending self, acting within ethical parameters (1971, 121). Lonergan therefore inserts spirituality and divinity[6] back into the equation of seeking the truth to know. Moreover, the process of excising moral agency weaves the individual into community, obligations, duties and

promises. Given Lonergan's integration of spirituality, cognition, reasoned judgment and divinity, the operations of human cognition become liberated twofold: They are no longer the exclusive domain of empirical science, and they legitimise certain aspects of metaphysics which numerous scholars consider a chicken-hearted discipline based on superstition and abstraction (Taylor 1983, 1).

These turns in Lonergan produce a more intellectually politicised theology that can dialogue meaningfully with the pressing secular affairs of government, economic policy, law, science and biomedicine.[7] Though coloured by the androcentrism normalised in Christianity, Lonergan's method does not shy away from the polemics,[8] conundrums and hard political issues of modernity. Rather, his approach facilitates the thorough examination of the values that impact the human condition. No longer can Christian theology afford to exercise the insular orthodoxy and the stance of condescending moral supremacy that has customarily barred many of its adherents, particularly women, from equal flourishing. No longer should it disengage from the ethical dilemmas involving

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[6] Lonergan reworks the metaphysics from historical theology, linking God, Jesus Christ and the church to individual human operations and community. See his chapters on Religion, Functional Specialties and Foundations in Method of Theology.

[7] See David Roy (1981), "Bioethics as Anamnesis: What Lonergan has understood and others have overlooked," on the value-conflicts in biotechnology.

[8] Philip McShane suggests that Lonergan uses process theology to establish his model of human cognition. See his introduction in Lonergan, Introducing the Thought of Bernard Lonergan (1973, 7-13). See also Alister McGrath on process theology in Christian Theology (2007, 287-288).

sexuality,[9] gender inequality,[10] sexual orientation and biotechnologies; for to be a life-affirming faith that is fair to all, that responds to social change and the epochal shifts which redefine the norms and values of the common good, Christianity must transform its ways of thinking and including. The transcendental method rises to this challenge, providing a model for observation and reflection that weigh how ideologies validate meaning and condone questionable practices mainstreamed as progressive.

In the same vein, Dallaire's humanitarianism is not exclusively political. His analysis straddled the spiritual and the political. His stress on caring for life, others and the younger generation was a discursive constant. To care is to ascribe meaning and value to those practices that nurture human flourishing. This perspective mirrors Dallaire's role as peacekeeper. To preserve peace, humility imposes itself on experience. Individuals must find the patience to listen to each other, to look into each other's faces and to forbear. A balance of self-subordination and self-respect must be played out in relations of mutuality and interdependence; and the ego must be bridled. Dallaire invites us into this frame of living, into a

dialogue of lenity in which we deepen our humanity through others by meaningful interactions. Thus caring inherently entails promises. At the level of international law where the signing of accords signifies promises, political apathy—especially at the outbreak of genocide—represents the breaking of a commitment to value humanity, protect human life and promote human thriving.[11] Thus the intertwining of the political, the just, the spiritual and the promissory in Dallaire intersects with Lonergan who treats conversion into an accountable higher self as an ongoing life process that remains unfinished at death.

While Dallaire did not use conversion *per se*, his discussion nonetheless concerned ethical transcendence. It is at this juncture that Dallaire and Lonergan share similarities in what constitutes responsible agency and activism, for the individual and the community, in immediacy and in mediated experiences.

The Common Ground

What fuels the blossoming of humanity? Dallaire and Lonergan idealise higher states of consciousness to actuate moral agency. Both endorse an engagement with our spiritual vitality, our agential inertia in inventing our higher selves while participating in the good. This conceptual framework also reflects the

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[9] See John Cornwell on the Vatican's problematic stance on HIV/AIDS during the 1990s in The Pontiff in Winter (2004, 239-251).
[10] See Linda Woodhead on the asymmetries in status, power and authority within Christian institutions that normalise patriarchal power religiously, socially, economically and politically; and the opportunities for women still made possible in modernity, Christianity: A Brief Insight (2010, 162-183).

[11] Regarding the Right to Protect (R2P), which is part of the international charter, see Mark Taylor (2005/2006) "Humanitarianism or Counterinsurgency?"

ought of intelligibility and obligation in human striving. Both press for the use of our higher faculties in judging and appreciating responsibility. Attentive self-accountability in regards to self-preservation and benevolence for others nurtures the praxes that allow human flourishing. This is the common ground where we find the peacekeeper and the theologian articulating like ideas of a higher becomingness of humanity.

Dallaire recommends we ponder the kind of agents we *are* in life and imagine what we should *become*. Self-absorption to the point of neglecting the cultivation of our higher selves was his main criticism, a negligence that rubs off in inter-subjective encounters and numbs our face-to-face reading of each other as human beings. This slumberous indifference conditions the (non)seeing of the other, or the recognition of the other as less-than-human. Impoverished of empathy and attentiveness, this somnolence inheres in globalising capitalist systems of economic development that intrinsically encourage competition, individualism, alienation, exploitation and aggression (Lowi 2004, 13-15). The quality of agency spawning selfhood from this state suffers; it suffers in being affected by apathy which manifests socially in dehumanising interaction and politically in bad policy.

Dallaire presented the individual as a contagion in society. In his PowerPoint chart, HUMAN LEADERSHIP and TEAMWORK

connoted this relation. The individual is a person onto herself, negotiating her own degree of obligations within the larger network of law in a specific community. But when she goes out in the world, she can influence. Lonergan accordingly saw subjects conditioned by persuasion, individual choices and a collective ethos. We are indeed influenced by our culture which possesses an ego, a certain worldview and moral biases (1971, 54, 231; Flanagan 2007, 1017-1018). Even our volition has been entrained by culture to a large extent. But individual will is not *entirely* conditioned or predictable. How does the community socialise its subjects to uphold the good in their daily existence? And in concurrence, how do individuals use ethical action to ameliorate meaning, values, community and life? Dallaire was concerned with current political events. Yet he was also future-oriented, wanting to diminish apathy at the international level as well as the "provincial" insularity he saw perpetuated in society. He suggested we sensitise the next generations at an earlier age about the imperative of human worth, personal responsibilities, commutative obligations and the universal preservation of human life. He called for an awakening in how we exist, reason, decide and act, so as to greater humanise the good of order. This transformation in the secular world reflects conversion in religious experience.

Surfacing as an indirect criticism in Dallaire is that we are living life

below our potential standards and denying ourselves our fullness of dignity. LEADERSHIP was the term he employed for the creative use of vitality in striving for justice. But not everyone is leading by initiative. Perhaps many of us are leading our lives from "the rear," like automatons. Lonergan similarly sees us striving below our ontic potential, existing in a daze in which life becomes meaningless and mechanical: "Insofar as one is lost in dreamless sleep, or lies helpless in a coma, then meaning is no part of one's being" (1973, 46). For Lonergan, self-transcendence possesses four categories of spiritual and intellectual awakening. At the bottom rung is common sense, overlaid by "theory, interiority, and transcendence" (1971, 120). Of the interfacing in these categories, he explains that:

> The lower levels are presupposed and complemented by the higher. The higher sublate the lower (1971, 120)...

> The fourth level, which presupposes, complements, and sublates the other three, is the level of freedom and responsibility, of moral self-transcendence and in that sense of existence, of self-direction and self-control. (1971, 121)

In being more present to one's self in this fourth level, an individual is inclined to make better choices from which begins the process of moral patterning and self-determination. Lonergan defines this process as an ontological vector of vertical liberty which leads to "deep-set joy," "solid peace,"

and God as "the supreme value" (1971).[12] These ascensional discoveries represent self-transcendence or *conversion*, of which Lonergan names three types: intellectual, moral and religious, the last being the most significant.

These higher-level conversions inscribe identity, authenticity, self-integrity and the self-objectifying consciousness of moral responsibility (Conn 2004, 39, 48). But as Lonergan states, wisdom, God and operative grace are one and the same (1971, 91). When transmuted through reasonable human mediations, operative grace becomes cooperative, maintaining the good of order: "Cooperative grace is the heart of flesh becoming effective in good works through human freedom" (1971, 241). Thus in Lonergan's theory, *cooperation* works through human beings from a sacred source (1971, 107),[13] an aspect mirrored in Dallaire's notion of *initiative* and *teamwork*. In addition to individuals' working on their degree of awareness, Dallaire said teamwork was necessary to mobilise

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[12] In certain passages, Lonergan apparently responds to Immanuel Kant who claimed the existence of God unprovable (Kant 2003, 331-333; Flanagan 2007).

[13] Lonergan's theory of cooperation speaks to René Descartes' cogito, ergo sum which only passively acknowledges the individual existing in relation to God and not as a part of a vibrant collective. Descartes claims that the certitude of God is found in the conjoining of the intellectual (soul) and the corporeal (body) nature of humanity (Discours, Quatrième partie, 51). But Lonergan further pushes this theme, stating that the dynamic human interaction which produces the good of order in community is tangible proof of God. See also Timothy Chappell (2005), The Inescapable Self, 26-33; Enrique Chávez-Arvizo, ed. (1997), Descartes: Key Philosophical Writings, 98-99; and Martial Guéroult (1985), Descartes' Philosophy, 3-6.

the will to effect change. His examples consistently stressed the interplay of the one and the many in sustaining the common good.

Like Lonergan, Dallaire emphasised individual well-being as anchored in a responsive community that nurtures the needs and innovations of humanity. This is the root of the good of order. At the same time, the community relies on the moral calibre and initiatives of its members to maintain and even surpass the established standards of the good. Thus both Dallaire and Lonergan see meaningful ontology as an ideal requiring individuals, institutions and community to use higher judgment and agency to benefit all of human life, locally and globally, nationally and internationally.

Closing remarks

The ethical striving of humanity in modernity remains a pressing concern for many, whether from a religious, theological, political or secular standpoint. Although scientific knowledge has been mainstreamed to enhance public understanding, at ground level human nature is still a bottomless pit of unknown mysteries. Lonergan's transcendental method is mostly empirical, intelligible and descriptive, presenting the higher cognitive attributes of human nature as God-given and integrated in the good of order, but leaving numerous questions of our darker sides to uncertainty. Dallaire does likewise. His experiences in Rwanda and the failure of the UNAMIR peacekeeping

mission have spurred him to speak out against the lack of political will. Yet despite the lecture on intervention and citizen activism, certain hidden notions were not addressed.

For instance, what is the human spirit? How does it guide human nature? Can we be socialised to lose our "provincial" or "village" views? Or is this an innate mechanism of self-preservation made worse by modern influences of consumerism and globalisation? Is not the cooperative grace Lonergan affiliates with his theological method of self-transcendence a part of the provincialism by which self-interests on a small scale turn into group interest, human associations and finally cooperative institutions? Are not these institutions of "cooperation" the very ones that Dallaire, in his inquiries, deconstructs as human beings deliberating and deciding together on (in)action? Also, what happens if economic and military resources do limit timely intervention? What happens if several genocides occur at once? How do we decide or prioritise?

Human nature is realist, egotistic, inverted, power-hungry, mediocre and unmerciful; but also idealist, benevolent, meek, sociable and curious of experience. These are not fixed polarities in character but dynamic components complexly articulated in human expression. Although Dallaire and Lonergan do not have all the answers, their persistence in questioning the value and the meaning of human ontologies reflects hope in the now and for the future.

