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Life and Reliability of Josephus: An Introduction

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Abstract

The article presents an introduction to the life and works of Josephus, the most important Jewish historian from the first century AD. Josephus played an active role in the First Jewish revolt against the Romans. After he was captured, he prophesied to Vespasian, his captor, that he would become the emperor. When he did, Josephus was enlisted as an associate, negotiator, and interpreter to Vespasian's son Titus. Josephus' work "The Jewish War" is of utmost importance for understanding the revolt because of Josephus' direct involvement in many events described in it. It gives valuable insights into the rebels' motives, the war's course, and the eventual Jewish defeat. As a Hellenized Jew, Josephus presented Jewish history from the earliest biblical times and composed some of the best apologies of Judaism. He also refuted anti-Jewish accusations spread throughout the Greco-Roman world in the "Antiquities of the Jews" and the treatise "Contra Apionem". His works may be considered the most valuable source of Hellenistic Jewish philosophical and theological thought of classical antiquity. Looking at it from a Christian perspective, Josephus is highly valued for his detailed descriptions of Judea before, during, and after the time of Jesus' life on earth and the establishment of the Church. His writings provide the most comprehensive extrabiblical description of the social, political, and religious context in which Christianity and the Church were born.

Keywords: *Josephus, Judea, Jews, Judaism, Israel, Jerusalem, Second Temple, early Christianity, Testimonium Flavianum*

1. Introduction: The First Century AD and Its Chronicler

The first century AD may be considered the most important century of classical antiquity, if not of the entire written human history. That is the time when Jesus lived, was crucified, and resurrected, when Christianity was born, and the Church was established. The Good News began to spread from Jerusalem and Judea to all parts of the world.[1] During the very same age, the form of mainstream Judaism that had developed for nearly a millennium changed profoundly. Since the time of king Solomon, Israel's religion, eventually called Judaism,[2] evolved around the Temple in Jerusalem, where the most important community rites were performed. The Temple was the central place of worship, sacrificial rites, Jewish religious hierarchy, political power, and national identity. During the festivals, it was a gathering place for Jewish pilgrims from Judea, Galilee, and the Diaspora. In the second half of the first century, Jews rebelled against the Roman government in Judea, provoked the war with the greatest military power of the time, and suffered a crushing defeat. In AD 70 the Romans captured Jerusalem and burned the Temple to the ground. These events prompted profound changes in Jewish theology, and transformed, to a degree, Jewish understanding of national redemption, righteousness, messianism, law, and the Canon. Sources in which these processes were recorded include the books of the New Testament for Christianity and rabbinical literature for Judaism. But it is the works of Josephus that provide the main insight into the context in which Christianity and other messianic movements emerged in Judea. He described the events that preceded the First Jewish revolt, the progress of its course, and its painful defeat. There is a strong link between Jesus' ministry and the First Jewish revolt in the form of messianic expectations widespread throughout Judea and the neighboring lands. If not for the work of Josephus, we would hardly know more than titles and subtitles to many of those processes and events. Thanks to Josephus, however, there is a rich content added under many "titles and subtitles." It would be rather difficult to obtain a deeper understanding of the beginnings of Christianity without Josephus' books. The early Church fathers recognized Josephus' importance, and they extensively translated, copied, studied, and commented on his works. Josephus' works were primarily preserved by Christians. Jews have long shunned and avoided Josephus because he was understood as a defector and a traitor. His importance in studying Jewish history has been eventually recognized even by Jews, however. A revival in Jewish studies of Josephus' occurred after the establishment of the State of Israel. Josephus' political conduct has been reevaluated, and Jews today view his behavior less as a high treason and more as one of political realism, pragmatism, common sense, and an

1 Acts 1:8.

2 About the origin of the term "Judaism" see Havel 2022, 17, 339, 440–441 (in Croatian).

effort to preserve Judaism from extinction, much like that of the prophet Jeremiah or Rabbi Yochanan ben Zakkai. A prominent Jewish historian, Solomon Zeitlin, considers Josephus the most important Jewish historian of all time (Zeitlin 1978, 393). Steve Mason, an expert in early Christian literature and Josephus' works refers to him as "the peerless authority for first-century Judea" (Mason 2009, 7). To recap, historians have gained the most substantial knowledge about events of the most important century in the spiritually most important region of classical antiquity through the writings of a single author, Josephus. Who was Josephus, what did he write, and why?

2. The Life of Josephus

2.1. Josephus' Family Background and Youth

Josephus' Hebrew name was Yosef ben Matityahu (יוסף בן מתתיהו), that is, Joseph, the son of Mathias. He later adopted the name Flavius in honor of his patron, Flavius Vespasian, when he became the emperor. Josephus was born in Jerusalem in AD 37, during the first year of Caligula's reign. He belonged to a noble family with priestly roots. On his father's side, he descended from the "first of the twenty-four courses [of priests],"[3] which was the order of Jehoiarib, a descendant of Aaron.[4] On his mother's side, he descended from the Hasmoneans, a ruling dynasty that led the Maccabean revolt and liberated Judea from Seleucid Greek oppression. The Hasmoneans halted the violent Hellenization of Judean Jews, cleansed the desecrated Temple,[5] and after more than four centuries of Judean subordination to foreign rulers – Chaldean, Persian, Ptolemaic, and Seleucid – renewed Jewish statehood and kingdom. Josephus' ancestors were traditional Jews with Hebrew names, such as Simon, Mathias, and Joseph. Josephus did not abide by that tradition and gave his three sons Hellenistic names Hyrcanus, Justus, and Agrippa.

According to his testimony, young Josephus was inclined to study, very intelligent, and had an excellent memory. He surpassed many of his peers in mastering the Greek language and eventually even wrote his famous works in Greek.[6] When he was fourteen years old high priests and Jewish leaders consulted him for

3 *Vita* 1:2.

4 1 Chronicles 24:7.

5 1 Maccabees 4:52-59. The dedication of the altar, Hebrew *Hannukat Ha-Mizbeach* (חֲנֻכַּת הַמִּזְבֵּחַ), is a biblical (Numbers 7:10, 11, 84, 88; 2 Chronicles 7:9) and rabbinical literature (Midrash Rabba etc.) phrase. This event is celebrated on the Jewish holiday of Hannukah or "the Festival of Dedication," as it is called in the New Testament (John 10:22, NIV).

6 *Antiquitates Iudaicae* 20:262–263.

interpretation in legal matters. Mason, however, cautions that tales of "Wunderkinder" were commonplace in the legends of that era (Mason 2001, 14–15), and it is possible that Josephus adapted some of them to creatively boost his autobiography. We find similar creative arbitrary refinement of self-image in Josephus' other works. At the age of sixteen Josephus decided to join one of the three Jewish sects, the Pharisees, Sadducees, and Essenes. He spent some time among all three sects considering which was the best fit for him. At that time, he heard of Banus, an ascetic who lived in the desert and decided to join him. Josephus spent three years with Banus, of whom nothing is known from other sources. Based on Josephus' description, it seems likely that Banus was an Essene. Following his time with Banus, Josephus returned to Jerusalem at the age of nineteen, adopted the principles of the Pharisees, and climbed the stage of public and political life of Judea.[7]

2.2. Josephus' Journey to Rome

When Felix, the Roman procurator of Judea, accused some Jewish priests of misconduct and sent them to Rome to plead their case before emperor Nero, a Jewish delegation went to Rome to assist them. Twenty-six-year-old Josephus, fluent in Greek and Latin, languages not widely spoken among Judean Jews (Jordi 2000, 420), joined the delegation. Upon arrival in Rome, Josephus approached empress Poppaea Sabina and convinced her of the priests' innocence.[8] The priests were set free, and Josephus obtained an outstanding reputation among Jewish leaders both in Rome and in Jerusalem. Later, when preparation for the revolt began in AD 66, Josephus' role in the success of this diplomatic mission contributed to Sanhedrin's decision to appoint him as the military commander of Galilee. The appointment indicated that Josephus was held in high esteem by the Jewish leaders, as Galilee was considered the most critical defense zone outside Jerusalem since the Romans were expected to launch their invasion of Jewish lands from the north.

2.3. Josephus' Involvement in the Revolt, his Capture, and Adoption by the Flavians

Josephus proved to be an able organizer, a brave commander, and an apt manipulator. He oversaw the fortification of nineteen towns and villages in Galilee and Golan (Aviam 2007, 372), the harvest of crops, the storage of food, the collection of weaponry, and the training of Jewish fighters. All of this was happening while other ambitious and ruthless contenders to Josephus' commanding position jeopardized not only the establishment of a defensive infrastructure and unity of Galilean Jews but also Josephus' life. When Vespasian's troops arrived in the spring

7 *Vita* 1:12.

8 *Vita* 1:13–16.

of 67 and moved against the rebels, Galilee was being torn from the inside by friction and discord. Advancing carefully but swiftly, Vespasian subdued Jewish strongholds one by one; most fortified places surrendered without any considerable resistance. The first to fall to the Romans was Gadara.[9] The five cities that did put up a fight were Jotapata, Japha, Migdal, Gamla, and Mount Tabor. In July of 67, a decisive battle took place in Jotapata, where Josephus had retreated. After a prolonged siege, the city was captured. Josephus and forty of his comrades hid in a nearby cave. When the Romans discovered their hiding place, Josephus was willing to surrender, but his fellow rebels refused. They preferred death to slavery and decided to execute each other, one by one. The sequence of killing was determined by dice, and Josephus led the roll. Probably due to his gambling skills, he was one of the last two to die. He then persuaded his remaining comrade to surrender to the Romans.

Josephus was brought to Vespasian, who initially intended to send him to Nero. Upon request, Josephus spoke privately to Vespasian and prophesied that he would soon become the emperor and ruler "of the land and the sea, and all mankind," which Vespasian understood as nothing more than Josephus' "cunning trick."[10] A member of the lower aristocracy Vespasian was a highly unlikely candidate for the highest office in the Empire. Soon thereafter, however, Josephus' prophecy came true. In June 68 Nero committed suicide. The bloody and inefficient rule of three succeeding emperors, Galba, Otho, and Vitellius, prompted troops in the East to proclaim Vespasian as emperor. Vespasian freed Josephus from imprisonment, took him into his service, and eventually adopted him into the Flavian family. Vespasian's son Titus assumed the command of the Roman troops in Judea, and Josephus followed him as he set off from Galilee across Samaria and the coastline to conquer Judea and Jerusalem. The two became friends and remained on friendly terms until Titus died in AD 81. During the siege of Jerusalem Josephus served as a Roman interpreter and negotiator. He attempted to persuade his former Jewish comrades to lay down their weapons, open the gates of Jerusalem, and surrender the holy city to the Romans. Besieged Jews hurled rocks, shot arrows, and spouted insults at him instead. Switching sides and riding with the Romans brought him contempt, aversion, and hatred from his unyielding compatriots and their posterity. After the rebellion was crushed and the war ended, Josephus was granted Roman citizenship and a pension by Vespasian. He moved to Rome where he remained for the rest of his days. He took on the name of his patron, Flavius. Josephus died between AD 100 and 110, probably without ever seeing Judea again (Rajak 2003, 11).

