

The High View of Scripture: Reading the Synoptics and Paul

by

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The opinions expressed in this [thesis / dissertation] do not necessarily reflect the views of the South African Theological Seminary

DECLARATION

I hereby acknowledge that the work contained in this thesis is my own original work and has not previously in its entirety or in part been submitted to any academic institution for degree purposes.

Mark Phillips

May 23 2011

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Because You are...

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SUMMARY

This research shows that critical studies of the Synoptic Problem and the new perspective on Paul support the reliability of the biblical texts. These studies not only fail to assault the veracity of Scripture, but actually lend support to their authenticity and historicity. It will be demonstrated that these discussions themselves support the trustworthiness of the text as historical accounts of the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus, as well as accurate depictions of theological developments in the first generation church as revealed through the Pauline corpus.

How the biblical text is read by critics has evolved rapidly over the last two centuries, leading to a modernist literary structuralism. The danger is that the Reader determines truth and meaning, rather than deriving such from the text. That threatens a high view of Scripture and reasonable exegesis. Such is the motivation for this paper (Chapter 1).

Different solutions to the Synoptic Problem each lend support to the extant Synoptics (Chapter 2). No matter which conclusions are reached on the various explanations, the texts themselves as we have them in the canon are substantiated. Hence, corroboration for the Gospels emerges from the critical literature proposing various explanations to the Synoptic Problem (3.1).

Anti-miracle bias streams like a screaming silence through most of the critical biblical literature. When literary units are broken down into forms, miracle stories can be easily isolated by naturalistic materialists as redactions with no historical foundation. The assumption is these biblical miracle accounts could not possibly be true. Why? - because they are supernatural miracles which any naturalistic materialist assumes could never happen. This bias is addressed (3.2-3.7) by showing that miracle accounts in the Synoptic Gospels are found in diverse material from varied sources (as deemed by the critical scholars, many who are anti-supernatural materialists).

Critical literature is fraught with appeals to the so-called chasm between the Synoptic Gospels and the Gospel of John as a challenge to their authenticity.

Obviously, the Synoptic Problem has generated excellent material comparing the evangelists' treatments of specific material / incidents. This contributes an unspoken result rarely celebrated - a tacit appeal to the authority of Scripture. When John and the Synoptics are seen with a fresh view in light of discussions about the Synoptic Problem, the chasm is diminished, thus supporting the reliability of both John and the Synoptic Gospels (Chapter 4).

To demonstrate further that a high view of Scripture can be deemed from critical literature, another example is given via the new perspective on Paul, which has generated a great deal of excellent dialogue (Chapter 5). Three observations are seen from these discussions: (1) how they make an assumed appeal to the reliability of the biblical text, thus providing tacit support for them; (2) there is no significant difference on weighty eternal matters regarding the perspective on Paul before and after the new perspective; and (3) there is a demonstrated unity in essentials among those engaged in this conversation.

The conclusion of this research is a corroboration that "all Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work" (2 Timothy 3:16-17, New International Version (1984) - Unless otherwise noted, the New International Version of the Bible is used for biblical text references).

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Introduction

1.1 The Challenge and Motivation for this Work

There is a current erroneous assumption among many followers of Christ that all critical biblical literature assaults a high view of Scripture. The gap appears wide between much of the critical literature and the Christian in the pew. An apparent chasm between biblio-centric faith and large segments of biblical academia in the realm of critical studies has been tolerated for too long.

Many have yielded to the easy supposition that these two worlds should just be compartmentalized, forever set apart from one another. Important apologetics are needed to reveal that much of said literature actually supports the authenticity of Scripture, as do many critics. This won't quickly solve the problem of assumed separation between scholar and pew; but it provides a start.

Christianity Today Online (Benne 2005) points out in an article about Robert B. Sloan's resignation from the presidency of Baylor University, "Protestants have simply not been able to establish the one thing Sloan has been striving to establish: a first-rate research university that preserves its soul. Vanderbilt, Duke, the University of Chicago, as well as much older Harvard, Yale, Princeton, and Brown lost their Christian character long ago as they rose to elite status" (Benne 2005: 4).

The article brings to light a serious question facing evangelical scholars. "Do Protestants have enough confidence in the intellectual claims of the Christian faith to make them relevant to the educational life of a great university? The question asks whether the Protestant faith is intellectually compelling and comprehensive enough to take its place at the table of scholarly conversation, especially in the institutionalized form of a university" (Benne 2005: 5).

As a former biochemist, when I wrote a scientific report on an assay procedure for determining human etoposide levels (Phillips 1994) or published a paper on nadolol enantiomers (Belas 1995: 140-145), there was no necessary consideration in the material regarding naturalism vs. supernaturalism. The results were what they were. While moral and ethical concerns might drive

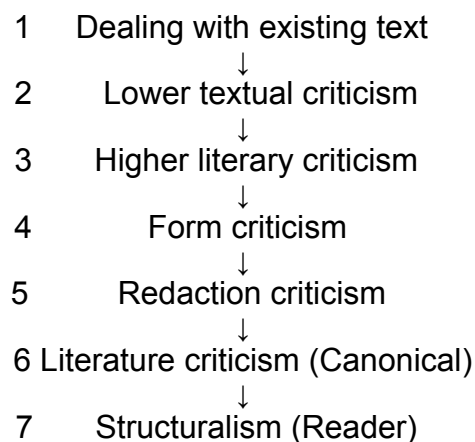
scientific research out of a desire to ease human suffering or generally raise the standard of living, the specific results do not necessarily reflect questions of the supernatural, consequences of eternity, or the “God-struggle” of dealing with the concept of being in right relationship with the Creator.

Regarding biblical criticism, however, that struggle is always present, always at the heart and message of the biblical material. Without exception, this is consistently true if the literature of the Gospels and Pauline corpus means what it says according to the exegete who approaches it by simply dealing with the existing canon. Where biblical criticism is useful, it is so immensely. Unfortunately, where it is destructive to the truth of God who so loved the world, it is likewise immensely injurious.

It is hoped that a new life-giving perspective on critical biblical studies will result from this paper – that those who are involved in critical studies will look with fresh anticipation for God’s story of redemption and truth in the midst of those studies. And may those who have avoided critical investigations (due to suspicion that all biblical criticism assaults a high view of Scripture) be able to approach such studies with eager hope for a greater understanding of God’s love letter to humanity.

1.2 How We Read

A tidy flow chart of developments in biblical criticism, though simplistic, provides a helpful overview to the potential benefits and pitfalls. The following seven steps depict the unfolding efforts to understand and elucidate:



Much of the preaching today is still done with the starting place of (1) dealing with the existing text. The Anglican priest and the Calvary Chapel pastor ponder the texts for that week, read through them, pray over them, asking God what He wants to say to the flock through the preacher. And how often is heard from the pulpit well-attempted exegesis of a key Greek term in the homiletic passage? Often, but perhaps not often enough with theological accuracy in most pulpits.

Beneficial effects of biblical criticism are thus seen for the homily through increased understanding of the original *Sitz im Leben*, associated with the author's intent and the first audience's relationship with the text. Insight for practical preaching results. A greater comprehension of "Let the reader understand" can be enjoyed, hopefully multiplying the beneficial effects of practical theology with the application of the Bible to life.

For centuries, the text as it stands in the canon was approached in what is best described as a non-critical fashion. Generations generated deep spiritual insights by this methodology. As manuscripts increased, efforts toward accurate comparisons were made to get as close to the original text as possible. This (2) lower textual criticism had the right goal, but it was impossible to measure academic completion of the task. The volume of the material was deemed helpful, but not seen by the emerging higher critics as enough to get at the true heart of the author's intention.

The need to look at the quality of the manuscript, and not just the quantity, led to (3) higher literary criticism. Comparisons of manuscripts developed into the study of literary units, such as the Gospels. Through efforts to find the sources of these units, (4) form criticism emerged. Literary units were further broken down into form units with attempts at understanding the circumstances contemporary to the author, hopefully gaining insights into the original purpose of why what was written was written.

The value of this contribution had a negative flip-side. The proposed units became more and more isolated from each other. Thematic unity disappeared,

forcing the assumption that all who interpreted before the arrival of literary units and form criticism falsely read coalescent sense into the whole narrative. Cyclical disunity resulted as the assumption likewise forced greater disassociation which further reinforced the assumption. The thinking became that after all, before literary and form criticism, interpreters and exegetes had no idea that the Gospel-writers and final editors were only compilers of isolated source materials.

If the writers were compilers, and likely compilers of previous compilers, then surely they were editors, redactors of tradition and existing material. So the next step, (5) redaction criticism, was the natural manifestation as a succeeding generation. As with form criticism, it had benefits, providing insights into motives as well as possible solutions to the Synoptic Problem. And like form criticism, it also had its detrimental effects, intimating human authors' intents against truth.

Obsessed with the human author's intent, it was a short journey to enter a world that views the biblical text as ancient literature no different than any other. In time with further idea evolution driven by assumptions of modernity, the Divine Author was removed as a participant in the production, transmission, and preservation of the biblical text. Biblical criticism had become both contributor and recipient regarding materialistic naturalism, a literate world built largely upon the foundations of a high view of Scripture, but altered by the walls of modernism.

Noble it is to search for truth. That alone is a worthy goal for biblical criticism. It may seem paradoxical to the more orthodox Christian with a high view of Scripture that biblical criticism stood, in a strange way (yet only for a time), against the general false premise threading through postmodernism - that truth is relative, cannot be defined, thus cannot be discovered in the absolute sense. But only for a time would this wall stand against the foundation-shaking earthquake of postmodernism, which could also be deemed a powerful after-shock of modernism.

Sadly, the current trend of biblical criticism has progressed among the current tremors to expected nebulous destinations. Threatening all noble efforts at getting at the text's meaning is the near-end-game of (6) canonical criticism,

which strangely looked in some ways like an effort to return to the unity of non-critical interpretation. Yet all critical thought seemed to flee as non-biblical (7) literary structuralism was applied to canonical criticism. Reader structuralism goes to the Reader for His / Her truth... and subjective postmodernism fully entered the objective world of biblical criticism.

1.3 Result

What does this look like when played out to irrational extremes in theological circles? A good example can be seen from an on-line newsletter from South African Theological Seminary (2009) as it demonstrates the importance of fighting the battle to uphold faith in the reliability of the biblical text:

A second conference took place last week ... a joint gathering of the 13 theological societies in South Africa, which convened at the University of Stellenbosch, with some 350 scholars present and where approximately 200 presentations were made. Although there were a few shining lights in the darkness, the state and plight of "theology" in academia was all too clear. By and large, those present have lost faith that the Scriptures are the Word of God. There were presentations, amongst others, by a Sangoma, a Hindu, and a radical Feminist. The goal of theology has changed from training pastors and evangelists to raising up 'agents for social change'. One entire plenary session explored the origin of religion (assuming it is a man-made phenomenon) in terms of 'dog psychology'. Another plenary speaker declared that the cross is a symbol of God's limited strength because 'He was unable to save Jesus from crucifixion'. Fundamentalism – the derogatory term applied to anyone who maintains faith in the inerrancy and authority of Scripture – is the only 'religion' that was maligned and for which the majority of speakers expressed a lack of tolerance.

For one of our delegates, Dr Kevin Smith, “this underlined once again the fact that we live in an age that is hostile to the exclusive claims of Christ that are recorded in the sacred pages of Scripture. It also drove home once again the importance of unshakable faith in the Word of God (1 Thessalonians 2:13), and sound evangelical approaches to interpretation that allow the original Author's intent to shine through the pages of Scripture, via us as channels and agents of truth, into the darkness of this present age.” It is clear that institutions like SATS, which are unequivocally committed to a Biblical approach to theological training, will become more and more rare and will attract greater criticism for their stance (2009: 2-3).

How did we get here, where postmodern humanity is waking up alongside post-critical criticism in the middle of nowhere, asking for directions without even knowing any destiny? When honest disagreements about what is true devolve into fundamental disbelief in truth itself, standards and definitions must die, along with dialogue and disagreement about them.

It is inevitable that dog psychology and the weakness of God displayed through the cross would be full plenary sessions at the same theological conference hosting a Sangoma (herbalist and divinator, contra Leviticus 19:26, Deuteronomy 18:14) when the Reader determines the meaning apart from any frame of absolute reference / standard outside the Reader. The Reader has become as God, knowing good and evil, knowing truth and non-truth, knowing there is no truth apart from the Reader's. Did God really say? It doesn't matter, because Reader has really determined.

Much of the rhetoric from gatherings like those at the University of Stellenbosch is not really that fresh. In many ways, it is a weakened expression of naturalistic materialism, mutated from anti-supernaturalism to anti-absolutism. Yearning for meaning without moor-lines during the tsunami, the new dialogue is not new, but in fact dated. According to D'Souza (2007), it is an “atheist backlash.

The atheists thought they were winning, but now they realize that, far from dying quietly, religion is on the global upswing. So the atheists are striking back, using all the resources they can command. This is not a religious war but a war over religion, and it has been declared by leading western atheists who have commenced hostilities” (2007: 23). The problem is greater than atheism, however. Atheism is not the only worldview battling for the human mind and the soul of cultures, as indicated by the presence of a Sangoma at the Stellenbosch conference. Atheism at least believes in the idea of truth.

The concept of absolute truth does not mean certainty, though modernist critics’ attempts at epistemological certainty were better than postmodern denial of truth. As Carson (1996: 59-60) points out, “... the assumption for many thinkers in the period of modernity was that certainty, absolute epistemological certainty ... was not only desirable but attainable.” Perhaps the perceived failure to achieve that desired confidence with assurance contributed to the postmodern idea of relative truth. Fatigued from the effort, the flirtation of canonical literature criticism yielded to the power of the Reader to determine his / her truth in secular literary structuralism. Assumptions of modernity made this transition all the easier.

1.4 Presumptions and Presuppositions

Much of higher biblical criticism has given a distorted view against the reliability and ultimate value of the New Testament story, largely based upon the reliability of the Old Testament, with New Testament characters expressing faith in those scriptures. By the beginning of the 19th century, an irrational rationalism began to dominate biblical studies. In the last decade of the 18th century, J. G. Herder (1797) questioned New Testament interpretations as problematic in *Van der Regel der Zustimmung unserver Evangelism*. F. E. Schleiermacher (1807) made such observations a more systematic fashion, beginning with *Über den sogenannten ersten Brief des Paulus an den Timotheus*. This trend continued in Germany with the Tübingen school of thought, from works such as F. C. Baur’s (1845) *Paulus der Apostle Jesus Christ*. Even though the weak presuppositions

of his historical reconstruction were ultimately rejected, resultant presumptions against canonical veracity remained.

Building upon the idea that the Gospels were myth, Bultmann (1955, 1963) developed his Gnostic Redeemer myth and concluded that it was impossible to base Christianity on any kind of search for the historical Jesus; therefore, the Christian faith must depend upon existentialism and not historical verification. Existentialists who posited life ethics over real history influenced him. Thus, an emphasis on the New Testament authors' work in redaction started taking priority over any truth (actual or perceived) which the authors' might be relaying. In some ways, this was also an overture to Reader-based literary structuralism that is seen today.

So redaction criticism may have roots with Bultmann; but critics with a higher view of Scripture utilize redaction criticism as a means of viewing the evangelists as theologians within the genre of the Gospels, not as editors of fact. This is a critical distinction. So higher criticism need not be an assault on the texts, but can increase our understanding of their transmission without destroying their witness to the truth of Jesus Christ. These studies should enlarge our understanding and further illuminate that witness.

This is the reason Keener (2010: 2) makes a case for why "historical Jesus studies remain valuable... Used rightly, these methods can be friends rather than foes of faith. The academy's ground rules are limited, not always fair, and themselves open to challenge. Some methods, such as the double dissimilarity criterion, are now widely rejected." Appropriately co-existing with this sentiment, Bock (2010: 5) rightly argues for context: "Anyone who demands to be taken seriously as one sent from God (as Jesus did in his mission and work) comes with an interpretive package wrapped up in his actions. Historical work helps us get the context of those actions."

While reasonable examinations of New Testament texts and the *Sitz im Leben* during their transmission are worthy processes, assumptions against supernatural inspiration cut the heart out of the narrative's purpose. By the criteria of anti-miracle bias, eyewitness accounts of the life, miracles, crucifixion,

death, resurrection, and ascension of our Lord become invalid only because it is assumed that what the witnesses report could never happen for the reason that they are supernatural. This carries over into education, even into pulpits, and thus into culture, with consequences of how people live... and the weightier matters of judgment, mercy, and eternity.

1.5 Appeal to Scripture

Yet the attraction of the Bible as a reliable source of guidance persistently recurs throughout history. Even among what many see as liberal leanings in the “emergent church,” perhaps influenced by liberal social emphases, thus often out of balance regarding human control over cultural change, there is recognition that the appeal to Scripture must dictate church action and right Christian behavior. In his discussion on Christian simplicity in a subsection he terms the “theology of enough,” Shane Claiborne (2006) writes:

In addition to rooting simplicity in love, it also seems crucial that economic practices be theologically grounded. I am convinced that most of the terribly disturbing things that are happening in our world in the name of Christ and Christianity are primarily the result not of malicious people but of bad theology. (At least, I want to believe that.) And the answer to bad theology is not no theology but good theology. So rather than distancing ourselves from religious language and biblical study, let’s dive into the Scriptures together, correcting bad theology with good theology ...(2006: 169)

The same appeal to the Bible is made for Rob Bell’s (2011) version of universalism in his latest book. While literary structuralism is evident in the methodology of Bell’s conclusions, his work once again highlights our mandate as the body of Christ to appeal to the Word of God for all matters. Where there are differences, let the discussion be based upon the unity in agreement of the

authority of Scripture and the veracity of the text. Then the clarity of what the text says will promote us onward to the business of greater exegetical sanity.

Such judicious prudence is dictated if in fact all Scripture is for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness for the followers of Christ to be equipped as emissaries of the gospel. If all Scripture is not so worthy and useful, if the texts do not mean what they say, if their words are unreliable and inauthentic, then the fuss about their meaning is an academic exercise, not an inspiration from God about the weightier matters of justice, mercy, and faithfulness. This is critical and heavy indeed, from the teacher's desk, the preacher's pulpit, to the saint in culture and everyday life.

Chapter 2: The Synoptic Problem

2.1 Overview

In following the tradition established in the fifth century by Augustine (SDF Salmond 1956: 65-236), the Griesbach Hypothesis (1789-90) proposes that Matthew wrote first (Orchard & Longstaff 1978). The difference from the Augustinian model is that the Griesbach Hypothesis says that Luke followed, using Matthew, and Mark used both Matthew and Luke. Griesbach's ideas were developed into the suggestion that Mark resulted from notes taken during Peter's Roman lectures, using Matthew and Luke to supplement. Farmer (1979) continued to further develop these ideas, proposing this model as the best explanation as to why Mark's Greek is not as refined, why it is shorter, and why it appears to vary so much in chronology.

The Two-Document and Four-Document schemes are based on Marcan priority. The Two-document Hypothesis argues that Matthew and Luke were independent of one another, and that they used Mark and Q as another source. The Four-Document Hypothesis proposes that in addition to Q of the Two-Document Hypothesis, Matthew and Luke independently used their own additional sources, "M" for Matthew's and "L" for Luke's. B. H. Streeter (1924), in *The Four Gospels*, introduced the idea that Luke drafted most of his Gospel before exposure to Mark, and then interjected Marcan portions. Streeter's work thus also proposes a proto-Luke that includes Luke's special material with Q. This was combined with Mark and other primal materials to form the extant Luke.

Scholars such as Stanton (1980) are convinced that following "a century of discussion of the Synoptic Problem, Matthew's dependence upon Mark is the single most assured result" (1980: 51). Those such as Farmer (1976-77: 275-295) and Buchanan (1974: 550-572) take issue, along with Orchard (1976) who wrote, "The two-Document Hypothesis and the Priority of Mark are still only hypotheses, not infallible dogma; and they have stood secure for so long chiefly because no one has been able to offer any satisfactory alternative" (1976: 1).

Other significant challenges have also come from Miller (1970), Leon-DuFour (1970), and Outler (n.d.), noted by Farmer (1976-77: 276-279). Furthermore, the later work of John Wenham (1991) has further demonstrated that the “assured result” is most definitely not assured.

2.2 Marcan Priority

Six main arguments in favor of Marcan priority can be distilled:

(1) 90% of Mark contains material common to all Synoptics: Less than 10% of Mark is unique. In *The Gospel According to St. Mark*, H. B. Swete (1898) notes that only four paragraphs of Mark are not paralleled if Matthew and Luke are combined for Marcan comparison. Supporters of Marcan priority believe that it makes more sense to expand a shorter Gospel, than to reduce a longer one, especially in consideration of the redundancy noted in Reason #3 below.

(2) Matthew and Luke agreement with Mark: When there is divergence in structure and verbal usage among the three Synoptic Gospels, Matthew and Luke agree with Mark against each other more often than they agree with each other against Mark. In one comparison, Kummel (1981: 46-47) shows that Luke has only four divergent citing sources from Mark, and Matthew has only two.

(3) Improved quality in Matthew and Luke: It appears that Matthew and Luke have made Mark’s descriptions more polished with improved precision (i.e., healing of the multitudes is a good example - Mark 3: 7-12 / Matthew 12: 15, 16 & Luke 6: 17-19). Mark has the least developed Greek. Mark has 213 redundant phrases. Mark 1:32 exemplifies:

That evening after sunset the people brought to Jesus all the sick and demon-possessed.

It makes more sense for Matthew and Luke to correct these redundancies, rather than Mark to add them, especially since Mark is shorter; and, if Mark was using Matthew, it can be argued that the writer was attempting to shorten the

account with highlights. Redundancy is contradictory to consolidation. (Later, a different scenario other than redundancy for this verse will be addressed).

(4) Aramaic expressions in Mark: Mark has seven Aramaic expressions, Matthew one - 27:46: *Eli, Eli, lama sabach-thani*. Furthermore, Matthew's *Eli* is the Hebrew for the Aramaic *Eloi*, which is used in the Marcan parallel, 15:34. This can be seen as a redaction reflection of Matthew's audience. Luke has no Aramaic expression. It is more reasonable for Matthew and Luke to eliminate these in favor of the dominant Greek or Hebrew (*Eli*) than for Mark to depart from the Greek and add them to his Matthew or Luke sources. However, Mark used the Aramaic primarily in the healing stories. It is not unreasonable to propose a literary device to lend credence to their occurrences and to the authenticity of the associated Jesus statements, since this was the language of Jesus. Their grouping also provides support for oral preservation until written transmission, which would also support Marcan priority. These uses are, with some examples, noted:

3:17 - James son of Zebedee and his brother John (to them he gave the name *Boanerges*, which means *Sons of Thunder*); ...

Cole (1995) notes that regarding the names, "Mark's list of the apostles contains more of the personal nicknames, naturally Aramaic, than do any of the lists in the other gospels...even if his gospel is not directly Petrine, Mark depends directly upon early Palestinian tradition, this is very understandable" (1995: 136-137).

5:41 - *Talitha cumi*, Little girl, I say to you arise.