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The North face, photograph, Abbie Perkins

In Rapture, charcoal, conte crayon and gesso on paper, Cindy Walker

Maternal Blessings of the Holy Spirit

Lynn Barwell

A relatively new and growing field of research has begun to focus interest on the early Syrian Christian writings. There are many factors which explain why the early Syrian Christian tradition displays such a distinctive and unique pattern of development, rendering it of great interest to modern theologians. This paper specifically addresses the early Syrian Christians' cultivation of the Holy Spirit symbolically represented as a mother.

It must be noted, however, that the Syrian tradition actually developed a wide variety of symbols for the Holy Spirit, partly due to the fact that the writings were primarily expressed in symbolic language, through poetry and hymns.[1] To a certain degree, the employment of symbolism permitted the early Syrian Christian tradition a freedom of expression which enabled them to transcend the patriarchal and androcentric tendencies generally perceived within Biblical and early Christian writings. This paper is devoted to the early Syrian Christian concept of the Holy Spirit, which is depicted as a motherly figure, something that is quite pertinent for a feminist pneumatology, one which seeks to "bring together two voices often rendered silent in mainstream theology – the Spirit of God and women."[2]

In order to explore this topic, the discussion will center upon four target areas:

1. To provide a brief sampling of the Holy Spirit portrayed as a mother in several prominent early Christian Syrian writings.

2. To describe and detail various factors which both facilitated and nurtured the development of mother imagery for the Holy Spirit in the early Syrian Christian tradition.

3. To analyse and attempt to provide a preliminary explanation as to the gradual decline of this "Holy Spirit as mother" tradition.

4. To demonstrate how a revival and positive re-evaluation of this early Syrian tradition can nourish modern-day discussions which seek to "attain a better appreciation of the Godhead."[3]

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[1] For an overview of the many symbols employed for the Holy Spirit, see Sebastian Brock, *The Holy Spirit in the Syrian Baptismal Tradition* (Kottayam, Kerala: Deepiko Book Stall, 1979).
[2] Helen Bergin, "Feminist Pneumatology," *Colloquium* 42, no. 2. (2010): 188.
[3] Sebastian Brock, "The Holy Spirit as Feminine in Early Syriac Literature," in *After Eve*, ed. Janet Martin Soskice (London: Collins Marshall Pickering, 1990), 84.

Examples of the Holy Spirit Portrayed as a Mother

There are four prominent early Syrian Christian writers who are frequently cited for their employment of female imagery to describe the Holy Spirit.[4] Following is a brief excerpt and description of the writings and figures who portrayed the Holy Spirit as a mother.

Odes of Solomon

These "primitive poetic texts," thought to be baptismal hymns, are some of the "earliest non-biblical literature from the Syrian Orient dating from the second century."[5] One text which is significant for its reference to the feminine identity of the Holy Spirit reads as follows:

Ode of Solomon (36:1-3,5)[6]

I rested on the Spirit of the Lord,

And She lifted me up on high.

And caused me to stand on my feet in the high place of the Lord,

In the presence of His perfection and His glory,

where I glorified [Him]with the composition of His hymns.

[The Spirit] gave birth to me before the Lord's face,

and although I was a man

I was named a brilliant son of God ….

For according to the greatness of the Most High, so did

She make me;

and according to His renewing

He renewed me.

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[4] For a detailed overview, see Susan E. Myers, "The Spirit as Mother in Early Syriac-Speaking Christianity," in *Women and Gender in Ancient Religions*," edited by Stephen P. Ahearne-Kroll, Paul A. Holloway and James A. Kelhoffer (Germany: Mohr Siebeck, 2010), 432.

[5] Susan Ashbrook Harvey, "Feminine Imagery for the Divine: The Holy Spirit, the Odes of Solomon, and Early Syriac Tradition," *St. Vladimir's Theological Quarterly* 37, no. 2-3 (1993): 122; Simon Jones, "Wombs of the Spirit: Incarnational Pneumatology in the Syrian Baptismal Tradition," in T*he Spirit in Worship – Worship in the Spirit*, eds. Teresa Berger and Bryan D. Spinks (Collegeville, Minnesota: Order of Saint Benedict, 2009), 100.

[6] Harvey,"Feminine Imagery," 124.

Apharat (270-345 C.E.)

Referred to as the "Persian Sage," Apharat is considered one of the "earliest theologians of substance in the East Syrian Church" whose "concepts show little Greek or Roman influence."[7]

Apharat's Interpretation of Genesis 2.24

Who is it who leaves father and mother to take a wife?

The meaning is as follows:

as long as a man has not taken a wife,

he loves and reveres

God his Father and the Holy Spirit his Mother,

and he has no other love.

But when a man takes a wife,

then he leaves his (true) Father and his Mother.[8]

The Acts of Thomas (200-225 C.E.)

According to Klauck, "the Acts of Thomas is the only one of the ancient apocryphal Acts that has survived completely, although not in its oldest version," commonly believed to have been "originally written in Syriac and then translated into Greek."[9]

The First Epiclesis of the Spirit[10]

Come, holy name of Christ. . .

Come, power of the Most High!

Come compassionate mother!

Come, fellowship of the male!

Come, revealer [feminine] of secret mysteries!

Come, mother of the seven houses . . .

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[7] Jane Richardson Jensen, "Father, Son, and Holy Spirit as Mothers in Early Syrian Literature," Continuum 2, no. 2-3 (1993): 30.

[8] Brock, "Holy Spirit as Feminine," 80.

[9] Hans-Josef Klauck, *The Apocryphal Acts of the Apostles: An Introduction,* translated by Brian McNeil (Waco, Texas: Baylor University Press, 2008), 141-142.

[10] Ibid, 155.

Ephrem the Syrian (303-373)

Ephrem the Syrian, who writes in the fourth century, is described by Bondi as the "greatest master of Syrian-Christian poetry."[11]

Ephrem's Hymns on the Nativity: Hymn 4:148-154[12]

The Lofty One became like a little child, yet hidden in Him was

a treasure of Wisdom that suffices for all.

He was lofty but he sucked Mary's milk,

and from His blessings all creation sucks.

He is the Living Breast of living breath;

by His life the dead were suckled, and they revived.

Without the breath of air no one can live;

without the power of the Son no one can rise.

Upon the living breath of the One Who vivifies all

depend the living beings above and below.

As indeed He sucked Mary's milk,

He has given suck – life to the universe.

As again He dwelt in His mother's womb,

in His womb dwells all creation.

The aforementioned short passages are but a small sampling of the extensive mother imagery employed by the early Christian Syrians to describe the Holy Spirit. While the writings may not always explicitly refer to the Holy Spirit as a mother, mother "images are conveyed by using motherly functions (giving birth, breastfeeding)" or "by comparing divinity to a mother (human or bird usually)."[13]

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[11]Roberta C. Bondi, "Christianity and Cultural Diversity," in *Christian Spirituality*, eds. Bernard McGinn & John Meyendorff (New York: Crossroad Publishing Company, 1985), 157.
[12]Kathleen E. McVey, *Ephrem the Syrian Hymns* (New York: Paulist Press, 1989), 100.
[13]Jensen, "Father, Son and Holy Spirit," 31.

Factors which Facilitated and Nurtured the Development of Mother Imagery

It seems surprising, when reading the early Syrian poems and hymns, how such explicit bodily mother imagery developed on the basis of the same Bible which also produced the contrasting philosophical/Helleniestic writings of the church theologians. In order to explain such a diversity of expression, three main areas which permitted the Syrians to develop their distinct symbolic theology will be briefly explored: i) Language; ii) Culture; and iii) Biblical sources. Elements from all three of these categories, intricately interconnected, played a major and complex role as to why Syrian poetic depictions of the Holy Spirit as a mother flourished.

Language

According to Brock and other scholars, Syriac is not only a Semitic language, it is also a dialect of Aramaic and, therefore, very similar to the environment from which Christianity first emerged.[14] Two features of Semitic language which contributed to the particularity of early Syrian Christianity's symbolic expressions are functions of both its grammar and its "romantic flavor."[15]

A key to the Syrian tradition's use of feminine imagery for the Holy Spirit lies in the gendered nature of Semitic languages. As a vast number of researchers underscore, since *ruha* (the Syriac noun for Spirit) is grammatically feminine, it was very natural for the Syrians to employ feminine verbs and adjectives to describe the Holy Spirit.[16]

A second influential term for Syrian Christians is the word *rahef* (to hover) used to describe the Spirit's activity in Genesis 1:2, "traditionally associated with a mother bird over her young."[17]

Finally, a third important linguistic concept which had an enormous impact upon the employment of mother imagery is *ubba* (womb). The preferred use of the word *ubba* rather than "bosom" in the Syrian translation of the Bible (The Peshitta) in the Prologue of the Gospel of John permitted the Syrian authors to nurture an extensive theology connected to the womb for all three members of the Godhead.[18]

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[14]Brock, "Holy Spirit as Feminine," 73.
[15]H.J.W. Drijvers, *East of Antioch: Forces & Structures in the Development of Early Syriac Theology* (London, EN: Variorum Reprints, 1984), 1.
[16]Brock, "Holy Spirit as Feminine," 73; Harvey, "Feminine Imagery," 115-6; Jensen, "Father, Son and Holy Spirit," 28.
[17]Harvey, "Feminine Imagery," 116; Jensen,"Father, Son and Holy Spirit," 31.
[18]Brock, "Holy Spirit as Feminine," 82-3; Jensen, "Father, Son and Holy Spirit," 31; Jones, "Wombs of the Spirit," 102.

Aside from the three preceding terms, ruha, rahef and ubba, which greatly influenced the Syrian focus on mother imagery for the Holy Spirit, Bondi underscores how Syrian spirituality was also very much characterized by "a dependence on the symbolic as a mode of theological reflection."[19] That being said, Harvey cautions against reducing religious metaphors to simple definitions.[20] For readers accustomed to a Western theology based upon reasoned inference, Syrian symbolic theology requires a different lens through which to view their biblical interpretations. As Harvey suggests, "language in the Syrian texts is serving a different function" compared to the Greek and Latin translations.[21] A clear advantage of the Syrian Christians' employment of metaphorical language when compared to the Western tradition, however, lies in metaphorical language's "capacity to open realms of meaning."[22]

Culture

As already hinted in the preceding section on language, early Syrian Christianity developed its symbolic theology in sharp contrast to Greek and Latin theology. A number of scholars point out that the Syrian Semitic environment was largely free from Hellenistic influence until around 400 C.E.[23] As Drijvers explains, the early Syrian tradition is "usually seen as largely untouched by Greek culture and idiom."[24]

At the same time, Syrian Christians were surrounded by "many cults involving the worship of female goddesses."[25] Furthermore, Myers affirms that "mother language applied to a divine figure was familiar in Northern Mesopotamia."[26] It would, therefore, have been quite natural for the early Christian Syrians to produce a "Holy Spirit as mother" imagery which resonated with their exposure to the surrounding cultural norms.