9 *Bellum Iudaicum* 3:132.

10 *Bellum Iudaicum* 3:398–403.

3. Josephus' Works

3.1. The Jewish War

The Jewish War was Josephus' first and essentially the most important work. He stated that he initially wrote it "in the language of our country," which is assumed to be Aramaic, and then translated it to Greek "for the sake of such as live under the government of the Romans."[11] Some scholars believe that Josephus originally wrote *The Jewish War* in Greek, using a preliminary draft he composed in Aramaic, rather than translating it from Aramaic altogether (Hata 1975, 89–108). A similar conclusion has been suggested by scholars who noticed Hebrew and Aramaic linguistic patterns in the Greek version, e.g., in the syntax. Josephus' use of Semitic forms of expression, however, can also be attributed to the multilingual culture in which he lived and produced his texts, in which Semitic linguistic forms influenced the Greek and vice versa.[12] In addition, it could have been caused by his use of Hebrew and Aramaic sources (Jordi 2000, 429–432). No Aramaic version of *The Jewish War* was ever discovered (Mason 2016b, 15–17); not even a single line or fragment of it. A few historians suggested that the Slavonic *Josephus' History of the Jewish War* is a translation of the Aramaic text (Leeming 2016, 390–391), but most scholars reject that theory.[13] *The Jewish War* was the first Josephus' work translated into Latin in the 4th or 5th century as *Bellum Iudaicum* (Levenson and Martin 2016, 324). It has become customary to refer to Josephus' works in their Latin title.

Divided into seven books, *The Jewish War* primarily exhibits a first-hand description of the First Jewish revolt against the Romans, from its beginning in the early AD 66 until its final defeat which is usually associated with the fall of Masada in AD 73 (The Second Jewish revolt led by Bar Kokhba lasted AD 132 to 135). The diligent historian he was, Josephus in the introduction provided a

11 *Bellum Iudaicum* 1:3. Josephus' quotes are from the William Whiston's English translation published by Thomas Nelson Publishers.

12 There are similar influences among languages even today. For example, Jewish immigration into Israel is in Hebrew called *aliyah* (עלייה), and the corresponding verb to immigrate is *la'alot* (לעלות). Proper Hebrew expression for the line "to immigrate to Israel" is *la'alot le-Israel* (לעלות לישראל), *la'alot artza* (לעלות ארצה), or *la'alot le-Eretz Israel* (לעלות לארץ ישראל). An English speaker, however, who also knows some Hebrew, phrases "to immigrate to Israel" as "to make *aliyah*" since the Hebrew noun *aliyah* cannot be expressed in the form of a corresponding verb in English. The English syntagm "to make *aliyah*" eventually made its way into the colloquial Hebrew as *la'asot aliyah* (לעשות עלייה), verbatim "to make immigration," an awkward-sounding substitute for the more natural, elegant and accurate Hebrew verb *la'alot,* "to immigrate."

13 For more information about the Old Slavonic version of *The Jewish War*, see further in the text, under the heading 5.2. *An Indisputable Christian Alteration: The Slavonic Josephus*.

detailed account of the political background and the events that incited Judean Jews against Roman rule. The work starts with a description of the tyrannical rule of Antiochus IV Epiphanes, the Seleucid king, and the subsequent Maccabean revolt of the first part of the second century BC.[14] Josephus' second major work *Antiquities of the Jews* had not yet been written, nor was it envisioned by Josephus. Therefore, when he wrote about the Maccabean revolt, which he later described in more detail in the *Antiquities*, he was building a case for the correlation of events from the restoration of Jewish statehood to its demise by the Romans. Josephus probably intended to show that the Romans were not the first against whom Jews raised a just rebellion.[15] He emphasized the truthfulness of his account and vigorously insisted on his impartiality. In the preface to *The Jewish War,* he wrote: "I will not go to the other extreme, out of opposition to those men who extol the Romans, nor will I determine to raise the actions of my countrymen too high; but I will prosecute the actions of both parties with accuracy."[16] Josephus underlined that he accurately and impartially described the events he was involved in as he sought to explain and justify the role he played in them. However, his efforts were in vain, as both contemporary and later Jews viewed his actions as treacherous. Mason explains that *The Jewish War* is "a work of political realism in its recognition that the powerful will and must rule" (Mason 2023, 208). The literary genre of this work is both narrative history and tragedy. It describes the severe difficulties and disasters that befell the Judean Jews and the people of Jerusalem during the Roman siege. Josephus' narration is saturated with compassion, a sense of hopelessness, and resignation to fate. The concept of fate or luck (τύχη) is referenced some ninety times throughout *The Jewish War* (Mason 2023, 189). Roman victories and ruthlessness, and Jewish calamities, are more or less directly attributed to it.[17] Josephus thus shifts blame for the destruction of his people and their sanctuary away from the Romans and onto abstract forces, or fellow Jews who failed to recognize how senseless it was to rebel against the invincible Roman state. Vespasian likely convinced, and possibly ordered Josephus to write *The Jewish War*. According to conventional dating, *The Jewish War* was published between AD 75 and 79, when Josephus was around forty years old (Feldman 1999, 903). However, Feldman also suggests a possibility that it was published after AD 79.[18]

14 *Bellum Iudaicum* 1:31 *ff.*

15 *Antiquitates Iudaicae* 12:237 *ff.*

16 *Bellum Iudaicum*, Preface 9.

17 Josephus' frequent use of this term reveals his deviation from the Scriptural understanding of reality and acceptance of a Hellenist worldview. The concepts of fate or luck do not appear in the Hebrew Bible (Havel 2020b, in Croatian).

18 Feldman 1999, 903–904. A recent study on Josephus concludes that *The Jewish War* was "substantially completed" in AD 79, and "finished completely" in AD 81 (Edwards 2023, 4).

3.2. Antiquities of the Jews

Chronologically, *Antiquities of the Jews* was Josephus' second work, but it was second to none in terms of its extensiveness.[19] It comprises twenty books and sixty thousand lines.[20] It was originally written in Greek[21] and published in AD 93/94 during the reign of emperor Domitian when Josephus was fifty-six years old.[22] The work is mainly known in its Latin translation, *Antiquitates Iudaicae*, which has at times been wrongly attributed to Saint Jerome (Kletter 2016, 370). According to Cassiodorus (c. 485–585), Jerome never translated any of Josephus' works.[23] In *Antiquities of the Jews*, Josephus described the history of the Jewish people from biblical times until the events immediately preceding the First Jewish revolt.[24] The work features profound Hellenistic influence on biblical stories. Josephus refrains from highlighting miracles mentioned in the Bible, and when he does mention them, he adds that everyone is entitled to their own opinion (Feldman 1999, 907). Edwards observes that Josephus seems to prioritize apologetics over ethics, as seen in his portrayal of biblical figures such as Joseph and Esther,[25] and concludes that "The reader is to learn not *how to behave* but that *the Jews are a people with a noble ancestry*" (Edwards 2023, 175, emphasis in the original). Josephus strove to demonstrate that Jewish thought was compatible with Hellenism, as a way of countering the growing hostilities toward Jews across the Roman Empire. Josephus' contemporary Philo of Alexandria (c. 25 BC–c. AD 50) shared a similar objective, though he was more of a philosopher than a chronicler. Near the end of his life, emperor Domitian (AD 81–96), who succeeded Titus, began to persecute Jews or those who practiced "Jewish rites." Some sources claim that only his death

19 The title of Josephus' book could also be translated *Antiquities of Judea*. Nevertheless, *Antiquities of the Jews* is a better translation because the events described did not happen only in Judea. The Hebrew title קדמוניות היהודים (*kadmoniyot hayehudim*) also points to the people and not to the land (Schwartz 2007, 4). In Greek, the same word refers to both Jew and Judean (more about this in Havel 2022, 45–47, 361–363, 560, in Croatian).

20 *Antiquitates Iudaicae* 20:267.

21 *Contra Apionem* 1:1.

22 *Antiquitates Iudaicae* 20:267, Edwards 2023, 4.

23 Cassiodorus 2004, 149–150. As Levenson and Martin point, this fragment from Cassiodorus' work *Institutiones divinarum et saecularium litterarum* is the only source about the circumstances of translation of Josephus' *Antiquities of the Jews*, *Against Apion,* and *The Jewish War* into Latin (Levenson and Martin 2016, 323). According to Feldman (1984, 851), however, Josephus was translated into Latin on Cassiodorus' initiative.

24 *Antiquitates Iudaicae* 20:267–268. *Antiquities of the Jews* ends with describing Florus' procuration of Judea and the twelfth year of Nero's rule.

25 Edwards here presents a comparison of two topics (apologetics and ethics), but the ethical messages in Josephus' works should not be underestimated. In Mason's list of topics in Josephus' writings, the dichotomy of "virtues and vices" is listed first (Mason 2003, 186).

prevented a Jewish revolt in the diaspora. If Josephus intended to use his works to persuade Domitian that Jewish faith, customs, and rites were reflections of an ancient and noble civilization, abounding in wisdom and creativity and not motivated by political treason, he apparently did not succeed.

3.3. Against Apion

In his treatise *Against Apion* (*Contra Apionem*), Josephus presented an even more elaborate defense of Judaism as an ancient, noble philosophy. This was "probably the last of his literary productions, and is arguably the most skilful" (Barclay 2016, 75). In *Contra Apionem* Josephus refuted some of the bizarre accusations made by Greeks and other Gentiles[26] against Jews. One of those accusations was that king Antiochus found a Greek prisoner in the Temple, who was being fattened for sacrificial slaughter.[27] Josephus also argued that Jewish faith and "philosophy" predated the Greek philosophy and was worthy of respect by non-Jews.

3.4. Josephus' Life

Josephus' work *Life of Josephus (Vita)* is "not really an autobiography in our sense of the word. Nor is it quite a *bios* (a life) in the ancient sense, that is, an account of a man's moral qualities" (Rajak 2003, 12). *Vita* is mainly composed of Josephus' apologies for his own decisions and actions. It is also the only work by Josephus that was not translated into Latin in the 5th or 6th century, but later (Mason 2001, xv). *Vita* was initially published towards the end of Josephus' life, perhaps as an appendix to the *Antiquities of the Jews*. Josephus in *Vita* recounts some details of the Jewish revolt, especially those related to the early stages of the rebellion in Galilee.

Despite being Josephus' "panegyric" to himself, this text is considered to have an inferior style compared to his other works, and it has been described as "confused, tendentious, inconsistent, with incorrect cross-references, with doublets, and with important segments of information presented in a casual and even a startling manner" (Feldman 1999, 914). Josephus was so focused on embellishing his image that he did not harmonize some of the data (Mason 2003, 169) and the chronology of events (Cohen 2002, 3–7) with what he had written previously in *The Jewish War*. By the time he published it, Josephus was already hated by his compatriots as a traitor and a defector. His autobiography, aimed at altering such perceptions, failed to score.