This could be transliterated as "It is time to get up." Those who see evidence of the Petrine influence on Mark consider the possibilities that the Aramaic sayings could reflect those moments with Jesus that deeply impacted Peter. Wright (2004) sees such in this saying when he writes, "So what's special about these words? Why leave them untranslated, along with only a handful of others ...?"

The best answer is that the scene, and the crucial words, made such a deep impression on Peter and the others,... they kept the crucial words as they were” (2004: 63). This is not only support for Petrine influence, but also for the idea that these words were important to the group maintaining any oral tradition, which further supports the authentic eyewitness account of the Gospel texts.

7:11 - *Corban* (that is, have gained from God), [or “a gift set apart for God.”]

Zeitlin (1962: 160) noted the strong possibility of a correlation between the Aramaic and the Hebrew *quarban* as a vowed offering, with the concept later developing into prayer. This link to the text’s contemporary Judaism also supports this paper’s position. These kinds of conceptual links to culture would be expected from an evangelist displaying both motives of eyewitness accuracy and evangelism. They also demonstrate the lack of necessity for fabrication.

7:34 - *Ephatha*, Open! (Addressed to the deaf man).

That ἐφφαθά is an Aramaean imperative, “be opened”, from Hebrew פתח ‘to open,’ has been questioned by some such as Rabinowitz (1962). He claims poor literary evidence behind any support for the Aramaic (1962: 236-7). But substantiation for a Hebraism is no stronger. In light of the other Marcan Aramaic sayings, the Aramaean imperative is a more reasonable conclusion than Rabinowitz’s proposal regarding the Hebrew *niph’al*. Yet either conclusion provides a reasonable link to Jesus’ spoken language or the aforementioned motive of Jewish evangelism. The reliability of the text is supported. It is a substantiated presentation of what actually happened.

10:46- As Jesus and his disciples, together with a large crowd, were leaving the city, a blind man, *Bartimaeus* (that is, the Son of *Timaeus*), was sitting by the roadside begging.

14:36 - καὶ ἔλεγεν· ἄββᾶ ὁ πατήρ, ...

Perhaps Jesus simply said *Abba* and this was Mark's way of doing what he has done with other Aramaic sayings, giving the explanation. Thus, *Abba ho patro* could be a literary explanation, not an exact recording of Jesus speaking 'Father' twice, once in Aramaic and then once in Greek. However, it is not such a stretch that a tender moment of connection between son and father could manifest, "Dad, oh Father." These kinds of details with efforts at understanding what's happening in the writer's mind only strengthen the thesis of this paper. The evangelist was accurately recording the event and making efforts as a writer to communicate the event on a deeper level of understanding, perhaps through Petrine eyes.

15:34 - The cry from the cross: *Eloi, Eloi, lema sabachthani?*

Recorded only in Matthew (27:46) and Mark, the 'forsaken-statement' certainly is strong enough to support the theory of Petrine / oral tradition emphasis influence as the reason for prominence through the Aramaic. Taylor (1953: 594) argues rightly that this expression of agony is not inconsistent with the love of God as it would have been deliberately and accurately portrayed by the evangelist. The strength of this expression is better captured in the original tongue and also lends credence and greater understanding to the reader as to why some standing around thought Jesus was calling on Elijah.

(5) There is more explicit candor in Mark's writings. Jesus is pictured with more human emotions (such as Mark 3:5), whereas Matthew and Luke could have "filtered," eliminating these descriptions due to their appearance of inappropriate intimacy or irreverence. If such is the case, this would fit the cultural context and be of support to this paper's position. Also contrasted against Matthew and Luke, Mark portrays the disciples in a less than angelic light (such as Mark 6:52):

“... for they [the disciples] had not understood about the loaves; their hearts were hardened.”

Again, the line of argument says that it makes more sense that Matthew and Luke would make easier reading from their Marcan source, than for Mark to make Matthew and/or Luke’s descriptions harder for the reader/hearer to bear. The reverse of this could also be true, however. Mark could be trying to correct a “whitewash” of the disciples.

(6) Matthew and Luke are more accurate in their descriptions. Mark refers to Herod as a king (Mark 6: 14), but they more precisely refer to Herod as a tetrarch (Matthew 14: 1 / Luke 9: 7). Such is argued as an improvement on an existing document; but it is pointed out by those such as Anderson (1976: 167) that Mark’s terminology could simply be a reflection of popular usage and not an error in linguistic understanding.

2.3 Responses

The first argument can be answered that Mark was attempting to consolidate the Gospel account, as previously mentioned. He simply wanted a shorter Gospel. It is reasonable, even essential that a consolidation would result in almost 100% of its contents to be included in the larger earlier works, because consolidation by definition demands it. Attempts at resolving the problem of redundancy contradicting this consolidation effort, argument (3) above, can be seen in the explanation of redundancy due to conflation. In his dissertation thesis, Thomas Longstaff (1967) believes his literary conflation studies support that the Griesbach hypothesis provides the best explanation for the literary relationships of the Synoptic Gospels. An example of redundancy due to conflation is Matthew 8:16 / Luke 4:40 - respectively:

“That evening...” / “Now when the sun was setting” in Mark 1:32 as “That evening, at sundown...”

The problem with this explanation is that there are only 17 instances of Mark's 213 redundant phrases where Matthew and Luke each do not share the redundant parallel; however, there are only 37 cases where neither Matthew nor Luke have either of the redundant phrases. Note the following summation:

Mark's 213 Redundant Phrases as They Relate to Matthew and Luke

The two redundant phrases can be termed A & B as found in Matthew and Luke:

		Number of Occurrences Of Redundancy in Mark
Matthew	Luke	
None	None	37
A	A	39
A or A+B	None	60
None	A or A+B	26
A	A+B	11
A+B	A	17
A+B	A+B	6
TOTAL= - 196		

This leaves only 17 possible cases of conflation (8%) out of the 213 redundant phrases in Mark. This weakens the argument of contradiction of redundancy against consolidation by allowing the consideration of Mark using Matthew or Luke or both; but, this is still a significant number, and is difficult to ignore and make any claim of irrelevance regarding this observation.

Arguments (4), (5), and (6) above are addressed by G. W. Buchanan (1974) in his response to C. H. Talbert and E. V. McKnight (1972). In a rather entertaining creation of a demonstrative account of a Synoptic relationship

between a poorly written term paper and a scholarly book he illustrates that it should not be assumed “a priori that the better version must always be the improved version and therefore secondary” (Buchanan 1974: 551). He does not directly address Mark’s use of the Aramaic in his response. Neither does Farmer in discussing developments of the Griesbach Hypothesis (1976-77: 275-295). However, it is still reasonable to consider the Petrine influence or the influence of any oral tradition as to the Aramaic for emphasis, as already discussed. So a possible explanation addressing (4) above could still be revealed by this illustration.

Problems still arise with the questions as to why Mark would make deliberate changes that result in a work less accurate. For example, why change tetrarch to king? Again, one possible answer is that Mark is making an effort toward readability regarding popular usage.

Buchanan’s illustration, delightful as it is, ignores the contrast of the motives of the term paper’s author and the author of Mark. It is probable that Mark was more concerned with spreading the good news or defending Christianity and its adherents than he was with avoiding plagiarism while making an easy grade. However, it is well to take note that the second paper is not necessarily the best. This might well be expected in contrasting literary capabilities between Mark and physician Luke or accountant / tax collector Matthew. Thus, Buchanan does indeed advance a significant address to Talbert and McKnight. And perhaps he provides a dent in the armor of Marcan priority.

Talbert and McKnight (1972) also attempted to show through the Triple Tradition (Matthean material used by Luke and Mark) and the Double Tradition (Matthean material used by Luke but not Mark) that there are “instances where Mark is prior to Matthew, where Mark is prior to Luke, where Luke is prior to Matthew, and where Luke seems independent of Matthew” (1972: 338). Three passages from each category are explored. Buchanan (1974) successfully disputed the assertions that those explorations challenge the Griesbach Hypothesis in every instance.

In addressing Argument (2) in favor of Marcan priority, the greatest strength of Griesbach's Hypothesis is revealed. It best provides a simple explanation to Matthew-Luke agreements against Mark. In these instances, Luke follows Matthew, and Mark deviates from both. Argument (2) in favor of Marcan priority can be turned around to support Mark's efforts at conflation; however, this is weakened by any deviations Mark takes from Matthew and Luke, for this is a contradictory notion. This is not enough, however, to deny the rationality of the solution provided by the Griesbach Hypothesis to the problem of Matthew-Luke agreement against Mark, and herein is the crux of the impasse; however, it can be concluded that explanations of Matthew-Luke agreement against Mark on the basis of Marcan priority, though not as simple as Griesbach's Hypothesis, are certainly reasonable.

Since the preponderance of plausibility is in favor of Marcan priority in most arguments and postulations, the choice between the simple explanation for agreement against Mark afforded by the Griesbach Hypothesis, and the reasonable, though less simple, explanations afforded by Marcan priority still leans in favor of Marcan priority. But it is not conclusive.

2.4 Redaction Support

Further support for Marcan priority comes from redaction criticism, "concerned with studying the theological motivation of the author as this is revealed in the collection, arrangement, editing, and modification of traditional material, and in the composition of new material or the creation of new forms within the traditions of early Christianity" (Perrin 1969: 1). The majority of redaction approaches to the Synoptic Gospels assume a Marcan priority because by definition of this methodology, this makes more sense than a primitive Matthew.

It is easier to understand Matthew adding "this was to fulfill" (in 1:22; 2:15, 17; 4:14; 8:17; 12:17; 13:14, 35; 21:4; 27:9) to a Marcan source rather than Luke and Mark omitting it from Matthew (Stein 1992: 789), especially with an evangelical view in mind for Luke and Mark. However, if the "fulfillment motiff"

was established in the early church from Matthew's distribution, then it just as reasonable to propose that Mark and Luke could have determined that ἵνα πληρωθῆ was unnecessary to include in their accounts.

2.5 Q

Since there are some 250 verses common to both Matthew and Luke that are not found in Mark, a Marcan priority suggests an additional source to these verses or some kind of relationship between Matthew and Luke, a "knowing" of Luke by Matthew or of Matthew by Luke. One possibility for a common source of material for Matthew and Luke that Mark did not see or did not use is "Q" material.

Stanton (1992) defines Q as "the 230 or so sayings of Jesus which Matthew and Luke share, but which are not found in Mark... referred to by German scholars as *Quelle* ("source"). In 1890 J. Weiss abbreviated *Quelle* to Q; this quickly gained wide acceptance" (1992: 644). However, many consider the first significant proposal of a Q source / corollary to have come from James Ropes (1934), followed by Morton Enslin (1938). T. W. Manson (1949) reconstructed Q by noting where "M" of Matthew and "L" of Luke match. The theory of Q's existence goes something like this:

Though there have been some proposals that Luke "knew" Matthew (Goulder 1977-78: 218-234; Goulder 1989: 27-71), most of these concepts have been properly refuted (Tuckett 1984: 130-142); therefore, it is generally accepted that neither Luke nor Matthew were "aware" of the other. Q then becomes reasonable as the non-Mark M / L common material in light of Marcan priority.

The two main arguments against Lucan knowledge of Q material in Matthew are (1) there are occasions when Luke has the more original form of Q, and (2) Luke would not have changed the order of Matthew's Q information. Given the complex nature of the relationship of the Synoptic Gospels, it is virtually impossible to define the exact nature of Q, though its contents can be readily interpolated as having the three divisions of eschatology, prophecies, and

wisdom of Jesus. However, Q also contains miracle accounts (See Chapter 2). Q is at least reasonable, at most essential, if Marcan priority is supported (Manson 1950).

The Lachman Fallacy should be mentioned here as well. It says, "M and L never agree to disagree with Mark." Yet, how could such a conspiracy exist, if they never "knew" each other? They could not agree to disagree because such an agreement requires conspiratorial communication. Neither the Lachman Fallacy nor Manson's discussion of Q give any reason to doubt the Gospels as they exist in the canon. Whether or not Q existed as a source renders no attack on the reliability of the extant Synoptic Gospels, whatever the conclusion might be about Q (see 2.1.7).

Goodacre (2002) mounted substantial arguments against Q in recent literature. Rather than argue against Q per se, he attempts to point out that it is unnecessary. He makes his case in an effort to demonstrate that Luke knew Matthew. The strongest arguments appear in the attempts to reveal the presence of Matthean redaction in Luke, especially in chapters 4, 5, and 7. A few examples are noted:

Matthew - When Jesus heard that John had been put in prison, he returned to Galilee. ...From that time on Jesus began to preach, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near." **4:12, 17**

Luke - Jesus returned to Galilee in the power of the Spirit, and news about him spread through the whole countryside. He taught in their synagogues, and everyone praised him. **4:14-15**

Matthew - Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. **5:3**

Luke - Looking at his disciples, he said: "Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God." **5:20**

Matthew - The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell with a great crash. **7:27**

Luke - The moment the torrent struck that house, it collapsed and its destruction was complete. **6:49b**

There are examples in these chapters that demonstrate theological unity, in spite of possible insertions or additions, even more radical ones such as Luke's insertion of "Son of Man" to Matthew 5:11.

Matthew - Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. **5:11**

Luke - Blessed are you when men hate you, when they exclude you and insult you and reject your name as evil, because of the Son of Man. **6:22**

These strong arguments can be addressed by proposing that Luke and Matthew were simply expressing their own redaction work from the same material. There is no reason to assume that Luke is redacting Matthew. Either one or both Matthew and Luke could be redacting a common source when they look similar yet have striking differences such as inserting "Son of Man." It could be the result of Luke adding this to Matthew, but Luke could also have added it to an original common source. However, this idea is not necessarily stronger than Luke knowing Matthew.

Kloppenborg (2003) reminds us that Q is not a hypothesis, "despite those who tirelessly refer to 'the Q hypothesis'. Rather, Q is a *corollary* of the hypotheses of Markan priority and the independence of Matthew and Luke, since it is then necessary to account for the material that Matthew and Luke have in common but which they did not take from Mark" (2003: 211). He challenges Goodacre's ultimate arguments against Q. For example, he writes that "one hardly needs Matt 5 - 10 to account for the list of wonders in Q 7.22, especially when we now have a remarkably similar text from Qumran, 4Q521, which describes the deeds of an Elijah-like Messiah, including freeing captives, restoring sight, raising up those who are bowed down, healing wounds, reviving the dead, and evangelizing the humble" (2003: 235).

Further indirect evidence for Q is found in redefining “Q” material, such as Jirair Tashjian’s (2010) latest reconstruction. Listing sequential Q material in Lukan order, he notes 26 sayings of Matthew’s agreement with Luke. As long as such reconstructions are reasonable, so is the idea of a “Q” source.

2.6 John Wenham’s Challenge to Marcan Priority

Though Marcan priority and Q carry great weight, John Wenham’s (1991) work challenging Marcan priority and the existence of Q is most provocative. Its Matthean priority looks much like the original Augustinian model. It has the added value of recognizing the significance of church tradition, which is all too often dismissed in critical literature without logical reasons for doing so. Through a five-step process, he builds a Synoptic theory in favor of oral transmission and dependence of Mark and Luke upon Matthew. Following is a summary of that process:

STEP (1) Luke knew Mark’s Gospel. This is not in contrast to the majority of consensus today, and Wenham parts with the Griesbach School. In summary, there is not much of Luke’s wording in Mark, and the “Q” parallels are not used by Mark.

STEP (2) Fifty-two pericope passages of Mark and Luke show a common origin. Fourteen of them cover the same material, but have a different origin.

STEP (3) In the passages that are truly parallel, Luke keeps to Mark.

STEP (4) It should be presumed that Luke keeps to the sense of his other sources as well, as this technique is demonstrated with Mark; thus, the existence of Q or heavy borrowing from Matthew should be ruled out, since the Lukan and Matthean forms of “Q-material” often differ radically.

STEP (5) Patristic tradition can satisfactorily explain the relation of Matthew to Mark. This last step is most compelling when it is in combination with the other four.

He reveals that most of the arguments in favor of Marcan priority are reversible, much in the same way the Lachman fallacy is just that, a fallacy of circular reasoning. His arguments that Matthew looks original and appears to be early Palestinian are persuasive. Wenham's dislocation table supports his observation that the differences between the two Gospels are best explained with Matthean priority (Wenham 1991: 106f).

2.7 Primal Matthew Objections Answered

His responses to the four demonstrative objections to Matthean priority and in favor of Marcan priority are worth noting as well:

(1) ARGUMENT: Why would Mark omit so much Matthean material had he known of its existence?

ANSWER: "All modern Augustinians regard Mark as an additional apostolic witness which confirms, illumines and supplements Matthew, and which would have been particularly appreciated by Peter's hearers, as indeed it is by most of us. The supplement is hardly at all that of new incidents and new teaching, it is that of Petrine vividness and Marcan emphases, with restriction probably to the most standard elements of the apostle's evangelistic teaching. It is a new portrait" (Wenham 1991: 94).

(2) ARGUMENT: The wealth of detail in Mark is prima facie evidence of its priority.

ANSWER: This could just as well make it a good supplement. If "Mark is faithfully recording the eyewitness touches of Peter's spoken word this could have been put on paper just as well after the writing of Matthew as before" (Wenham 1991: 96).

(3) ARGUMENT: The account of the death of the Baptist requires that Matthew knew Mark's account. Matthew's appears contradictory because he says that Herod wanted John's death and that he grieved over it. Mark attempts to explain

the apparent ambivalence and since Matthew does not, this reveals Matthew's knowledge of the more complicated account, as his is a simplified version of the one upon which he is drawing.

ANSWER: Ambivalence on the part of Herod is not unreasonable. There is no necessity for Matthew to address this if his version is independent. Herod could well have been angry at John's repeated criticisms of Herod's sexual sin. Furthermore, it is unnecessary that Matthew would know Mark's account, but only that he know the full account available to the early church. Wenham's theory certainly fits this probable situation (Wenham 1991: 101-109).

(4) ARGUMENT: Matthew 27:15-18 has destroyed the logic of Mark 15:6, 10. The contention is that Mark's sequence is clear and Matthew seems to have blurred this:

Now it was the governor's custom at the Feast to release a prisoner chosen by the crowd. At that time they had a notorious prisoner, called Barabbas. So when the crowd had gathered, Pilate asked them, "Which one do you want me to release to you: Barabbas, or Jesus who is called Christ?" For he knew it was out of envy that they had handed Jesus over to him. Matthew 27:15-18

Now it was the custom at the Feast to release a prisoner whom the people requested ... knowing it was out of envy that the chief priests had handed Jesus over to him. Mark 15:6, 10

ANSWER: The important and central observation is that both narratives make the point that Pilate knew Jesus was innocent and preferred that he be released. Furthermore, there is no firm evidence of a definitive literary relationship between these two accounts, and this makes the whole discussion moot as far as priority is concerned (Wenham 1991: 91).

2.8 Other Explanations to the Synoptic Problem

Prior to literary relationships, the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, the Gospels as historical texts, and the oral tradition were considered as possible solutions to the Synoptic Problem. While these do not answer the riddle as singular solutions, they are relevant as variables to the solution and in lending support to this thesis.

The oral tradition is one of the more compelling contributions to the formation of the Synoptic Gospels outside the bulk of discussions of literary interdependence. Recent developments in areas where Christianity is emerging have made it more compelling, as has work such as Wenham's as just covered. There are also other current alternatives to the mainstream literary solutions.

2.8.1 Holy Spirit

It has been offered that the Synoptic similarity is due to the inspiration and coincident guidance of the Holy Spirit. The assumption in this singular explanation is that the Synoptic Gospels were developed independently from one another. This reemerged as late as the 1990's by Eta Linnemann (1992). The plausibility of this position as a *singular* explanation has been most often abandoned due to the fact that John was also written under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, and it is quite different from Matthew, Mark, and Luke. R. H. Stein (1992) gives this consideration five sentences in one contribution: "If all four Gospels were written under the superintendence of the Holy Spirit, this superintendence cannot at the same time explain why some Gospels look alike and why another does not" (1992: 785). And Luke even opens his Gospel about investigating existing sources. This is not to propose that the Holy Spirit was not the Divine Source of inspiration in the production of the Synoptic Gospels (see discussion in Chapter 2), only that such supervision may not adequately provide the only *particular* and *singular* explanation to the Synoptic Problem and why John looks so different.

2.8.2 Historical Texts

Another explanation is to view the Synoptic Gospels as historical accounts. This consideration says they look alike because they are records in the historical sense. While the shared historical events lend credence to this idea, the problem is that these events are in different orders in the Synoptic Gospels. This is not to say that these events did not occur; but it does reveal that the Synoptic Gospels are not first and foremost books concerned primarily with the chronology of events. They are an altogether different genre. That being the case, an explanation of the Synoptic Problem based upon these Gospels as historical texts falls short.

Another challenge this concept comes from the view that the native tongue of Jesus was Aramaic. If such a translation into Greek Gospels took place, a simple and direct historical translation into the literary Greek contemporary to that time would not necessarily yield the noteworthy similarities and chronological differences noted in the Synoptic Problem.

2.8.3 Oral Tradition

Another explanation of the Synoptic relationship is that of the Oral Tradition, first made noteworthy in the late 18th century. Scholars such as W. G. Kummel (1981) would take issue here or altogether ignore this as a possibility. But this consideration is again noteworthy from recent dialogue about the contribution of oral memory and transmission, such as Wenham's (1991) previously covered work on oral transmission in the early church tradition. Furthermore, a modern example of oral teaching and memory work is being seen in third-world / emerging Christian nations, further discussed on pages 40-41.

Martin Debelius (1936) described the oral tradition before the written Gospels as "the source of preaching, teaching, and edification in the Church [that] was the tradition about Jesus either preserved orally, or else in small collections capable of expansion. When the gospels became current, the Church no longer held to the fluid tradition but to the writings in book form in which the

old material had been recorded” (1936: 56). In 1934, Rudolf Bultmann (1962) proposed changes in details of transmission but held that “their fundamental character remains the same” (1962: 32). James Martin (1959) believes the early Christian worship service provided the strongest source in oral tradition, writing that “the perpetuation of the tradition had an appointed and regular place in the services of worship in the early Church” (1959: 52-56).

2.8.4 Other Literary Proposals

2.8.4.1 The Farrer Hypothesis dispenses with the need for Q (Farrer 1955: 55-58). This is because Matthew used the primal Mark and Luke used both.

2.8.4.2 The Three-Source Hypothesis (Morgenthaler 1971) is an expansion on Farrer (Price 2001: 1-9). It proposes that Matthew used Mark and a written source of sayings. Luke had access to both of these as well and subsidized with Matthew. This model changes the way a “Q” source might look from the more widely accepted model of shared Matthew-Luke sayings.

2.8.4.3 The Parker Hypothesis (Parker 1953) includes an explanation as to why John looks most like Luke. This proposal says an Aramaic Matthew (proto-Matthew) was the main source for Mark. Q also existed first, so the Greek Matthew used proto-Matthew, Mark, and Q. Luke used the same three sources that Greek Matthew did, along with another source common to John.