That this surrounding culture had an impact upon Syrian Christianity is also evidenced by Jensen, who explains how "the discomfort of seeing the Holy Spirit as mother" influenced later Greek redactors who wished to downplay any connotations of the Holy Spirit as mother to prevent any associations with the "various mother goddesses (were) still worshipped in the region when these texts were being written and translated."[27]

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[19] Bondi, "Christianity and Cultural Diversity," 153.
[20] Harvey, "Feminine Imagery," 114.
[21] Ibid, 113-114.
[22] Ibid, 114.
[23] Sebastian Brock, *The Luminous Eye: The Spiritual World Vision of Saint Ephrem the Syrian* (Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian Publications, 1985), 15; Bondi, "Christianity and Cultural Diversity," 152; Drijvers, *East of Antioch,* 2.
[24] Drijvers, *East of Antioch,* 1.
[25] Paul K. Jewett, "The Holy Spirit as Female (?)," *Reformed Journal* 28, no. 4. (April 1978): 10.
[26] Myers, "The Spirit as Mother," 431-432.
[27] Jensen, "Father, Son and Holy Spirit," 32.

What can certainly be concluded is that, given the extensive array of mother imagery present in the early Syrian Christian writings, it must have been a culture which valued both the nurturing and reproductive role of women. McVey seems to concur, as she suggests that "Ephrem's use of female fertility symbols in this comprehensive and open-ended manner must have depended on a prior openness to femaleness as a potential vehicle of religious truth – an attitude perhaps provided by the fertility religion of his environment."[28]

Biblical Sources Contributing to Syrian Theology

It almost appears to be an oxymoron that Syrian theology arose as a tradition of biblical interpretation from writings which are often accused of being patriarchal and androcentric. Could the Bible have possibly provided the inspiration for the development of such a vivid feminine image of the mother for the Holy Spirit?

In the "Holy Spirit as Feminine in Early Syriac Literature," Brock addresses this dilemma when he states that "Ephrem and other Syriac writers are simply following the lead set in the biblical writings themselves where such imagery applied to God is by no means infrequent – even though traditionally male-oriented eyes have usually been blind to this."[29] Myers certainly agrees that the Syrian authors' use of feminine imagery has been "built on biblical language used of God's Spirit."[30]

With respect to specific biblical sources which may have inspired the early Syriac writers to develop mother imagery, two have been previously mentioned: the Spirit as a mother bird hovering (in Genesis 1:2; also as a hovering eagle in Deuteronomy 32:11 in the Peshitta) and the Syrian translation of John 1:18 by the word "womb" rather than "bosom."[31] Harvey also underlines a number of Old Testament metaphors in which God is portrayed through mother imagery. Furthermore, Biale's "The God with Breasts," highlights a tradition of the name El Shaddai for the Hebrew God, mainly represented in Genesis, which finds its origins from "a fertility God in general" in which "only recently have we become aware of the feminine characteristics which the Israelites sometimes allowed their God to possess."[32]

Along similar lines, Brock suggests there was once even a "widespread tradition which associated the Holy Spirit with the image of mother" and

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[28] Kathleen E. McVey, "Ephrem the Syrian's Use of Female Metaphors to Describe the Deity," *Zeitschrift für antikes Christentum* 5, no. 2 (2001): 286.

[29] Brock, "Holy Spirit as Feminine," 84.

[30] Myers, "The Spirit as Mother," 458.

[31] For elaboration on these two biblical sources, see Brock, "The Spirit as Feminine," 82 and Harvey, "Feminine Imagery," 116.

[32] David Biale, "The God with Breasts: El Shaddai in the Bible," *History of Religions* 21, no. 3 (1982): 256.

proposes that the "roots of such a tradition are to be found, not only in the grammatical feature of the Semitic languages where "Spirit" is feminine, but also in the links which the concept of Holy Spirit will have had with the personalised figure of Wisdom and with the Jewish concept of the Divine Presence or Shekhina."[33]

Yet, despite the present evidence which supports the notion that biblical traditions once existed that employed feminine imagery for the divine, at some point they must have become minimized and forgotten. This is what feminist Ruether posits in Dart's "Balancing Out the Trinity," wherein she states that traditions which emphasized the feminine were likely part of an earlier Christianity which was "gradually being marginalized by a victorious Greco-Roman Christianity that repressed it."[34] It is to the disappearance of this trend which occupies the next section of this research paper.

Gradual Decline of the "Holy Spirit as Mother" Tradition

Several authors trace the historical decline of the Holy Spirit as feminine as occurring between 400 C.E. to 600 C.E.[35] According to Myers, one outcome of the decline of the feminine dimension of the Godhead is a dramatic change in language which saw the feminine noun *ruha* (Spirit) become grammatically masculine when speaking of the Holy Spirit.[36] This grammatical shift of gender, likely due to the influence of the West, also saw a repression of the notion of the Holy Spirit as mother. This is crystal clear in the early Christian Syrian writings whereby the early writers (Odes of Solomon, Apharat, Acts of Thomas) will explicitly refer to or allude to the Holy Spirit as a mother, whereas Ephrem, who writes later, does not. Jensen highlights how "the most prevalent images in the pre-Ephremic writings are of the Holy Spirit as mother."[37] Yet, according to Myers, "Ephrem is aware of and reveres the tradition but refrains from using mother language of the Spirit."[38] Jensen speculates that Ephrem's reluctance to call the Holy Spirit mother was connected to the Bardaisans, whose teachings included speaking of the Holy Spirit in mother language.[39] Furthermore, both these authors additionally suggest that Ephrem was also trying to distance himself from the surrounding polytheistic religions who worshipped mother goddesses.[40]

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[33] Brock, "The Spirit as Feminine," 81.
[34] Ruether is cited by John Dart in "Balancing Out the Trinity: The Genders of the Godhead," *Christian Century* 100, no. 5 F16-23 (1983): 149.
[35] See for example Brock, "The Holy Spirit as Feminine," 74-75; Harvey, "Feminine Imagery," 118 or Jones, "Wombs of the Spirit," 100 & 107.
[36] Myers, "The Spirit as Mother," 429; also described by Brock in"The Holy Spirit as Feminine," 75.
[37] Jensen, "Father, Son and Holy Spirit," 43.
[38] Myers, "The Spirit as Mother," 456.
[39] Jensen, "Father, Son and Holy Spirit," 46; Myers, "The Spirit as Mother," 456.
[40] Ibid.

Although Ephrem does not specifically refer to the Holy Spirit as mother, he does continue to employ mother imagery for the Holy Spirit. Jensen describes how "Ephrem came up with an interesting compromise between his religious heritage which freely imagined the Spirit as a feminine principle, and confusion with the Mother Goddess. He continued to use primarily feminine verbs, etc., to describe the Holy Spirit; but he rarely portrayed the Spirit as a Mother."[41]

What is remarkable, nonetheless, is how Ephrem's "only feminine images of God the Father and the Son are those of God as a Mother; performing specifically motherly functions like giving birth or breast-feeding."[42] This final point bears a tremendous significance which will be revealed later in this research paper.

Turning back to the question of the dissipating tradition of the Holy Spirit as mother, several authors ponder over the reasons. Myers proposes that there was a "discomfort with such images probably out of influence from the West" and Brock certainly speculates that this likely occurred "in concert with other changes to bring the Syrian churches into closer conformity with those of the Greco-Latin west. [43] Jones quotes Brock who underscores that a "revulsion against the idea of the Holy Spirit as mother" became prevalent.[44] Harvey is less certain as to why this decline occured since "no surviving text explains how or why Syriac writers changed the gender of the Holy Spirit" but points out that "the same change took place for the Word (*Logos*)."[45] What cannot be denied is that "if we take a close second look at our tradition, both Biblical and post-Biblical, we will find both (masculine and feminine). Masculine symbols are dominant and male theologians have frozen them into patterns of abstraction; but the feminine images are also there, awaiting that fuller appreciation."[46]

For example, regardless of the grammatical shift to the masculine for the Holy Spirit, the Syrian tradition to this day retains the female image of the womb "as the principal symbolic focus of the baptism tradition."[47] Nonetheless, Harvey laments that "when the feminine language for the Spirit was lost, Syriac theological language may well have lost more than a metaphor; it may have also lost a bond of identification, making the divine less accessible to the human."[48]

In *Beyond Androcentrism*, Adler argues that this trend was part of an overall tendency to suppress the feminine in order to build a patriarchal

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[41] Jensen, "Father, Son, and Holy Spirit," 48.
[42] Ibid, 48; see also Myers, "The Spirit as Mother," 456.
[43] Brock is cited in Harvey, "Feminine Imagery," 121; Myers, "The Spirit as Mother," 428.
[44] Jones, "Wombs of the Spirit," 112.
[45] Harvey, "Feminine Imagery," 120.
[46] Erminie Huntress Lantero, *Feminine Aspects of Divinity, Pendle Hill Phamphlet 191* (Wallingford, Pennsylvania: Sowers Printing Company, 1973), 4.
[47] Jones, "Wombs of the Spirit," 100.
[48] Harvey, "Feminine Imagery," 137.

monotheism wherein "the creative aspect of the female role will be claimed by the masculine deity, and hence by his male worshippers, who know themselves to be made in his image."[49] Biale describes how this also occurred in the Hebrew Bible whereby the "early meaning of El Shaddai was 'the god of fertility,' later to be supplanted by the 'almighty God'." [50] Yet, despite these tendencies, there exists a wonderful heritage of female imagery waiting to be uncovered and the early Syrian Christian writings provide an interesting and relevant starting point. As Adler states, "the myths and images which stress God's mothering functions could be the basis for new midrash in which God does not arrogate these functions to His masculine self, but is portrayed as possessing a feminine aspect."[51]

The Relevance of Early Syrian Christianity's "Holy Spirit as Mother" for Today

How then, can the early Syrian portrayal of the Holy Spirit as a mother benefit today's world? The extreme urgency of introducing the feminine into the Godhead cannot be understated, however, it comprises only one part of a complex but necessary social, cultural and religious struggle. To some degree, applying feminine imagery to the Holy Spirit was natural, due to the existing acceptance of the Spirit as Wisdom.[52] Unfortunately, Bergin claims that "previous theological attempts to include female dimensions within the Godhead have not effected major change in God-discourse."[53] This is largely due to the fact that merely adding a female (or feminine) dimension to the Godhead, such as the concept of "Holy Spirit as mother," does not reach far enough down to the root of the real problem. As succinctly stated by Lantero, "there is a bizarre trend today in the direction of a concept of God as entirely feminine" and "the absurdity of such ad-hoc revised symbolism is evident when we reflect that male and female are biologically interdependent, so that neither would make sense without the other."[54] Jewett, I believe expresses well what needs to be done:

> "we therefore must conclude that the supposed solution to sexist theological language – or we might say, the traditionally sexist understanding of theological language – about God is not to be found in assigning the members of the Godhead to the male and female genders respectively. It is rather to be found in the affirmation of the orthodox view that God-in-himself, as a personal fellowship, transcends all distinctions of sex, yet

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[49] Rachel Adler, "A Mother in Israel: Aspects of the Mother-Role in Jewish Myth" in *Beyond Androcentrism: New Essays on Women and Religion* ed. Rita M. Gross (Missoula, Montana: Scholars Press, 1977), 239.