26 Josephus explained that the first false accusations against Jews were made by Egyptians after the Exodus (*Contra Apionem* 1:223).

27 *Contra Apionem* 2:89–98.

Works *Against Apion* and *Life of Josephus* were translated from the Greek original into Croatian by Luka Vukušić and published in 2011 by a Croatian Jewish community Bet Israel. *Antiquities of the Jews* and *The Jewish War* have not been translated into Croatian language yet.

3.5. Books Previously Attributed to Josephus

Whiston's English translation of Josephus' contains, along with the four works mentioned above, an extract from a treatise called *Josephus' Discourse to the Greeks Concerning Hades*. Today is known with certainty that Josephus did not write that text. It was probably written by Hippolytus of Rome (c. 170–235), a Christian theologian, bishop, martyr, and saint. Among other books previously believed to have been written by Josephus is *The Fourth Book of Maccabees*, which was attributed to Josephus by Eusebius and Jerome (Charlesworth 1985, 533), and *Josippon*, a history of Jews until the end of the Second Temple period, written in the mid-10th century or somewhat later by an unknown author (Feldman 1984, 62–66).[28]

3.6. Numbering of Josephus' Works

Four levels of text are used in numbering Josephus' major works. *The Jewish War* and *Antiquities of the Jews* are divided into 1) books, 2) chapters, 3) sub-chapters, and 4) verses. The fourth level, or verse, is the smallest unit in the numbering even though, unlike biblical verses, it often contains more than one sentence.

Division into books was done by Josephus.[29] The division of books into chapters is of ancient origin, and it is found already in Cassiodorus. These chapters are long, and a single chapter might span across multiple pages, which is why Whiston's translation features additional sub-chapters. Newer editions add another, fourth level, that is verses, which is numbering known as Niese's numbering system, in honor of its inventor, Benedict Niese (1849–1910), a most prominent editor of Josephus' works in the German language of the time. Niese introduced this system in editions published at the end of the 19th century (Farmer 1984, 307). The publisher *Loeb Classical Library* adopted Niese's numbering system for their English translation of Josephus' works, and it has therefore also been known as Loeb's numbering system. Josephus' works are in this article cited only by Niese's, or Loeb's, numbering. It includes the book and verse number, but not the chapter and sub-chapter. That is the easiest and most precise way of citing Josephus. For example, the verse *Antiquitates Iudaicae* 12:130 would, according to Whiston's

28 According to Zeitlin, *Josippon* was written in the third or early fourth century (Zeitlin 1963, 297).

29 *Bellum Iudaicum*, Preface 30, *Antiquitates Iudaicae* 20:267.

numbering system, read *Antiquitates Iudaicae* 13:3.3, which is rather vague as it includes verses 129–144, spread over three pages in Whiston's 1998 edition published by Thomas Nelson Publishers.[30]

4. Historiographical Value of Josephus

4.1. Josephus' Method and Bias

Josephus was among the first historians to invoke the principles on which modern scholarly study of history rests, that is objectivity and relevance of sources. We may argue that he often adhered to those principles, particularly in topics unrelated to disputed events of his life and career. For example, in writing *The Jewish War,* Josephus used Vespasian and Titus' notes, works of Nicolaus of Damascus, letters of Agrippa II, and testimonies of Jewish detainees, survivors, or defectors (Villalba i Varneda 1986, 267). Moreover, Josephus often described events he participated in or witnessed first-hand. He provided historical contexts, descriptions of landscapes, structures, relationships among key political players, court intrigues, and the motivations, characters, ambitions, fears, worldviews, and thoughts of many important characters – heroes and villains alike. He ventured into political, societal, military, historical, theological, and psychological analyses of people and events. Josephus' historical method often intertwines with shrewd calculation and blends with bias. However, his historical method cannot simply be dismissed because of it, as if bias is something generally alien to historians. Bias can be detected in the works of the most respected modern historians, so much so that "professional historians are [...] zealous in scrutinizing each other's work for bias" (Tosh 2000, 31–32). Biases do not necessarily indicate bad scholarship. It is almost self-evident that there is a certain level of bias in any given text of historiography. For example, if there is a great variety of sources on a certain topic, historians face a choice of which ones to include and which ones to leave out. Personal evaluation of sources by the historian is unavoidable in the process. A correlation between the choice of sources and the message that the historian highlights is reasonable and does not, on its own, diminish the value of the research. Few historians believe that historical research is an end in itself, but not all historians reveal the purpose of their research. Thus, we may argue that most Croatian historians have a sense of purpose in their scholarly work, especially when discussing modern topics and issues. They often write about events they participated in, such as the breakdown of Yugoslavia and the subsequent Croatian War of Independence, to which they have a personal commitment through family background, national

30 Whiston 1998, 379–381.

identity, political affiliation, ideological preferences, etc. Some Croatian historians research contemporary events both as scholars and as active participants. It is rather common in Croatia that the author's name and the title of his book alone spark expectations, and prompt discussions about the author's opinions, attitudes, intentions, and biases. Ultimately, our worldview is reflected in everything we create, whether it is our understanding of being, ourselves, the world, society, God, nature, destiny, epistemology, axiology, or history. Historians should be aware of their worldviews and biases and limit their influence on the methodology. However, these are modern thoughts about scholarly standards and as such should not be lightly applied in the evaluation of ancient texts. A historian's worldview is not only a self-evident part of his work, but it often determines his basic premises. Thus, historiographer John Tosh explains that Leopold von Ranke was "probably the last major historian to believe that the outcome of studies such as his own would be to reveal the hand of God in human history," and from the 18th century onwards history was often interpreted in the context of a secularized faith in perpetual progress that leads to a future of "triumph of reason and human happiness" (Tosh 2000, 6, 136). Josephus as a historian should be approached keeping all that in mind. His method and bias cannot be judged as if today we have somehow reached a perfection of historiographical objectivity; a high ground from which we can point out all of his failures and shortcomings. Any work, ancient or modern, could benefit from a more precise methodology, more diverse sources, a more unbiased approach, more objective content selection, fancier style, better coherence, or improved consistency. Josephus is no exception.

Josephus described an entire gallery of people in a picturesque, realistic, and colorful way, portraying their upright and wicked sides, virtues and vices, dishonorable and honorable acts, their flaws, and their merits. His final judgment of them is nevertheless often well-defined and easily discerned. Various events and people in his texts cannot be simply categorized as "good" or "bad," but reflect a reality that is "much more humanly complex" (Mason 2016a, 540–541). They fairly congruously reflect the complexity of biblical anthropology, and its ubiquitous evasion of the black-and-white depictions of persons, and even physical reality in general (cf. Havel 2019b, 529–541). Josephus often sought to discern the motives, emotions, and personalities of the protagonists, and set their conduct and deeds in the context of prevailing circumstances. An example of such an approach is Josephus' description of king Herod the Great. Similar to Herod's portrayal in the New Testament, Josephus describes him as an unscrupulous, deranged, sinister psychopath. That, however, did not prevent Josephus from praising Herod's ingenious building projects and his visionary, military, governing, and administrative skills.

Some parts of Josephus' text feature inconsistent and incomplete data, such as the conflicting ancestry of Mariamne II, the wife of Herod the Great and the daughter of the high priest (Smallwood 1962, 32–34). There are some discrepancies in the spelling and transliteration of names from Hebrew and Aramaic to Greek. Several important protagonists at some point disappear from the story, such as Joseph ben Gurion, one of the leaders of the revolt in Jerusalem. His fate remained unknown. Some citations from other sources were reproduced superficially and carelessly (Ilan and Price 1993, 189–208). Descriptions of Jewish rebel groups and chieftains, and Roman commanders and military leaders, such as Titus, are very biased and often reveal Josephus' tendency to present an apologetic picture of his own decisions and conduct. On the other side, some of his accounts of events from the First Jewish revolt were unexpectedly corroborated by archeological findings in the 20th century (Yadin 1998, 16). The discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls confirmed the existence of the Essenes, a sect Josephus wrote about in *The Jewish War* (Schwartz 2016, 428). Archeological excavations verified Josephus' descriptions of the last defenders of Masada and the existence of Jerusalem's Third Wall (Ben-Arieh and Netzer 1979, 140), which had previously been known only through Josephus' writing. When Yadin led archeological excavations of Masada in the 1960s, he repeatedly confirmed Josephus' accuracy, even in some seemingly implausible accounts. For instance, archeologists witnessed and recorded a heavy downpour that saved Herod the Great's family and their entourage from thirst.[31] Archeologists have also experienced a sudden, odd change in the wind that caused a portion of the wall to catch fire, opening a space for the Roman troops' breakthrough into Masada (Yadin 1998, 32–35).[32] Some historians consider the siege of Masada to be the "most spectacular case where archaeology has enabled us to check Josephus' accuracy" (Feldman 1999, 905). Mordechai Aviam, a historian and an archaeologist, writes that archeological excavations have also confirmed Josephus' descriptions of the siege and fall of the Galilean towns of Yodefat (Jotapata) and Gamla. He led the excavation of Jotapata (Aviam 2007, 372–384).

Josephus diligently collected facts and fairly accurately described the events he considered important. His participation, or first-hand knowledge of many key events described in *The Jewish War*, are of supreme value. So are the unmediated testimonies he seems to have collected from Jewish survivors, as in his description of the siege and fall of Masada. Josephus' evaluation of Jewish leaders and groups, however, should be approached with caution, even distrust, as he portrayed them based on how close they were to his interpretation of the revolt. Uriel Rappaport

31 *Bellum Iudaicum* 1:286–287.

32 *Bellum Iudaicum* 7:310–400.

suggests four levels of Josephus' life and activities that prevent him from adhering to the truth:

> [O]ne is personal (his role in the war and his personal image); the second is political (that is partisan, defending his and his "party's" position in the war); the third is national (caring for his people's interests, as he understood them) and the fourth is the service he rendered to his Roman benefactors, the Flavians (Rappaport 1994, 282).

Each of these four aspects is necessary for understanding Josephus as a historian. The historicity of many events he described, particularly in *The Jewish War*, could be valued differently by applying one or more of these levels as a prism through which they are observed. In addition, there is a significant difference between those parts where Josephus described contemporary events he participated in, witnessed, or had access to reliable and extensive sources on the one, and events from earlier periods of Jewish history when he had to rely on diverse and often inconsistent sources on the other hand. In the accounts of earlier times, Josephus sometimes used primary sources of supreme value, such as the works of Nicolaus of Damascus for the description of Herod the Great's rule, and sometimes he exhibited superficiality, carelessness, inconsistency, and messiness. An example of such "evidence of Josephus' weakness as historian," refers to the Ptolemaic and the beginning of Seleucid rule in Judea (Schalit 2007, 439).