Chapter 3: The Issue of Miracles

3.1 Anti-Miracle Bias

Is the modernist view of miracles a driving force behind much of the critical biblical literature, including explanations for the Synoptic Problem? Do assumptions against supernatural considerations provide a subtle yet powerful bias against the reliability of the Synoptic canon? Is this a major factor in presenting a case against the Synoptic portrayal as eyewitness accounts? The Synoptic texts as records of eyewitness accounts to the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ have been challenged; but is it a strong, objective challenge, or is it rooted in anti-miracle bias? If the different solutions to the Synoptic Problem demonstrate support for the authentic witness of the Synoptic Gospels, then anti-supernaturalism presumptions are addressed.

3.1.1 The Holy Spirit

This does not provide an adequate *singular* explanation to the Synoptic Problem. Obviously, this position makes no assault on the reliability of the Synoptic texts. It is reasonable to state that an 'evangelical' view of the Holy Spirit of God is that He would certainly be capable of transmitting one quite different Gospel and three Synoptic Gospels, including their unique quotations against the Hebrew OT and the Septuagint, as well as maintaining their integrity throughout history.

B. Barton (1994: 1859) gives a good account of Matthew being seen as a teacher, genealogy and all, Mark, as a succinct storyteller, Luke, more the historian, and John as a theologian. As such, Matthew may be seen as stressing Jesus' sermons and words; Mark, Jesus' miracles and actions to back up His words; Luke, the humanity of Jesus; and John, the principles of Jesus' teaching, with the purpose of signs and wonders to believe. It is more reasonable to posit a

unified design behind the complexities of the Synoptic Problem than it is to conclude there is no solution stemming from anti-supernatural bias (i.e., no presence of the Holy Spirit's inspiration).

3.1.2 Historical Accounts

The events of the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus show unity even when the order of events seems to differ. These Gospels are a new genre. The literary freedom expressed by the evangelists regarding the order of events is not disingenuous, erroneous, or illegitimate. This literary usage reveals a very real setting with very real authors of theological redaction. Yet, their conclusions are not contradictory to one another, only different in emphases. This supports a history that truly took place and reliable eyewitness accounts as recorded in the Synoptic Gospels.

Looking at the treatment of the centurion at the foot of the cross provides a good supporting example (Mark 15:39 / Matthew 27:54 / Luke 23:47). The centurion's statement summarizes the important truth about who the main character was and is. As Anderson (1976) says, the centurion's "expression of faith shows how much the barrier between man and God is now eradicated ... leaders of mankind such as emperors or rulers or philosophers like Pythagoras, Plato, or later Apollonius of Tyana, could also be hailed as 'son of God' or 'saviour'. But it is barely conceivable that Mark has in mind here anything else than a full and authentic Christian acknowledgement of Jesus as 'the Son of God' (cf. Mk I : I)" (1976: 347-348). This takes priority over chronologically accurate details.

Matthew eliminates "man" (Mt. 27:54), perhaps revealing his redaction elevation of Jesus Christ. This can be seen as Matthew's emphasis edit whether it is from Marcan material or a separate common source. Luke's broader appeal of his contemporary audience is revealed in that he simply has the centurion declare that "Certainly this man was innocent" (Luke 23:47). His presentation is less direct and threatening. The humanity of Jesus also fits into this same theme;

but the presentation can also stand on its own to both the church and any proselytized witnesses.

3.1.2.1 Baptism

It is likewise helpful to look at the three Synoptic baptism stories:
Mark 1:9-11 / Matthew 3:13-17 / Luke 3:21-22.

In this passage, Luke's treatment appears more universal. Jesus is being baptized in Mark (1:9) and Matthew (3:13), but in Luke, "all the people were being baptized" (3:21). This theme is more prevalent in Luke than the other Synoptic Gospels. Following are a few supportive examples:

1. Luke's genealogy goes back to God, contrasted with Matthew who stops at father Abraham.
2. Luke's sermon on the level place contrasts Matthew's Sermon on the Mount, supporting the idea of 'universal availability.'
3. Even the fig tree in Mark (13:28) and Matthew (24:32) becomes "the fig tree and all the trees in Luke (21:29-32).
4. In Acts, Peter speaks of universal restoration, not just national restoration, as "everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved" (2:21).
5. This occurs after they were "all together in one place" (2:1) and "all of them were filled with the Holy Spirit" (2:4).

Thus, we see this universalism of Luke because "all the people were being baptized," yet Luke also follows the Marcan theme of the Father speaking directly to the Son, while Matthew makes more of the universal declaration: "This is my son," rather than "You are my son." This apparent 'shift and overlap' in redaction emphasis demonstrates that differences are not so drastic, thus costing no theological unity secondary to redaction interests.

Furthermore, while the differences in the Father's post-baptismal declaration may be relevant to the redaction interests of each Synoptic Evangelist, they all include the powerful imagery of the heavens opening and God the Father speaking, either to the Son directly (Mark and Luke) or as a declaration (Matthew). Both presentations reveal a circumstance that makes a

potent statement that was surely received by onlookers as an undeniable divine proclamation! The impact was such in the Petrine and / or oral tradition and the similarities outshine any possible redaction differences. These so-called differences are neither theologically incompatible, nor so different as to jeopardize the reliability of the accounts. There is every reason to accept that they had the same motive to support the good news with prophetic apologetics. The strength for this paper's position lies in the fact that even these so-called theological motives of redaction do not destroy the unity in the essentials of the faith, in the theology as presented in the text. Their effect is to strengthen them.

3.1.2.2 The Rooster Crows: Once or Twice, Day or Night?

An example of an apparent historical contradiction in the Gospels occurs in Jesus' foretelling and the subsequent fulfillment of Peter's three denials after Christ's arrest and the ensuing crowing of the cock. This crowing is designated as "twice" only in Mark (*Mark 14:30 ...72* vs. *Matthew 26:34 ...74-75* / *Luke 22:34 ...60-62*). Also, this account in Luke (also John 3:38) does not include δὶς.

The *Sitz im Leben* answers the issue of the inclusion of "twice" in Mark only, though a correction from Matthew or Matthean material may also be a factor. There were normally two "crowings" of the cock in first century Palestine – one from around 1:00 a.m. to 2:00 a.m. and the other shortly before or around daybreak. Mark highlights the crowing which everyone knew was the one that mattered, the one indicating the end of night and the beginning of daylight. He is also giving the reader (or "hearer" if in an oral setting of an early Christian meeting point) some indication of the passage of time within Peter's denials, dramatizing better the long dark night of Christ's arrest. Likewise, when the other three Gospels do not include "twice," they are merely indicating the final second crowing, the imminent end of night.

The answer to whether the description included "this day," "today," or "this night" comes by understanding that the day ended and began at sundown. Night was darkness. Daylight was in the light. But a day ended at sunset, which was consequently the beginning of the next day. Though the old day ended and the

new day began at sunset, the night ended at the second crowing of the cock, often simply referred to as the crowing of the cock, just as the final buzzer of a basketball game can rightly be referred to as the buzzer or the second buzzer or the final buzzer.

The detailed difference of Mark's inclusion of "twice" adds merit to the validity of the texts. If Marcan priority is assumed, it would make sense that the subsequent three Gospels might omit it merely for the sake of simplicity; especially since other such redactions took place. Yet if Mark was subsequent to the other Synoptic Gospels, it is likewise reasonable that the author would include "twice" for dramatic emphasis.

3.1.3 Oral Tradition

The range of support from many such as Rudolf Bultmann's (1962) or R. Martin's (1959) investigations about early church worship indicate the essential contribution oral preservation provided in the transmission of Gospel material. Peter's speech in Acts 2 resulted in thousands being cut to the heart by what he said (verse 37). And what he said was a story, a continuance of the oral tradition. Many people groups throughout history have preserved stories, legends, myths, tales, and yes, truth, by an oral tradition passed around and passed down.

Now there is new support for the importance of oral preservation from a development in current evangelism. What has come to be known as "orality breakouts" (Chiang 2010) are being instigated in third-world and Christian-emerging nations, and witnessed on a rapidly growing scale. They provide glimpses into a model of oral preservation. Danita (2010) shares why oral transmission is so effective in memorizing, understanding, and communicating the good news. He writes, "Stories in the mother-tongue communicate God's truth in a way that cuts right to the heart... The retellings are very important, motivating the listeners to think deeply about every phrase...It also frees everyone who learns the story to lead their own story group..." (2010: 33-35).

What is being witnessed in these “orality breakouts” is possibly an exciting glimpse into the early spread of Christianity before the written Gospels. This modern phenomenon reflects the significance oral preservation must have played in the beginnings of the church. The oral transmission of the gospel is a major factor in China, where the Bible was illegal until a few years ago.

Halper (2010) writes that “Christianity has moved like a brushfire across China since the 1980s. The state has an endemic fear of large congregations, meaning that the number of people who can join each church is limited. Rather than reduce the number of Christians, however, this has created a large underground Christian community” (2010: 162). That underground community provides the ideal setting for orality breakouts.

Martin (1959) reports, “The Oral tradition was made public through the knowledge of Christians in the Church, and because it was made public, the accuracy of it is sound” (1959: 65). Langkammer (1973: 57) is from the school of thought that says even the opening of Mark (1:1-15) is reflective of a pre-evangelist traditional unit. Anderson (1976) notes that “*let the reader understand*, if not on the one hand simply an indication that the original oracle was already in written form or on the other hand a post-Markan scribal insertion, is possibly Mark’s signal that a larger than life symbol is involved, ...” (1976: 296).

A. M. Hunter (1972) points out that radical critics have erroneously concluded “that all the early tradition about Jesus was quite unfixed and relatively unreliable, though the first Christians, who were Jews, had a serious care for the faithful and controlled transmission of their Lord’s words and deeds;” and that these same critics have made the mistake of drawing “dubious parallels between oral tradition in other cultures, where the time of transmission runs into centuries, and oral tradition in the Gospels, where it is a matter of two or three decades” (1972: 34). What is important to this paper’s position is that evidence for intact eyewitness accounts is good, and any part played by oral preservation further supports and substantiates this position.

3.1.4 Ur Gospel

Since reconstructing backwards any primitive “Ur-Marcus” ends up looking like the canonical Mark, this early theory contributes little to the conversation. If “Ur” has merit, then it is a possible means of preservation and transmission supporting the reliability of the Synoptic Gospels in the canon. If there was a primary Aramaic Gospel as a means toward the canon, it served to place the Synoptics closer to Jesus. In fact, any such original sources that provided material would only serve to increase the accuracy of the extant Synoptic Gospels.

3.1.5 Fragmentary Hypothesis

The fragmentary hypothesis poses no threat to the thesis of this paper. Notes from the disciples as a means toward the canon would support the canon’s accuracy. The discussion becomes only one of transmission methodology, not a question of the reliability of the text or the validity of its sources. If fragments of source materials played a role toward the production of the Synoptic Gospels, they only add legitimacy to the final extant product.

3.1.6 Marcan priority

If Matthew and Luke used Mark, it is evident they made redaction corrections and additions (see Chapter 1); but it is also clear that no substantial changes in crucial events are evident. This is true whether they used the same source as Mark, and / or added Q, M, or L material to existing copies of Mark. If Marcan priority is a conclusion, then it is important to defend its authenticity against attacks on such.

Mark 4:13-20

A good example to address is the 3-objection assault on the authenticity of Mark 4:13-20. If the authenticity of this parable / interpretation is brought into question, it must be answered to support the veracity of all three Synoptic

Gospels, especially with the conclusion of Marcan priority. Furthermore, Jesus is recorded in 4:13 as saying his explanation for the interpretation of this parable is the key to understanding all the parables. The basic concepts of the Kingdom of God / Heaven are found in the parables, so the reliability of this passage and understanding it are both paramount to essentials of theology, ecclesiology, even eschatology. Three main objections and answers to them are as follows:

OBJECTION 1: It seems Jesus would not have to explain his parables in such detail as we see here. Why would such a master story-teller need to make his meaning so clear?

RESPONSE 1: Most of the ancient rabbinic teachings, especially short narratives, often concluded with detailed explanations far surpassing the example here. That Jesus Christ uttered the above words is not only reasonable; but it adds to the authentic setting behind their manifestation. This rabbinical explanation / teaching would certainly be appropriate in light of his contemporary setting. It is more likely that he would give some honor to the tradition, even though he was also a groundbreaker in this area, which includes the brevity of his explanation.

If Mark 4:13 is accurate that Jesus said a proper interpretation of this parable is critical to all the parables, it's even more likely that he would take extra effort to make sure his listeners got it right. Consequently, this would follow into the oral tradition after Jesus, and be carried forth into the written Gospel of Mark. It was just that important! It requires reverse circular logic to deny that because it was important, the oral tradition was careful to preserve it. That is what would be expected of the rabbi giving the teaching and of the careful and honoring preservation in the oral tradition.

OBJECTION 2: The language found in this parable contains a high percentage of words that would be difficult to derive from Aramaic, likely to be Jesus' spoken language. Furthermore, they are also words not regularly attributed to Jesus' spoken word in the Gospel.

RESPONSE 2: This is a common objection often seen in biblical criticism and it is faulty and a logical absurdity. The argument goes like this: Since Jesus used certain words more than others, then if the Gospel account attributes a word or saying to him only once or twice, then he must not have said it. One sees this same argument in questioning whether Jesus uttered the ‘ransom saying’ of Mark 10:45. The claim is that if Jesus did not say something several times, then he never said it. The claim is that if the language used in the interpretation of the parable of the sower of the four soils is not what is most commonly attributed to Jesus, then he must not have said it.

According to this theory, Jesus was quite a predictable and boring speaker. Yet the historical evidence is that he was a captivating preacher and teacher. “When Jesus had finished saying these things, the crowds were amazed at his teaching, because he taught as one who had authority, and not as their teachers of the law” (Matthew 7:28-29). “When they heard this, they were amazed. So they left him and went away” (Matthew 22:22). There are many such examples.

It is an erroneous “Catch-22 argument” to claim that a saying is not authentic because it is apparently unique. The argument presents the illusion of choice while disavowing the possibility of any real choice. This is especially absurd when referring to someone as unique as Jesus Christ. The setting dictates that Jesus wanted this interpretation to stick in the minds of its hearers and subsequent readers. It is most probable that he wanted it to stand out, to be remembered and understood.

This could also provide an adequate explanation for the source of *chreia* prior to the written Gospels of the canon. Pithy sayings for the purpose of edification and instruction would be the normal fare of the day for a rabbi of his stature; and they would certainly be maintained with vehement dedication in the oral tradition. Chances are that if this was important to the Lord, it was important to those preserving the teaching. It would have gone down exactly the way it is presented and was preserved as such.

By the way, one might do a study on how many times this paper has used the phrase 'Chances are' in this presentation (or 'by the way'). It may not be enough to warrant that this phrase was part of this original manuscript. Well, chances are it may not be used enough. On the other hand, if this phrase is used more than another phrase, like 'It may not be' or 'on the other hand,' then this other phrase might be put forth as a later redaction of this manuscript after its public expression. Of course, both of these conclusions are incorrect, which was the point of that tongue in cheek example.

Nonetheless, even if the church used their own type of vocabulary in recording the Greek variant of what Jesus spoke in Aramaic, this in no way means their record is not true to the *essence* of Jesus' teaching here. The very fact that they were going from Aramaic to Greek means there will be some change in the vocabulary application.

OBJECTION 3: The main point of the parable is in the enormous harvest of the good soil. Why would Jesus also focus on the other three? The interpretation of Mark 4:13-20 is way off on this.

RESPONSE 3: While the good soil results in a strong admonition for the church to do its good work, it is incorrect to say that interpreting the other three examples of where the seed fell is unwarranted. The truth of the matter is that commentators often argue over the 'true' meaning of this interpretation. With that in mind, who is to say that the good soil is the only point of the parable? In fact, much of the recent scholarship is swinging back toward accepting that the parables are probably best understood most often as making more than one point. Why would Jesus include the other three examples in the parable itself if they were not worthy of interpretation in the first place? Why would the early church tradition include these sayings or redact them as an addition? The answer is that he would not have included them if they were not important and the early church would not have added them. It is a detail lending credence to authenticity.

Jesus did include them, which is why the early church preserved them; and he also gave the full interpretation, one which he considered essential to all

of his parables, an important point which the early church noted and recorded. Just because an answer is simple when it can be simple does not make it wrong. Love for analysis must not trump desire for truth, even when or especially when it is the right conclusion is more obvious and simple.

3.1.7 Q

If Q is a legitimate source, whether oral or written material, Aramaic or Greek, this only further supports this paper's thesis. Q is not essential to the thesis; but any defined source closer to the life of Jesus provides further integrity to the written material of the Synoptic Gospels. As a different *quelle* unique to Matthew and Luke, it would manifest as we see in those two Gospels - a different source unique to Matthew and Luke, just as would be expected!

An example of an assault on the reliability of the Synoptic Gospels using Q comes from James Still (2010) who writes,

The oral tradition did not preserve autobiographical details of Jesus' life and, surprisingly, the Q gospel does not even mention Jesus' death and resurrection. The task falls to the first gospel writer (Mark in 70 CE) to write about Jesus' death but he ends his gospel by the discovery of the empty tomb (Mark 16:1-8). Matthew and Luke will provide a genealogy for Jesus as well as post-resurrection appearance stories (Still 2010: online).

The circular reasoning is evident to anyone with a basic understanding of Q. A common view is that Q is a "sayings source" shared by Matthew and Luke, but not Mark. Still's definition of Q says that Q contains *accounts relating* to the resurrection but not "Jesus' death and resurrection." This oxymoron is indicative of unreasonable logical tension resulting from anti-miracle bias.

There are two arguments against Still:

(1) He writes that Q does not contain the post-resurrection accounts, but then argues that Matthew and Luke contain them but Mark does not. His

argument against a post-resurrection account in Q contains the post-resurrection account in his very simple definition of Q - material in Matthew and Luke that is not found in Mark. This is not to go against the majority opinion of Q content, but to expose the representative circular reasoning by Still according to his definition.

(2) Furthermore, Mark does include the empty tomb. It is difficult even to see the point Still is trying to make. He says the task to write about Jesus' death falls to the first Gospel. That task was fulfilled. Arguing that Mark ended at the empty tomb while Matthew and Luke included post-resurrection stories is a non sequitur. Mark recorded that the tomb was empty so a good explanation for that is necessary. And it must be an explanation that contradicts Matthew and Luke (and John, the epistles, church history, and the patristic writings of first and second century).

3.1.8 Matthean priority

If Orchard's (1990) proposal is accurate that Mark came from notes in Greek taken during Peter's Roman lectures, this explanation strengthens the unity of the Synoptic Gospels and brings the Gospel of Mark directly into relationship with the eyewitness Peter. Then differences among the Synoptic Gospels further enhance the legitimacy of their origins. Why would notes from Peter's talks which used Matthew and Luke be a refuting rebuttal against them?

There is no evidence for any kind of deliberate abusive redaction to the point of contradiction, within the text or other historical sources. Where Mark's wording is fuller than Matthew or Luke, the source is concluded by different proponents based upon whether Matthew and Luke are simplifying or Mark is amplifying. Either way the direction of source or dependence flows, the reliability of the text is not challenged.

It is helpful to compare how their source is treated in Matthew's Sermon on the Mount (5:10-12) and Luke's Sermon on the "Level Place" (6:22-23). Luke does not contain *μακάριοι οἱ δεδιωγμένοι ἕνεκεν δικαιοσύνης*, of verse 10 in Matthew 5. The righteousness of God's people is thus a Jewish emphasis.

Although righteousness is the cause of the persecution, it is still rooted in religion as noted by Hendrickson (1973): “The persecution to which Jesus refers does not spring from purely social, racial, economic, or political causes, but is rooted in religion. It is distinctly a persecution ‘for righteousness’ sake” (1973: 279).

There are four women mentioned in Matthew’s genealogy. This unusual treatment is most significant in support of this paper’s thesis for several reasons. That women were not normally included in such genealogies represents a challenge to circulating stories about Jesus being illegitimate. It is not difficult to imagine this deliberate challenge in the setting contemporary to Matthew, albeit granting the courage behind this challenge in the written Gospel. It also stands against the notion of disingenuous motives on the part of the evangelist. The four women included Rahab, Tamar, Uriah’s wife, and Ruth, thus emphasizing that God uses the righteous and the sinful to accomplish His purposes.

Such a redaction emphasis was not done for the sake of cultural acceptance. The earthly bloodline of the Savior is not presented as one of a squeaky clean history, thus hinting at the good news that bad blood is made good by the blood of the Savior; but it also supports the legitimate content of the material itself. Three of the four women were foreigners, which may be Matthew’s way of hinting at salvation outside the immediate family tree (generally considered a Lucan theme); but it also reveals blatant honesty that supports authenticity. Indeed these three could very well represent Gentile blood. Philip Yancey’s (1995: 50-51) shady description of these ancestors highlights how the Word chose to become flesh through a bloodline with skeletons in the closet.

An author / redactor making an effort to force-fit an acceptable document into his existing culture would not have done so with this kind of presentation. Perhaps an argument for Matthean priority is a “correction” of this genealogy in Luke and its total absence in Mark. But it could just as likely be an addition of Matthew, later “corrected” by Luke. Either way, we again see historical-cultural support for the authenticity of the Gospel.

3.1.9 Other Proposals

The same arguments supporting the authenticity of the extant Synoptic Gospels exist for proposals of Synoptic relationships that are embraced less by the majority. Consistently, unity and authenticity are maintained through varying degrees of complexity. Other proposals become matters of means of transmission leading to the final extant canon. They do not put forth any different challenges to the reliability of that final product. If anything is different with the other explanations, it would be that they force the source material even closer to the actual events, with an increased number of unified witnesses. By increasing the complexity of transmission, the tendency should be against thematic unity. But the opposite is observed. Thematic unity is maintained, thus supporting reliability and authenticity.

Larger numbers of unified witnesses in a court case and greater complexity of how their witness is transmitted to the jury results in a stronger case, not a weaker one. If there is a disjointed conspiracy of fabrication and false redaction, more witnesses with increased complexity makes the fabrication easier to reveal and more difficult to hide. The unity of the essential themes of the Synoptic Gospels supports their reliability as the explanations for the Synoptic Problem increase in complexity and source numbers.

3.2 Miracles

If one starts with a materialistic worldview that leaves no room for the miraculous, an anti-miracle bias, obviously all miracle accounts of any document are immediately dismissed. Certainly there can be materialistic explanations for circumstances that appear miraculous and yet are not. But this is not sufficient reason to discount a written record simply because it contains miracles.

Assault on the reliability of the Synoptic Gospels has come from the claim that the miracles of Jesus are fictitious stories added by the early church to proselytize their new religion. Assertions are made that they can be easily equated with other miracle stories in the time contemporary to the early church. The argument against the historicity on the basis of miracle accounts is primarily

a post-enlightenment assumption against miracles. Hence, the prejudice against Jesus' historicity on the basis of miracles is secondary.

As Wright (1992) states, "why have so many scholars been coy, to say the least, about 'events' in the gospels being actual events, rather than simply fictions in the mind of the evangelists? It is sometimes thought that the real reason is the rejection of the 'miraculous,' and hence the felt impossibility of using the gospels as serious history... one cannot rule out *a priori* the possibility of things occurring in ways not normally expected, since to do so would be to begin from the fixed point that a particular worldview, namely the eighteenth-century rational one, or its twentieth century positivist successor, is correct in postulating that the universe is simply a 'closed continuum' of cause and effect" (1992: 92).