[50] Biale, "The God with Breasts," 249.

[51] Adler, "A Mother in Israel," 250.

[52] See Lantero, *Feminine Aspects*, 17.

[53] Bergin, "Feminist Pneumatology," 195.

[54] Lantero, *Feminine Aspects*, 4.

condescends to compare himself to both sexes, likening himself to a Father whose pity knows no bounds (Ps. 103:13) and a Mother whose love can never fail (Isa. 66:13).[55]

For if we do not build a God who transcends all distinctions of sex, we will end up, as Brock asserts, with "an unbalanced view of God."[56]

In my opinion, there is no better way to illustrate this point, than the following excerpt from the Odes of Solomon:

Odes of Solomon, Extract From Ode 19[57]

A cup of milk was offered to me

And I drank it with the sweetness of the Lord's kindness.

The Son is the cup,

And He who was milked is the Father.

And She who milked Him is the Holy Spirit.

Because His breasts were full,

And it was not necessary for His milk to be poured out

without cause.

The Holy Spirit opened her womb,

and mixed the milk of the two breasts of the Father.

And She gave the mixture to the world without their

knowing,

And those who received it are in the perfection of the

right hand.

The womb of the Virgin caught it,

and She received conception and gave birth.

And the Virgin became a mother with many mercies.

And she labored and bore a son and there was no pain

for her.

Because it was not without cause.

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[55] Jewett,"The Holy Spirit as Female," 12.
[56] Brock, "The Spirit as Feminine," 84.
[57] Harvey, "Feminine Imagery," 125.

This Ode, described by Jensen as being "best known for its bisexual imagery of God," has been dismissed by commentators and scholars who, according to Harvey, construe the Ode as displaying "grotesque and repulsive imagery."[58] Yet, does this Ode not display exactly what authors perceive as the very type of imagery needed to describe the Godhead? As Harvey rightly points out, the Odist is "seeking to capture the complexity of human experience of the divine – an experience we may know but never fully comprehend" and, "bears witness to the notion that gender – but not one gender only – is somehow fundamental to both human and divine identity, albeit in ways that do not fit the human social conception (or construction) thereof."[59] Lantero also reinforces Harvey's reflections by claiming that "'male and female' is not a change of subject; if He created man male and female, it was because bisexuality somehow belongs to His own image."[60]

While some may react strongly against the imagery presented in Ode 19, it is likely due to a Western reflex which automatically reduces the symbolic to the literal, as previously noted, and finding the idea of a male God portrayed in such explicitly reproductive and physically nurturing terms to be offensive. However, according to Adler, this is **precisely** what is required; beyond the requirement to portray the Holy Spirit in feminine images, is the urgent need for "images and stories which emphasize the nurturant aspect of man."[61] As Ahmed further explains, "to see things symbolically is implicitly to accept ambiguity and a wider spectrum of meaning. *Theos* (God) is the archetype of meaning, and literalizing narrows this idea, excluding multiple possibilities and narrowing the spectrum of meaning."[62]

Such a perspective is not at all out of synchronicity with the Bible; these images are present and need only be unearthed and revered. For example, Bergman presents two Biblical portrayals of Yahweh in an article entitled "Like a Warrior and Like a Woman Giving Birth." Bergman concludes her article by stating that:

> "YHWH is not human, neither male nor female. On a literary level, this is supported by the fact that two similes are used: one that is typically male and one that is typically female. The lesson is that one can compare YHWH's characteristics and actions to human characteristics and actions, but only up to a certain point. Using similes reminds the reader that Isa 42:10-17 deals with a deity who transcends gender and the conditions of the human body."[63]

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[58] Harvey, "Feminine Imagery, 125; Jensen "Father, Son, and Holy Spirit," 35.
[59] Harvey, "Feminine Imagery," 128,132.
[60] Lantero, "Feminine Aspects," 5.
[61] Adler, "A Mother in Israel," 251.
[62] Durre S. Ahmed, "Women, Psychology and Religion," in *Gendering the Spirit: Women, Religion and the Post-Colonial Response,"* ed. Durre S. Ahmed (New York: Zed Books, 2002), 81-2.
[63] Claudia D. Bergmann, "'Like a Warrior' and 'Like a Woman Giving Birth:' Expressing Divine Immanence and Transcendence in Isaiah 42:10-17," in *Bodies, Embodiment, and Theology of the Hebrew Bible*, eds. S. Tamar Kamionkowski and Wonil Kim (New York: T & T Clark International, 2010), 55.

In conclusion, the term "androgynous," often applied to the nature of the Godhead, which in reality means "ranking high on both masculine and feminine attributes," is not always accepted and even outright rejected and repulsed when it disturbs commonly held beliefs about gender.[64] This is especially the case when female attributes are applied to the male which, when expressed symbolically as in Ode 19, on the contrary, should lead to a new and deeper understanding of God. As McVey affirms, "the extension of both the male and the female qualities to individuals of both sexes may have (had) liberating consequences for all."[65]

The intention of this paper has been demonstrate how the power of imagery, such as the Holy Spirit portrayed as mother in early Syrian Christianity, is one essential and necessary part of our religious heritage that can greatly enhance and inspire a modern-day world which is in great need of "mothering." Just as the transgendering of *ruha* (Spirit) from a grammatically feminine to a masculine noun was part of an overall trend to eradicate the feminine dimension of the Godhead, I fear the same type of phenomenon still exists in our society today. For if changes in language demonstrates changes in values and perceptions, then I firmly believe the notion of "mother," a concept which is fundamental to survival, is in danger of disappearing and collapsing into the more gender neutral and prevalent term "child care." As Goodman underlines in "Sex, Symbols and the Unity of God," the "resonance of 'Mother' may meet a deep emotional need, and/or establish historical continuity and these are valid enough reasons for their use. But like any name, they also carry the risk that we may mistake the name – the symbol – for that which is symbolized."[66] In other words, the notion of *mother,* is a concept which transcends gender, both men and women are capable (with the exception of reproduction, obviously) of assuming the role of a mother and what this term represents is much more expansive and meaningful than merely "child care." A child-care worker can never replace a mother, even though societal norms may try to convince us otherwise.

In closing, the exercise of writing and researching this paper overwhelmingly demonstrated to me the rich and varied resources which exist in the Bible and early Christian writings that value feminine imagery for God. The Holy Spirit as mother in the early Syrian Christian literature is a clear instance, which, if revivified, can inspire and nurture our modern world to a richer and deeper understanding of the Holy Spirit, the Godhead and even ourselves.

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[64] A. Nelson, "The Social Construction of Sex, Gender, and Sexuality," in *Gender in Canada* (Toronto: Pearson Prentice Hall, 1999), 3.
[65] McVey, "Ephrem The Syrian's Use of Female Metaphors," 287.
[66] Jenny Goodman, "Sex, Symbols and the Unity of God," in *The Absent Mother*, ed. Alix Irani (London: Mandala, 1991), 93.

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Chloe, acrylic on paper, Cindy Walker

Creatio Ex Nihilo —
God, Creation, and Nothing Else

Brent Thomas Walker

Preamble

It has been my experience that when the issue of ontology comes up for discussion there is much confusion regarding the Christian understanding of *Creatio Ex Nihilo*. Somehow, there seems to be an assumption that the *nothing* (nihilo) in this declaration is a *something* with an existence of its own. The more one enters into discussion on this topic, the more there seems to be a prevalent sub-conscious imagination of some nebulous cupboard or tool chest in heaven that God went to, took out some *nothing*, and formed it into the glorious consciousness of *being* and the universe we now experience. Being aware of the fact that we are finite *beings* who must always create from *something*, it follows that we would transfer the only experience of creation we have ever had, onto God. Pascal discerned this default in created humanity and prophesied, "God created man in His own image, and man has been trying to return the favour ever since." Thus we project our human experience of creating onto God.

To imagine *nothing* as *something* is not only logically inconsistent, it is completely contrary to the assertions regarding creation found in Scripture. Furthermore, imagining *nothing* as *something*, subverts the doctrine *Creatio Ex Nihilo* into an opposite understanding of creation attested to in scripture, articulated by the Early Fathers and affirmed in the Nicene Creed.

Before any progress can be made on this issue, one must cease projecting the limited postulations of human reason onto God and face the simple axiom:

~Nothing can't exist~

Introduction and Thesis

The debate in theological circles between creation vs. evolution has escalated ever since Darwin published his famous "Origin of Species" in 1859. For many Christians, the topic of evolution has been perceived as a threat that undermines God as the source of all that exists including intelligent human life. To conceive the theory of evolution as a threat to Christianity or the Christian scriptures, is evidence that an understanding of *Creatio Ex Nihilo* has been lost altogether. Once an understanding of what the Church Fathers meant by *Creatio Ex Nihilo* is comprehended, the debate between evolution and creation falls mute. In actuality, once *Creatio Ex Nihilo* is understood and accepted, one who holds to the "theory of evolution" will perceive God as all the more marvellous in that He created creation to keep creating itself. This is the view held by Theologian and former Professor of Mathematical Physics at Cambridge University John Polkinghorne. Polkinghorne asserts:

> It is a great mistake to read Genesis 1 and 2 as if they were a divinely guaranteed scientific textbook. In fact, they're something more interesting than this. They are theological writing, and their main purpose is to assert that all that exists does so because of the will of God (God said 'let there be...'). The early Christians knew this and it was only in later medieval and Reformation times that people began to insist on a literal interpretation. When science made this

no longer possible, Genesis 1 and 2 were liberated to play their proper theological roleagain. In fact, God didn't produce a ready-made world. He's done something cleverer than this. He's created a world to make itself.[1]

For Polkinghorne, to ascribe to a literal "ready-made world" is to diminish the glory of what God has done and—is doing—in creation.

Simultaneously, when *Creatio Ex Nihilo* is properly understood, a person who holds to "creationist theory" will no longer feel the reverence due God is threatened by those who are convinced by the theory of evolution. In the end, *Creatio Ex Nihilo* ascribes God as the single source of all creation regardless of "how" He decided to do it.

The Christian doctrine of the universe being created "Ex nihilo," has been, and still is, very difficult for the rational mind to comprehend—perhaps as difficult as the concept of nothing itself. How does one imagine nothing, or no-thing? The minute one attaches an idea or concept to *nothing*, it becomes *something* and no longer remains a *no-thing*, but a thing of some kind. What exactly is meant by the phrase *Creatio Ex Nihilo*? What spurned the development of this phrase and eventual Church doctrine? What does Scripture have to say regarding the issue? Before we go on to

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[1] John Polkinghorne, *Quarks, Chaos, and Christianity* (London, England: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1994), 50.

explore these issues, let us first acknowledge what *Creatio Ex Nihilo* is not. It is not the reforming of the Chaos mentioned in the Genesis account. *Creatio Ex Nihilo* is not God Sovereignly imposing shape onto eternal co-existing matter.

In the purest sense, according to scripture, the Christian doctrine that all God created He created Ex Nihilo, means literally that all God created He created from nothing *else*. If there was nothing else from which God created, then God alone is the source of all there is, or, all that exists came out of God—and nothing else.