4.2. The Problem with Josephus' Description of Masada's Defenders

Archeological discoveries at Masada seem to verify accuracy of Josephus' account of events, but disprove his portrayal of the Jewish rebels and Roman conquerors. Masada was held by Eleazar ben Jair, the commander of the Jewish militant group of sicarii, who escaped Jerusalem after the execution of his uncle Menachem, son of Judah the Galilean. Most Jews at Masada belonged to sicarii or the Zealots. This was the fourth Jewish sect often described by Josephus as bandits and thugs[33] responsible for the calamity that befell Jewish people. In describing their resistance at Masada, he stated that the name Zealots was derived from their zeal for good and that it suits them "only by way of irony."[34] That Zealots were only a

33 Josephus uses various names for the insurgent Jewish movements. At times he alternates between sicarii and Zealots, but he mostly calls them robbers (λῃστής) (Hengel 1989, 24). According to Josephus, Judah the Galilean was the founder of the fourth sect, the Zealots, whose beliefs were generally identical to those of the Pharisees. As their distinctive features Josephus adds that they highly valued freedom, considered God as their only ruler, and did not fear death (*Antiquitates Iudaicae* 18:4–10, 23–25). He did not, however, mention them when he described Judean Jewish sects in *The Jewish War*, where he only listed the Pharisees, the Sadducees, and the Essenes (cf. *Bellum Iudaicum* 2:119–166).

34 *Bellum Iudaicum* 7:270.

band of robbers, as Josephus claimed, and not a movement of Jewish patriots who stood up against a foreign power that devastated their lands, as they claimed, is by no means a settled issue though. Josephus' works are the only historical source about the siege and fall of Masada, and Josephus' compatriots, as we discussed previously, perceived Josephus as a traitor. This alone casts doubt on the reliability of Josephus' description of Jewish groups and their leaders who were his political and ideological opponents. There is yet another possible motive of his, which could be regarded as Josephus' life mission. It was portrayal of Jews as a peaceful, enlightened nation whose loyalty to Rome was only brought into question unwarrantably, due to the revolutionary activities of a few militant, mean thugs. The instigator of rebellion in Josephus is not the Jewish nation, prompted by the desire for political freedom or messianic expectations. Rather, it is a group of criminals who not only attacked the Romans but also their fellow Jews, for robbery, rather than settling ideological disagreements. Josephus wrote under the patronage of Roman rulers who ravaged Judea, but his intended readership was also Jews, so he had to reconcile much that is unreconcilable, and explain much that is unexplainable. That is why it should not surprise us that he pertinaciously portrays Jewish rebels as thugs, the Romans as the force mandated by God to purge Judea of injustice, and himself as a prophetic voice and an advocate of reason and peace (cf. Rappaport 1994, 282).

Josephus' portrayal of Jewish rebels as thugs is probably the least convincing in the case of the siege and fall of Masada. Rich archeological discoveries found during the excavation of Masada in the 1960s confirmed Josephus' description of the events, but not his ideological profiling of the rebels. Archeologists have, among other things, found fragments of scrolls with biblical books, religious texts from the post-biblical period such as Ben Sira (Sirach), and a room that probably served as a synagogue. In that room, archaeologists discovered a fragment from the Book of Ezekiel buried in a *genizah*. A *genizah* (גניזה) is a place where pious Jews store damaged, worn out, or unusable religious texts, which per the halakhic law may not be destroyed. An archeological expedition led by Yigael Yadin excavated fourteen scrolls with biblical, apocryphal, and the Essene sect's texts (Yadin 1998, 189). Were the Jewish defenders of Masada common thieves and thugs, it would have been rather unlikely that they would build a synagogue, hold religious rites, keep the Holy Scriptures, and store its damaged fragments in a *genizah*. True, this assumption could also be disputed. It would be anachronistic to assert that just because someone was a thug *ipso facto* means that he was also non-religious because in Judea of that age, there was no "secularism" in the form that appeared in much later history in Europe. However, there is in particular one scroll among the discoveries that sheds a new and, compared to Josephus, different light on the Masada Zealots. The scroll that surprised archeologists the most contained Hebrew verses from the *Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice*, which were identical to the

verses found among the Dead Sea Scrolls, in the fourth cave at Qumran. Since it is a text of the Qumran sect, probably the Essenes, and not a widely circulated biblical, apocryphal, or pseudepigraphic text, its discovery at Masada is rather surprising. Yadin points out that even before this discovery a few historians considered the possibility that the sicarii Zealots who defended Masada were the Essenes. Based on Josephus' reference to a certain John the Essene, one of the commanders of the central parts of Judea – Lod, Jaffa, and Emmaus, Yadin argues that at least some of the Masada fighters were Essenes,[35] as it is unlikely that only one Essene was among the rebels and a commander at that. It is more likely that numerous Essenes participated in the Jewish rebellion, and as the Romans captured rebel strongholds throughout Judea, surviving Essenes, along with members of other groups, ended up at Masada, taking their holy texts with them (Yadin 1998, 174). If true, this theory would contradict the established belief, largely based on the works of Philo of Alexandria, that the Essenes were a pacifist group that did not possess any weapons nor even tools that could be "perverted to wicked purposes," and rejected participation in any war or conflict.[36] Yadin suggests an explanation that appears more suited to the Judean circumstances of the Second Temple period: Essenes refrained from interfering in wars caused by human striving for glory, as they deemed such wars theologically unjustifiable. However, when they perceived the Jewish rebellion against the Romans as being in accordance with, or prompted by divine will, they joined up.[37] Such an attitude would be consistent with the attitude of many Judean Jews, particularly those who were the most devout observers of Law when a call to armed conflict of Jews with a legitimate authority was proclaimed. Jews faced a similar dilemma in previous history when their people was exposed to violence by a foreign ruler whose right to the throne was beyond dispute. From the mainstream Jewish perspective, the core issue was not who was in government (i.e. Jew or Gentile), but how that government was obtained. Loyalty was due to any Gentile who could be presumed to rule by divine mandate, while an unlawful usurper of power, even if he was Jewish, could be denied obedience. Such dilemmas first appeared during the time of the Chaldean conquest of Judea and Jerusalem, and even more during the Jewish-Seleucid conflict. The dilemma of whether or not Antiochus Epiphanes' right to govern Jews was divinely sanctioned and theologically binding was resolved by his violent desecration of the Temple. The abomination he committed convinced most Judean Jews, including the reluctant Hasideans disinclined to political disobedience, to

35 *Bellum Iudaicum* 2:567.

36 Filon, *Quod Omn. Prob.* 78–79 (Philo 2008, 689); see also *Hyp.* 11:2 (Philo 2008, 746).

37 Cf. Yadin 1998, 173–174. Yadin argues that the discovery of the scroll is the evidence that the Essenes took part in the revolt, and he does not think it likely that only one of them, John, joined the rebels and rose to the rank of commander.

join the ranks of the Hasmonean rebels. Even if the Essenes did not initially participate in the rebellion against the Romans, and John the Essene was an exception, after the Romans burned the Temple and destroyed Jerusalem, their theological understanding of the rebellion probably changed. Consequently, it appears likely that the Jewish defenders of Masada were pious Jews who interpreted Jewish political independence as a reflection of God's favor, and not thugs and robbers. It is difficult to imagine the Essenes – accustomed to life of asceticism, prayer, and diligent copying and studying the sacred texts – sojourning Judea, randomly killing Jews, looting Jewish settlements, and burning Jewish homes. What is more, it appears unthinkable that pious Jews trapped at Masada entirely dependent on God, would allow the presence of any lawless thugs in their midst. God's help, as described in numerous biblical and other Jewish sources, would not have come to a camp permeated with lawlessness and sin, and God's help was the only help they could hope for as Romans closed in.

Josephus frequently accused the Zealots of desecrating the Temple, an offense which ultimately led to its destruction. Fifteen times in *The Jewish War* Josephus accused the Zealots of defiling and profaning the Temple (Regev 2011, 279–293). In many other instances, he accused them of immorality, greed, haughtiness, avarice, violence, ruthlessness, and lawlessness. And yet, in the very same book, Josephus states that the reason for the Jewish rebellion was an expectation that messianic prophecies would be fulfilled through their struggle:

> But now, what did most elevate them in undertaking this war, was an ambiguous oracle that was also found in their sacred writings, how, "about that time, one from their country should become governor of the habitable earth." The Jews took this prediction to belong to themselves in particular and many of the wise men were thereby deceived in their determination.[38]

Josephus proceeds to clarify that the aforementioned prophecy pertains to Vespasian, who indeed became a ruler of the Roman Empire while being in Judea, "their country." In the interpretation of the rebellion as a series of events prompted by Jewish messianic expectations, Josephus resembles pagan historians, such as Tacitus and Suetonius. Tacitus devoted a whole paragraph of *Histories* to the description of "omens" which the Judeans wrongly interpreted as divine signs and consequently rebelled against the Romans.[39] Tacitus, just like Suetonius, understood neither Judaism nor messianism, but he understood that the Jewish revolt was based on the expectations of some ancient prophecies being fulfilled, and thus discerned religion as its moving force. Tacitus routinely used derogatory terms for Jews, and yet he never mentioned thugs or thieves as the instigators and protago-

38 *Bellum Iudaicum* 6:312–313, Hengel 1989, 238.

39 Tacitus 1931, 196–199 (*Histories* 5:13).

nists of the Jewish rebellion (Feldman 1999, 904–905). On the other hand, some Talmudic books describe rebels as ruthless enemies of both Romans and their Jewish brothers. Rabbi Yohanan ben Zakkai rebuked his nephew, a leader of the Jerusalem rebels, because their conduct caused starvation in the city, to which he replied that his fellow rebels would have killed him had he objected.[40]

The systematic siege of Masada indicates that the Romans spared no effort to prevent any of the defenders from leaving and, perhaps, continuing to incite the uprising elsewhere. As soon as they arrived at the slopes of Masada, the Romans constructed a siege wall around it.[41] Parts of that wall are still preserved. The wall was about 2,7 miles long, with some parts erected over steep and difficult-to-access terrain (Gwyn 2011, 68). It is rather unlikely that the Romans would have undertaken such an ambitious construction enterprise had the Jews at Masada been but common thieves and thugs. The Roman attitude towards the Jews besieged at Masada differed from that of Titus toward Jews besieged in Jerusalem. While besieging Jerusalem, Titus repeatedly urged the Jews to abandon their rebellion, surrender, and evacuate the city. He promised to spare their lives and grant them freedom in exchange. Consequently, many Jews left or tried to leave Jerusalem. Among them was rabbi Yohanan ben Zakkai who moved to Yavne (Jamnia) with a group of sages, and established a new center of Jewish learning.[42] A possible reason for the different treatment of the defenders of Jerusalem (and previously the fortified rebel towns in Galilee) and Masada was a new Roman insight into the scope, motives, and depth of Jewish insurrection. It is possible that during the period between the fall of Jerusalem and the start of the siege of Masada, the Romans realized that the rebellion was not confined to a specific time or place, but was driven by eschatological messianic expectations. This led them to view the spread of the rebellion as a far more serious threat. Josephus does not mention any change in Roman perception of the nature of the rebellion, but a clear shift in the Roman stance toward Jews sheltered behind fortified walls provides a strong argument for further analyses, inquiries, theories, and assumptions along that line.