Discussions about sources, transmission, and the final extant texts regarding the Synoptic Problem address this prejudice. There are multiple sources for the Synoptic Gospels and all of them contain miracle accounts. The more witnesses there are to events, the more credence is given to them.

If the quantity and quality of witnesses equivalent to these sources were presented in a legitimate court of law, their testimony would carry substantial weight, especially with the thread of unity noted in the sources of the Synoptic Gospels. A court of law looks at both circumstantial and direct evidence equally (at least in the United States).

Even if certain social advantages as proposed by Rodney Stark (1996) contribute to the rise of Christianity, it is untenable that those caring for the poor, the sick, and the marginalized also deceptively fabricated miracle accounts for some social agenda. It is more irrational to make such a claim than it is to consider the significance with full objectivity that all sources of the Synoptics include miracle accounts. That these events happened and were passed down from eyewitness accounts is more reasonable than fabrication by the minds of those dedicated to social welfare as presented by Stark.

Furthermore, the realities against the rise of early Christianity cannot be ignored when discussing fabrications of sources or redaction writers. This

opposition was not limited to Roman leadership. Many consider Celsus' *The True Word* (Origen: c. 177) as the first all-inclusive challenge to the Christian faith (Chadwick 1965: xxvii). The refutation came from Origen sixty years later as *Contra Celsus*, which includes our source for Celsus (Chadwick 1965: xxviii).

Celsus' bio of Jesus presents the Lord as a sorcerer bastard whose mother committed adultery with Panthera, a Roman soldier (Van Voorst 2000: 64-65). Such a fabricated attack is not indicative of a setting where social advantage alone describes the tenacity and growth of the early church. Removing miracles as an impetus for believing due to anti-miracle bias is not the objective critical thinking it purports to be.

3.3 Myth or Supernatural History

The presentation in all three Synoptic Gospels is in a fashion different than what would be found in mythology. There are several components of myth that the Synoptics do not contain, but two essential elements will be highlighted: primordial time setting different from that contemporary to composition and wild exaggerations.

The first component is widely recognized as one in myth, that the setting of the mythical accounts is in a primordial time quite different from the present world or the setting contemporary to the story. For example, Bietenholz (1994) writes, "Just such a distinction between a mythical and a historical age, however, is implied in the Mesopotamian tradition" (1994: 9). He adds, "That same resolve may be discovered in Hittite literature, which treats contemporary or recent public events quite differently from the age of timeless myth and the more distant past..." (Holt 1994: 12).

So, myth based upon legend while integrating any real characters would take time to develop. Jesus would need to be a clearly delineated character from Genesis 1-6 or before. Yes, He is the Ancient of Days, the Lamb slain from the foundation of the earth. But these are discovered through unfolding revelation. He is not a clearly delineated character at literary conception like Zeus, whose capricious nature fails to challenge his clear identity from past to present. Thus,

even for some of the later dates proposed for their composition, sufficient time for mythological legend did not pass for the normal development of the the Gospels as myth.

In fact, there is evidence that the Gospels' negative connotation against *mythos* influenced the literary culture around them, further supporting that they did not fit the definition of myth even to their contemporaries. The Gospels' treatment of the term is a negative one of false testimony. "The negative meaning of the NT term 'myth' is comparable to the later meaning that the ancient Greeks developed for it when they became critical of their own myths, and came to see *mythos* as the opposite of 'truth' ... It is natural, then, that the NT would not use Greek mythology" (Bromiley 1979: sv).

Second, wild exaggerations normally associated with myth are not seen here, or in any of the Synoptic miracle accounts. "If he [mythical poet] wants to harness a team of winged horses, or make people run on water or over the top of the corn, nobody complains. When the poets' Zeus suspends earth and sea from a single chain and swings it around, people aren't afraid of the chain breaking and the universe crashing to destruction" (Russell and Winterbottom 1972: 538). Hermogenes (Russell and Winterbottom 1972) writing on style notes: "For some inventions are disagreeable even to hear, for instance that Athena sprang from the head of Zeus. This may indeed do very well in some other circumstances, if it is meant allegorically, but the invention is plainly disagreeable" (1972: 579). His concern is the disagreeableness, especially for gods like Athena and Zeus, not the mythical exaggerated nature of the grotesque overstatement.

There are supernatural events in the Gospels, but they are described in a straightforward presentation quite different from mythology. The heavens opening with a declaration from God is extraordinary; but the presentation cannot be defined as typically mythological. It is more historical in its style, even with the redaction considerations. As noted, these differences in fact add validity to the text. Three evangelists giving an historical account of a supernatural event with specific emphases from each is to be expected if they are sharing a true incident,

and those emphases are in unity with the general presentation in each Synoptic Gospel. All three present these events historically, not mythologically.

3.4 Cultural Perspective on the Resurrection

Additionally, it is unlikely that a fabricated story generated for the purpose of proselytization (not presented as the nebulous genre of myth) would include descriptions which strongly go against the grain of social standard. Bilezikian (1989) has described the significant contrast of how women are treated in the Gospels and the world contemporary during their composition. Women were rarely allowed to testify in certain kinds of court cases simply based upon their gender. They would not be the kinds of witnesses a fabricator would invent to lend credence to their account of something as extraordinary as the resurrection.

Looking at the Synoptic Gospels' treatment of the resurrection reveals a component that would not be concocted for the purpose of wide acceptance and smooth integration - the prominence of the women (Mark 15:47 - 16:8 / Matthew 27:61, 28:1, 8 / Luke 23:55, 24:1-10):

Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of Jesus saw where he was laid.

When the Sabbath was over, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices so that they might go to anoint Jesus' body. Very early on the first day of the week, just after sunrise, they were on their way to the tomb and they asked each other, "Who will roll the stone away from the entrance of the tomb?"

But when they looked up, they saw that the stone, which was very large, had been rolled away. As they entered the tomb, they saw a young man dressed in a white robe sitting on the right side, and they were alarmed.

"Don't be alarmed," he said. "You are looking for Jesus the Nazarene, who was crucified. He has risen! He is not here. See the place

where they laid him. But go, tell his disciples and Peter, 'He is going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will see him, just as he told you.' "

Trembling and bewildered, the women went out and fled from the tomb. They said nothing to anyone, because they were afraid.

Mark 15:47 - 16:8

Mary Magdalene and the other Mary were sitting there opposite the tomb...

After the Sabbath, at dawn on the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to look at the tomb...

So the women hurried away from the tomb, afraid yet filled with joy, and ran to tell his disciples. *Matthew 27:61, 28:1, 8*

The women who had come with Jesus from Galilee followed Joseph and saw the tomb and how his body was laid in it...

On the first day of the week, very early in the morning, the women took the spices they had prepared and went to the tomb.

They found the stone rolled away from the tomb, but when they entered, they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus. While they were wondering about this, suddenly two men in clothes that gleamed like lightning stood beside them. In their fright the women bowed down with their faces to the ground, but the men said to them, "Why do you look for the living among the dead? He is not here; he has risen! Remember how he told you, while he was still with you in Galilee: 'The Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, be crucified and on the third day be raised again.' " Then they remembered his words.

When they came back from the tomb, they told all these things to the Eleven and to all the others. It was Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James, and the others with them who told this to the apostles. *Luke 23:55, 24:1-10*

If the evangelists were making up the historical account about the resurrection, they would not use women as first and key witnesses. This detail would have challenged the credibility of the account in the cultural mindset of readers / hearers of this story. Their testimony as women would have even been questionable as to any legal validity. The evangelists did not conjure up this detail in a make-believe tale. To do so would have defeated the purpose of deceptively validating their false tale. They reported it as it happened in spite of the anti-female prejudice of their contemporary reality because it was the truth. It was not a myth, not a made-up story.

All three Synoptic Gospels include the knowledge the women had of where Jesus' tomb was. The redaction emphases are reliably predictable. Mark merely notes that Mary the mother of Jesus and Mary Magdalene knew where Jesus' body was laid. Matthew adds the detail that they sat there opposite the tomb. Luke broadens the possibilities to an "any-woman" inclusion by simply stating that "the women" who followed Jesus from Galilee followed Joseph to the tomb. There is no contradiction in Mark's statement that the women said nothing to anyone because they were afraid against their sharing with the disciples in Matthew and Luke. The women's silence in the moment fits Mark's abrupt ending. It places no restriction against them speaking after the recovery of this precipitous encounter.

Luke makes the event more palatable to the cultural prejudice against women when he frames them in a more appropriate role as "following" (both Jesus and Joseph). Furthermore, they are not named. This impersonal generality lessens the impact against the cultural prejudice. This is a good place to note that Matthew uses *αἰτίνας* in 27:55 which Vincent (2009) designates as "denoting a class; who were *of the body of women* that had followed him" (2009: 146). This is another example that the differences in the Synoptic Gospels on the treatment of the women is not an irreconcilable chasm, and poses no threat to their authenticity.

The main point here is that Luke, like the other Synoptic Evangelists, did include this account of the women because it was true. There was no reason to

make up this detail and then soften it. Luke is not condoning the cultural prejudice. He is merely expressing a redaction priority of telling the truth in a more acceptable manner for the sake of the gospel. It does not make any compromise right, but it does lend credence to the reliable authenticity of the text.

As would be expected, Matthew goes into some detail that leads the reader into a sense of emotion the women were feeling. This is created by the picture of the women sitting there opposite the tomb. The Greek reads, "And there was there Mary the Magdalene and the other Mary, sitting opposite the grave." The poetic feel of "there they were ... sitting" is indeed a pathos-invoking presentation. His account agrees with Luke because he says Joseph took Jesus to the tomb. As in Mark and Luke, Matthew makes it apparent that the women saw this. He simply states that they sat there opposite the tomb, suggesting emotional emphasis as noted. There is a sad and meditative "Jewishness" to Matthew's presentation. There is no contradiction in any of these accounts and the use of women as key witnesses is most striking, lending enormous credence to the reliability of the account.

Their reaction to the empty tomb makes the same progression from simplicity in Mark to emphasized details in Matthew and Luke. Mark simply reports that they were afraid. Matthew adds to their fear being full of joy. While it is evident redaction occurred (possibly reflecting church development which would support Marcan priority), there is no contradiction or change in the essence of the women's reaction. If indeed Matthew was written later, there very well could have been time for the women to get more in touch with their feelings about this extraordinary event. And it is expected they would communicate this.

A later detail of their report could very well be something like, "Yes, we were very afraid. But the more I look back on that moment, I can still remember a sense of joy stirring within me in spite of the fear." So Matthew would add to their fear that they were full of joy. Even if one assumes Matthean priority, it is still reasonable that Mark would simply choose to keep the detail of their inner joy out of his account for a variety of reasons - the literary effect of the abrupt ending, or the fact that it fits the rest of his Gospel. It is a reasonable conjecture that he

decided it lessened the magnitude of the supernatural event. There is no reason to assume any kind of inauthenticity or unreliability because Matthew included the women's joy and Mark does not, especially since both included their fear.

In the women's reaction at the tomb, Luke again places the women in a more subservient light. In their fright they "bowed down." The angel does not correct them and have them arise as is seen in other biblical instances of angelic encounters. After the angel speaks the attention turns away from the women again. They remembered "his words." Again, Luke is not condoning the error of society's prejudice against women. That said, a contemporary feminist position might challenge the extent to which Luke is making his account "acceptable" to the cultural norm. That discussion is beyond the scope of this paper.

Wrong as the cultural norm against women was at the time the Synoptic Gospels were written, the fact that women are prominent and essential in the resurrection story strengthens the view that these accounts are reliable. Furthermore, the differences of how the Synoptic Evangelists treat the women in the resurrection account provides more legitimacy. A carefully constructed myth would not demonstrate redaction differences in the way they are presented in the Synoptic Gospels. Redactors would minimize the differences as they appear.

Another cultural observation supports the reality of the resurrection. Such stories began to appear suddenly and prolifically in Roman fiction around the time of Nero. Bowersock (1994) explains the significance usually overlooked by Christian interpreters:

"Parallels in form and substance between the writings of the New Testament and the fictional production of the imperial age are too prominent to be either ignored or dismissed as coincidental. Both Celsus, in his attack on the Christians, and Origen, in his defense of them, recognized the similarities, particularly, as we have seen, where apparent miracles--such as the open tomb or resurrection of the dead--were at issue. It is, furthermore, a plain fact of chronology that the distinctive fictional forms of the Roman empire begin, on

present evidence, no earlier than the reign of Nero and proliferate conspicuously soon thereafter...The tendency of Christian interpreters to look for the pagan origins of Christian rites, utterances, and images has all too often obscured influences in the reverse direction" (1994: 124-126).

Thus, a strong case for this reverse influence of the early church community can be seen. The central cause behind the early Christian movement is the resurrection. So significant was this event that literature outside the Christian group was reflecting it in their fiction.

3.5 Miracle Accounts

Looking at the Marcan source, as well as M, L, and Q, we see miracle accounts present in all four. When the sources are shared, there is unity in the historicity of these miraculous events, even if subsequent redaction is assumed. In fact, subsequent redaction makes the unity less likely. Speaking of excess in redaction criticism, Karl Moller (2003) writes, "This is aggravated by the fact that subsequent generations of scholars all too often take the results produced and the presuppositions held by their predecessors for granted, thus adding to what is becoming an increasingly unstable stack of hypotheses and assumptions... This, while surely not always the case, aptly illustrates what I have called a tendency of uncritical self-perpetuation" (2003: 430).

If assumptions are made on anti-miraculous bias, the historicity is not even considered. Since miraculous reports make up so much of the Synoptic accounts, and carry even greater weight than their literary volume alone, how easy it is, when one assumes the anti-miraculous, to discount the authenticity of the material in its transmission of accurate eyewitness accounts of the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

3.5.1 Marcan material

The Aramaisms in Mark have been discussed regarding support for Marcan priority and / or the author lending credence to the miracle stories. It is just as reasonable to view them as evidence of a tradition close to their early origins as it is to assume a redactor added them. This assumption largely stems from the anti-miraculous bias that miracles could never happen, with no further warrant or investigation.

Almost one third of Mark's total content includes miracle accounts, so one-third is immediately assumed to be a fabrication on the singular basis of denying the possibility of historical miracle accounts. The fact that they are presented as varied as they are supports that they come from a tradition borne out of eyewitness accounts.

From my brief and recent experience as a juror in a criminal trial, I know this in a new and better way. We served as a 12-person jury. The specific instructions given by the judge were that circumstantial evidence and direct evidence are equal. The individual juror or the corporate jury may weigh the merits of the individual pieces of evidence, circumstantial or direct, but whether or not they are circumstantial or direct does not effect their weight as evidence. My testimony that I received these instructions while serving is direct evidence. If someone wished to challenge this, they would seek evidence to the contrary. Of course, what they would find is that the point of my argument is correct - that circumstantial and direct evidence carry equal weight for the juror to ponder. That would be true, even if I was lying about serving and receiving these instructions. I am not fabricating that story, of course.

3.5.1.1 Detail Variety

Sometimes the accounts include details of named people in the incidents, sometimes they are anonymous:

Named:

Simon's mother-in-law was in bed with a fever, and they immediately told Jesus about her. So he went to her, took her hand and helped her up. The fever left her and she began to wait on them. *1:30-31*

Anonymous:

A man with leprosy came to him and begged him on his knees, "If you are willing, you can make me clean."

Jesus was indignant. He reached out his hand and touched the man. "I am willing," he said. "Be clean!" Immediately the leprosy left him and he was cleansed. *1:40-42*

At other times, the accounts have geographical details, while some do not:

Insignificant Geographical Details:

When they came to the other disciples, they saw a large crowd around them and the teachers of the law arguing with them. ...

A man in the crowd answered, "Teacher, I brought you my son, who is possessed by a spirit that has robbed him of speech. Whenever it seizes him, it throws him to the ground. He foams at the mouth, gnashes his teeth and becomes rigid. I asked your disciples to drive out the spirit, but they could not."

... When Jesus saw that a crowd was running to the scene, he rebuked the impure spirit. "You deaf and mute spirit," he said, "I command you, come out of him and never enter him again."

The spirit shrieked, convulsed him violently and came out. The boy looked so much like a corpse that many said, "He's dead."

But Jesus took him by the hand and lifted him to his feet, and he stood up.
9:14, 17-18, 25-27

Includes Geographical Details

Immediately Jesus made his disciples get into the boat and go on ahead of him to Bethsaida, while he dismissed the crowd. After leaving them, he went up on a mountainside to pray.

Later that night, the boat was in the middle of the lake, and he was alone on land. He saw the disciples straining at the oars, because the wind was against them. Shortly before dawn he went out to them, walking on the lake. ...

Then he climbed into the boat with them, and the wind died down. They were completely amazed, for they had not understood about the loaves; their hearts were hardened.

When they had crossed over, they landed at Gennesaret and anchored there ... 6:45-48, 51-53

These variations look more like recorded accounts passed on to the written source as they appear in the canon than they do fabricated insertions. If they were only redaction creations of the evangelist, the miracle accounts would not look so much like insertions from an existing tradition. The critic is then forced to create a new assumption - that the original source or a redactor of the original source fabricated a miracle. This conclusion is the single choice for anyone embracing the anti-miracle bias. It is the only possible conclusion for such a bias; but it is not critically honest with historical objectivity if it is reached based upon bias and not investigation.

3.5.1.2 Synagogue Relations

Mark's account of the synagogue ruler's daughter being healed (5:22-24a, 35-43; paralleled Matthew 9:18-19, 23-26 / Luke 8:41-42, 49-56) is not the normative inclusion of the Synoptic Gospels' ever present theme of conflict between Jesus and the synagogue. And it was written when this conflict was

intensified with the early church. Humble, faithful, as well as astonished at the miraculous healing of his daughter, the synagogue ruler Jairus is portrayed in a favorable way. This is not the sort of story a group in conflict with the synagogue rulers would manufacture.

Then one of the synagogue rulers, named Jairus, came there. Seeing Jesus, he fell at his feet and pleaded earnestly with him, "My little daughter is dying. Please come and put your hands on her so that she will be healed and live." So Jesus went with him...

While Jesus was still speaking, some men came from the house of Jairus, the synagogue ruler. "Your daughter is dead," they said. "Why bother the teacher any more?"

Ignoring what they said, Jesus told the synagogue ruler, "Don't be afraid; just believe."

After he put them all out, he took the child's father and mother and the disciples who were with him, and went in where the child was. He took her by the hand and said to her, "Talitha kum!" (which means, "Little girl, I say to you, get up!"). Immediately the girl stood up and walked around (she was twelve years old). At this they were completely astonished. He gave strict orders not to let anyone know about this, and told them to give her something to eat. *Mark 5:22-24a, 40b-43*

So it is significant that such faith is credited to a synagogue ruler. It has already been demonstrated that in Mark, the evangelist sometimes has anonymous characters in his healing accounts. This would have been a good place for anonymity if conflict between synagogue and the Jesus-group were being forced into the text for situational convenience.

The faith demonstrated by Jairus is what Phillips (1957) calls the "chief of the right conditions," when he writes, "While it is true that God forces his way into

no man's personality, yet he is always ready where the right conditions are fulfilled, to enter and redeem and transform. The chief of the right conditions is what the New Testament calls faith; the willingness to use the faculty which can touch God..." (1957: 33).

It is reasonable to view the early church developing an understanding of faith in this way, since the sources of the Synoptic Gospels are partly responsible for inspiring Phillips to provide this description of faith. In pondering this summation by Phillips and considering the synagogue conflict, one must give credit as to how noteworthy it is that this account appears in Mark and Luke with full disclosure of Jairus as a synagogue ruler, and that Matthew at least included the account. The circumstances of church vs. synagogue conflict make no accommodation for this as a fictionalized story.

3.5.2 Jairus in Matthew and Luke

Jairus is not mentioned by name or as a leader of the synagogue by Matthew. Nor does Matthew share the amazement of the parents at the miracle (although it is not difficult for the reader to surmise). This is a curious demonstration of redaction. The intra muros vs. extra muros dialogue of Matthew's *Hebraisi dialecta* adds merit to the authenticity of the original pre-Synoptic source of this account. Luke kept those details, which is generally the case of his careful treatment of material (see below on "L" material). These observations destroy tidy explanations of miracle fabrication, revealing how the Synoptic Problem is more a problem for the critics of authenticity than it is for detectives of Synoptic literary relationships.

3.5.3 Matthew

There are several Marcan miracles not found in Matthew. He shortens some Marcan accounts and removes certain details of those accounts he does include, as previously seen in the healing of Jairus' daughter. Matthew did not emphasize miracles, yet his particular "M" material includes them:

"Lord, if it's you," Peter replied, "tell me to come to you on the water."

"Come," he said.

Then Peter got down out of the boat, walked on the water and came toward Jesus. But when he saw the wind, he was afraid and, beginning to sink, cried out, "Lord, save me!"

Immediately Jesus reached out his hand and caught him. "You of little faith," he said, "why did you doubt?" *Matthew 14:28-31*

But so that we may not offend them, go to the lake and throw out your line. Take the first fish you catch; open its mouth and you will find a four-drachma coin. Take it and give it to them for my tax and yours." *Matthew 17:27*

The accounts include details of characters without a great deal of elaboration. This is distinctive. Clearly using separate source materials other than Mark, Q, or L, Matthew appears to keep the "M" source intact. This is not the action of fabrication, even if an argument for redaction is being made.

3.5.4 Luke

There is a large consensus that Luke's "L" material comes from fewer sources than Matthew's "M" material. This is more noteworthy because nearly half of Luke contains unique material. Because it is generally agreed that Luke maintains the integrity of his Marcan and "Q" material, there is no reason to doubt his similar treatment of L. So it is reasonable to conclude that the miracles unique to Luke (L) are preserved well from their original early church sources (disappearing through the crowd - 4:29-30; the great catch of fish - 5:1-11; raising the widow's son - 7:11-17; women cured of evil spirits, which is another cultural example of what would be avoided in a manufactured story, also including the fact that the women supported Jesus' ministry. One of them was a manager of Herod's household! - 8:2-3; crippled woman healed on the Sabbath - 13:10-17;

man healed of dropsy on the Sabbath - 14:1-6; healing of the ten lepers - 17:11-19).

This is reflected in Luke's expressed purposes that introduce both his Gospel and Acts:

Many have undertaken to draw up an account of the things that have been fulfilled among us, just as they were handed down to us by those who from the first were eyewitnesses and servants of the word. Therefore, since I myself have carefully investigated everything from the beginning, it seemed good also to me to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus, so that you may know the certainty of the things you have been taught.

Luke 1:1-4

In my former book, Theophilus, I wrote about all that Jesus began to do and to teach until the day he was taken up to heaven, after giving instructions through the Holy Spirit to the apostles he had chosen. *Acts 1:1-2*

3.5.5 Q

Even though Q is in majority defined as a "sayings source," it also includes miracle accounts. Even the saying portion presents Jesus instructing the disciples to tell John the Baptist about the miracles:

Jesus replied, "Go back and report to John what you hear and see: The blind receive sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy are cured, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the good news is preached to the poor. *Matthew 11:4-5*

So he replied to the messengers, "Go back and report to John what you have seen and heard: The blind receive sight, the lame walk,

those who have leprosy are cured, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the good news is preached to the poor. *Luke 7:22*

Q contains the healing of the centurion's son (Matthew 8:5-10, 13 / Luke 7:2-10), Jesus empowering the disciples to perform miracles (Matthew 10:1, 8 / Luke 9:1-2), the woe to the cities for the mighty works done there, yet without repentance (Matthew 11:2-24 / Luke 10:13-15), and the healing of the blind and dumb demoniac (Matthew 12:22 / Luke 11:14).