The idea that there was a "something else" co-existing with God was precisely the mistaken assumption of Gnosticism that led to a) the belief in an eternal demi-god competing against God, which would necessitate an ontology apart from God, and b) the belief that since God was spirit and God is good, then "matter" is corrupt or evil, and therefore, only that which is spiritual can be pure or good. The catalyst for the articulation of the doctrine of *Creatio Ex Nihilo* was a direct response to Gnosticism and was born out of a desire to correct the confusion of an assumed eternally co-existing matter (which was considered in itself to be evil). The assertion of *Creatio Ex Nihilo* by Augustine and the early fathers of the Church was based on scripture and rabbinic teaching which this paper will demonstrate. The writings of St Paul are foundational

to this assertion; in his letter to the Romans, he states that God "is calling the things that be not [in themselves or in something else] into being, (καὶ καλοῦντος τὰ μὴ ὄντα ὡς ὄντα).[2] This paper will demonstrate that both Old and New Testament Scriptures assert—all that is—has its ontology in the being and substance of God. *Creatio Ex Nihilo* literally means: All of creation, God created out of nothing *else*—thus all that exists—came from God alone. This is the unadulterated meaning of *Creatio Ex Nihilo*; it is the mystery declared in scripture, articulated as Church doctrine by the Early Fathers, and confirmed in the Nicene Creed.

The Historical Propensity to fall into Dualistic Creationism

Natural human reasoning has much difficulty in dealing with the concept of *nothing*. How does one describe what is not? Historically, when *nothing* is applied to the creation account, a sub-conscious slip into dualism often materializes. The no-*thing* becomes a some-*thing*. The void, darkness, or chaos in the Genesis narrative[3] is often inserted as the substance God used in creation. But a void, a black hole, or a space of chaos, is a some-thing; for some reason, the ontology of the chaos or void is often overlooked.

The assumption of some co-existing matter from which the

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[2] Romans 4:17, *Greek New Testament and LXX Database(BGT)*. Norfolk: BibleWorks, LLC., 1999.
[3] Genesis 1:2, NRSV.

world was shaped, was not unique to Gnostic thought. According to Gerhard May, Philo and other Jewish thinkers influenced by Hellenistic philosophies pre-dating the Gnostic Christian debate also held this view:

> The theology of Hellenistic Judaism has adopted on broad terms philosophical ideas and teaching [from Hellenistic philosophy]...From the apologetic point of view the unity of God, his role as creator, and the effectiveness of his providence were declared; but the doctrine of the fashioning of the world out of an eternal matter [co-existing eternally with God] could be accepted without embarrassment.[4]

The imagining of some substance co-existing eternally with God was not too dissimilar from the Platonic notion found in the *Timaeus* where three eternal principles of the One *being* are set forth: Source, Ideas, and Matter.[5] This cosmological worldview is clearly present in the works of Philo who attempted to synthesize Greek philosophy with the account of creation found in the Hebrew Scriptures. May reveals how Hellenistic philosophy shaped Philo's interpretation of the Hebrew Scriptures:

> That Philo postulates a pre-existent matter alongside God is apparent from the very beginning of the work *De opificio mundi*. Philo starts from the Stoic proposition that there must be an active and passive principle of being. The former is the perfect Nous—God—the latter is no doubt the formless matter, although the concept does not occur; the passive principle is in itself without soul or motion, but it is moved,

formed and ensouled by the Nous, and turned into the visible cosmos.[6]

The position held by Philo is typical of the attempts made by human reason to compensate for the concept of *nothing else* besides God. Somehow human reason stumbles over the concept that—to begin with, God was all there was (Aristotle's first cause, or immovable mover).

The notion that there was some passive formless *something* co-existing eternally with God abdicates a consistent logic with the Christian assertion of God. For Christians, God is the omnipotent unequalled uncreated light; everything else is created. Philo's synthesis of Platonic and Stoic thought is incongruent in that the pre-existing matter which the Nous ensouled must have an ontology—otherwise it is equal in ontology to the uncreated light.

Shaped by Hellenistic thought, Philo's ontology for the formless matter is ignored. May articulates Philo's inconsistency regarding the formless matter, "The idea that the acceptance of a passive principle could diminish the omnipotence of God and therefore that matter also must be thought of as created, does not arise."[7] It is not hard to imagine how this thinking set the stage for Gnostic assertions regarding creation to emerge in which a demiurge is added to the equation. In turn, Platonic thought, developments by Philo, and Gnostic influence, are still affecting western

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[4] Gerhard May, *Creatio Ex Nihilo* (Edinburgh, Scotland: T&T Clark Ltd, 1994), 6.
[5] Ibid, paraphrase, 4.

[6] Ibid, 10.
[7] Ibid.

thought regarding creation, even if it is at a subconscious level. However, as will be seen in the biblical exegesis that follows, both Old and New Testaments reveal a God who is Creator of all, and before anything was created, there was nothing *else* but God.

Rabi Gamaliel and the Departure from God and Something Else

The New Testament book of Acts records interaction with the respected Jewish Rabi Gamaliel. This is the same Gamaliel (according to the biblical text of Acts) from whom St. Paul received his instruction in Judaism.[8] The *Jewish Encyclopaedia* confirms Rabi Gamaliel's place in history along with his prominence as the first President of the Sanhedrin of Jerusalem:

> Gamaliel, Son of Simon and grandson of Hillel: according to a Tannaitic tradition (Shab.15a), he was their successor as nasi and first president of the Great Sanhedrin of Jerusalem. Although the reliability of this tradition, especially as regards the title of "nasi," has been justly disputed, it is nevertheless a fact beyond all doubt that in the second third of the first century Gamaliel (of whose father, Simon, nothing beyond his name is known) occupied a leading position in the highest court, the great council of Jerusalem...[9]

In his monograph *Creatio Ex Nihilo*, May insists that before the teaching of Gamaliel, the Rabbinical Tradition was without a clear articulation regarding creation—ex nihilo:

> Neither did Palestinian Judaism formulate any firm doctrine of the *creation ex nihilo*...To rabbinic Judaism the problems raised by the philosophical doctrine of 'first principles' were remote and its speculations about creation turned on other themes.[10]

May cites a conversation recorded in the *Midrash Genesis* rabba as a formative and pivotal assertion in Jewish thinking. Gamaliel clearly articulates creation as proceeding forth from God and nothing else:

> The most important evidence for the express rejection of the view that God created the world out of an unformed stuff is in a debate between Rabban Gamaliel 11 (90/110) and a philosopher, reproduced in the midrash Geniesis rabba. The philosopher explains that God was indeed a great artist, but he had also found good 'colours' ready for his use, which served him as material for his creation of the world. The primitive stuffs were, in line with Genesis 1:2, defined as Tohuwabohu, darkness, water, spirit and 'deep'. Gamaliel refutes this scheme by pointing out that all the available primitive stuffs named by the philosopher are described in the Bible expressly as created by God.[11]

This statement records an unambiguous assertion regarding creation by an esteemed teacher of the Jewish law in the midst of a society in which Hellenistic cosmology was predominant and the emergence of Gnosticism was in full force. Gamaliel declares that everything that is, proceeded forth

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[8] Acts 22:3.
[9] Gamaliel, *Jewish Encyclopedia*, http://www.jewishencyclopedia.com/articles/6494-gamaliel-i.

[10] Gerhard May, *Creatio Ex Nihilo* (Edinburgh, Scotland: T&T Clark Ltd, 1994), 22-23.
[11] Ibid, 23, and Gen.r.19 (18-6 Tehodor-Albeck).

from God and *nothing else*. Certainly this teaching had an effect on his disciple Saul who would later make the same assertions after his conversion to Christianity (assertions of the converted Paul regarding creation would eventually be recorded in the New Testament). However, before we consider the New Testament passages attributed to Paul, if Gamaliel based his assertion of creation on Hebrew scripture, from which Hebraic scriptures would the Rabbi be forming his cosmology? According to Theodor-Allbeck, they are Is. 45:7; Ps. 148:4-5; and Amos 4:13.[12] A consideration of these Hebraic scriptures from Gamaliel's perspective of *Creatio Ex Nihilo* follows.

Hebraic Scriptural Attestation to Creatio Ex Nihilo

Although, as May asserts, a clear articulation of *Creatio Ex Nihilo* seems somewhat obscure in Palestinian Judaism, it was not absent from the thought and teaching of Gamaliel. It is impossible to know how many others within the Rabbinic Tradition held this view. It seems likely that if one Rabi discerned this from the Hebraic Scripture, others may have too, although there is no existing commentary to verify this. What can be said, is that the Hebrew Scriptures do assert the creation of all things by God from nothing *else*, even if it was not formally recognized in common Rabbinic teaching. Let us

then consider these Hebraic biblical passages attributed as the source from which Gamaliel asserted his position of God and nothing else as source for all creation.

Isaiah 45:5-7

As a brief preamble to the following verses, it must be stated that the phrase translated into English "I Am the LORD" repeated in all three verses, is simply the tetragrammaton in the original Hebraic text. The tetragrammaton meaning: *I Am that I Am*, or *I Am who I wish to Be* or *Become*. or *I am being*. In short, whatever lexical nuance is attributed to the tetragrammaton, it is a proclamation of self-existence not predicated on a beginning, or dependent on something or someone else. As a literary device, the repetition of the tetragrammaton in all three verses is deliberate and intended for emphases. This is significant when considering ontology. In these passages, the prophet is asserting that YHWH (I Am who I wish to Be) is the self-sustaining source of *being*, and there is no other.

> 5 I am the LORD, and there is no other [no other source of existence]; besides me there is no god. I arm you, though you do not know me,
>
> 6 so that they may know, from the rising of the sun and from the west, that there is no one besides me; I am the LORD, and there is no other.
>
> 7 I form light and create darkness, I make peace and create calamity (evil); I the LORD do all these things.[13]

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12 G.F. Moore, *Judaism in the First Centuries of the Christian Era 1*, (Cambridge, Mass., 1996) 381.

13 Isaiah 45:5-7, NRSV.

In this passage, the prophet makes the unprecedented claim that God is the only source of self sustaining being and that "there is no other." For emphasis, he then re-asserts this twice, in vs. 6. Finally, in vs. 7, we are told that not only is God the source of all being, but that God forms the light, darkness, peace, and even calamity or evil (Hebrew "Rah"). In other words, light, darkness, peace, and calamity/evil (or all there is) are all dependent on existence from the One eternal source of being.[14] Later on in the chapter, within the context of this assertion of YHWH as the sole source of being, the prophet further asserts God declaring, "I made the earth, and created humankind upon it; it was my hands that stretched out the heavens, and I commanded all their host.[15] If this verse were isolated from its context, it could be interpreted as God commanding pre-existent matter into its present form. However, considering this verse within the context of verses 5-7, any Hebrew scholar aware of the meaning of the tetragrammaton (such as Gamaliel), would never interpret this latter verse (12) to be a shaping of co-eternal matter by YHWH. This would be blatantly inconsistent with the text. This passage, (one from which Gamaliel discerned his cosmology), credits God as the only source of all created matter. While it is difficult for human reason to imagine anything outside of time, or "before the beginning," according to the prophet, where ontology is concerned, there is YHWH and there is no other.

Psalms 148:4-5

> 4 Praise him, you highest heavens, and you waters above the heavens!