4.3. Jewish Attitude to Josephus

Solomon Zeitlin, one of the most eminent Jewish historians of the Second Temple period, wrote that "There is no doubt that Josephus was the greatest historian of

40 Gittin 56a:15. The title בִּרְיוֹנֵי (*biryonei* from *biryon*) denotes bandits and evildoers, but the etymology of the word is unknown (Zeitlin 1978, 136), cf. Berakhot 10:2–4.

41 *Bellum Iudaicum* 7:276.

42 In AD 70, rabbi Yohanan ben Zakkai made a deal with the Romans to rescue dovish Jewish intellectuals from the besieged Jerusalem. He brought them to the coastal city of Yavne, where they established a new center for Jewish spiritual and intellectual life, saving thereby Judaism from destruction (for more on this, see: Havel 2022, 810–811, 867–869, in Croatian).

the Jewish people," and he referred to Josephus as the "Judaean Thucydides" (Zeitlin 1978, 393). Such a Jewish attitude to Josephus mainly emerged in the second half of the 20th century and differs considerably from previous positions held for centuries. Jews traditionally despised Josephus and either ignored his works or approached them with utter distrust because he was "a traitor and a turncoat" and it was "natural to suspect that he was a liar as well" (Yadin 1969, 12). Such opinion about Josephus was based more on Josephus' pro-Roman stance and conduct, than on perception of the accuracy of his historical method. Jewish historians' cautious reconsideration of Josephus began in the 19th and early 20th centuries. The first Hebrew translations of Josephus appeared in the 1860s when Kalman Schulman (1819–1899) translated some of his works from German (Feiner 2019, 145). The first translations from the Greek original were published in the 1920s as a four-volume set and included *The Jewish War*, *Against Apion*, and *Life of Josephus*. The first volumes of *Antiquities of the Jews* were translated into Hebrew and published in the first half of the 1940s (Feldman 1984, 34–35). According to Schwartz (2016, 427), Josephus' image among the Jews began to reshape due to the availability of his works in Hebrew, as they presented him to a wider Jewish audience as a defender of Jewish values, tradition, and identity. A period of Jewish ambivalence toward Josephus followed while new archeological excavations increasingly pointed to the accuracy of his descriptions. His perception as a traitor, however, was still intact. Yadin thus wrote that Josephus was a "brilliant historian and unfortunate Jew" (Yadin 1998, 15). A near complete "rehabilitation of Josephus' image" happened in the 1970s and 1980s, as an outcome of the historical experiences of the Jewish people in the previous decades, including the Holocaust, the establishment of the State of Israel, and the subsequent wars with Arabs, especially the 1973 war, and the wallowing in the "Lebanese mud" of the 1980s, which transformed the idealized way Israelis looked at war, sacrifice, and victory (Schwartz 2016, 431). Since then, Josephus has been increasingly seen in the light of his contribution to the preservation of the Jewish spiritual and intellectual heritage, which would have been lost had he persisted in hostility to the Romans. In recent years Josephus' legacy has been more and more associated with that of the prophet Jeremiah[43] and rabbi Yohanan ben Zakkai, and less with defection and high treason (Schwartz 2016, 432).

In the 20th century, an important part of the Zionist and Israeli collective identity began to shape around the symbol of Masada. Zionist poet Yitzhak Lamdan (1899–1954) published a poem in 1927 whose concluding words are: "Never again shall Masada fall!" (Schwartz, Zerubavel and Barnett, 1986, 155). The story of Masada became a "symbol of Jewish heroism and the modern State of Israel" and a "metaphor for the State of Israel: isolated, besieged, and surrounded by enemies

43 Concerning Jeremiah's appeals to surrender Jerusalem to the Chaldeans, see: Havel 2022, 273–282 (in Croatian).

on all sides" (Magness 2019, 197–198). Today, some units of the Israel Defense Forces swear their oath at Masada using the words of Lamdan's poem, "Never again shall Masada fall," expressing their commitment to safeguarding the State of Israel from destruction and the Jewish people from annihilation. Being the author of the story about the last stronghold of the ancient Jewish statehood,[44] Josephus thus finally attained a place among intellectual giants of the Jewish nation, not due to his self-apologetic autobiographical stunts, but due to the Jewish historical experience of 20th century.

4.4. Christian Attitude to Josephus

Christians were the first to recognize Josephus' historiographical importance. According to *Ecyclopaedia Judaica*, any historian "must be grateful to the Christian Church for preserving this treasure" (Schalit 2007, 441). The "treasure" includes some of the most important parts of Jewish history not mentioned anywhere else in Jewish texts, including the siege of Masada (Schwartz, Zerubavel and Barnett 1986, 148). Josephus' works are mentioned or quoted in the patristic literature by authors such as Justin, Melito of Sardis, Theophilus of Antioch, Hippolytus of Rome, Clement of Alexandria, Origen, Eusebius, and John Chrysostom. St. Jerome called Josephus "the Greek Livy" (Huntsman 1996, 393), and Cassiodorus "almost a second Livy" (Cassiodorus 2004, 149). The most important reason for their interest in Josephus' works is the fact that they provide an unparalleled extra-biblical insight into the circumstances of the Jewish lands which yielded the Christian faith. Thanks to Josephus, the teachings of Jesus can be placed into a broader historical context not provided by the authors of the New Testament. It includes social, religious, cultural, economic, political, and international circumstances within which the Church was born. Josephus provides valuable insight into the development of Jewish thought during the Hellenistic period in Judea. Along with the Pseudepigrapha,[45] his works provide the historian with an exceptional link between the Old Testament and the New Testament periods. Some passages of Josephus complement stories found in the Gospels, and contribute to the historical credibility of the New Testament. According to Christian belief and tradition, Josephus confirms the Gospels' prophetic messages, most notably Jesus' prophecies about the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple,[46] interpreted by Christians as a divine punishment for Jewish unbelief in Jesus as the Mes-

44 The movement led by Bar Kokhba began sixty years after the fall of Masada and is commonly viewed as a rebellion, rather than part of the Judean statehood period. Post-exilic Judean state existed from the rise of the Hasmoneans until the collapse of the First Jewish revolt.

45 For an introduction to the Pseudepigrapha see Havel 2022, 34–35 (in Croatian). For English see Charlesworth 1983, and Charlesworth 1985.

46 Mark 13:1-2, Luke 21:5-24, etc.

siah. Christians therefore studied, copied, and preserved Josephus' writings, and kept them from fading into oblivion. Even Josephus' biography, which was translated into Latin at a relatively late time, is "the oldest autobiography that we possess from antiquity in its original form" (Feldman 1999, 913). Mason notes that "Christian authors took up Josephus's work with enthusiasm" because they attributed great value to them. Before Eusebius, however, they did not explain why they considered Josephus credible (Mason 2009, 13–14).

4.5. Josephus' Personality

In the context of their pursuit of evaluation of Josephus' historiographical value, scholars have been trying to decipher Josephus' character and personality. As we open this topic, we may find it somewhat puzzling since the issue of the personality of other historians of antiquity, such as Thucydides, Tacitus, or Cassius Dio, has not been discussed similarly, nor has the reliability of their chronicles been evaluated based on their character assessment. On the other hand, unlike Thucydides, Tacitus or Dio, Josephus was rather preoccupied with himself and deeply involved in the most important events he documented.

Josephus' works indicate a curious, creative, skilled, and daring man prone to adventure, hazard, and risk-taking. He was persistent, visionary, and strong-willed but not a fanatic. Quite on the contrary, he knew well when it was more convenient to back off, give up, or evade trouble. Josephus generally preferred pragmatism to idealism, but he shrewdly avoided appearing as a self-serving, ambitious opportunist. He skillfully and cunningly used his talents, eloquence, and charm, both among his Jewish comrades in arms and before Roman generals. He was clever enough to discern which side was winning and adjusted his moves and interests accordingly. However, it cannot be easily determined if and when he acted in a cold, calculated way. On the contrary, he strived to persuade the reader that he genuinely and wholeheartedly stood on the side of righteousness, probably after he had first convinced himself that it was so. Rappaport believes that Josephus, dissatisfied with his accomplishments both before Romans and Jews, presents to himself and to his readers his "Ideal Ego" (Rappaport 2007, 71), which does not correspond to reality. Harsh reality and the instinct to survive compelled him to make difficult decisions, that he needed to creatively reconcile with the lofty Jewish ideals of justice and duty. And creative he was. Josephus' tacit or plain apologies for Roman atrocities, alongside his lifelong effort to justify the Jewish people, indicate a tormented, torn soul. He swiftly and superficially addressed unpleasant issues or avoided them altogether. Thus he wrote little about his wives (Goodman 1994, 337), especially about the one who remained in the besieged Jerusalem, whom he might have abandoned to marry another. On the other hand, his vanity, calculatedness, opportunism, and somewhat split identity enabled him

not only to survive the tumultuous events but also to understand them, turn them to his advantage, record them, and make them into his lasting legacy. To what extent perceptiveness and literary talent can coexist with an unsettled identity, selfish opportunism, and even deep dark side of the author's personality, Croats might surmise from the example of Ivo Andrić.[47] Josephus was talented, eloquent, intelligent, analytical, and adaptable enough to direct generations of readers – except for Jews – to focus on his works rather than on his apparent character flaws. In contemporary historical research, however, the issue of his personality, character, motives, and identity has become inevitable.

5. Testimonium Flavianum

5.1. Does Josephus Mention Jesus as Messiah?

In several places, Josephus mentions individuals who occupy a central place in the books of the New Testament, prompting scholars to investigate the authenticity of these fragments. One such instance is in *Antiquities of the Jews*, where Josephus described the murder of John the Baptist in the Transjordan fortress of Machaerus. According to Josephus John was a godly and righteous man, and Jews believed that king Herod Antipas suffered the military defeat by Nabateans as God's punishment for killing him.[48] There are no substantial reasons to doubt the authenticity of that paragraph, and there are no contradictions between Josephus' account of John with those presented by Matthew or Mark. Generally, we may assert that Josephus' account complements the New Testament (cf. Feldman 1984, 673–679). Elsewhere in *Antiquities of the Jews,* Josephus mentions James, "brother of Jesus, who was called Christ."[49] That line has also been widely accepted as authentic by most contemporary scholars (Feldman 1984, 704; Whealey 2016, 353). The section that is often considered controversial is the so-called *Testimonium Flavianum* or *The Testimony of Flavius Josephus*. It is also found in the *Antiquities of the Jews*, in Josephus' account of Pilate's rule over Judea. It speaks of Jesus of Nazareth and reads as follows:

> About this time, there lived Jesus, a wise man, if indeed one ought to call him a man. For he was one who performed surprising deeds and was a teacher of such people as accept the truth gladly. He won over many Jews and many of

47 Cf. Nemec 2016, (in Croatian). Ivo Andrić (1892–1975), a recipient of Nobel Prize for Literature in 1961, was born to a Croatian Catholic family in central Bosnia and Herzegovina.