Thus is seen a variety of sources for the Synoptic Gospels which all give attestation to miracles. Biblical miracles are debunked because people do not believe in the supernatural. That is circuitous thinking. It is precisely the abnormal supernatural nature of miracles that make them a powerful witness as recorded from the multiple sources in the Synoptic Gospels. The witness of the historicity of Jesus' miracles must be debunked, not the idea of miracles. And that task has not been accomplished by the debunkers. The fact that there are many Synoptic sources of miracles makes the myth-finders' job even more difficult.

3.6 Unfavorable Concepts

The fact that Q and Mark both include the charge against Jesus that he is in league with Satan demonstrates that even the opponents of Jesus attested to his miracles (Q: Matthew 12:24 f. / Luke 11:15 f.; Mark 3:22 f.). This is not the kind of charge that the Synoptic Evangelists or the source community would fabricate. To do so would only complicate their abilities to convince the surrounding culture of their story. It would also provide opponents with another means of attacking the character of Christ. Why would separate sources (Q and Mark) both blunder against their own cause in the same way if these accounts are fictional? That even one source would do that is unlikely. That multiple sources would do so is an untenable stretch to fathom.

Arguments for lengthy steps of transmission into the written Synoptic accounts strengthens this argument for authenticity. The critic cannot have it both

ways on this observation. The further the written accounts get from the original source, the more likely it is that a correction to this Mark / Q blunder would result.

There are also times when Jesus is not able to perform miracles (Mark 6:1-6a, parallel in Matthew 13:53-58. Luke's version is approximated in the unique proverbial quote of 4:23). Inventing a miracle-working Jesus would not be likely to have an incident that says Jesus "could not do any miracles there, except lay his hands on a few sick people and heal them" (Mark 6:5 / Matthew 13:58). The raw honesty of this simple presentation is a sign of authenticity that should not be dismissed lightly. This is especially true with Luke's elimination or redaction in the approximation of 4:23. The reasons for Luke's treatment follow the rest of his redaction work - more universal in appeal (See 2.1.2.1). He did include Jesus saying that "no prophet is accepted in his hometown" (Luke 4:24). So the conflict itself was not eliminated from Luke.

The above observations fulfill Perrin's (1967) three criteria for determining the "tradition-history" of the Jesus sayings: (1) dissimilarity, (2) consistent coherence, which is interdependent with the first criterion, and (3) multiple-source origins (1967: 384). Perrin's assumptions that there are layers of traditions are just that - assumptions. But even if these layers make for historical reality, there is unity among the different sources with supportive dissimilarity (by Perrin's own criteria!). It is reasonable to conjecture the essence of the sayings and the accuracy of the events were preserved from the sources through the layers and into the extant Synoptic Gospels. The historical Jesus of the Synoptic Gospels is more validated through these layers, not less.

3.7 Miracle Material

Most scholars yield to the attestation of multiple sources regarding Jesus as a healer. Gerd Theissen (1978, 1983, 1999) generally views the historical Jesus as a social-changer, and yet he writes, "There is no doubt that Jesus worked miracles, healed the sick and cast out demons" (1983: 277). It is a small step from the healer Jesus of the Synoptic Gospels to the historical Jesus of the Synoptic Gospels.

As Barclay (1963) wrote, “[Jesus] *did mighty works*. To the human situation he brings *power*, power to deal with the sin, the sorrow, the suffering of the human situation” (1963: 111). The miracles were a part of the message, an expression of the good news that the Kingdom had come.

Fabricating miracles is to fabricate the whole story. Herein lies the danger of fabrication - either of miracle stories or of explanations to debunk miracle accounts simply because they include the miraculous.

Debunking miracle stories simply because one believes miracles could never be true is not historical objectivity. That is an uncritical nonobjective assumption that an essential expression and corroboration of the Gospel was a fabrication simply because that promulgation is a miracle account. Barclay (1963) continues, “The Synoptic Gospels by Mark, Matthew and Luke leave us in no doubt concerning the message with which Jesus came. Jesus came preaching the Gospel of God” ‘The time is fulfilled, and the Kingdom of God is at hand; repent, and believe the Gospel’ (Mark 1:15)” (1963: 12).

Chapter 4: The Synoptics and John

4.1 The Chasm

Claims against authenticity for both the Synoptic accounts and the Gospel of John have come from their apparent contrasts of developed theology, especially Christology and pneumatology. Studying the Synoptic Problem addresses these claims. The extent of this paper is not to look into the Gospel of John in depth, but to address this issue of proposed challenges to textual reliability in light of its differences with the Synoptics.

The first thing to note is that different does not mean contradiction. There are differences among the Synoptic Gospels and it has been demonstrated that does not mean contradiction. No one would deny differences between the Old Testament and the New Testament. But their differences further strengthen the thread of unity between them. Contradictory testimony weakens a position but different testimony in unity strengthens it.

4.2 Emerging Arguments

As early as 1906, authenticity of John's Gospel was challenged by Scott (1906). By 1940, he had strongly argued for John's developed Christology as a primary challenge of four main arguments against the view that the apostle John, a disciple of Jesus, wrote the Gospel of John, or at least authorized it (1940: 242). Two main arguments related to the Synoptic Gospels emerged and have remained, being developed and tweaked over the last century:

4.2.1 Christology: The Christology of the Gospel of John is too developed to have occurred in the first century. This challenge to a first-century date of John only supports the reliability of the Synoptic Gospels. By attempting to create a significant timeline separation of John with the Synoptics, it not only tries to force John further into the future, like Newton's Law of equal and opposite reaction, it pushes the Synoptic Gospels back closer to the time of Jesus. that being said, this argument can be addressed.

RESPONSE to ARGUMENT 1, Christology: This argument is easily countered by studying the Christology of Paul, especially in sections like Romans 8-9, Colossians 2, or Philippians 2. It can even be argued that the Synoptic Gospels contain significant developments in Christology. Matthew 11 presents a unique relationship of Christ with the Father that could be interpreted as high Christology (perhaps an early Christological development if Mark is primal).

At that time Jesus said, "I praise you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and learned, and revealed them to little children. Yes, Father, for this is what you were pleased to do.

"All things have been committed to me by my Father. No one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and those to whom the Son chooses to reveal him."

Matthew 11:25-27

Matthew does not place the context of the return of the seventy as does Luke (10:17). Vincent (2009) points out that ἀποκριθεὶς in Matthew 11:25 indicates Jesus *answered* "in reply to something not stated" (2009: 66). Hendriksen (2007) applies the same translation, associating the return of the seventy in Luke with "the precious saying found in Matt. 11:25-30 and in part also in Luke 10: 21, 22. Naturally the seventy had much to report (Luke 10:17), though, as remarked earlier, what they reported was not nearly as important as what the Lord says in response. It is to this reaction on the part of Jesus that the evangelists, each in his own way, call attention" (2007: 497).

The fact that emphasis was made "each in his own way" echoes with the Synoptic Problem; but that they individually took care points to the significance of Jesus' recorded statement. This greatly decreases the proposed gap between John and the Synoptic Gospels and we see how the Synoptic Problem addresses this challenge.

Any conclusions about more developed Christology in John do not negate the presentation of the *actual events*. That John has changed the emphasis of those events would be expected after nearly a generation into the first century church. Domeris' (1993) propositions about meaning strengthen this position: "Jesus, in John 6:69, is the divine agent of God who proceeds from above, and who divides the world with his words of life, into the realms of darkness and of light. As such the title 'the Holy One of God' ranks above messiah and prophet, and alongside the definitive titles of Son of God and Son of Man as used by John" (1993: 167).

Through this reasoning, he shows that John is a Gospel that "demonstrates the slow pilgrimage to faith of the Johannine community, as it moved from the prophetic faith of the Sign's Source to the full blown Christology of the ascending and descending Son of Man" (Domeris 1993: 162). This authenticates the text into its setting, written at the dawn of the early church's second generation, especially in light of narrative arguments for other titles in material from the Synoptic Gospels (Danove 2003: 16-34).

Danove (2003) argues that Mark's use of Son of Man is a narrative function that challenges pre-conceived notions about these titles. He writes, "Since the narrative frames evoked by Christ and Son of Man are inherently resistant to the cultivation of the contradictory content about these characters, their characterizations have the potential to challenge the authorial (and real) audience's pre-existing beliefs and so the reliability of the narration to such a degree that this audience may be inclined to reject this content" (Danove 2003: 30).

This is not likely to be from an author trying to gain user-friendly acceptance. Furthermore, the fact that narrative repetition and progression are used in Gospels as different (despite similarities!) as John and Mark creates an authentic thread of unity from first to second generation church formation and information dissemination. This development is what would be expected. Investigations into the Synoptic Problem pull them close together on a

chronological timeline. This results in pulling them closer to the original source, at the time of Jesus.

4.2.2 Numerous Differences: Other differences between John and the Synoptic Gospels are too vast to have been written by a companion of Jesus and His disciples.

RESPONSE to ARGUMENT 2: Only the emphasis and approach are different. There is no incongruity in doctrine. The important events are the same regarding the miracles, rejection and passion, crucifixion and resurrection, etc. The fundamental teachings (sayings) of Jesus are not inconsistent with the Synoptic Gospels. What come into play here are all the proposed solutions to the Synoptic Problem, for they encompass the unity among the Synoptic Gospels, which encompass unity in the major themes with John, even though expected developments are observed.

4.3 Arguments for Contradiction

It is constructive to look at a three specific specific examples of arguments for contradiction between the Synoptic Gospels and John.

4.3.1 Elijah: The Synoptic Gospels state that John the Baptist is Elijah (or in the spirit of Elijah of Old Testament prophecy) and the Gospel of John says he is not Elijah.

RESPONSE to ARGUMENT 1, Elijah: Moule (1967: 69-72) effectively addresses this. First, it was Jesus who equated John the Baptist with Elijah in the Synoptic Gospels and it was John the Baptist who denied the association in the Gospel of John. In his humility, the Baptist rejected this exaltation that Jesus was in a position to bestow. Second, the Gospel of John stresses the witness for the sake of believing (see next response to Argument 2). This could explain why the Synoptic Gospels do not include John the Baptist's denial, for that denial in John frames him more as a witness to the Christ over and above that of an Elijah-prophet. Third, Elijah carried messianic associations. John the Baptist was

careful that he was not mistaken for the Messiah; and this would be a good reason for him to deny his association with Elijah.

Jesus, however, was in a position to further define messiahship which goes beyond his contemporaries understanding of that titular association with the prophet Elijah. As Moule (1967) puts it, “insofar as Jesus did accept messiahship he not only ‘spiritualized’ it in this sense, but exalted it in a transcendental sense... Thus, it is arguable that Jesus conceived of John as Elijah (which places John on the level of the Messiah as ordinarily conceived), but saw his own function as equivalent not to the Messiah as ordinarily conceived but to more than the Messiah – indeed (and this is my point), to that which Elijah (or the Messiah) heralds. Elijah heralds the Day of the Lord” (1967: 71). The coming of Jesus in the sense of the Kingdom’s inauguration is in that sense the Day of the Lord. Investigations into the Kingdom regarding the Synoptic Problem end up supporting the unity among the Synoptic Gospels and with John.

4.3.2 Christ Revealed: Unlike the Synoptic Gospels, John does not gradually reveal Jesus as the Messiah. He is divine from the beginning. It is not likely that one of the original disciples would have portrayed his version in this manner.

RESPONSE to ARGUMENT 2, Christ Revealed: Critical consensus is that Mark is likely the first Gospel (But see Chapter 1, including J. Wenham’s challenge to Marcan priority), and it opens with “The beginning of the good news about Jesus the Messiah, the Son of God.” Such an opening is not exactly clandestine. It helps define the genre of the Gospels while it also boldly challenges the claims of the *Pax Romana* to unique emperor deity.

Perhaps the characters are more gradual in their understanding than in John, but the difference actually lends credence to the text, since it followed nearly a generation after the birth of the church. It is a very real-time progression to be expected. This turns the very argument against its authenticity on its side. Furthermore, as already stated, the essential doctrine of the Synoptic Gospels and John is the same.

The emphasis in the Gospel of John on Jesus as the Messiah, the Son of God, also highlights his purpose in writing the Gospel. This lends credence to the

textual reality of John's desire for the reader to believe. Again, dealing with this genre as it relates to the Synoptic Problem highlights their unity and expected thematic development observed in John, but not a development that contradicts the Synoptic Gospels.

4.3.3 The Kingdom: The Synoptics focus much more on the Kingdom of God / Heaven than John. This emphasis amounts to irreconcilable redaction which challenges the authenticity of the Synoptic Gospels and the Gospel of John.

RESPONSE to ARGUMENT 3, The Kingdom: This is addressed by the indirect support for authenticity from critical literature as seen in Domeris' (1993: 155-167) investigation into the implied title of ὁ ἄγιος τοῦ θεοῦ in John 6:69. He argues, "that the primary meaning of the title is that of representation or agency. For Mark and Luke it is an agency of judgment on the demons while for John, Jesus is also the life-giver" (1993: 155). He adequately demonstrates that the historical Hebrew understanding of holiness is summed up in (1) Agent of God, (2) a representative function, and (3) election or choice which is "aside and indeed consequent upon those of representation and association" (1993: 159-160). So when the agency of Jesus is considered, any apparent gap between John and the Synoptic Gospels is diminished.

4.4 Pneumatology

Is John's treatment of the Holy Spirit different in meaning than the Synoptic Gospels? There is a distinctive emphasis on the Holy Spirit in the Gospel of John; but development in pneumatology from the Synoptic Gospels to Johanne material does not assault a first century date any more than any apparent development in Christology. As with developments in Christology, this is what we would expect to see if the radical events of the resurrection, Pentecost, and miracles were true. Such spiritual and cultural earthquakes would result in these revolutionary theological themes with rapid maturation. Furthermore, the Synoptic Gospels do include references and pneumatic themes in common with John.

In Mark, the Spirit descends upon Jesus and is at work through Jesus as represented by his powerful acts (Mk. 1:10; 3:29, 30; and see also Luke 4). All three Synoptic Gospels contain the account of Jesus' warning against blaspheming the Holy Spirit:

And so I tell you, every kind of sin and slander can be forgiven, but blasphemy against the Spirit will not be forgiven. Anyone who speaks a word against the Son of Man will be forgiven, but anyone who speaks against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven, either in this age or in the age to come. *Matthew 12:31-32*

And everyone who speaks a word against the Son of Man will be forgiven, but anyone who blasphemes against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven. *Luke 12:10*

Truly I tell you, people can be forgiven all their sins and every slander they utter, but whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit will never be forgiven; they are guilty of an eternal sin. *Mark 3:28-29*

In the Synoptic Gospel accounts, John the Baptist refers to Jesus as the one who would later baptize with the Holy Spirit (Mk 1:8), and that the Holy Spirit would help followers of Christ, especially under persecution (Mk 13:11). Noteworthy support for the authenticity of the Gospels is provided here since the Synoptic Gospels mention the very thing that happens in Acts, and then the Gospel of John *recalls* Jesus' teaching about the Holy Spirit. This makes sense in light of the fact that the church had seen these teachings come to light by the time John was written. Again, that is what would be expected if these texts are authentic and they are describing actual events.

The Gospel of Luke as described by Hans Conzelmann (1960) puts forth three periods of time with Jesus as the middle of time. It is reasonable to modify this as a developed view that the Holy Spirit's manifestations overlap the 'Jesus period' with the church age post Jesus with increasing significance (i.e., Acts,

Chapters 1-2). In John, the Holy Spirit is part of the new age during the life of Jesus, as well as after Him.

Thus, it is reasonable to say that John sees two time periods, each having development within them - the first, the Old Testament era, developing toward and culminating at the coming of the Messiah. Again, this progressive development fits what would be expected if the circumstances described in the Synoptic Gospels are true, and if the circumstances of John's Gospel are also true with a new emphasis based upon new experiences, those very real historic incidents that were indeed predicted by Jesus a generation prior.

Chapter 5: The New Perspective on Paul

5.1 Overview

Due to the enthusiasm generated by this topic, the thesis of this paper dictates a demonstration that the discussions and debates around this issue fail to assault the authenticity and reliability of the Pauline texts. This issue is still on the forefront of discussion as demonstrated by the recent dialogue between John Piper (2007) and N. T. Wright (2009). With *Justification* as the title of Wright's newest book on the subject, we see that Paul's view of Palestinian Judaism has not been left behind in the discussion, but it has expanded into clarifications of the meaning of biblical terms.

The inclusion of the "author vs. reader" model of Pauline textual investigation further deepens the intrigue. Moyise (2006: 78-96) sums up that our own prejudices of reading the Pauline corpus from "Paul's perspective" or the "reader's perspective" shapes how we read the texts. This in turn affects our view of the 'new perspective,' which further influences how we read Pauline texts. Using Romans 2:24 as a test case, he writes, "Should we evaluate the significance of the Isaiah quotation in Rom 2:24 based only on what the hearer/reader has so far been told? Or should we allow the rest of the book to play a role in determining its meaning? Author-centred studies will naturally choose the latter, since determining Paul's overall strategy is an important prerequisite for determining the function of any particular part" (2006: 93).

He ultimately concludes that, "rather than starting with either an exclusively author-centred or exclusively reader-centred approach and then vaguely suggesting that the other would have led to much the same conclusions, it would be better to develop an approach that takes into account both author and reader perspectives from the outset. Though scholars differ as to whether they (primarily) locate the meaning of a text in a reconstruction of the author's intentions, in the dynamics of the text itself, or in its reception in a community of

readers, this article has shown that a relationship between them is unavoidable” (Moyise 2006: 92-93).

The primal discussions on the ‘new perspective’ and those more recently addressing justification, reflect only a cursory treatment of “author vs. reader”; though they tend toward author since it is the new perspective on *Paul*. Yet the relationship is unavoidable, as Moyise demonstrates. Paul is after all writing to an audience. Henceforth, we will assume that both approaches are functional in the literature covered. From either vista, the appeal to the text is always the basis of the position. Though there is considerable disagreement concerning certain aspects of the ‘new perspective’, the appeal to the texts supports their fidelity because the plea for positions is based upon the texts!

5.2 Discussion Points

Three things can be included in defining the ‘new perspective’ on Paul in regard to his relationship to Palestinian Judaism:

- (1) A fresh understanding of Paul’s contemporary Judaism, on which there is much consensus,
- (2) A fresh approach to Paul’s view of this Judaism, upon which there is much debate, and
- (3) A fresh discussion on definitions of terms in the Pauline corpus. (The meaning of justification has emerged throughout these discussions).

What has changed in the first consideration above is that Judaism is no longer seen, as Dunn (1990) puts it, “in light of Luther’s agonized search for relief from a troubled conscience” (1990: 185). Dunn is sharing Krister Stendahl’s (1963) earlier contributions regarding rabbinical Judaism of Paul’s day, which intimated the association made by Luther between it and unreformed Catholicism. Stendahl (1963) suggested that Luther projected his own struggle with guilt onto Paul’s view of justification.

He reiterated via lecture and publication in 1974 shortly before E. P. Sanders (1977) clearly painted a picture of Palestinian Judaism expanding upon what had been accepted since the sixteenth century in his *Paul and Palestinian*

Judaism. Considering the background of his environment, it is understandable how Luther's works were filtered through an anti-legalistic lens, and that he might be interpreted as seeing the Judaism of the Messiah's day as a crude legalistic system of gaining entrance to God's kingdom by works. In his own contemporary surroundings, he was challenging the buying of indulgences and other such abuses of works-oriented justification practices. That being said, his emotional and ecclesiastical struggles reveal a man who was aware of the probability that the prophets of old wrestled with and ultimately understood the grace of God. This was likely carried forth into the rabbinical tradition and Luther was probably cognizant of this.

Chester (2005) supports this idea observing that the 'new perspective' says, "Paul is not in fact opposing works-righteousness, but faith plus works (however those might be defined). In fact faith plus works sounds much more like medieval Catholicism than some crass version of works-righteousness. Rather than Luther misreading Paul's conflict with first century Judaism, it is the proponents of the New Perspective who have misread Luther's conflict with medieval Catholicism. Works-righteousness may be a Protestant Sunday School caricature of medieval Catholicism, but it is doubtful whether Luther viewed Catholicism in these terms" (2005: 7).

A view of Paul's doctrine of justification by grace as an unconditional antithesis to Palestinian Judaism became so entrenched that even modern scholars with a liberal bias such as Bultmann (1955) made it the centerpiece of their theological approach. Bultmann (1955) agreed that the fundamental definition of δικαιοσύνη as a forensic-eschatological term was the same in Paul and Palestinian Judaism; but, the contrast he saw between the two was what many contemporaries accept and understand as Luther's view – grace / mercy vs. works = Paul vs. Judaism.

This can be seen in this quote from Bultmann's *Theology of the New Testament* (1955) as cited by Sanders (1977): "The Jew takes it for granted that this condition is keeping the law, the accomplishing of 'works' prescribed by the Law. In direct contrast to this view Paul's thesis runs to consider its negative

aspects first: ‘without works of the law...’ (1977: 3). In our current setting, modern authors like Vishal Mangalwadi (2009) assume what could be termed the ‘old perspective.’ He writes, “Paul’s preaching of salvation through Christ’s death on the cross is summed up in two major themes in his epistles: grace versus law and faith versus works” (2009: 161).

Then there is also a shift in focus from debated meanings of Paul’s perspective and justification to what the life in the Messiah is supposed to look like. Considered by many to express a good deal of emergent church views, Rob Bell (2005) describes this life when he writes, “The fact that we are loved and accepted and forgiven in spite of everything we have done is simply too good to be true. Our choice becomes this: We can trust his [Jesus’] retelling of the story or we can trust ours. It is a choice we make every day about the reality we are going to live in” (2005: 146). He goes on to describe, not salvific universalism, but a sort of universal soteriological opportunity, which flies in the face of limited atonement / salvation proponents, but which still carries traces of the old perspective:

And this reality extends beyond this life. Heaven is full of forgiven people. Hell is full of forgiven people. Heaven is full of people God loves, whom Jesus died for. Hell is full of forgiven people God loves, whom Jesus died for. The difference is how we choose to live, which story we choose to live in, which version of reality we trust. Ours or God’s (Bell 2005: 146).

5.3 Paul’s Contemporary Judaism

Sanders (1977) has amassed evidence and significant consensus that Palestinian Judaism saw the law as an expression of an already existing covenant relationship and not as a means of ‘getting in.’ This can be seen much in the same way as the Christian manifestations of baptism and the Lord’s Supper as expressions of the saving faith in Jesus Christ.

When covenant theology of reform doctrine is considered in light of Lutheran and Calvinistic roots, the covenant of grace supports less of a stark contrast of Palestinian Judaism against reform theology in its covenant theology roots.