> 5 Let them praise the name of the LORD [YHVH], for he commanded and they were created.[16]

In this passage the Psalmist declares that God commanded the highest heavens and waters—and they were created. Again, one could interpret the act of creation in these verses to infer that God only shaped, or formed pre-existing matter by His command. However, the Hebrew word for *created* in this verse is the Hebrew word "bara." The lexicon provides the following definition of this word:

> To create, form, make, produce… This word occurs in the very first verse of the Hebrew Bible (Gen.1:1). Bara emphasizes the initiation of the object, not manipulating it after original creation.[17]

Notice that again, the tetragrammaton is also the centerpiece of this passage. However, this passage contains not only an assertion, but it is also accompanied by the admonition

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[14] A caveat should be made regarding the attribution of evil to God. It is precisely in this context that Augustine's Privatio Boni takes on critical meaning. For Augustine, and according to Scripture, God is good and all He creates is thus good in accordance with His nature. However, while some theologians may try to escape this verse by translating Rah as calamity, or misfortune, there is no inconsistency in interpreting this verse to mean what it says once evil is understood as the privation of good. That is to say, that God, the creator of all, created freewill as part of the goodness of creation, and in so doing, sustains human beings even when they exercise their freewill in destructive behaviour that is inconsistent with His goodness.

[15] Ibid, 12.

[16] Psalm 148:4-5, NRSV.

[17] Bara, *The Complete Word Study Old Testament* (Chattanooga, AMG, 1994) 2306.

"to praise" or "recognize" the name YHWH. Without this *recognition*, one will never have a clear understanding of creation from God's point of view. Thus the Psalmist is not only asserting YHWH as the centerpiece of creation, he is admonishing the creation itself to acknowledge the source from which it came. Notwithstanding, the one reading the account (also being a created) should do the same. This passage affirms that all creation came forth by the command of YHWH.

Amos 4:13

As in the previous verse, the word translated "created" in this passage is also the Hebrew "bara." In addition, the tetragrammaton is once again present as source.

> For behold, He who forms mountains, and creates the wind, who declares to man what his thought is, and makes the morning darkness, who treads the high places of the earth-- The LORD [YHWH] God of hosts is His name.[18]

Recognizing these verses as the authority behind Gamaliel's assertion, it becomes clear that whatever the process of creation was, if there was a subsequent event when YHWH shaped matter, it does not negate that He also was the initial origin of it. May asserts that a Hebraic understanding of YHWH as the source of all, was the perfect segue to the Christian doctrine of *Creatio Ex Nihilo*:

> It seems to us that an almost obvious step leads from the Jewish belief in creation to the formulation of

the idea of creation ex nihilo. And Gamaliel's debating speech shows that in defence of the unlimited creative power of God, this logical conclusion could actually be drawn.[19]

It comes as no surprise that St. Paul's conviction of *Creatio Ex Nihilo* should mirror that of his teacher Gamaliel. This position is clearly asserted by St. Paul in the New Testament—a position that would be discerned by the Church Fathers, and eventually confirmed in the Nicene Creed.

St. Paul and Creatio Ex Nihilo in The New Testament

Having "sat at the feet of Gamaliel,"[20] and been educated "a Hebrew of the Hebrews and regarding the law, a Pharisee,"[21] St. Paul brings the rich tradition of his Jewish background and rigorous training as a Pharisee into the Church era. Thus his assertions in the New Testament would not be inconsistent with the Hebraic Scripture that were inspired by the same Spirit that enlightened Paul. A centerpiece of his cosmology can be discerned from his letter to the Romans. In fact, it is the position of this paper that Romans 11:36 is a further articulation of Isaiah 45 referred to by Paul's mentor Gamaliel regarding creation. Both of these passages present God as the one and only source of all.

Thoughtful consideration of the Greek prepositions in this passage

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[18] Amos, 4:13, NRSV.

[19] Gerhard May, *Creatio Ex Nihilo* (Edinburgh, Scotland: T&T Clark Ltd, 1994), 23.
[20] Acts 22:3, NRSV.
[21] Philippians 3:6, NRSV.

is imperative to understanding Paul's cosmology. This passage positions itself as a center piece to the rest of what Paul has to say regarding creation throughout the New Testament; for Paul, Christ is the revelation of God by whom "all things were created," and "in whom, all things consist."[22] Romans 11 is situated as a fitting crescendo to the preceding 10 chapters in which Paul, like a lawyer, lays out the justice and mercy of God. In consideration of the truths espoused in the previous verses of his epistle to the Romans, Paul seems to be unable to contain the emotion derived from his insight into the creation of the universe, and breaks forth forth with awe:

> 33 Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and His ways past finding out!
>
> 34 "For who has known the mind of the LORD? Or who has become His counselor?"
>
> 35 "Or who has first given to Him and it shall be repaid to him?"
>
> 36 For of [out of] Him and through Him and to [into] Him are all things, to whom be glory forever. Amen.[23]

This passage clearly links Paul's conviction regarding God as *Creator of all* with his training in the Hebrew Scriptures; verses 33 and 34 are a Greek transliteration of a Hebrew passage taken from Isaiah 40:13 (the same book Gamaliel referenced regarding creation). Before making his assertion regarding God

as source of all in verse 36, Paul locates himself in direct association with the Hebrew Scripture. Only then does Paul declare, "For from Him, through Him, and to Him are all things."[24] This verse in the original language is rich with specific meaning, Ὅτι ἐξ αὐτοῦ καὶ δι᾿ αὐτοῦ καὶ εἰς αὐτὸν τὰ πάντα· αὐτῷ ἡ δόξα εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας. Ἀμήν.[25] The three prepositions speak volumes and leave no room for ambiguity regarding ontology.

The first preposition is ἐξ meaning 'out of.' A number of other prepositions were available in Greek such as μετα meaning *beside*, or behind, or περί meaning *around*, and so forth. Yet Paul specifically chooses the preposition ἐξ meaning "out of."[26] For Paul, all there is—proceeded forth *out of* God. The second preposition in this verse is δι᾿.[27] This preposition in the genitive means: *through* in a spatial sense, or by way of.[28] Finally, the third preposition εἰς, is again a spatial referent and denotes movement into.[29] Literally translated, Paul is saying, "out of, through the agency of, and into God—all things are.

The pronouns "Him" following the first two prepositions also hold significant meaning. Both pronouns appear in the genitive case αὐτοῦ, denoting possession or source. Thus, out of Him and through Him (possessive) are all things. The third use

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[22]Colossians 1:16-17, 3:11, Ephesians 1:23, NRSV.
[23]Romans 11:33-36, NRVS.
[24]Romans 11:36, NRSV.
[25]Ibid, *Greek New Testament and LXX Database (BGT)*. Norfolk: BibleWorks, LLC., 1999.
[26]ἐξ, Thayer, lexicon.
[27]Rom 11:36 BYZ.
[28]dia...Frieberg, lexicon.
[29]εἰς Frieberg, lexicon.

of the pronoun is in the accusative αὐτὸν designating God as the direct object of the action. Thus Paul is declaring God as not only the one source, and sustainer, but also the destiny of all things. There is no room for co-existing matter, chaos, or even void to be considered as a source of creation. When read in light of Isaiah 45:5-7 (referred to by Gamaliel), both Old and New Testaments declare one self-sustaining source of all. All that is created is sourced and sustained by God, "There is one YHWH and there is no other."[30]

This position is congruent with the rest of Paul's epistles. Addressing the Epicurean and Stoic philosophers in Athens, Paul asserts of God, "for in Him we live and move and have our being, as also some of your own poets have said, 'For we are also His offspring.'

Therefore… we are the offspring of God…"[31] In his letter to the Colossians Paul writes of Christ:

> For by Him *all things* were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him. And He is before all things, and in Him all things consist.[32]

The epistle to the church in Ephesus concurs with this cosmology and speaks of the Church as Christ's body, Christ being "the fullness of Him who fills all in all."[33] Thus for Paul, like his mentor Gamaliel,

there is only one source from which all that is created has its being. However, although the Scriptures both Old and New declare God as the only source and sustainer of all that is created, it would not be until the second century that an official declaration of this position would be articulated by the Church.

Creatio Ex Nihilo as Church Doctrine

As the Gnostic assertion presented itself in the first and second century, an articulation of the Church's position on creation was necessary. Many doctrines articulated in the formative years of the Church were brought about as a response to heresy. As the Church grew, issues such as the humanity and deity of Christ had to be worked out. For instance, some taught that Christ was only human having a spiritual experience, or only spiritual showing us what humanity was intended to look like. The Church had to work out teaching that explained "one person-two natures." *Creatio Ex Nihilo* was fashioned in like manner as a refutation against Gnostic teaching. Thus Gnosticism served as a catalyst aiding the Church in clearly comprehending and articulating its position regarding creation. In the second century Irenaeus writing against the Gnostic heresy wrote, "The rule of truth which we hold is, that there is one God Almighty, who made all things by His Word, and fashioned and formed, out of that which had not existence [leaving only God as

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[30] Isaiah 45:5-7, NRSV.
[31] Acts 17:28-29, NKJV.
[32] Colossians 1:16-17, NKJV.
[33] Ephesians 1:23, NKJV.

the substance], all things which exist."[34] In this statement, Irenaeus asserts that all God made was made by His word. There is nothing else. Irenaeus goes on to explain:

> For He is Himself uncreated, both without beginning and end, and lacking nothing. He is Himself sufficient for Himself; and still further, He grants to all others this very thing: existence; but the things which have been made by Him have received a beginning. But whatever things had a beginning, are liable to dissolution, and are subject to and stand in need of Him who made them.[35]

Thus, beginning with Irenaeus in the 2nd century, clear articulation of God as both the source and sustainer of all that is created began to be disseminated and accepted as official Church doctrine. Building on Irenaeus' work, Tertullian and Origen would further articulate and confirm this position. It is interesting to note that the establishment of *Creatio Ex Nihilo* actually preceded the formation of definitive doctrine on the Trinity (325-Council of Nicaea in response to Arius), as well as the acceptance and declaration of the New Testament canonical books (397-Council of Carthage). G. May corroborates the early foundational movement and establishing of *Creatio Ex Nihilo*:

> Only with Christian theologians of the second century did the traditional saying, that God created the world out of nothing, take on a principled ontological sense: the expression 'out of nothing' now meant that absolutely, and excluded the idea that the creator had

merely imposed form on a pre-existent material.[36]

From the 2nd c. to the present, the Church has declared its official position on creation as: all that is created has its source in God and nothing else.

Concluding Thoughts and Implications

Eventually, the declaration that God created all that is, would take prominence in the Nicene Creed (CE. 325) that opens, "I believe in one God, the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, and of all things visible and invisible." For the council at Nicaea, *Creatio Ex Nihilo* meant absolutely that God created all that is—out of nothing else. He alone is the one source that is calling the things that be not [in themselves or in something else] into being, (καὶ καλοῦντος τὰ μὴ ὄντα ὡς ὄντα).[37] All that is—came from God and nothing else; God alone is the one being without a source or beginning. God is in fact, the one source of all that is. This is a great mystery to the finite mind. Sometimes poetry can tread into mystery where reason trembles. Thomas Aquinas expresses this mystery beautiful in the following poem:

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[34] Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, I.22.1.
[35] Ibid, 3.8.3.