48 *Antiquitates Iudaicae* 18:116–119.

49 *Antiquitates Iudaicae* 20:200.

> the Greeks. He was the Christ. And when, upon the accusation of the principal men among us, Pilate had condemned him to a cross, those who had first come to love him did not cease. He appeared to them spending a third day restored to life, for the prophets of God had foretold these things and a thousand other marvels about him. And the tribe of the Christians, so called after him, has still to this day not disappeared.[50]

The authenticity of *Testimonium Flavianum*, or parts of it, has been called into question by many historians.[51] In his work *Contra Celsum*, written in the mid-3rd century, Origen (c. 185–c. 254) claimed that Josephus does not acknowledge Jesus as the Messiah. This perhaps suggests that the *Testimonium Flavianum* may not have been included in the version of Josephus' text Origen had at his disposal. However, shortly thereafter Eusebius (c. 265–340) knew about Josephus' paragraph about Jesus, and this is how he retold it in his *Ecclesiastical History*:

> About the same time, there was a certain Jesus, a wise man, if indeed it is proper to call him a man. For he was a performer of extraordinary deeds; a teacher of men, that received his doctrine with delight; and he attached to himself many of the Jews, many also of the Greeks. This was Christ. Pilate having inflicted the punishment of the cross upon him, on the accusation of our principal men, those who had been attached to him before did not, however, afterwards cease to love him: for he appeared to them alive again on the third day, according to the holy prophets, who had declared these and innumerable other wonderful things respecting him. The race of the Christians, who derive their name from him, likewise still continues (Eusebius 2004, 27–28).

According to L. H. Feldman, between Eusebius and Jerome eleven Christian authors wrote about Josephus, but none of them mentioned the *Testimonium Flavianum* (Feldman 1999, 911–912). This suggests that the paragraph may have been inserted or modified. Mason points out that the oldest copies of Josephus' works date from the 9th and 10th centuries (Mason 1993, 167), which increases the possibility that the original Josephus' text was somewhat altered. On the other hand, the fragment containing the testimony is present in all existing versions of *Antiquities of the Jews* (Feldman 1999, 911). In Jerome's text called *On Illustrious Men*, written around 392 and preserved in a version from the 6th or 7th century, the part of *Testimonium Flavianum* in which Jesus was mentioned reads "he was believed to be the Christ" (Whealey 2016, 346–347).

It is impossible to prove or disprove the assumption that *Testimonium Flavianum* was a later Christian interpolation or revision. In the late 19th century, when the credibility of all ancient texts relevant to Christianity was being critically

50 *Antiquitates Iudaicae* 18:63–64. Cf. Havel 2022, 682; Božiković 1981, 472 (in Croatian) etc.

51 For a comment of this paragraph see Klausner 1926, 55–58.

examined, many if not most scholars speculated that *Testimonium Flavianum* was a Christian forgery altogether (Whealey 2016, 354). To the extent to which this was an ideological attempt to rebut the origins of Christianity, a historiographical debate is futile. The opinion that *Testimonium Flavianum* is a complete forgery was never universally accepted, and today it is no longer even the majority view. A small number of scholars believe that *Testimonium Flavianum* is entirely authentic.[52] The issue of possible ideological bias can be raised even in those cases. It is a defendable assumption that *Testimonium Flavianum* was edited to a certain extent but not completely interpolated (Eisler 1930, 21–30; Mason 1993, 163–175; Feldman 1999, 911–912; Whealey 2016, 345–355, etc.), and that Josephus wrote that Jesus was "believed to be the Christ." This can be deduced based on other sources, such as the aforementioned Jerome's text and its recently discovered fragments in Syriac and Arabic (Whealey 2008, 587–588). This theory does not diminish the historiographical value of Josephus' *Testimonium Flavianum*, because Josephus was not a Christian. A sentence thus formulated would also explain Origen's observation that Josephus does not recognize Jesus as the Messiah (Whealey 2016, 352).

5.2. An Indisputable Christian Alteration: The Slavonic Josephus

Examination of this delicate issue should include a comparison of Josephus' writings with the undoubtedly forged texts claiming to be of Josephus' authorship. What Josephus' text reconstructed by Christians looks like may well be understood by reading *The Slavonic Josephus*. It is a translation of *The Jewish War* into Old Slavonic language, dating back to the 11th century, with the oldest known manuscript written in 1463 (Leeming 2016, 391). Although some historians argued that the Slavonic translation may have come from a lost Aramaic version of *The Jewish War* (which, if true, would be spectacular for the study of Josephus), today it is generally accepted that it was "apparently made in the eleventh century" and used by Christians, perhaps "in the ideological struggle against the Khazars" (Feldman 1999, 918; Leeming and Leeming 2003, 75–76).[53] Some parts of Josephus' text have been removed, and some parts of undeniably Christian origin inserted. *The Slavonic Josephus* includes sections with anti-Jewish messages, details about the arrival of the wise men at king Herod's court, passages about John the Baptist, stories of Jesus "the miracle worker," etc. [54] In Josephus' works that are today considered authentic, there are no identifiable "Christian ideological" passages,

52 For a comprehensive analyses of various perspectives and interpretations until 1980 see Feldman 1984, 679–703.

53 See also Zeitlin 1929, 1–50; Zeitlin 1948, 171–180; Meier 1990, 78; Leeming 2016, 390–401, etc.

54 For texts of Old Slavonic and Greek versions of *The Jewish War* translated into English see Leeming and Leeming 2003, 107–639.

except the claim that Jesus was the Christ (as opposed to the claim that Jesus was believed to be the Christ). Thus, speculations about a possible Christian revision of Josephus' writings beyond that sentence do not seem justifiable.

6. Final Observations

6.1. Value of Josephus' Works in Comparison to Sources About the Second Jewish Revolt

The works of Josephus represent the most valuable historiographical sources for the study of the events and processes of first-century Judea. Largely because of Josephus, this turbulent and for Christians the most important period of Judean history is also the most documented. How poor and deficient our historical knowledge of first-century Judea without Josephus would be, is perhaps best evident in comparison to the last major event of ancient Jewish Judean history, the Bar Kokhba revolt. After the Bar Kokhba revolt AD 132–135 Jewish political thought profoundly and seemingly permanently changed: active messianism was rejected, political activism with the purpose of the reestablishment of an independent Judea was considered theologically illegitimate, and messianic expectations were reduced to passive awaiting for a divine eschatological intervention (Havel 2020a, 224); a position dominant in Jewish political theology until recently. Despite such immense historical, eschatological, theological, political, ideological, and intellectual importance of the Bar Kokhba revolt, very little was known about it until archeological discoveries in the 20th century, solely because there was no chronicler of Josephus' caliber to record it. Even after modern archaeological discoveries shed much new light on it, understanding of the Bar Kokhba revolt remains an incomplete mosaic, with a new piece added here and there. Even the name of the revolt's leader was not known until the latter half of the 20th century, and the debate as to whether the rebels captured Jerusalem from the Romans is still ongoing (Havel 2019a, 481–482).

6.2. Extensiveness of Josephus' Work and Modern Interdisciplinary Studies

The extent of Josephus' knowledge, his access to first-class sources, and his preserved literary opus are unparalleled in the ancient history of Judea. The history he recorded is so extensive and eventful, rich with intricate details, contexts, terminology, names, geography, tactics, intrigues, emotions, psychological analyses, literary creativity, facts, figures, and sources that it is hard not to be impressed by his work, and even harder to expect a perfect one. As Josephus was working on his Greek manuscripts, he was likely assisted by editors and proofreaders. It is highly unlikely though that he had anyone even remotely as knowledgeable in Jewish

and Judean history, languages, and cultures as him, who would have been able to contribute to the content. In addition to his vast knowledge, Josephus was gifted with keen observation and writing skills, vivid imagination, and visionary ingenuity. He conveniently utilized his gifts and skills to improve someone's reputation (mostly his own) or to discredit someone (mainly his opponents). However, his primary goal was to bridge the gap between the Greco-Roman world and the Jewish theological and philosophical thought, as he understood it. He invested much effort in explaining Jewish customs that seemed bizarre in the Hellenized world and that provoked even more bizarre anti-Jewish allegations. Josephus is credited with coining the term "theocracy," which was for the first time used to describe the political system of Judea (Baron 1952, 152).[55] It is undeniable that the work of Josephus is immensely valuable for the study of the periods he wrote about, as he was a direct witness or had access to historical materials and sources that are mostly lost today. Additionally, Josephus personally knew some of the most important figures involved in the political events of the era, giving him unique insights that most historians, then and now, could only dream of. His social network included emperors, kings, dignitaries, Jewish leaders of the revolt, Roman officials, generals, policymakers, and administrators both in Judea and in Rome, spanning from Nero's reign to the end of the period he chronicled. He was friends with the Judean king Agrippa II and the Roman emperors Vespasian and Titus. Few people were as acquainted with the Jewish past and worldview, Hellenistic culture, Greco-Roman history, thought, and philosophy in general and were so well-versed in Hebrew, Aramaic, Latin, and Greek, as Josephus was. He was attracted to all those cultures, harbored no dislike toward any of them, and considered them all, in a way, his own. This made him uniquely equipped and competent for comparative analyses. Additionally, verifiable data found in Josephus largely corresponds to facts found in the works of other historians, such as Polybius, Livy, Tacitus, Suetonius, or Dio, and in the books of the New Testament. Consequently, we may assert that the extraordinary value of Josephus' works is not denigrated by the mistakes, shortcomings, inconsistencies, occasional negligence, frequent bias, or flaws of his character. All those should neither be ignored nor overemphasized but researched in the light of new perceptions and discoveries. Considering the contemporary development of interdisciplinarity, where academic fields of historiography, archaeology, theology, political science, psychology, linguistics, and other branches of humanities and social sciences intertwine like never before, a final verdict on Josephus and his work is far from settled.

55 *Contra Apionem* 2:165. Josephus compares the government of Jews whose legislator ascribed the authority and the power to God, with the governments of other nations ruled by monarchs, oligarchs, or the people.

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Boris Havel

Život Josipa Flavija i pitanje pouzdanosti njegovih djela

Sažetak

U članku su prikazani život i djela Josipa Flavija, najvažnijega židovskog povjesničara iz prvoga stoljeća poslije Krista. Flavije je bio sudionik Prvoga židovskog ustanka protiv Rimljana, a nakon zarobljavanja i proroštva Vespazijanu da će postati carem, suradnik, pregovarač i prevoditelj njegovu sinu Titu. Zbog izravnog sudioništva u mnogim zbivanjima koja opisuje u *Židovskom ratu* to je njegovo djelo od neprocjenjive važnosti za uvid u motive, tijek i slom ustanka. Kao helenizirani Židov u *Židovskim* je *starinama* i u raspravnici *Protiv Apiona* predstavio židovsku povijest od najranijega biblijskog razdoblja i apologetiku židovstva te je opovrgavao protužidovske optužbe raširene u grčko-rimskom svijetu. Njegova djela stoga predstavljaju i dragocjen dio helenističke židovske filozofske i teološke misli staroga vijeka. Iz kršćanskog je očišta Flavijeva najveća vrijednost u opisima Judeje u vrijeme prije, tijekom i nakon Isusova života na zemlji i nastanka prve Crkve. Iz njegovih se djela pruža najširi, najopsežniji i najdublji izvanbiblijski uvid u društvene, političke i vjerske prilike u kojima je nastalo kršćanstvo.