Following are demonstrative excerpts reflecting the consensus behind Sanders:

Sanders: "... covenant nomism is the view that one's place in God's plan is established on the basis of the covenant and that the covenant requires as the proper response of man his obedience to its commandments, while providing means of atonement for transgression ... Obedience *maintains* one's position in the covenant, but it does not earn God's grace as such ... Righteousness in Judaism is a term which implies the maintenance of status among the group of the elect" [EMPHASIS MINE] (1977: 551).

Dunn: "The point is that Protestant exegesis has for too long allowed a typically Lutheran emphasis on justification by faith to impose a hermeneutical grid on the text of Romans... [The] Reformation rejection of a system where indulgences could be bought and merits accumulated was necessary and justified, ... but the hermeneutical mistake was made of reading this antithesis back into the NT period, ..." (1988: lxv).

Ziesler: "Now while Sanders may have somewhat overstated his case, and while not every piece of his exegesis has won universal agreement, yet many people suspect that fundamentally his case is correct...; rightly or wrongly I concluded that it makes perfectly good sense. We do not need the Bultmannian anti-merit, anti-self-righteousness view" (1991: 189-190).

Thielman: "The proper response of the covenant was, of course, obedience; but means of atonement were readily available for those who did not obey fully. This 'pattern of religion' Sanders called 'covenant nomism', and he claimed it bears little resemblance to the descriptions of Jewish 'soteriology' in most handbooks of Protestant biblical scholarship ... [Most] students of Pauline theology now believe that Montefiore, Sanders and other dissenters from the classic Protestant perspective have proven their case" (1993: 531).

Does Thielman's phrase 'classic Protestant perspective' reveal some degree of personal subjectivity? An entire paper could be argued on the merits of a position that just as Palestinian Judaism was not an unconditional legalistic system of 'getting in,' so might Luther's views of that system during his times of greater clarity be different from the generally accepted unconditional contrast to that system; but his emphasis was not on this investigation, but was more appropriate to his contemporary setting. Likewise, the thesis of this paper is supported by arguments on either side of this view of Luther's view and the nature of Palestinian Judaism. The veracity of Scripture is strengthened by the fact that the arguments exist, because the nature of the scarlet thread throughout Scripture is God's mercy in covenant. Most important, it is the texts to which the participants appeal for their position!

5.3.1 Dissent

Believing they are defending Paul, there are some scholars such as Stephen Westerholm (1988), who still hold to the view of Palestinian Judaism as 'δικαιοσύνη ἐξ ἔργων νόμου,' and that Paul was rejecting this. But is this a misjudgment of an erroneous view of Luther's so-called Palestinian Judaism in response to another erroneous position - that Paul's view and Luther's view of Palestinian Judaism are synonymous?

In fairness to Westerholm, it should be stated that he considers Paul's rejection of 'Judaism's law' as only one rejection of any and all works for justified σωτηρία, and that any such system presents Christ as less than sufficient. There is clearly much to be said for this, as it reflects an historic orthodoxy; but there is still a need to address Paul's view of Judaism contemporary to him, considering also that the crux of the debate could rest on Paul's view of covenant nomism, not its practice in his contemporary Judaism.

5.3.2 Justification

Furthermore, an accurate understanding of what δικαιοσύνη and being justified actually mean is still being discussed. Wright (2009) sees justification as membership in the family, that justification means being a member, rather than an imputed morality: “‘righteousness’ in that lawcourt sense does not mean either ‘morally good character’ or ‘performance of moral good deeds’ but ‘the status you have when the court has found in your favor’” (2009: 79-108).

Piper (2007) takes what most see as the traditional reform route of what he calls the “common folk” when he writes that “it may be that when the defendant lacks moral righteousness, the Judge, who is also Creator and Redeemer, may find a way to make his righteousness count for the defendant, since it is exactly the righteousness he needs – namely, an unwavering and flawless and acted-out allegiance to the glory of the Judge” (2007: 71).

In the late 1600’s, Turretin’s (1992) systematic theology emphasized the legal aspect of justification in describing the justice of God as “vindictive justice” when he affirmed such against the Socinians: “Again, divine justice can be considered either absolutely in itself (...the rectitude and perfection of the divine nature; ... belonging to him as God) or relatively (with respect to its egress and exercise through the divine will...). It may be regarded as twofold: either in the rule and government of creatures...; or in judgments, and these either ‘premiative’ (*praemiantibus*) (granting rewards) or vindictive (and this latter for chastisement or for punishment) which is called *justitia vindicatrix*...” (1992: 235).

Getting at the biblical origins and meanings is present from all angles of the discussion, which supports that the text itself is valid. Why else would there be a desire to comprehend it? McGrath (1986) opens his historical treatise on these doctrines with the following observation about the church’s need to put Scripture before tradition and to make sure that tradition is rightly based upon Scripture: “The *doctrine* of justification has come to develop a meaning quite independent of its biblical origins, and concerns *the means by which man’s relationship to God is established*. The church has chosen to subsume its

discussion of the reconciliation of man to God under the aegis of justification, thereby giving the concept an emphasis quite absent from the New Testament. The 'doctrine of justification' has come to bear a meaning within dogmatic theology which is quite independent of its Pauline origins" (1986: 2-3).

5.4 Paul's View of Judaism

In rejecting a view of Palestinian Judaism as indulgences through the law, should we also reject all previous understanding of Paul's view on the assumption that it is the same as a stark and unconditional contrast to covenant grace? Could the acceptance of this degree of contrast go along with the understanding of Paul's perspective on it? The dialogue is complicated further because there are matters of degree within 'covenant nomism', although the Christian view is one of absolute grace for justification. Thus, there is considerable disagreement:

Sanders: "Paul's 'pattern of religion' cannot be described as 'covenant nomism,' and therefore Paul presents an essentially different type of religiousness from any found in Palestinian Jewish literature. ... Paul seems to ignore (and by implication deny) the grace of God toward Israel as evidenced by the election and the covenant" (1977: 543, 551).

Dunn: "The most surprising feature of Sanders' writing, however, is that he himself has failed to take the opportunity his own mould-breaking work offered ... He quickly - too quickly in my view - concluded that Paul's religion could be understood only as a basically different system from that of his fellow Jews" (1988: 186).

Piper: [Reading with the new perspective] "does not fit well with the ordinary reading of many texts and leaves many ordinary folk not with the rewarding 'ah-ha' experience of illumination, but with a paralyzed sense of perplexity" (2007: 24).

Wright: "Indeed, anyone giving close attention to the work of Ed Sanders, Jimmy Dunn and myself (for some reason we are often mentioned as the chief culprits: why not Richard Hays or why not Douglass Campbell or Terry Donaldson or

Bruce Longnecker?) will see that we have at least as much disagreement between ourselves as we do with those outside this (very small, and hardly charmed) circle” (2009: 28).

This is not unusual considering the Reformers themselves saw great differences and continue to do so. In fact, Scot McKnight (2009) says that Wright, in forming a position which would be considered by most to be different from traditional Reform Pauline theology “has out-Reformed America’s newest religious zealots – the neo-Reformed – by taking them back to Scripture and to its meaning in its historical context” (Wright 2009: back-cover).

Wright again: “Again and again, even where the authors appear to be paying close attention to the biblical texts, several of the key elements in Paul’s doctrine were simply missing: Abraham and the promises God made to him, incorporation into Christ, resurrection and new creation, the coming together of Jews and Gentiles, eschatology in the sense of God’s purpose-driven plan through history, and, not least, the Holy Spirit and the formation of Christian character” (2009: 31-32).

5.5 Paul’s World

All agree that understanding what the author meant is important, so it is reasonable to seek an understanding of the author, in this case, Paul. He was a good-standing member of the Pharisees before his conversion; but, what does this really mean? Pharisees were the “separated ones,” distinguishing themselves out of the Hasidim, who stood against Hellenistic influences. In resisting King Antiochus IV in his efforts to get rid of the Jewish religion, the Hasidim distinguished themselves. The Pharisees and Essenes came from this group.

The Pharisaic party was favored by some of the Greeks ruling Palestine before Rome came to power. This is likely the reason Pharisees became a part of the Sanhedrin, the supreme judicial and legislative body of the Jews. Likely in the minority at the time of the New Testament, they still carried a great deal of effective sway in the Sanhedrin. How these historical realities relate to the biblical

texts being debated regarding the new perspective on Paul reinforce the legitimacy of those very texts.

There are several opinions concerning the kind of Judaism with which Paul was associated before his conversion and which Judaism he was addressing in his letter to the Romans. Paul referred to himself as a “Hebrew of Hebrews” in Philippians 3:5. Some have postulated that Paul was a member of Palestinian Judaism and in the Pharisaic faith during his possible exposure to Hellenistic Judaism at Jerusalem. Others have argued that apparent incongruities of parts of Romans and Paul’s contemporary Judaism can only be explained by accepting that Paul was exposed to a gloomy and fanatically legalistic Judaism of the Diaspora of the Hellenistic world.

They apply these Diaspora views as those of the voluntary scattering of Jews and the subsequent infusion of influences other than Palestinian Judaism, especially during first century Rome. This is significant because a *voluntary* Diaspora would make such a population more prone to accept outside influences without as much resistance as a *forced* Diaspora. There is evidence that both expressions of first century Jewish dispersion were present. Yet there is no reason to assume this about Paul.

Furthermore, the primary problem with this theory is that the earlier perception of a great chasm between the Judaism of the Diaspora and that of Palestine has been effectively refuted, and that the gulf between these two was not so significant. Stegner (1993) points out, “Apparently, Diaspora Judaism could be both lax and strict in its observance of the Torah, as could Palestinian Judaism” (1993: 212). It is not necessary that Paul would receive exposure to these ideas in the Dispersion, or that he would accept them if he did. Furthermore, it becomes even less noteworthy if they were not that significantly different in their expressions of faith and in their view of the Abrahamic covenant.

Without surprise, R. Bultmann (1963) has attempted to carry the Gnostic redeemer myth into Paul’s teaching. It appears, however, that such passages as 1 Corinthians 2:6f are more Paul’s efforts to evangelize in knowable terms and reference points for the culture into which he found himself to be a missionary for

the gospel of Christ. Hering (1962) attempts to demonstrate that the Corinthian exchange merely contrasts simple Christians with mature Christians. He claims that the “simple Christians” understand and know the cross; but the more mature Christians move on to a deeper and more profound wisdom. But the text does not support this. It is evident Paul is contrasting the simplicity of the cross as the true divinely deep and profound wisdom.

Wright (2004) understands this to encompass the division of the ages. He writes, “There is the ‘present age’, the period of history characterized by human rebellion, sin, despair and death. Then there is ‘the age to come’, the time when the one true God will be king over all the world, bringing to an end the rule of all forces that oppose him. And the point is this: the ‘age to come’ has already broken in to the present age in Jesus the Messiah” (2004: 25).

Philosophical thought regarding soteriology was found throughout the Hellenistic world. In Acts, Paul addresses the Athenians as very religious, and comments on their idol to the Unknown God (Acts 17:22f), after grieving over a city full of idols (Acts 17:16). Stendahl (1963) sees no evidence of an inner struggle for Paul while he was Saul of Tarsus within the Torah religion. A challenge to the concept that Romans 7 amounts to the ramblings of a divided soul is seen in Philippians 3:6, where Paul says of himself, “as to righteousness under the law blameless.”

Of Paul’s former life as Saul, Michael (1927) writes, “Pharisee though he was, vehement as had been his ardour, had he in actual practice met all the demands of the Law in his search for righteousness before God? Even by this microscopic test he stands approved, for he can say of himself that he was immaculate by the standard of legal righteousness... There was no flaw in his observance. He had left nothing undone” (1927: 143). Those supporting a new perspective would see support for covenantal nomism here since Paul can easily be seen in this instance as a Jew of Jews already in “maintenance” under the law.

Indeed, righteousness is a key term in approaching how Paul understands salvation in Jesus Christ (dependent upon the meaning of δικαιοσύνη!). Much of

the discussion hinges on Paul's meaning of θεοῦ δικαιοσύνην. Does *dikaioσύνη* *theou* make the genitive subjective or possessive? If subjective, then it refers to God's actions as nouns: acts of righteousness. Turretin's (1992: 234-241) description of vindictive justice would fall into this God of action. If possessive, then it refers to God's character and the *expectation* based upon His character that He will act in certain ways.

Nouns such as δικαιοσύνην and adjectives such as δικαίου ("just" or "righteous"— *dikaio*s and its cognates) are used over 100 times in the Pauline corpus, and in such use can be seen their central importance to his theology and their relevance to his doctrine of justification by faith. These ideas also have significance in Paul's discussion and application of the relationship between Judaism and the Gentiles. This is exemplified by the fact that J. B. Muddiman (1996) tied together Lecture 6 (Israel and the Gentiles) with Lecture 7 (Faith and Righteousness: Law and Sin, Romans 1-8) in his Oxford Lecture Series on Pauline Theology.

5.6 Conceptual Terms

There is a complex interrelationship among the different definitions of law, justification, salvation, righteousness, and righteousness of God. There is a fluid juxtaposition of questions and answers, and asking the right questions is as important as the answers. Each question has multiple answers any of which could force the path of the discussion into any one of multiple directions. The first step seems to be deciding the proper order for the treatment of these terms because primary conclusions drawn have important ramifications for the other concepts.

5.6.1 Law, Works, and Covenant

Thus far it appears the law represented a sign of Israel's existing covenant for members of God's family, and was not an unconditional means of 'getting in' or gaining membership. It should be noted that Sanders does not include 4 Ezra

in his discussions. 4 Ezra includes texts which demonstrate a rabbinical tradition that could very well be interpreted as supporting a salvation that is earned. Whether Paul held to this view or abandoned it after being knocked off his horse becomes clearer when discussing righteousness and salvation.

Further discussion of whether or not Paul can be accused of forsaking his Jewish heritage emanates here from Sanders and Dunn. Sanders (1983: 143-167) says that Paul's basic attack on Judaism is in the idea of their covenant, that it fails God's ultimate purpose, which is to save the entirety of humanity; thus, Sanders still views Paul as breaking with the law and preaching an antithesis to it. He thinks that Romans 9:4-6 is arbitrary, reflects a struggle, and tends to render Paul's discussion of the law to be illogical. But this need not be seen as arbitrary at all for verse 5 reveals that the Christ is the one through whom Israel's historic purposes are fulfilled. There is nothing illogical, capricious, or random about that at all.

For I could wish that I myself were cursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my brothers, those of my own race, the people of Israel. Theirs is the adoption as sons; theirs the divine glory, the covenants, the receiving of the law, the temple worship and the promises. Theirs are the patriarchs, and from them is traced the human ancestry of Christ, who is God over all, forever praised! Amen. It is not as though God's word had failed. For not all who are descended from Israel are Israel. *Romans 9:3-6*

Murray (1959: 98) is among many scholars (i.e., Greijdanus, Hodge, Vos) who believe that all of Chapters 9-11 reveal that the living Jews at the time history is culminated will be saved; but the specific discussion is around salvation for the Jews in general in this Pauline section. As Hendriksen (2007) notes, "This is clearly the language of a Christian... In this passage Paul certainly proves what a wonderful missionary he is, how passionately he yearns to save the lost. Cf. Rom, 11:41; I Cor. 9:22" (2007:310-311).

To carry an earlier quote from Sanders (1977) further, he says “Paul in fact explicitly denies that the Jewish covenant can be effective for salvation, thus consciously denying the basis of Judaism” (1977: 551). Dunn (1990: 201) takes the position that Paul was recognizing that Christ was the fulfillment of the law and that any intended antithesis on the part of Paul was against a false view of covenant nomism; and on that point Paul would be in agreement with Sanders. Wright (2009: 103) sees the Messiah as the fulfillment of history in that Paul was not denying the basics of Judaism, but was seeing Christ as the fulfillment of the Law basic to Judaism.

Dunn (1990) thinks that Sanders “recognizes rightly that in disparaging ‘works of the law’ Paul is not disparaging good works in general, far less is he thinking of good works earning merit. But by taking ‘works of the law’ as equivalent to ‘doing the law’ in general (the normal exegesis), he [Sanders] is led to the false conclusion that in disparaging ‘works of the law’ Paul is disparaging law as such, [and] has broken with Judaism as a whole” (1990: 201). Dunn (1990: 201) further comments that Paul had particular works in mind (circumcision, food laws, Sabbath). This was only because they had become a narrow vision, an expression of Israel’s boast, as opposed to covenant nomism being a badge of Abraham’s faith.

He was not making the erroneous reference to these practices as works to get into the covenant, but was responding to the practical error that these had become more than what true covenant nomism intended, and they were not for boasting, but symbols of the covenant, the God of which is worth the boast!

Where, then, is boasting? It is excluded. On what principle? On that of observing the law? No, but on that of faith. For we maintain that a man is justified by faith apart from observing the law. Is God the God of Jews only? Is he not the God of Gentiles too? Yes, of Gentiles too, since there is only one God, who will justify the circumcised by faith and the uncircumcised through that same faith.

Do we, then, nullify the law by this faith? Not at all! Rather, we uphold the law. *Romans 3:27 – 31*

As Wright (2009) says:

Torah, which you are using to prop up this boast (despite all the things that Torah then tells you about your failures), this Torah itself declares that your boasted position in God's purposes has been taken away and given to others. ... 'Boasting excluded – by what Torah? A Torah of works? No – but by the Torah of faith' (Romans 3:27). Who are God's people? They are those who keep the Torah – but whose Torah-keeping consists of faith (2009: 211).

So it is not that the works were bad or unattainable, but that faith was not included. Dunn (1990:200) seems to argue that this *nomos* is always referring to the Mosaic law when νόμος is being written by Paul; but it is interesting to look at Romans 2:14, and consider the third use to be a principle of Gentile conscience:

(Indeed, when Gentiles, who do not have the law [Mosaic], do by nature things required by the law [Mosaic], they are a law [conscience principle] for themselves, even though they do not have the law [Mosaic], ...) *Romans 2:14*

Morgan (1995) believes this verse (with v. 15 and also 7:18-19) echoes popular philosophy; but he is making this statement from a perspective of Paul's 'religious symbols': "He [Paul] is not describing empirical reality, even though in his letters he is socially engaged and often alludes to his own and his hearers' historical situation. Neither is he developing a philosophical or theological system, even though his ideas and arguments occasionally echo popular philosophy (e.g. 2:14-15; 7:18-19) and were later built into theological systems. But all religious ideas and practices encapsulate human meanings in symbolic

form and Paul articulates a vision of the world and human life under God” (1995: 102).

The ‘although-statements’ within these arguments are strong indications that these opinions are not weighty regarding the reliability of the text. Paul was quite empirical, and especially pragmatic. Yet, in much of his work, he also developed philosophies of ministry and theologies of applicable truth along with teachings on the *ethnos* of the church.

Dunn (1990) accepts that Sanders recognizes the nationalistic significance of circumcision, food laws, and Sabbath; but he proposes that Sanders still does not understand that Paul is targeting these as works which “betoken racial prerogative” (1990: 200). As such he still disagrees with Sanders’ taking of ‘works of the law’ as synonymous with ‘law.’ Dunn’s concept that ‘works of the law’ should not be equivalent to ‘law’ is challenged by Cranfield (1991: 89-101), though he agrees that a limited use may be applicable in Galatians.

Cranfield (1991) believes that Paul deliberately and clearly means that a status of righteousness before God cannot come about by obedience to the law, and that Dunn missed on this. However, he appears to give way a bit to Dunn when he writes that “of course, it should go without saying that Paul also believed that there is a sense in which the righteous requirement of the law is being fulfilled in the believer (Rom 8.4), that there is something which may be called ‘fulfillment of the law’, which is not full or perfect obedience and in no way establishes a claim on God, but is simply that humble faith in God’s grace, ...” (1991: 100-101).

This is moving in Dunn’s (1992) direction, who makes clear in his rebuttal that ‘works of the law’ is not intended in a special restricted sense: “Circumcision and food laws in particular come into play simply (!) because they provided the key test cases for most Jews of Paul’s time... So, ‘works of the law’ are not to be understood in a special restricted sense, but in a general sense given particular point by certain crucial issues and disputes” (1992: 100-101).

He also parallels works of the law in its Qumran usage. He (Dunn 1992) demonstrates that it is equivalent to deeds of the law found there, specifically

those that distinguished “Qumran covenanters from their fellow Jews” (1992: 103). The Qumran covenanters were clarifying what the law required of the loyal covenant member. This supports the aspect of Paul’s contemporary use of the phrase ‘works of the law’ as that of ‘distinguishing characteristics’ of the law and the people of the law.

In a similar light in yet another direction, Zeisler (1991) says that Paul was not opposed to “ ‘works’ per se, but ‘works of the Law’ ” for two reasons: (1) Nothing should compete with Christ as sufficient grounds for salvation; and (2) the Law is Jewish, while faith is universal. Paul “was against the de-centralizing of Christ, and against the division of Gentiles from Jews” (1991: 190). Again, we see the tension between the Law for the Jews as an expression of faith and the universality of faith, which is for all, Jew and Gentile; but, this tension need not be beyond co-existence as two unconditional antitheses.

Paul notes that Abraham’s faith was counted unto him as righteousness, and that circumcision, given as a token after the faith, was so regarded by God. Wright (2009) further points out that the “whole chapter (Romans 4) is a sustained exposition of the promises of Abraham, drawing on several chapters in Genesis but framing the whole thing particularly with Genesis 15 ... [Paul] declares that the promises to Abraham and his family were that they should inherit (not ‘the land,’ merely), but ‘the world’ (Romans 4:13)” (2009: 98-99).

Is this blessedness only for the circumcised, or also for the uncircumcised? We have been saying that Abraham's faith was credited to him as righteousness. Under what circumstances was it credited? Was it after he was circumcised, or before? It was not after, but before! And he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness that he had by faith while he was still uncircumcised. So then, he is the father of all who believe but have not been circumcised, in order that righteousness might be credited to them. And he is also the father of the circumcised who not only

are circumcised but who also walk in the footsteps of the faith that our father Abraham had before he was circumcised.

It was not through law that Abraham and his offspring received the promise that he would be heir of the world, but through the righteousness that comes by faith. *Romans 4:9-13*

The comments by Bruce (2002) on this section of Romans reflect an inherent understanding that “getting in” was accomplished not through the law when he writes, “If circumcision had nothing to do with Abraham’s justification by God, with all the promised blessings that accompanied it, the law had even less to do with it. For, as Paul had pointed out to the Galatians, the law was given 430 years later than God’s promise to Abraham and could not invalidate it or restrict its scope (Gal. 3:17). If, long after the promise was given, it had been made conditional on obedience to a law which was not mentioned in the original terms of the promise, the whole basis of the promise would have been nullified. The promise was a promise of blessing, and was fulfilled in the gospel” (2002: 108-109).

J. F. Ashton (1995) proposed that Paul might have painted himself into a corner by his expressions about the law in Romans 5:20 and 7:14.

The law was added so that the trespass might increase. But where sin increased, grace increased all the more, *Romans 5:20*

We know that the law is spiritual; but I am unspiritual, sold as a slave to sin. *Romans 7:14*

In light of other verses, this suggestion that Paul has painted himself into a corner is exaggerated, which is demonstrated in 7:7.