[36] Gerhard May, *Creatio Ex Nihilo* (Edinburgh, Scotland: T&T Clark Ltd, 1994), 22.
[37] Romans 4:17, *Greek New Testament and LXX Database(BGT)*. Norfolk: BibleWorks, LLC., 1999.

You Cannot Be What God is Not

All are having a relationship with God.

A pear taken from a limb and

set in a bowl,

surely it is talking to its Lord

and happy that it is being honoured
for its life,

and somehow knowing

that soon it will be

returning to

Him.

We use words like "returning."

Think about that. Inherent in that
word is

separation,

and separation from God is never

really possible.

What can you be that He is not?

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"You cannot be what I am not,"

my Lord once said

to me.[38]

The implications of re-visiting and clarifying the truth of *Creatio Ex Nihilo*, are far reaching. In the first place, if all that exists is out of, through, and into God (as Paul declared to the Romans) then the issue of the source or origin of all that is created is settled. Once this is understood, matters such as an old earth vs. a young earth, evolution vs. creation, etc., fall into the shadows of consideration as interesting theories to explore and nothing more. Secondly, if God is the source of all things, then even though they may have been corrupted, all things are in some since sacred and must be revered as such. Ecologically this is a stark reversal of the worldview that emerged out of the Enlightenment espoused by Francis Bacon, Isaac Newton and others. Their unfortunate worldview considered creation as nothing more than a commodity to serve man's interests. Acquiescing to a true *Enlightenment* of creation would include changing the way one views not only all of nature, but even an enemy. Perhaps from the vantage point of *Creatio Ex Nihilo*, one might even be empowered to love one's enemies, turn the other cheek, and do good to those who spitefully abuse them. Could this be the divine sight by which Jesus navigated his human existence?

Ultimately, to abdicate human reason that imagines *nothing as something*, and recognize creation from God's perspective, is to step onto *holy ground* where all created entities recognize the one source from which they came—the Creator and Sustainer of all. The genius by which God chose to create is an adventure awaiting ongoing discovery with as many possibilities as God is infinite. *Creatio Ex Nihilo* recognizes, that regardless of "how" God created, what is marvellous is—He did; even more breath taking is that we have our ontology in God and nothing *else*.

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[38]Daniel Ladinsky, *Love Poems From God: Twelve Sacred Voices from the East and West*, (New York: Penguin Books, 2002), 147.

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Moves, mixed media on cardboard, Cindy Walker

Insight on Bonnieview Road

Karen Courtland Kelly

It was a slightly crisp late autumn night, a time of transition. The leaves were adorning the roadway as they had fallen to their resting place. Their once vibrant colour was gone with the wind. Once again the trees were sleeping with shorter days and longer nights. Battling with all the transition surrounding my external environment, *Method in Theology* by Bernard Lonergan was wrestling internally within my mind. The drive through the rolling mountains of the Adirondacks made Lonergan's writings live and breathe with an unseen depth. Be attentive. Be intelligent. Be reasonable. Be responsible.[1] How one experiences, understands, decides and makes judgments in the night, driving from the city of Montreal through the Adirondack Mountains, is always a different experience depending on unforeseen circumstances.

As I was winding through the moonlit back roads, a light drizzle started. I attentively turned on the wipers. Arriving at Bonnieview Road, a back door into the Adirondack Park, one enters the narrow, winding pitch-black wilderness stretched out with abundant trees hovering over the roadway. I had experienced this road many times but this night was very different. The rain washed the sleeping leaves in the hallowed night. The dense forest loomed starkly over both sides of the roadway belittling all in its moonlit shadow. This night the brown leaves were blanketing the roadway when suddenly the leaves lying on the road startled me. Being startled made me question: the disturbing question, a kind of crisis on Bonnieview Road. I slowed down, rubbed my eyes, and asked myself the unthinkable. Could it be that the leaves this night on Bonnieview Road were not leaves at all?

My life experience was shaken, my understanding blurred, my question weighed heavily upon me. I reluctantly stopped the car to verify the data in question. Internally my mind was reviewing my reason for questioning. As I emerged from the car, I took a deep breath and slowly approached the data. Standing in the rain I walked slowly towards the headlights. The leaves were all around me. I knelt, seeing my breath in the clear Adirondack air. To my utter amazement most of the brown leaves were not leaves at all. They were frogs!

I slowly arose in my knees as the rain-washed gently down my face. My body rose upwards as my eyes gazed outwards towards

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[1] Bernard J. F. Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, (Toronto: Reprinted University of Toronto Press for Lonergan Research Institute, 2007), 53.

my extended breath. I peered as far as the headlights extended, contemplating how the night was transformed by extreme weather juxtapositions. It was dark and foreboding but strangely moonlit. It was raining with a steady gentle tempo, yet the air was happily crisp. The surroundings of the dense forest lay against the moonlit leaves blanketing the roadway. Somehow the night was experienced between these intense dynamics, yet warm and inviting. Attentively returning to my car, I internally observed a dynamic shift occurring to me, a phase of adaptation, assimilation and adjustment to this insight. I was engaged in the dynamic shift that manifested both internally to me and externally to my environment. There was a new road ahead of me.

Navigating the road was challenging as it continued to be abundantly alive and experienced by creatively driving through the new path of dead leaves and around the living frogs. Each section of roadway brought new insights from the frogs, leaves and dynamic juxtapositions. Fresh insights emerged causing me to distinguish (from a distance) the difference between a frog and a leaf by looking for its eyes, as the colouring of its body was deceiving. The whole evening became interwoven between the language of Lonergan and the attentiveness needed to drive the difficult road. It was the challenge of navigating the path in-between the dead leaves and the living frogs. Could this be an example of what Bernard Lonergan calls symbolic meaning?

The road was riveting when I realized how the backdrop became mesmerizing. I was learning by experiencing the two types juxtaposed against each other: the juxtaposition expressed on the roadway of living frogs and dead leaves. It became possible to distinguish the difference between the two; was I learning by accumulating some type of analogous knowledge? For ten years I have driven Bonnieview Road, but tonight, in a moment of being disturbed, a question percolated over something that otherwise seemed normally mundane. The crisis on the road brought on a necessity to attentively seek for an answer.

Through the dynamic of seeking, the seemingly mundane road became renewed. Upon approaching the end of the road, the juxtaposition of life and death became a human reality. The stark reality came into full view as one ascended and then descended to the final stop sign. An old cemetery beckoned a glance and an intersection emerged with three choices. A decision loomed, the choice filled with tension and a deep breath became necessary to continue. Once the decision manifested the action I crossed the intersection, the tension shattered and the scenery drastically changed.

Did my experience on Bonnieview Road transform my understanding of the transcendental precepts that Lonergan identifies? Absolutely, the disruption/crisis caused me to ask an otherwise unthinkable question. Could it be that the leaves this

night on Bonnieview Road were not leaves at all? By being attentive to something that disturbed my environment, the question propelled me to intelligently seek new data for an answer. I unknowingly became transformed by the experience. First, I needed to stay attentive and adapt my current situation to collect and understand the data. I needed to stop driving and that went against the easier momentum. It was necessary to reasonably approach the data by openly seeking an answer, so a judgment and decision needed to be rendered. By being reasonable and recognizing my freedom to take a creative moment in the rain, I responsibly stopped the car and opened the door. Is this what Lonergan means by being a creative collaborator? The rest of the road met me with an astonishing find. I gained an insight on Bonnieview Road by attempting to seek fresh data through a normally unthinkable question by experiencing, understanding, judging and deciding to navigate the same road within the light of a new question. Lonergan stresses that it is important to be attentive to what one notices. It is illuminating to contemplate the interwoven dynamics within Lonergan's *Method in Theology*. "Am I to carry the burden of continuity or to risk the initiative of change?"[2] Is it possible to consciously live the 4th transcendental precept of responsibility that Lonergan identifies?

Three years later I am still learning from the experience of insight gained on Bonnieview

Road. My theological thesis *The Experience of Salvific Energy* emerged from another disturbing question that occurred fifteen years ago. My thesis questions the tension and juxtaposition of life and death and whether someone can feel someone else's peace or pain after they crossed over the threshold. Why question this? Lonergan gives an insight into a possible answer with the dynamic of interdependence and unity that occurs in a family and in our human family with community of feeling, fellow-feeling, physic contagion, and emotional identification.[3] The living dynamic of interdependence and unity propelled me into theology and to research internal and external tensions and their possible liberation. My research eventually materialized in the field of eschatology and unpacking the notion of salvific energy. Unbeknownst to me at the time, the dynamic juxtaposition encountered with dead leaves and the living frogs was one of the lessons that I carried with me into the theological field of eschatology. One can encounter the emergence of salvific energy and the re-emergence of the theological field of eschatology by accessing the thesis at http://spectrum.library.concordia.ca/977740/

There is a new endowment at Concordia University called the *Salvific Energy Endowment*. The endowment became necessary based on what the research revealed. For further information regarding the Salvific Energy Endowment contact caroline.apollon@concordia.ca.

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[2] Ibid, 135.

[3] Ibid, 58.

Photographs: Orit Shimoni

Jerusalem Revisited: My Winding Path Toward a Modest Optimism

Orit Shimoni

"If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, May my right hand loose its cunning"

Psalm 137:5

I have been nomadic for five years now, living out of a suitcase, traveling in accordance with my musical performances, across Canada and throughout Europe. I have been meeting all sorts of people, gaining perspective, learning much about the world, not to mention myself. There is something wonderful about circling through places, leaving and returning again and again, each time with newfound perspective, each time feeling your old self and your new self merge. Sometimes it is joyful, sometimes full of sorrow, but always, it teaches you something. So now here I am on a visit back to the place I grew up in on and off as a child and again in my early adulthood.

Jerusalem. Where do I begin? *How can* I begin? In literary criticism, there is the concept of over-determination – a symbol that has so many layers of possible interpretation that it is too overwhelming for the reader, and is thereby rendered as if useless. That is how I feel whenever I approach Jerusalem in writing. Actually, that is how I feel when I approach Jerusalem with my heart, mind and soul: Overwhelmed.

If I ever thought that it was *simply* my place of residence, it was foolish of me to think so, for every aspect of life here is affected by the fact that Jerusalem is, and has been for centuries, a potent symbol of so much, for so many. With that in mind, it is terrifying to share any thoughts about the place, when everyone has a strong opinion and wants to tell it to you, if not bark it. And so I beg you to understand: This is a personal, experiential reflection. The number of qualifications and caveats I would have to add as footnotes if this were political would make the following entirely unreadable.

For a long time, I have not known what to think about Jerusalem. When I moved from there to Canada as a child, I missed it desperately.

Where I once played freely in the alleys and playgrounds with friends, the smells of dry grass, pine cones, sand dust, the wonderful smells of familiar cooking wafting from different apartments, back then I knew little about Jerusalem's potency beyond my sensual experience of it. From there to move at eight years old to Calgary where it was cold and where we had to be driven to friends' houses to play, was a profound disappointment, a loss of freedom and childhood independence, not to mention the loss of more agreeable climate.