Narrating YHWH's Kingship in Psalms[1]

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Abstract

Psalms 93-100 function within Book 4 of the Psalter to advance the narrative of YHWH's kingship over the cosmos. Whatever the origins of the constituent psalms, their current sequencing within Book 4 softens the despair that appears in psalms like Psalm 89, the ending of Book 3. As a kind of narrative used in liturgy, these psalms develop characters and plotlines that concentrate upon YHWH's kingship and proper ordering of the world, which, in turn, benefits Israel and through them, the world.

Keywords: *Psalms, narratology, the kingship of God*

Introduction

In his 1922 volume, *Das Thronbesteigungsfest Jahwäs und der Ursprung der Eschatologie*, Sigmund Mowinckel famously argued for the existence of an annual festival of enthronement of Israel's God analogous to the Akitu festival in Babylonia. He pieced together the festival from clues in a range of psalms, especially those explicitly mentioning YHWH's kingship (Ps 47; 93-100), but also others with similar motifs. He identified some of the religious ideas animating that reconstructed festival and those texts and, perhaps most interestingly, claimed that "Fest und

1 This article is associated with the project: *Narrative and Metanarrative in Biblical Psalmody and Biblical Psalter: How the Narrative in Biblical Poetry is used for Conveying Content and Message* (project leader: Danijel Berković).

Kult gehören daher zusammen" ("festival and cult belong together") (Mowinckel 1922, 19). He went on to describe the cult, and therefore the setting of the narrative in the psalms of YHWH's kingship, as a "drama." Yet it was no ordinary drama, but one that both created and reflected a reality, or in a word, a sacrament.[2] Mowinckel further explored the nature of the cult as a drama, including the psychological dimensions of performance.

As students learn in courses on Psalms, Mowinckel's notion of a single festival enacting and dramatizing YHWH's kingship has not found universal acceptance. In the form he proposed, his hypothesis has seemed to many scholars overly speculative. Yet, as a number of recent assessments have argued, he was on the right track in seeking a cultic setting for the performance of these psalms of kingship and so for understanding divine kingship as something to be narrated and enacted, rather than a static, objective reality to be acknowledged. The dating of Psalms 47 and 93-100 and the tightness of their relationship with one another remain debatable, though understanding them may not depend on an agreement on those points. Rather, I wish to argue, as they exist currently, these psalms do cohere as a way of narrating YHWH's kingship over against potential rivals, whether human or divine (Roberts 2005, 97–115; Clifford 2014, 326–337).

Still standing is Mowinckel's basic insight that the psalms of YHWH's kingship figure in a drama, or better, a narrative, and as such they should be understood not as a description of an objective reality but as a discourse in which both divine and human actors participate. Divine kingship, like human kingship, requires not only actions by the monarch but also repeated acts of affirmation by an audience participating in liturgies that depict characters moving about in relation to one another toward certain ends. Kingship also needs enemies, potential or real. In short, divine kingship can be the subject of narrative.

What do we mean by "narrative," then? A number of definitions exist, differing in how one conceives of the role of the plot (i.e., the sequence of events), of the audience, and of the relationship between the act of narrating, the product of narration, and the matter narrated (the story). Here I will follow the influential narratologist Monika Fludernik (2009, 6), who says that "A narrative… is a representation of a possible world in a linguistic and/or visual medium, at whose center there are one or several protagonists of an anthropomorphic nature who are existentially anchored in a temporal and spatial sense and who (mostly) perform goal-directed actions (action and plot structures)." Here I will consider some of the psalms of divine kingship, Psalms 93-100, as narrative in several stages. The first step is to position Psalms 93-99, especially within the larger context of Book

2 Mowinckel, *Psalmenstudien II,* 21. He writes, "Nicht lediglich ein gespieltes Drama, ein Spiel, sondern ein wirkliches und Wirklichkeit hervorbringendes Drama, ein Drama, das mit realer Kraft das dramatisierte Ereignis verwirklicht, eine Wirklichkeit, aus der reale Kräfte hervorstrahlen, oder mit anderen Worten ein Sakrament."

4 of the Psalter (Ps 90-106). The second is to identify narrative elements in those psalms: the imagined world it creates, the characters, and the plot structure. The final point will be to argue that the narrative as we have it, while it functions in its present location in Book 4 as a rejoinder to Psalm 89's questioning of YHWH's ability to run the world well, has a logically prior function of affirming divine kingship against all comers. That is, the *YHWH mālak* psalms provided the impetus for the creation of Book 4 rather than the other way around.

1. Book 4 of the Psalms as a Single Narrative

Mowinckel and many subsequent scholars, especially form critics, thought of Psalms 93-99 or 93 and 95-99 as a coherent collection even if he and his immediate successors tended to think of individual psalms as manifestations of genres and ignore the meaningful shaping of the Psalter as a whole or collections within it.[3] Influenced by the work of Gerald Wilson and others, more recent scholarship has shifted decisively toward approaches that try to understand the book as a meaningful whole, not limited in significance to the form or content of each individual psalm or sub-collection of psalms (Wilson 1985; McCann 1993; Howard 1993). For Psalms 93-100, in particular, new scholarship does well to investigate the relationship between these texts and the lyrics preceding and following them in Book 4 of the Psalter.

Hossfeld and Zenger, for example, accept the widespread view that Psalms 93-100 form a coherent unit preexisting its current location in the Psalter, while Psalms 90-92 are a coherent unit collected (composed?) to supplement an earlier version of the Psalter ranging from Psalms 2-89 (Hossfeld and Zenger 2005, 5–7; Ndoga 2014, 149–159). In that view, Psalms 90-92 constitute a bridge linking two collections.

Perhaps even more radically, deClaissé-Walford, Jacobson, and Tanner (2014, 38) understand the entire Psalter as a narrative of Israel's history, with Book 3 (Ps 73-89) reporting the tragic end of the monarchy, and Book 4 (Ps 90-106) the restoration of the people after the deportations to Babylonia. Often with a high level of nuance, they read each psalm on its own and through the narrative grid they believe shaped the formation of the Psalter as a whole.

This view is not far from that of Samuel Terrien, who argued that Book 3, and especially Psalms 73 and 89, forms the pivot around which the rest of the Psalter rotates. As he puts it (2003, 24), "These [psalms] bear the signs of sapiential disquisition, but they are also impregnated with a tragic sense of human existence as well as being steeped in a theology of heroic nobility, both divine and

3 For example, Mowinckel devotes only five pages to the Psalter's development as a collection of collections in his seminal *Psalms in Israel's Worship* (1962, 2:193–197).

human…" These claims are fair enough, though Terrien's universalizing interpretation should not be taken to obscure the true focus of these texts on the particularity of Israel's experience in the forced migrations and returns of the mid-first millennium BCE. That is, the universal and the particular must both figure in the proper interpretation of the texts.

The point here is not to rehearse the current state of the discussion of the evolution of the Psalter or these psalms' place within it. It suffices to note that reading Psalms 93-100 as the psalms of YHWH's kingship within a larger sequence of psalms fits well with contemporary moves in biblical scholarship. The point is to understand those psalms and their announcement of YHWH's kingship within a larger context of the psalms as performed texts. The performance practices and purposes of the psalms of YHWH's kingship may well have evolved over time, and their inclusion in Book 4 of the Psalter may have altered those purposes, though it is sometimes difficult to say precisely how.[4] It would be unwarranted to argue that Psalms 93-100 originated during Israel's post-monarchic era, for the idea of divine kingship is much older in both Israel and the rest of the ancient Near East. However, the selection and placement of these psalms in their current location amid other psalms seems both deliberate and meaningful. This combination of the psalms meaningfully responds to a particularly traumatic era in Israel's history.

If we accept Terrien's notion that Psalms 73 and 89 together form the pivot around which the Psalter rotates, we find a book that both celebrates "how good Elohim is to Israel" (Ps 73:1) and invites the same deity to "remember the disgrace of your servants" (Ps 89:51 [ETT 89:50]). The Psalter never fully resolves – indeed, refuses to resolve – the tension between praise and protest, forcing both its readers and God to live in the tensions of history. Israel confesses its hopes in God's goodness and acknowledges its own sins (Ps 78) but nevertheless also objects to the suffering that sin has brought about and expects YHWH to relieve that suffering. No final resolution of these tensions occurs, nor can it occur in this life, since history never arrives at utopia. However, a worshiping community needs language that allows it to manage the tension, if not eliminate it altogether. Book 4 provides that language.

It makes sense, then, to sketch the narrative flow of Book 4, however briefly. Psalms 90-92 respond to Psalm 89's lament of the loss of the king by acknowledging God as "our rock" (Ps 90:1) and "my refuge and stronghold" (Ps 91:2) and by making the metacomment on the psalms themselves, "It is good to praise YHWH" (Ps 92:2 [ETT 92:1]) (see Steymans 2005, 265–276). Again, to speak of

4 For example, the inclusion of Ps 96 in 1 Chr 16 in an abbreviated form, whatever else it might say, shows that the text could be used in multiple ways. See the discussion in Schnocks 2019, 223–240; Magonet 2014, 161–177.

these psalms as "responding" to Psalm 89 does not imply that they were composed after it, merely that their placement in Book 4 constitutes such a response. These psalms are populated with characters that defend the righteous (Ps 91:11-12), while the enemies "perish" (Ps 92:10 [ETT 92:9]). The survival of the righteous betokens the reversal of Psalm 89's despair at the loss of monarchy (Ps 92:13-14 [ETT 92:12-13], echoing or anticipating Ps 1). In short, the Babylonians do not get the last word in the affairs of YHWH's people.

If Psalms 90-92 form a bridge to the psalms of YHWH's kingship, Psalms 100-106 form an offramp from them. Psalm 100 underscores the scope of divine kingship by calling upon "all the earth" to praise YHWH. Psalm 101 uses the human king, now restored after the debacle detailed in Psalm 89, as the spokesperson for a commitment to justice in the land. Psalm 102 petitions YHWH to help the one praying during a time of distress, or as the superscription says, "when the poor person … pours out his petition" (Ps 102:1). Psalm 103 responds to the divine act of salvation by calling upon the praying person's נפש to "bless" (ברכי) YHWH, that is, to thank the benevolent deity for help. Psalm 104 expands this sentiment of gratitude and wonder with a celebration of the intricacy and beauty of nature. Finally, Psalms 105-106 recounts the history of Israel and Judah, though in a much happier way than Psalm 78, and probably in answer to that earlier psalm.