What shall we say, then? Is the law sin? Certainly not! Indeed I would not have known what sin was except through the law. For I

would not have known what coveting really was if the law had not said, "Do not covet." *Romans 7:7*

Hendriksen (2007) clarifies that there is no contradictory corner-bound painting going on here when he comments, "The apostle had made several statements which might lead thoughtless people to believe that the law itself was a sinful thing. Had he not made mention of 'the sinful passions stimulated by the law'? (7:5). See also 5:20 and 6:14. So in the present section (see especially verse 12) the writer makes very clear the fact that, considered in and by itself, the law is not at all sinful" (2007: 219).

Perhaps Paul could have added more clearly that Adam and Eve would not have known the beautiful ripe fruit from the forbidden tree was not to be eaten had they not been given the 'do not' commandment from God, the Law of the Garden of Eden, though he makes implication to it as the opportunity for death in subsequent verses (vv. 9-12):

Once I was alive apart from law; but when the commandment came, sin sprang to life and I died. I found that the very commandment that was intended to bring life actually brought death. For sin, seizing the opportunity afforded by the commandment, deceived me, and through the commandment put me to death. So then, the law is holy, and the commandment is holy, righteous and good. *Romans 7:9-12*

Dodd (1932) comments that "the description of the fall into sin in verses 9-11 reads like an allegorical interpretation of the story of the Fall of Adam in Genesis... he has many allusions to it" (1932: 105-106). Yet, he goes on to write, "The reason why Paul found there the story of how an individual fell into the power of sin and death was that he had experience of it, and the whole story fitted his experience" (1930: 106). This adds validity to the text because a good rabbinical teacher like Paul would include such allegory.

In favor of Ashton is the ever-imposing question of, “Why did God make the tree available in the first place?” Perhaps Paul would answer, “To know sin.” By this would he mean before or after the fateful tasting? Before, in that the commandment was known and could be broken; after through the subsequent knowledge of good and evil. The first and second Adam theme is present in this discussion because the first Adam and the second Adam, Jesus, were ‘tempted from without.’ All other human descendants of Adam and Eve are tempted from within, due to the flesh (7:14, of the flesh, fleshly; unspiritual, so NIV) within them, as Paul agonizes in Romans 7:13-23:

Did that which is good, then, become death to me? By no means!
But in order that sin might be recognized as sin, it produced death
in me through what was good, so that through the commandment
sin might become utterly sinful.

We know that the law is spiritual; but I am unspiritual [σάρκινός –
fleshly, of the flesh], sold as a slave to sin.

I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but
what I hate I do. And if I do what I do not want to do, I agree that
the law is good. As it is, it is no longer I myself who do it, but it is sin
living in me. I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my
sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot
carry it out. For what I do is not the good I want to do; no, the evil I
do not want to do—this I keep on doing. Now if I do what I do not
want to do, it is no longer I who do it, but it is sin living in me that
does it. So I find this law at work: When I want to do good, evil is
right there with me. For in my inner being I delight in God's law; but
I see another law at work in the members of my body, waging war
against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of
sin at work within my members. *Romans 7:13-23*

Ashton (1995) was more generous toward Paul in Romans Series Lecture #3, when he likened Paul's relationship to the Law with the following parable:

A mother lives at home with her newly married daughter. The mother becomes bossy and overbearing. In due time, the daughter is forced to choose between husband and mother. She still loves her mother; but, the tension is too great for co-existence, and the mother is rejected only as a necessity to embrace the new husband [my paraphrase].

What seems reasonable from all of this is what Zeisler (1991) said may be 'blindingly obvious' - "If, explicitly or implicitly, Paul is saying that since justification is by God's grace received by faith, it cannot be by anything else such as works of the Law, then Lutherans and others may surely say that it cannot be by good works in general either" (1991: 191). The other reasonable conclusions are that Paul intended for Christianity to be universal, and that faith in Christ, and nothing else, is required for justification. Good works are not to be shunned, but are to be an expression of this universal and personal requirement for justification. Even in the debate between the meaning of justification as imparted righteousness (Piper 2007: 164) or membership in the family (Wright 2009: 79-108), the positional results are the same, and that is also blindingly obvious.

5.6.2 δικαιοσύνη

Paul's use of δικαιοσύνη in Romans can best be summarized into four categories:

5.6.2.1 Righteousness declared by God (4:3 f. to v.22)

What does the Scripture say? "Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness." Now when a man works, his

wages are not credited to him as a gift, but as an obligation. However, to the man who does not work but trusts God who justifies the wicked, his faith is credited as righteousness. *Romans 4:3-5*

Paul uses Romans 4 as support for his treatment of believers' justification by faith from the first three chapters.

The words "it was credited to him" were written not for him alone, but also for us, to whom God will credit righteousness—for us who believe in him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead. He was delivered over to death for our sins and was raised to life for our justification. *Romans 4:23-25*

(Questions of whose faith Paul meant here - Christ or believer - will be dealt with later).

5.6.2.2 Righteousness as Gift

Again, the gift of God is not like the result of the one man's sin: The judgment followed one sin and brought condemnation, but the gift followed many trespasses and brought justification. For if, by the trespass of the one man, death reigned through that one man, how much more will those who receive God's abundant provision of grace and of the gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man, Jesus Christ. Consequently, just as the result of one trespass was condemnation for all men, so also the result of one act of righteousness was justification that brings life for all men. For just as through the disobedience of the one man the many were made sinners, so also through the obedience of the one man the many will be made righteous. The law was added so that the trespass might increase. But where sin increased, grace increased all the more, so

that, just as sin reigned in death, so also grace might reign through righteousness to bring eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Romans 5:16-21

This is directly related to the declaration idea because 4:4 talks of wages as earned vs. being a gift.

5.6.2.3 Righteousness of faith (4:11-15, 9:30-32, 10:4-10)

Closely associated with the righteousness declared by God and given by Him as a free gift is the righteousness of faith; but, the faith itself neither is nor becomes this righteousness. Rather, it is the instrument through which the declared gift manifests itself. This is often contrasted with the Law, and that provides the source of the earlier discussion of how Paul viewed the Law.

And he [Abraham] received the *sign* [σημεῖον] of circumcision, a *seal* [σφραγιδα] of the righteousness that he had by *faith* while he was still uncircumcised. So then, he is the father of all who believe but have not been circumcised, in order that righteousness might be *credited* to them. And he is also the father of the circumcised who not only are circumcised but who also walk in the footsteps of the faith that our father Abraham had before he was circumcised. It was not through law that Abraham and his offspring received the promise that he would be heir of the world, but through the righteousness that comes by faith. For if those who live by law are heirs, faith has no value and the promise is worthless, because law brings wrath. And where there is no law there is no transgression [EMPHASIS MINE]. *Romans 4:11-15*

In the sign / seal received, ἔλαβεν [received] is the aorist active indicative, maintaining the soteriological theme of completed / continuing benefit of God's righteousness credited [λογισθῆναι – aorist passive infinitive] to all who believe.

What then shall we say? That the Gentiles, who did not pursue righteousness, have obtained it, a δικαιοσύνην δὲ τὴν ἐκ πίστεως; but Israel, who pursued a νόμον δικαιοσύνης, has not attained it.

Romans 9:30-31

It is important here that following in v. 32, Paul answers why they did not succeed. If Paul did not answer why, the assumption could be that he implied Judaism taught that 'getting in' and 'staying in' were both accomplished through the Law. In v. 32, Paul answers that proper faith is the fulfillment of the law, not the denial of it - "Why not? Because they pursued it not by faith but as if it were by works..."

Christ is the end of the law so that there may be righteousness for everyone who believes. Moses describes in this way the righteousness that is by the law: "The man who does these things will live by them." But the righteousness that is by faith says: "Do not say in your heart, 'Who will ascend into heaven?'" (that is, to bring Christ down) or "'Who will descend into the deep?'" (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead). But what does it say? "The word is near you; it is in your mouth and in your heart," that is, the word of faith we are proclaiming: That if you confess with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved. *Romans 10:4-10*

5.6.2.4 Ethical righteousness as obedience to God (6:13-20)

This kind of righteousness is a sign of faith in Christ, and as such has a close correlation with the idea of God's Law being a sign of the covenant. Since Abraham's family is founded upon God's justifying action in Christ and provides membership in the Messianic family, Wright (2009) says, "We should not be surprised, then, to find the language of 'righteousness' continuing to crop up in chapter 6 – though not, we note again, any mention of 'faith' ([apart from 6:8])" (2009: 229).

Do not offer the parts of your body to sin, as instruments of wickedness, but rather offer yourselves to God, as those who have been brought from death to life; and offer the parts of your body to him as instruments of righteousness. For sin shall not be your master, because you are not under law, but under grace. What then? Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace? By no means! Don't you know that when you offer yourselves to someone to obey him as slaves, you are slaves to the one whom you obey—whether you are slaves to sin, which leads to death, or to obedience, which leads to righteousness? But thanks be to God that, though you used to be slaves to sin, you wholeheartedly obeyed the form of teaching to which you were entrusted. You have been set free from sin and have become slaves to righteousness. I put this in human terms because you are weak in your natural selves. Just as you used to offer the parts of your body in slavery to impurity and to ever-increasing wickedness, so now offer them in slavery to righteousness leading to holiness. When you were slaves to sin, you were free from the control of righteousness. *Romans 6:13-20*

Ashton (1995) has said there is something odd about being a slave to grace, so Paul changes the language in v.17 to obedience rather than slavery. It

could also be seen that obedience to God is voluntary slavery / servitude for the believer, which appears at first glance to be a paradox of terms; however, slavery to sin is beyond the individual's control outside of God's grace, so the voluntary servitude to God results in freedom from that slavery to sin. In this understanding, Paul's theology of dominions of powers and principalities and spiritual victories is intimated. As such, these victories are part of Paul's defined benefits of salvation. The important conclusion about the righteousness of obedience is that it is an expression of the believer's faith and life in Christ, and that even the power over sin is an added advantage of God's declared gift of righteousness. There is no breach with the view from traditional church history.

5.6.3 δίκαιος

The adjective δίκαιος is used in Romans in association with both God and man. In 1:17 the relationship between faith and leading the righteous life can be seen, as Paul refers to Habakkuk 2:4:

For in the gospel a righteousness from God is revealed, a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written:
"The righteous will live by faith." *Romans 1:17*

See, he is puffed up;
his desires are not upright –
but the righteous will live by his faith. *Habakkuk 2:4*

In 2:13, 3:10, and 5:7, the righteous ones are described as those who live obedient lives, and the presentations of this adjective tend toward the ethical definition of righteousness. The doers of the law will be justified (2:13); but none are righteous (3:10, Psalms 14:3 and 53:1-3). This can seem contradictory if the doers of the law are not seen as those given righteousness by faith, and who are acting out that faith.

5.6.4 νόμος and ἐντολή

There is another possible misunderstanding when Paul refers to the law as holy and just (righteous adjective δικάια):

So then, the law is holy, and the commandment is holy, righteous [δικαία] and good. *Romans 7:12*

Paul uses νόμος and ἐντολή for effect, making it plain that he did not just mean the command of Genesis 2:16-17 to avoid the forbidden tree, as the allusion in vv. 9-10. In describing the law as holy and righteous, Onesti and Branch (1993) point out that Paul should not be seen as incoherent and inconsistent to “the logic of his position. Such a judgment would betray a failure to grasp the nature and thrust of Paul’s critique of the law as understood within the Judaism of his own day. Paul could only speak as positively of the law as he does here if he thought that his critique was directed against an abuse of the law...” (1993: 835). This is in line with the conclusions reached earlier. God’s Law reveals the righteous purposes of God, and His will is to transform the righteous believers in Christ to conformity of those purposes, conformity to the image of Christ (as in 2 Corinthians 3:18):

And we, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory, ...
2 Corinthians 3:18

5.6.5 Original Sin

Augustine’s doctrine of original sin can be seen in looking at his translation of Romans 5:12:

“Therefore as sin came into the world through one man and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all men sinned” [*Romans 5:12*, so Augustine].

Augustine uses the Latin *in quo* ('in whom') for the Greek *eph'hoi* ('in that', 'because'). The second mention of death is omitted from his manuscripts. The result is that 'sin' becomes the subject of 'spread'. This says that Adam brought sin, not death. This was most likely a result of Augustine's effort to refute Pelagius' teaching that sin comes from imitating Adam and can be overcome by imitating Jesus. It is a distortion of the text.

Ashton (1995) stated this as a “villainous doctrine.” It is only villainous if it ignores the general grace of God and the degree of expression of man's sinful nature (i.e., many without Christ are *good citizens*). It is not villainous in understanding the doctrinal statement that justification, however defined, comes only by a saving faith in Jesus Christ.

5.6.6 Righteousness of God

The 'righteousness of God' phrase is found seven times in Romans (out of ten total in Paul's epistles). It is of central importance to the justification of the sinner. As noted earlier, in 1:17, God's righteousness is revealed through faith. Part of the righteousness of God is His faithfulness, and the faith of the believer becomes the instrument of God's exercising His faithfulness. That is why Paul says faith is counted as righteousness, not transformed into righteousness, though the new man of faith is now empowered into a life of ethical righteousness.

This is consistent with the Judaism of Paul's day, and properly linked with the past, as exemplified with the royal psalms. They depict the king as ruling with justice and righteousness as God's agent on earth. The king himself is not divine, and is totally dependent on God. There is even evidence that the king went through a ritual of humiliation to make plain that he is aware of his mortality. This can also be a prophetic sign of Christ's passion, albeit there is no reason for

these to be mutually exclusive, especially considering Old Testament typology. It is the relationship with God that is restored through faith in Jesus Christ. (Treatments of the translation 'faith of Jesus Christ' will be discussed later).

5.7 Hope in Salvation

In Romans 8:24, Paul refers to salvation in the past, the aorist indicating the certainty of an action that belongs in the future by describing it as though it had already transpired, thus the aspect of hope, which is future-driven:

For in this hope we were saved. *Romans 8:24*
[ἐσώθημεν, 1st plural aorist passive indicative].

The very nature and definition of the word 'hope' contains a future aspect to it. Paul writes to the Ephesians that by grace they have been saved (Eph. 2:8-10). The passive of ἐσώθημεν in Romans 8:24 emphasizes this grace, "so that no one can boast" (Eph. 2:9).

Justification by works of the law is not dealt with in Ephesians. So, this issue is most likely resolved by the time of its composition. These references in the past tense look back to the cross. Yet in the same passage of Romans, Paul speaks of hope and of waiting, and that implies a future aspect of salvation.

We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time. Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies. For in this hope we were saved. But hope that is seen is no hope at all. Who hopes for what he already has? But if we hope for what we do not yet have, we wait for it patiently. *Romans 8:22-25*

Erickson (1998) makes mention of the important social aspect of this verse which supports the idea of the family of God bringing to bear the Kingdom of God into culture when he writes, “In Romans 8:18-25 Paul speaks of the cosmic character of sin. The whole creation was subjected to futility... If the sin of humankind has distorted the entire creation, certainly its social structures are included” (1998: 671). We see that the discussion on the new perspective on Paul does not negate such a reality. Scripture enhances the social influence on society regardless of the position one might take on Paul and Palestinian Judaism.

But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God's wrath through him! *Romans 5:8-9*

5.8 Justification and Works: Past, Present, and Future

Assurance is a present blessing of this future promise. In this, we see no counter against the historical traditional view. As stated by Dodd (1932), “Justification, or reconciliation, is, as we have already been told, the initial act of a process; but it carries with it the assurance that the process will be completed. To enforce this point, Paul uses a double *a fortiori* argument” (1932: 77). Justification is in the present, and as such is synonymous with salvation in the present, whereas salvation from wrath is in the future. The next verse covers this same theme in past, present, and future:

For if, when we were God's enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life! *Romans 5:10*

As would be expected from his position, Williams (1996) stresses the human initiative in this reconciliation when he comments on 5:10-11: “it is

important to add that the reconciliation God has accomplished needs to be *received*... God has bridged the gap and reconciled us to Himself. Yet we must receive it, else, despite God's completed work, we are still unreconciled to Him" (1996: 370).

Shifting the emphasis to God's initiative, Grudem (1999:216) writes, "If God gives anyone a desire to repent and trust in Christ, he should not delay and should not harden his heart (cf. Heb. 3:7-8; 12:17). This ability to repent and desire to trust in God is not naturally ours but is given by the prompting of the Holy Spirit, and it will not last forever... (Heb. 3:15)." Whether it is emphasis on man's initiative or one that stresses God's initiative toward the totally depraved, the result of the completed reconciliation is the same. Grudem would likely join all of us in agreeing with Williams' (1996) sentiments: "Atonement, reconciliation through Jesus Christ, is indeed reason for great rejoicing!" (1996: 354).

Being declared righteous by the gift of God is in and of itself a salvation; but it also provides further salvation from all the nasty things that go with (and that will come as a result of) a wrong relationship with God; and salvation (through justification by faith) substitutes eternal glory in their place. The protection from divine wrath (1 Thessalonians 5:9; cf. Eph. 2:3) occurs immediately in the present (Romans 1:18) and at the Day of Judgment (Romans 5:8) in the eschatological sense. R. P. Martin (1981: 39) provides a good discussion on this. This past, present and future aspect of salvation in Romans is in harmony with the past, present, and future aspects of the Kingdom of God in the Synoptic Gospels and eternal life in John.

There are issues with which we must deal. As Charles Cosgrove (1987: 653-670) points out, there are *only apparent* contradictions in Paul's teachings on justification by faith and future judgment by works. He cites Romans 2:13 as the '*locus classicus*' of a justification statement clashing with what he seems to say about justification itself:

For it is not those who hear the law who are righteous in God's sight, but it is those who obey the law who will be declared righteous. *Romans 2:13*

For Cosgrove (1987), there is resolution in Paul's teachings, and *no* contradiction. I agree. This results from making a distinction between the present and future treatment of justification. This is the same position that Zeisler (1991) referred to as "blindingly obvious - that the present justification is indeed a result of God's gift apart from works" (1991: 189-190). As one might expect from a Baptist seminarian, Cosgrove adds "justification in baptism 'apart from works'" (1987: 664).

Regarding the future, Cosgrove applies justification with a more forensic sense in that it is judgment according to works. He (Cosgrove 1987) writes, "If at the beginning of this study Paul's programmatic statement preserved in Gal 2:16 and Romans 3:20 appeared to pose the one impediment to a unified interpretation of justification in baptism 'apart from works' and future justification (in judgment) 'according to works,' this hindrance has now fallen away" (1987: 664). The position seems to be that sin is conquered in the present, and obedience to the law is made possible, and there is future reward for the 'good and faithful servant.'

But now a righteousness from God, *apart from law*, has been made known, to which the Law and the Prophets testify. This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus. God presented him as a sacrifice of atonement, through faith in his blood. He did this to demonstrate his justice, because in his forbearance he had left the sins committed beforehand unpunished— he did it to demonstrate his justice at the present time, so as to be just and the

one who justifies those who have faith in Jesus. Where, then, is boasting? It is excluded. On what principle? On that of observing the law? No, but on that of faith. For we maintain that a man is justified by faith apart from observing the law. Is God the God of Jews only? Is he not the God of Gentiles too? Yes, of Gentiles too, since there is only one God, who will justify the circumcised by faith and the uncircumcised through that same faith. *Do we, then, nullify* [καταργοῦμεν – destroy; present active indicative] *the law by this faith? Not at all! Rather, we uphold* [ἱσχύνομεν – stand, covenant with; present active indicative] *the law* [EMPHASIS MINE].

Romans 3:21-31

5.9 Ἰλαστήριον

How this justification comes about brings up the question of the translation and interpretation of ἰλαστήριον. Allen (1986) frames the dialogue when he comments, “While expiation deals with human sin, propitiation deals also with wrath, the divine reaction to sin” (1986: 1323).

δικαιοῦμενοι δωρεὰν τῆ αὐτοῦ χάριτι διὰ τῆς ἀπολυτρώσεως τῆς ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ· ὃν προέθετο ὁ θεὸς ἰλαστήριον διὰ πίστεως ἐν τῷ αὐτοῦ αἵματι εἰς ἔνδειξιν τῆς δικαιοσύνης αὐτοῦ διὰ τὴν πάρεσιν τῶν προγεγονότων ἁμαρτημάτων [EMPHASIS MINE].

Romans 3:24-25

The following translations of ἰλαστήριον (*hapax legomenon* for Paul) are noted:

expiation: Revised Standard Version

propitiation: American Standard Version, King James Version, NKJV

mercy seat: Darby’s, Young’s Literal Translation

sacrifice of atonement: New International Version, New Revised Standard Version (which can also read place of atonement, which would be more in line with Darby's or the Young's).

Dunn (1988: 175) would support expiation because he understands God's righteousness being fulfilled on the cross in the covenantal sense, and not being vindicated in the judicial sense. It has already been demonstrated that the righteousness of God can be seen as a gift and therefore not as God's judicial righteousness, such as salvation as seen in Romans 3:21-22:

But now a righteousness from God, apart from law, has been made known, to which the Law and the Prophets testify. This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference, ... *Romans 3:21-22*

This supports expiation over propitiation. But referring to Romans 3:5 as supporting righteousness as a divine attribute that must be appeased supports propitiation.

But if our unrighteousness brings out God's righteousness more clearly, what shall we say? That God is unjust in bringing his wrath on us? (I am using a human argument.) *Romans 3:5*

Sproul (1999) comments on the balancing act when he writes:

So there is a certain sense in which by sinning we are exhibiting the righteousness of God. Our unrighteousness demonstrates the righteousness of God. And if God shows his righteousness by exposing our unrighteousness, are we not – and here's the distortion – doing God a favour by continuing in unrighteousness? Are we not adding to Divine glory by sinning? Again, to ask such a

question is to answer it, and how does Paul answer it? *Certainly not!* ... If our unrighteousness were justified on the grounds that it makes all the more clear and vivid the righteousness of God, then God would have no reason to judge us. Instead he should reward us, compliment us (1999: 61).

This leans toward propitiation as the proper term for ἱλαστήριον, and this is how Sproul (1999) defines the act of 3:25, although he translates it as sacrifice of atonement: “God presented him as a sacrifice of atonement, through faith in his blood (verse 25)... It is God who sets forth his only-begotten Son to be a propitiation” (1999: 77).

The forbearance of former sins paints an image of a God who saved us while we were yet sinners. Expiation fits this model of God’s loving initiative to the ungodly, and not as a wrathful God in need of appeasement. The law must be fulfilled and the personified law must be appeased and the altruistic and sanguine God accomplishes selfless companionship. This is not out of a *need* for companionship, but out of an *expression* of the ἀγάπη τοῦ θεοῦ. The integrity of God’s holiness is maintained with the idea of expiation, while still seeing the work of the cross as this loving initiative, because the work of the cross itself would not be necessary without the holiness of God, holy justification, which includes love and justification for the sinner.

There are theological implications from these terms, but F. F. Bruce (1963) shows wisdom in this regard: “Exception has been taken to the use of the verb ‘propitiate’ and the substantive ‘propitiation’ in rendering these Greek words into English in the New Testament, on the ground that these English terms smack of placating or appeasing [reference to Dodd]... But if *hilaskomai*, *hilasterion* and their cognates acquired a new meaning from their biblical context, we may expect that by dint of long usage the English words ‘propitiate’ and ‘propitiation’ have acquired a biblical meaning in the same way” (1963: 105).