But even then I must have felt that it was the spirit of the place that I missed, the spirit that inhabited those senses. For in Calgary, too, there was the smell of grass and the odd pine cone, there were moments of deep spiritual existence from the eyes of a child underneath the blanket of the great cosmos. But unlike Jerusalem, there was no mythology attached to it, no repertoire of songs, stories and poems shared by its inhabitants, no *suffering* to make it *soulful,* nor collective narrative I felt a belonging to.

So intense was my longing for the place of my early childhood, that when I finished high school I moved back to Jerusalem to do undergraduate studies in literature, history and education. At eighteen years of age, I thrived at first, enthralled by my physical re-familiarization with the sights, smells and sounds, with the language rolling off my tongue, with the music, and the warm breeze. It was a time of newfound freedom and independence for me, having left home to discover myself in the excitement of university life. I was taking everything in and trying desperately to build an adult identity I could call my own, conflicted as it was.   I was full of emotion, inexplicable tears, a sense of belonging that was not on the lines of nationalism or ideology, at least I did not think so. Nor did the sentiment rest on the wings of religion, but on the most basic of terms. My five senses just felt at home, a home I was happy to share in peace with whom ever else felt that way, regardless of political or social category.

But in my first year of teaching at a Jerusalem high school, everything changed dramatically. Political tension, part of every day life in the region, erupted to the point of affecting my day to day life gravely. And from the initial eruptions things only escalated. It started with shootings on certain roads, but quickly moved on to buses exploding in the streets, almost daily, in intersections my own bus route took to work. From buses the explosions spread to cafes, supermarkets, and night clubs. By then, in my second year as school teacher, I had over two hundred students I cared for and cared about, so it was not only concern for my own safety and that of my family that gripped me, but for my students as well. It was harrowing.

My supervisors at work told me we had to keep them calm and tell

them to carry on as normal. I vehemently disagreed. What was normal about this? This was happening for a reason. Yes we were in danger and had to show a brave face, but this was the uprising of another people, and it was not enough to know we were filled with desperate dread and wanted to survive. I needed to better understand, though it seemed impossible, why a group of people would act with such total disregard for innocent civilian lives.

As the violence and nervous irritability grew around me, so my understanding of the context of my living space grew deeper. My thoughts spanned history, politics, culture, religion, psychology and spirituality, and inevitably dove from my narrative into a more complex pool of narratives. Meanwhile, I watched as my high school students turned their fear into anger. I could hardly blame them. Fifteen of their close friends had been killed in a downtown explosion. Those who did not die were in hospitals in comas, with nails in their heads, packed into the explosives so as to cause the most amount of damage. A month or two later, one of my favourite student's mother and baby sister were killed in their home. I dutifully attended the unforgettable funeral.

I was sick with grief, and my students were blind with rage. But there was a core part of me that refused to agree to their hatred, because when they made their disdain for the enemy plain to me,

in writing forcefully scratched onto their desks and scrawled on their exam papers, I knew that this was not and could not be the answer. Anger that stemmed from a deep and volatile wound could not be what healed it.

Through the daily dread and despair something turned within me. When I came home each day and turned on the news, by obligation, not by desire, the sounds of mothers weeping for their fallen sons and daughters triggered nightly weeping.   But it struck me deeply that the sound of those wailing mothers was the exact same on both sides. On that level, it did not matter whose narrative you were going with, it was utterly devastating. Knowing that it was harder than ever to expect my students to transcend their pain beyond the immediate and understandably tribal, self-protective solidarity was also devastating.

I left Jerusalem at the end of the second year of violence. I could not stomach it, but moreover, I no longer knew how to belong to it. No part of the beauty I had loved my whole life seemed worth the price. Seeing the rage on all sides, I had no hope whatsoever of it resolving and I could no longer justify my existence there, I could no longer live it simply, denying it carried political presence.

Heartbroken, I moved to Montreal, and quickly discovered I could not escape my grief, for in Montreal, upon hearing my foreign

name, everyone asked me where I was from, and as soon as I answered, never really wanting to, I was victim to an onslaught of their harsh opinion. My own was seldom asked of me.

I had all the markers of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder: Nightmares of violence, disdain for crowds, jumping at loud noises, tears, and a sense of isolation, a feeling that nobody understood how I was feeling. I was caught between unacceptable options. If someone verbally attacked or slandered Israel, I felt the need to defend it, at least to nuance the argument, even though I myself critiqued it heavily. I grew so sick of other people bringing it up when I just wanted to 'be', I almost considered lying about my name. In fact, I did choose a different name for my artist self, as I delved into music more seriously.

I spent the next five years in Montreal, working on my Master's thesis in theological studies, which, as a direct result of my experiences in Jerusalem, was on the topic of ethics and religion, begging for an emphasis on the openness to multiple narratives for the sake of peace. I continued to teach at an elementary school, and I began to thrive in my art of song-writing. But I was in exile. Like a messy break up, I was angry, hurt, lost and confused, and grieving.

Two years later I had the opportunity to go back for a conference, and though the nightmares tripled in frequency toward my departure, I knew I had to do it. Back in Jerusalem, mostly on obligatory guided tours offered by the conference, I think I did nothing but weep. Like a bereaved widow to a formerly abusive husband, I felt hopelessly entangled in anger, grief, and the acknowledgment of a former love and life. It was too much to bear and at trip's end, I was relieved to set foot in safe Montreal, which I called my new Jerusalem. There was enough of a spirit lingering in Montreal, and it would suffice. Still, my nightmares continued. In them, I would be walking around in Jerusalem and enthralled to be there, only to realise I was lost, and in harm's way. I would wake disheartened beyond words.

At thirty, with a second album in the works, positive reviews and radio play, my master's thesis finished and defended, and my patience for a rigid educational system at its lowest, I took a leave of absence in order to finally give my artistic self it's full due. And where did I go of all places, but to Berlin. Berlin, from where two of my grandparents escaped in the nick of time. There, whatever anger I had toward "my" "people's" "wrongdoings" in Israel, was halted by the sight of a thousand plaques placed in the pavement where "my" "people" had been dragged out of their homes and sent off to their slaughter. It's not that I did not know that history, it's that being there and seeing its traces affected me deeper than I

had anticipated. And perhaps it re-built a certain justification for "my" "people's" need for a homeland.

But then, it did not undo or take over my sympathy for the "other" "people's" needs. It just confused me more. I could hold multiple nar-ratives in my hand and mind, juggle them and see each one's validity, and yet they remained painfully irreconcilable. I was without hope. Concurrently, I was experiencing the same irreconcilability in my most important personal relationships. And so my sense of crisis deepened overall. I came out with my third album, called "Sadder Music," and I wondered where I could go from there.

From Europe, geographically closer, I was compelled to visit my family in Jerusalem again. I did not weep again quite as immediately, but I was still extremely tense. It was like everything I believed in was being tested, and moreover, the question of where I belonged seemed further and father from my grasp. I felt like an alien in Israel now, out of touch and so far from having a firm position or under-standing, so confused by the con-tinuous criticism of my non-Israeli friends: some legitimate, some slan-derous and fraught with ignorance of the history, so overwhelmed by the diversity of opinions within Israel, all spoken with fervour and urgency. My head was spinning with anxiety and grief. And yet my heart still sparkled when I took solitary walks in my old neighbourhood.

It still melted at the sounds and scents. I could not cut it off from myself, nor myself from it.

And then I remembered the phrase: "If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, May my right hand loose its cunning." And I remembered that when I left Jerusalem in my youth, I had a necklace with those words on it. I wrote that memory down in my notebook, and doing the only thing I know how to do when I swell up with more thoughts and feelings than I can keep in, I wrote a song. But fearing as I always do, to disclose anything about me and Jerusalem, I wrote Jane, instead of Jerusalem:

I wore a chain around my neck,

With your name on it so I wouldn't forget,

Then I took it off and I locked it away,

I could never explain my regret

For having loved you so,

Who was I to think I know,

And who are you to be fought over so?

Jane, Jane, it's not that I've come to complain,

But love you or leave you it's always the same,

Jane, you drive me insane . . .

Indeed. A love I could not shake. I returned to Europe, by then having given up on an apartment, and having no direction whatsoever but to follow the muse of my heart, I took a Buddhist-like leap, gave up whatever possessions I had left, and

slept by the mercy of kind hosts who believed enough in my art and music as to feed and shelter me as I passed through their town. I pursued performances and by the grace of something that was surely bigger than me, was never shy of a safe haven. Therein perhaps lay my most profound transition.

Having essentially given up on political resolution, I now experienced reality not through the lens of academia, nor the educational institution, nor the regular day-to-day of regular work in one place. Now I was experiencing first hand different households, couples and families, in Canada as well as in Europe. And this is where my darkness turned to light.

What struck me most in these experiences was the generosity and good will of people wherever I went. What inspired me was the commonality of some essential human love, an appreciation for art and passion. What comforted me was that love was everywhere, with all its little deformities, in several versions, with various challenges, but it was everywhere. And where the structures of society seemed doomed to collapse *everywhere* I went, a small but persistent hope started to glow a little brighter.

Everywhere I went I learned of local grass-roots organizations that functioned on altruism, and made up for the lack of benevolence and compassion in greater institutions. Everywhere I went I heard the art and poetry of people who believed

in peace and uninhibited creative expression. By the same token, everywhere I went, people suffered similar sufferings, and it was strangely comforting. And slowly, as I kept on traveling, I began to feel better. Critical thinkers were everywhere, sharing their ideas, breaking down barriers imposed from the outside, reaching from genuine hearts to other genuine hearts. I continued to weep, but more for comfort than for misery.

And now, in my fifth year of life as a troubadour, I am back in Jerusalem for another visit. And it's not that I tune out the political news, but I can hold it in one hand and still see, feel and remember that here too, though you never see it in the news abroad, there are many people working at a grass-roots level toward peace. Groups of youth from both sides are brought together. Documentaries are being made to bring the legitimacy of multiple narratives to mind. Songs and poems that transcend political boundaries see publication. Jewish men get up to let an Arab lady with heavy shopping bags sit. Political and social satire breaks the tension with laughter. There is life here that is not altogether grim, or at least, there is joy still to be found within the grimness.

And the grass still smells as it always did. The olive trees still stand, twisted with poetic trunks, the birds still sing sweet songs. Jerusalem in all its humble beauty exists with and in spite of all

its weight. And I can love it once again because I have fallen in love with *everywhere,* and so how can I exclude it - my original favourite, the place of my childhood? Good people, peace-loving people live here, and will continue to live here come what may. If I am citizen of the world, as my friends have come to call me, surely I can be at home once again here too.

Will I ever return for good? God only knows what twists and turns my journey will still take. But the grief I have felt for so long has shifted its emphasis. And for that I am entirely indebted to the good hearted souls whom I have met from near and far, who have reminded me not to reside only in fear, that people can and should belong everywhere, and that plenty of people believe that. If that is so, then why not Jerusalem?

Grace

For a fleeting moment, our hearts were one

For a fraction of a second, our souls were united

I saw through your eyes and you through mine

You understood my words

before I even spoke them

And I felt your words

resonate in me.

For a fleeting moment, I felt love

For a fraction of a second, I felt grace

Then it was gone.

I returned to the lonely path

that is my life

And still my heart yearns

for yours again.

— *Lynn Barwell*

In flight, photograph, Abbie Perkins