Bruce’s observation is like an overture to a more healthy canonical critical reading! This provides historico-cultural support to the thesis of this paper. This

truth has not changed as transmitted through history, but is brought to a fuller understanding. The dialogue does not assault the legitimacy of Scripture. It enhances it.

5.9.1 Pre-Pauline 3:25-26a

Historical understanding of the pre-Pauline church is enhanced if it is evident that Romans 3:25-26a is pre-Pauline. So is the authenticity due to thematic continuity. Referencing Bultmann and Kasemann, Meyer (1983: 108) points out how they agreed that 3:24-26 emanated from a pre-Pauline tradition, even though their translations were different.

The four main reasons supporting a pre-Pauline tradition are:

- (1) As noted, ἵλαστήριον is found only here in the Pauline works.
- (2) The use of δικαιούμενοι must be the beginning of the pre-Pauline text in Romans 3:24, because there is no accounting for this form syntactically.
- (3) Reference to 'the blood' is found only in other presumably pre-Pauline texts (1 Corinthians 10:16; 11:25, 27). (The obvious circularity of this presumption weakens #3 here, but additional reasons for the other texts provide support).
- (4) The idea of the divine righteousness demanding expiation for former sins seems to be a concept Paul does not thread with emphasis through his writings. But to claim this concept as totally alien to Paul is based on a foundation of prior assumption.

From previous portions of this discussion, it is not so apparent that the idea of expiation is alien to Paul, but the singular use of ἵλαστήριον and other compelling reasons do give support that this formula is pre-Pauline. This in no way makes it antithetical to Pauline doctrine. In fact, if he adopted it, he was maintaining a thread of continuity with the earliest days of the church, lending credence to the thesis of this paper.

5.9.2 Atonement

Martin (1981) argues that the combination of the Jewish Christian confession tradition and Paul's redaction in v. 26, which adds commentary interpretation to the tradition, means "that the soteriology of Christ's expiatory sacrifice in 3:25 is firmly grounded in traditional teaching passed on to Paul (cf. 1 Cor. 15:1 ff. / v. 3a: 'For what I received I passed on to you...') and it is not his own eccentricity" (1981: 82). Meyer (1983) points out, "The pre-Pauline text's centre of gravity is the interpretation of Christ's bloody death as a divinely planned eschatological antitype... [A]n anonymous Jewish-Christian drew on the reservoir of Israel's cultic symbols to present Golgotha as history's definitive Day of Atonement" (1983: 106). This is in reference to the Day of Atonement in Leviticus 16, supporting the plausibility of the additional interpretive translation of ἱλαστήριον as 'mercy seat.'

Eduard Lohse (1982) has challenged the cultic sense of Romans 3:25, referring to 4 Maccabees 17:21- 22, wherein the martyr death of a few righteous Jews atones for the sins of the people. If so, the source of the pre-Pauline material is in or near Antioch, where a theology of martyrdom already existed. Against this position is the likelihood that Jewish Christians would be reluctant to utilize this tradition to describe the expiatory death of Christ, since there is a more deep-rooted tradition in the Day of Atonement ritual.

Though it is well attested that Paul associated with the Hellenistic/Judaic church in Antioch (see for example Acts 11:25-216; 13:1 ff), the idea of the Day of Atonement in Leviticus 16 is still more fitting with his idea of the once-for-all completeness of Christ's expiatory death on the cross; thus, ἱλαστήριον as 'mercy seat' supports that the traditional material interpreted Christ's death in terms of cultic atonement, and that this was the tradition Paul was adapting.

Wenham (1995) argues that it is probable Paul interpreted this view as a continuous thread with prophets of old and with the Messiah. With the use of mercy seat, no mechanics are required. The golden slab (Hebrew *kapporet*) covered the Ark of the Covenant in the most holy place. It comes from the verb

kipper 'to cover' as in 'atone' or 'wipe out.' The origination of the English atonement is found in the 16th century. It comes from the idea of 'at-one-ment': being one with. This supports Wright's (2009) idea of a right standing, one with the purposes and holiness of God, and one in the relational membership aspect regarding atonement (thus justification). This is even more noteworthy since the date of the 16th century 'at-one-ment' developed during the time of the German Reformation and its early European influences.

5.10 ΠΙΣΤΙΣ

Basic to the Christian understanding of how God deals with his people in both covenant ages is the idea that He is faithful. Faith is the more common application of πίστις, though there are times it is used as faithful such as in Romans 3:3 - the πίστιν τοῦ θεοῦ. Dunn (1991) supports the traditional translation of 3:22 and 3:26 as 'faith *in* Jesus.' He feels Paul could have drawn attention to the faith (or faithfulness) of Jesus in places such as Romans 4, when he writes about the faith of Abraham that is a model faith and does not use Christ's faithfulness as the example (1991: 730-744).

Longnecker (1993) disagrees, and argues for 'faithfulness *of* Christ' in 3:25. He says that Kasemann's view that Paul added the πίστις phrase to bring the formula more in line with his view of salvation by faith, though shared by many, has a curious problem. He asks why Paul would add πίστις to ἰλαστήριον διὰ πίστεως ἐν τῷ αὐτοῦ αἵματι in such an awkward fashion if he were to introduce a reference to the believer's faith at this point (1993: 478-479). The opinion of L. Morris (1993) is that "we should probably understand Paul to be referring to faith in Jesus as object, though the other possibilities remind us both that he was faithful to the Father and that he lived by faith" (1993: 288).

Stanley Stowers (1989) thinks there is significance to Paul's use of ἐκ πίστεως for Jews and διὰ τῆς πίστεως for Gentiles in Romans 3:30. He thinks it is not merely stylistic or rhetorical, but that it deliberately challenges "the universalizing and homogenous scheme of later Christian economies of

salvation,” though he does agree that “both Jews and Gentiles share in the blessings of ἐκ πίστεως of Abraham and Jesus, although not in identical ways” (1989: 665-674).

Perhaps Dunn and Sanders and most new perspective conversationalists would agree when Sanders (1977) finds it “clear that one of Paul’s major concerns is to assert that salvation is for both Jews and Gentiles,” though there may be debate on Sander’s’ view “that it must be based on the same ground” (1977: 488). Paul’s noted concern is a critical assertion that demonstrates essential unity among the scholars of the new perspective.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

In 1685, Gottfried Leibniz wrote that the “only way to rectify our reasonings is to make them as tangible as those of the Mathematicians, so that we can find our error at a glance, and when there are disputes among persons, we can simply say: ‘Let us calculate without further ado, to see who is right’” (Zegarelli 2007: 26). While Leibniz advanced notions of logic were dormant for nearly 200 years, unfortunately so were his ideal prejudice-free principles absent from the increasing grip of anti-supernatural bias on biblical criticism. A simple if --> then principle could be applied to the historicity of the New Testament, specific to this paper being the Gospels, and Pauline texts associated with the new perspective on Paul.

If the Synoptic miracle accounts and their depiction of the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ are true, would the Synoptic Gospels look any different than they do? As we have investigated with greater acumen the *Sitz im Leben* of the evangelists, their personal motivations, and their audience, is there greater reason to doubt the Gospels as they appear in the canon, *if* their accounts are about real history? The answer to both questions is an emphatic, “No.” It has been demonstrated that the complex relationships of the Synoptic Gospels supports their authenticity. Furthermore, the developments we see in John are what would be expected if it was penned at the verge of the second generation church. Those developments do not contradict the Synoptic Gospels, but support their authenticity.

The same is true of the Pauline corpus regarding the new perspective on Paul. If his accounts of encountering the risen Lord are true, would they look any different? If his correspondence with the early church is about actual engagements, would those letters have a different manifestation as they do in the canon? Again, we must answer, “No” to both of these questions. There is no strong case whatsoever for fabrication or massive redaction at a much later date.

If the new perspective on Paul sheds light about Judaism contemporary to his day, does that assault the message of salvation and redemption preached by Paul? Does it theologically separate Paul from Jesus of the Gospels? “No” again. If we start with the reasonable premise that eyewitness accounts have been recorded in the canon, the canon would look as it does. This is not circular reasoning, but is instead a warranted premise based upon two centuries of church history, manuscripts, extant work, and increased understanding of the events of the first century. The New Testament canon is not guilty of fraud until proven innocent. On the contrary, there is corroboration for these accounts as reliable testimony. This supports the more tenable position that they are authentic until proven otherwise, which has not been done. That position is warranted and reasonable.

6.1 Complex Synoptic Relationships Support Authenticity

Critical literature on the Synoptic Problem reveals the complexity of the intertwined relationships of the Synoptic Gospels. There are disagreements on the solutions to the Synoptic Problem, yet it becomes clear that each solution relates to others in a way that lends credence to the reliability of the extant Synoptic Gospels. When the order of written transmission of the Synoptic Gospels is argued, and the various sources of Mark, Q, M, L, and oral preservation are brought into the conversation, such discussions only strengthen the fact that something really did get transmitted – some truth that caused a revolution in the world and a great deal of subsequent fuss about culture and settings, meanings of words, origins and orders of texts.

The burden of proof has not been met from those claiming that the Synoptic traditions are not based upon eyewitness accounts. Reasonable inquiry reveals that the relationship of such accounts with each other and their consistency with the setting in which they were transmitted demonstrate their authenticity. If the story they reveal is true history, of course the Synoptic Gospels would appear to have dependence on the sources and interdependence on one

another. As Carson (1992: 120) points out, “The Synoptic Problem, however conceived, involves some literary dependence; that is, some New Testament authors are using some literary sources. That should not surprise us.” The effect of this reality is that it merely moves those Gospel accounts even closer to the source of interest - Jesus Himself!

Regarding a reasonable reliance upon the knowledge of an omniscient God, we can likewise rely upon that same God to transmit His story, as Carson (1992: 142) goes on to write about this biblical truth: a truth “though not exhaustively true, is nevertheless completely true... such knowledge derives from a mixture of evidence, training, predisposition, and the secret work of the Spirit of God.” This adds a philosophical argument of reason, the forest made up of the trees, to the historical and literary weight of evidence supporting the authenticity of Scripture.

The position that the Holy Spirit is the pneumatic inspiration of their production is strengthened by their not yet fully elucidated relationships and the complexity of the Synoptic Problem. There is force added to the witness of an event by multiple sources in unity enough with the others in such a way that the key items of the story are verified. There are numerous explanations that consider varied sources, which are also borne out as valid sources. The Synoptic Gospels as we have them in the canon are reliable eyewitness accounts of the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

6.2 Diverse Sources of Miracle Stories

The sundry descriptions of miracle accounts and supernatural events are found in all the varied proposed sources of the Synoptic Gospels. And these are sources as defined and delineated by the most ardent anti-supernaturalist / anti-miracle biblical critics. Indeed the Synoptic Problem results in a discussion that reveals the bias of the anti-supernaturalists, a presumptive attitude that ignores the corroborative significance of multiple origins all containing miracle accounts. This predilection sorely lacks objectivity.

Rather than jeopardizing the legitimacy of the miracles found within the Synoptic Gospels, isolating literary units begs the question of why such units in isolation would all have miracle accounts told with such similarity that it apparently took numerous centuries plus a millennium to figure out they were isolated units. If we toss aside preconceived prejudice against the supernatural, we can recognize the strength of these proposed various units all containing miracle accounts. As with any court case, this kind of evidence in multiple testimonies supports the conclusion that these events were real. The different sources are just that - different, but not contradictory to one another. Multiple witnesses in unity attest to the validity of those witnesses' testimony, and this is what we see regarding source criticism and the miracle accounts.

6.3 Unity of the Synoptics and John

Emerging also in the various attempts to deal with the Synoptic Problem is material that shows unity and reasonable chronological expectations between the Synoptic Gospels and the Gospel of John. The different testimonies of John and the Synoptic Gospels are not contradictory testimonies. Their divergent perspectives strengthen their witness.

Supposed contradictions, such as John the Baptist as Elijah or a contrast of emphasis on the Kingdom of God have been adequately dispelled as arguments for disunity. Moule (1967: 69-72) and others addressed the supposed contradiction regarding John the Baptist as Elijah. Jesus associated John the Baptist with Elijah in the Synoptic Gospels and the Baptist humbly denied the association in the Gospel of John. There is no contradiction here, but different accents from two different people. This is reasonable, even expected.

Likewise, the implied title of ὁ ἄγιος τοῦ θεοῦ as revealed in Domeris' (1993: 155-167) work shows no contradiction between the Synoptic Gospels and John regarding the Kingdom of God. In John, the title also means salvation, but is by no means less a title of authority over demons as stressed more in the Synoptic Gospels. In understanding that the main expression of the

title is that of representation or agency, the supposed chasm between the Synoptic Gospels and John regarding the Kingdom of God is diminished.

The Holy Spirit does not make a sudden appearance out of nowhere in the Gospel of John. John's emphasis on the Holy Spirit is no fabrication without basis in Synoptic tradition. The Synoptic Gospels contain paramount inclusions: Mary's conception by the Holy Spirit, John the Baptist's prediction of Him who would baptize in the Holy Spirit, the Holy Spirit descending like a dove during the baptism of Jesus, the Spirit leading Jesus into the wilderness, Jesus' prediction of the Spirit of the Father speaking through His followers, the blaspheming of the Holy Spirit, the Great Commission, Elizabeth filled with the Holy Spirit in Mary's presence, Zechariah filled and giving his testimony of redemption, devout Simeon with the Holy Spirit on him, prophesying salvation and the sword that would pierce Mary's heart. These are not negligible meaningless accounts of the Holy Spirit but critical Pneumatic presentations woven into the Synoptic Gospels. If the Holy Spirit was active from Pentecost to the penning of John as depicted in the Bible, the progression in Pneumatology witnessed in the Gospel of John would be the most reasonable manifestation.

John's developed Christology is likewise no less supportive of the Synoptic versions and also the most reasonable expression of a church matured from the time the Synoptic Gospels were penned. Unity is revealed because these developments are what would be expected if the resurrection, Pentecost, and miracles were true. Mark, supposedly secretive of the messianic revelation, opens with the gospel of Jesus Christ, Son of God. That is hardly a focus on the humanity of Jesus requiring an unacceptable leap of faith to John's Christology, written a generation after the church of the resurrected Jesus was founded.

6.4 Fresh Perspective on Form, Source, and Redaction Criticism

Enlightened perspective from the Synoptics / John comparison should enhance the critic's acceptance of unity within the Synoptic Gospels themselves. Form units, sources, and redaction must be seen with fresh eyes and analyzed with new minds free of the modernist anti-miracle bias. Even units believed

isolated by those obsessed with demonstrating original thematic disunity contain material common to overarching Gospel themes. If these literary units really came from isolated sources, why would there be so much thematic unity with an existing tradition if that material was fabricated. More contemporary commentators like Guelich (1989) elucidate this, noting that “even rare pericopae composed by the evangelist consistently reflect a use of traditional materials and motifs appearing elsewhere in the Gospel tradition” (1989: xxxiii).

The discussion in all critical areas, including form and redaction criticism, supports the reliability of Scripture and the authenticity of the authors. Erickson (1998: 99) points out, “Noting differences in the way the Synoptic Gospels handle and report the same incidents, redaction criticism finds them to have been genuine authors, not mere reporters or chroniclers on one hand, or editors on another. It rests on the assumption that the Gospels grew out of a theological concern which each of the writers had.”

The burden of proof is on those (Nineham 1958) who would question the reasonable assumption that the Synoptic traditions are accurately based upon eyewitness accounts. That burden has not been met. Regarding critical efforts to elucidate the biblical texts, F. F. Bruce (1970: 57) offers a wonderful suggestion for the Synoptic critic which all can heed: “When this painstaking work has been accomplished and the core of the tradition authenticated as securely as possible, he will do well to stand back among the rank and file of Gospel readers and, listening with them to the witness of the Evangelists, join in acknowledging that this witness has the ring of truth.”

6.5 New Perspective on Paul: Jesus Continues to be the Way

When we go through the back-and-forth details on discussions regarding the new perspective on Paul, the end-game still results in a lot of unity on the fact the Jesus Christ is the means into the family of God. Paul writes that he is “not ashamed of the gospel: it is the power of God for salvation to every one who has faith, to the Jew first and also to the Greek” (Romans 1:16). Regarding that verse, the 18th century comments of Henry (1778: 1754) are still relevant, for

Paul “was ready to preach the gospel at Rome, *for, I am not ashamed of it*, v. 16. There is a great deal in the gospel which such a man as Paul might be tempted to be ashamed of, especially that he whose gospel it was a man hanged upon a tree. Yet Paul was not ashamed to own it. I reckon him a Christian indeed that is neither ashamed of the gospel nor a shame to it.”

The open discussions on the new perspective on Paul and the meanings of justification reveal a desire to get at the facts about it all. Thus, in that sense, Romans 1:16 is fulfilled through those in the faith engaged in active conversations sincerely seeking the truth in those definitions. That is not shameful at all, for there is a sense of power and celebration in the dialogue.

6.6 Paul, Luther, and the New Perspective

The arguments about Paul’s view and Luther’s view of Palestinian Judaism support the thesis of this paper by placing that thesis in an unnamed position of being assumed and accepted by the conversants. This can be likened to a sporting event, such as baseball. There may be disagreements about close calls in a certain game, even discussions about the application of the rules; but the bottom line is that the team with the most runs across home plate at the end of the game wins. This arrived after 9 regular innings, 3 outs for each team / inning, unless there are extra innings. But the extra innings do not change the bottom line of who wins and who loses. In fact, they are played to achieve that bottom line in the event of a tie after the regular 9 innings. Likewise, the result of becoming a member into God’s family is defined by all parties in the discussion as that which is achieved through Jesus’ finished work on the cross.

Justification by faith is not the main issue of debate here, although it is the central theme of the good news of Scripture. Paul’s view of how his contemporary Judaism defined this is secondary to the most important issue of all — that a person is justified by a saving faith in Jesus Christ. The position of this paper is supported by arguments on either side of this pinnacle regarding Luther’s view and the nature of Palestinian Judaism.

The reliable authenticity of Scripture is strengthened by the fact that the arguments exist, because the nature of the scarlet thread throughout Scripture is God's mercy in covenant! The questions of who defined this or viewed that and when they embraced it are retrospective investigations into God's manifest revelation, demonstrated by our increased understanding of the early church and its surrounding cultures. The origins of ἰλαστήριον and arguments over historical applications of covenant nomism and covenant theology *broaden our understanding* without challenging the *essence* of the good news.

The presumption of support for this paper's position is found in the fact that two people like Piper and Wright both appeal to the text in their debate as if it carries full authority. More important, they are both justified and are both in the family of God, the family of the Messiah. What is most important is not what contrasts exist in the debate of terminology within the gospel of justification by faith, but that gospel itself.

When Piper and Wright discuss the meaning of justification, growing out of Sanders' new perspective on Paul, there is inquiry into the *Sitz im Leben*, the mind of Paul, the expectations of his readers, etc.; but none of that makes for a legitimate attack on the reliability of the texts themselves. In fact, that is the authority to which the different conversationalists appeal for their positions. If debates about expiation and propitiation take place about the meaning of ἰλαστήριον (Romans 3:25), they do not change the clear result of preaching this good news of Jesus bringing ἰλαστήριον to bear for our salvation. The same goes for nouns like δικαιοσύνην and adjectives like δικαίου.

6.7 Paul Followed Tradition

Form and redaction criticisms both engage in discussions about whether or not Romans 3:25-26a is pre-Pauline. This spikes interest about how and when Paul developed some of his theological explanations. But it also puts that text closer to the community contemporary with Jesus and demonstrates that Paul adopted what was handed down to him (1 Corinthians 11:2, 23 / 15:3). Whether

or not there was any redaction by Paul, there is no radical shift in Christian doctrine as he received it. As Wenham (1995: 409-410) writes, “Paul would have been horrified at the suggestion that he was the founder of Christianity. For him the fountain of theology was Jesus: first, the Jesus whom he met on the Damascus road, second the Jesus of the Christian tradition.”

Paul adopted what he was taught and adapted his life to a life in Christ as a result. How fitting that he would say to the Corinthians, “For I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ and him crucified” (1st Corinthians 2:2). From the crucified and risen Christ springs the life of faith in Christ, based upon present hope for the future.

Support for the unity of Pauline theology also comes from his contemporary culture. For instance, the well-attested theme of redemption is seen not only in the biblical text but in extant sources and the culture contemporary with Jesus (Deissmann 1927: 319-330) (Marshall 1974: 153-169). It is not astonishing that Paul developed this in his letters based upon the tradition he received, passing along what was taught to him. So important is this theme that it is likewise no surprise to see the current lively dialogue around the new perspective on Paul. This strengthens the reality of biblical textual authenticity in light of resultant exaltation and the means of membership in God’s family through the vicarious act of Israel’s ultimate representative, the Messiah Jesus.

John Piper’s (1995: 118) sentiments capture it well: “If there is a way to live by faith in this invincible future grace, I want to know that life. I want to know how trusting this promise, rooted in the unshakable logic of heaven, can free me and empower me to love and risk and suffer and die and rise for the glory of God, and the good of my people, the good of the nations, and the good of my own soul.”

6.8 In Covenant with God

There is a first-order problem brought out so well by Barclay (1966), a problem that we all share with Paul: “Paul’s problem was the problem of every

man who is aware that there is a God; his problem was how to get into a right relationship with God, how to escape from a situation dominated by distance, fear, estrangement, frustration into a relationship enriched by intimacy, friendship, confidence and trust... We shall never go far in the study of Jewish religion without coming upon the idea of the *covenant*" (1966: 29).

What that covenant means is probed and prodded in the critical literature regarding the new perspective on Paul; and that probing and prodding reinforce the reliability of the text because the unity of the texts and reasonableness of their interaction are made apparent as appeals for certain positions are made. Piper and Wright and all the born-again born-from-above believers in the power of the cross of Jesus will have all eternity to dialogue.

This is because they all agree their eternity is provided through the cross of Jesus, whether justification means an impartation of the righteousness of Christ or membership in the family, or some mixture thereof, or whether ἱλαστήριον means expiation or propitiation. The result is eternal membership, no matter where the mind of God truly lands on the definitions of various terminologies. Searching that mind is good as long as we forget neither why we search nor Who gives the ability to investigate.

C. S. Lewis (1968: 158) thought it was silly to approach New Testament writers as though we know more about what they wrote than they did: "The idea that any man or writer should be opaque to those who lived in the same habitual imagery and unconscious assumptions, and yet be transparent to those who have none of these advantages, is in my opinion preposterous. There is an *a priori* improbability in it which almost no argument and no evidence could counterbalance."

This is important because the Bible tells us that Jesus loves us. That conclusion is easily reached from any source or unit or form. The corroboration of textual strength and history support that it means what it says. The implications of this reality were condensed by Karl Barth on his only visit to America in 1962. His trip was to include lectures at Princeton Theological Seminary and the University of Chicago. But his simple response to a reporter's quest for Barth to

summarize his *Church Dogmatics* (Barth 1961) is often what is highlighted. He answered succinctly by referring to a familiar child's hymn (Warner 1860):

“Jesus love me this I know.

For the Bible tells me so.”

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