In speaking of the "narrative flow" of these psalms, I do not wish to say that the characters change or that a clear plotline emerges. The narrative has a static quality, as one might well expect in a liturgical text. Just as Jesus always dies and rises again in Christian hymnody, here YHWH always remains king, YHWH's enemies remain enemies, the world remains the theater of YHWH's actions, and the singers of the psalms always must decide on the degree to which they embrace the words they sing. Ritual performance creates not narrative progression but a sense of the trueness of the narrative, its "givenness" for the audience.

This givenness emerges because, collectively, these texts create a negotiation among various voices (the singer, worshipers in Judah, other members of humankind, and celestial beings) about the announcement of divine kingship. Observed from several vantage points, the psalms in Book 4 respond to Book 3's movement from the affirmation of Jerusalem's human ruler that ends Book 2 in Psalm 72 to its lament for his defeat (and so the crushing of the people's dreams of hegemony or at any rate independence) in Psalm 89. Book 4 affirms the continuation of YHWH's kingship and the survival of YHWH's people even in their new world (Wilson 2010, 757–760).

This brings the discussion to Psalms 93-100 as part of a larger flow of texts. Psalms 93, 97, and 99 begin with the claim יהוה מלך ("YHWH is king"), while Psalms 96 and 98 open with שירו ליהוה ("sing to YHWH"). In other words, the sequencing of the Psalms creates an opportunity for Israel as a worshiping community to affirm the reality of YHWH's kingship while acknowledging that oth-

ers may rebel against it. Affirming the reality of divine rule makes it a fact of life to which the congregation must respond. Psalm 95 opens with a call, also to the congregation of worshipers to sing out, "because YHWH is a great God (אל גדול), a king over all gods" (Ps 95:3). The call to worship the king of the gods points to the large-scale conception of these psalms. YHWH's realm was not limited to Israel or even the human world. It encompassed everything.

The seeming outlier in this sequence of psalms is Psalm 94. However, the sequence of Psalms 93-100 could be understood as a sort of mortice-and-tenon structure, with 94 linking two separate clusters of יהוה מלך hymns (93; 95-99). Although, as Howard has shown, Psalm 94 has many thematic links with the texts surrounding it, it differs from them in genre and what we might call "voice." Many of Howard's links are fairly common words, and as he notes, Psalm 94 also has similar links to "many non-adjacent psalms" (Howard 1993, 123). This fact must indicate that Psalm 94 originally existed independently of Psalm 93 and 95-99 and was added to them as part of the editorial process creating Book 4. On the other hand, the placement of Psalm 94 amid others shows a high level of artistic and theological intentionality. Psalm 94 troubles the affirmation of YHWH's kingship even as it ultimately accepts it. The psalm reminds readers that not everyone accepts divine rule as a given. Psalm 94 ends (almost) by denying the appropriateness of an alliance between YHWH and "the throne of destruction(s)" (כסא הוות; Ps 94:20), that is, entanglement between Judah and foreign powers. Here YHWH is the divine emperor who might make an alliance with a good throne but not with evil ones. The imagery is that of international politics during the mid-first millennium BCE in which alliances and counter-alliances served the purposes of both weak and powerful states. YHWH is not a king like other kings, never needing to compromise principles in order to hang on to power. In other words, Psalm 94 does "fit" its surroundings even as it reshapes them.

2. The *YHWH mālak* Psalms as Narrative

Just as Book 4 presents a somewhat coherent story or reflection on a story (i.e., a metanarrative in the narratological sense), Psalms 93 and 95-99 have many elements of narrative in Fludernik's sense, as the preceding brief sketch of them in the sequence indicates. Collectively, they depict an imagined world, name important characters, assign them distinguishable traits, and create a plot that they follow over time and space. This plot figures as a subtext in Book 4, as well.

The Imagined World. The principal characters of these psalms include YHWH, chthonic forces (rivers and seas as in Ugaritic mythology, as well as heaven and earth) (Ps 93:3-4; 95:5; 96:1-2, 5, 11; 97:6a; 98:7-9), the Israelite/Judahite audience

(often marked as "we") (Ps 95:1-2, 6-7; 98:3), other gods (Ps 95:3; 96:4; 97:7, 9),[5] Israel's rebellious ancestors (Ps 95:8-9; cf. 99:7), Israel's famous leaders of the past (Moses, Aaron, and Samuel; Ps 99:6), the nations (Ps 96:3, 9, 10, 13; 97:1, 6b; 98:2, 3; 99:1-2; cf. 47:8-9), Zion and its satellite cities (Ps 97:8; 99:2), and the righteous or "friends of YHWH" (Ps 97:10-12). These characters, about which more momentarily, inhabit a world in which the vast cosmic forces ordered (conquered?) in the original creation of the world remain subject to their sovereign, YHWH. They may "lift up their voices" (Ps 93:3-4), but this noise does not threaten the basic order of the world. The primordial combat will not be repeated.

There is something curious about the texts' imagined world, however. Though YHWH is ruler over the nations, no specific nation is named, and the deity's kingship extends over the world, again without any specific region being mentioned. The ambiguity of the references signals a desire to speak of truly universal rule, not subject to the vicissitudes of political change. By avoiding excessive historical detail and resorting instead to the language of the divine realm, the Psalms can, therefore, serve a liturgical purpose in many historical settings. These texts are at once ahistorical (in the sense that they can operate in many settings) and historical (in the sense that they were composed in particular settings and reused in others, in particular in the Persian period when Book 4 was compiled and performed).

Indeed, the only place these psalms mention by name is Zion (Ps 99:2), which becomes the location of divine justice, both retributive and reparative. From Zion, YHWH responds to the cries of people seeking protection from unnamed (therefore, any) evildoers (99:6-8; cf. Ps 94). Interestingly, the prime "callers upon YHWH's name" are Samuel, Moses, and Aaron, figures who operated elsewhere than Zion but whose memory and moral legacy have been entrusted to the care of the priests and others dwelling in Zion. The city, in other words, has become the magnet for Israel's traditions, even those originating elsewhere in Israel/Judah, as well as its hopes for a better future. Admittedly, virtually all, if not all, of the Psalter presupposes Zion as the locale of its performance. Yet naming the previously unnamed if assumed place has a dramatic purpose.

There is no strong reason to assume, as is often done, that such attention to Zion must postdate the era of the so-called Babylonian Exile. It may do so, but it is hard to imagine that a Zion tradition arose out of nowhere in the era when the city lay in ruins or had been restored only as a tiny settlement in the early Persian period. Much more likely, the psalms reflect the ongoing relevance of the Zion traditions as they developed before, during, and after the sixth century BCE.

The characters. I have already named the key characters in these psalms. The most important are YHWH and the collective community of worshipers. The texts focus on YHWH by inviting the worshipers to gaze upon YHWH, to notice

5 On the meaning of אלילים ("gods"), see Hamilton 2019.

the various other characters, all with their own back stories, and to understand the roles those figures play in the drama of divine kingship. For example, Psalm 93's evocation of the sea and the ancient Near Eastern stories of creation as the conquest of watery forces not only triggers the congregation's memories of such older stories of creation through combat (cf. the references to slaying the dragon in Job 9:13; 26:12; Ps 40:5 [ET 40:4]; 87:4 [ET 87:3]; 89:11 [ET 89:10]; Isa 51:9) but also reaffirms those stories' continuing relevance. Likewise, the recall of the stories of Israel's ancestors, whether negative (Ps 95:8-10) or positive (Ps 99:6-7), forces the congregation to consider itself part of the centuries-long drama on which it is gazing. Israel both acts on the stage and spectates in the drama's audience. Its gaze falls upon the divine actor YHWH while also turning back on itself.

Manfred Jahn, commenting on the work of Gerard Genette, speaks of "external focalization" as a narrative option. That mode of narration "marks the most drastic reduction of narrative information because it restricts itself to 'outside views,' reporting what would be visible and audible to a virtual camera" (Jahn 2007, 98). As Jahn points out, again following Genette, the narrative focus can shift in a narrative, and maintaining a truly stationary "camera" is rare. To take the example at hand, the *YHWH mālak* psalms adopt such a focus, displaying a panorama of characters parading across the worshiping community's field of vision, but never exploring in any detail the characters' identity, motives, or fates. The focus remains on the divine king and the worshiping community celebrating that king's rule from Zion.

In a general way, the texts' method of externally focalizing the narrative is reminiscent of another ancient Near Eastern medium, the presentation scenes in royal palaces. In such scenes, the friends and foes of the king parade across the stone wall, always subject to the king's power (voluntarily or otherwise), always pointing to the irresistible rightness of that power, which comes from the divine realm and supports the due order of the world.[6] That connection may seem less than obvious for the psalms in question, but several scholars have pointed to it for other texts such as Isaiah 60-61 and Esther (Strawn 2007; Machinist 2018; Hamilton 2021). The comparison is apt here because these psalms imagine YHWH enthroned in the heavenly and earthly throne room, the temple in Jerusalem (Ps 93:1). Narrative can occur in multiple media, and the conventions of one medium may influence others. The depiction of characters as a part of the scenery of kingship, which appears in reliefs, also appears in texts, as here.

The point is that most of the characters in the *YHWH mālak* are intentionally flat, forming the landscape through which the divine king moves. They do not, and cannot, develop because they must play the same unaltering role if divine

6 A voluminous literature exists on this subject. A useful set of essays identifying the major issues is Bach and Fink 2022.

kingship is to continue. The exception to this rule is the congregation itself. The worshipers singing these psalms must decide whether to imitate their querulous ancestors in the wilderness, their polytheistic neighbors or the superhuman forces previously rebelling against YHWH, on the one hand, or the great heroes of their people like Moses, Aaron, or Samuel, on the other. Their participation in the narration of YHWH's kingship in the performance of these psalms implies that they have made, or should make that choice.

Plot actions. To continue with Fludernik's categories, it is important to consider the plot of these psalms. In addition to the community narrating its own participation in YHWH's rule as loyal subjects, what happens in these psalms? In a recent essay, Jorge M. Blunda Grubert (2019) understands Psalms 93 and 95-100 as the core of Book 4 and as a response to the collapse of the monarchies of Israel and Judah. He argues, as many other scholars have also done, that the "answer" of Book 4 is to emphasize the role of the divine monarch, YHWH, as a replacement for human monarchy, and the post-monarchic age as a return to the pre-monarchic one (hence the recurring mention of Moses in Book 4). It is true, as already noted, that Book 4 responds to the fall of the native Judahite monarchy to the Babylonians and recasts Israel's story in a more hopeful direction in Psalms 105-106, the conclusion of the book. The despair evident in Psalm 89 (or Lamentations, similarly) has given way to a more hopeful view of the past and future. On the other hand, unlike Isaiah 40-55, none of the psalms in Book 4, and certainly not the *YHWH mālak* psalms, expects foreign rule to become the vehicle of divine grace. Whereas Blunda Grubert connects these psalms to Isaiah 40-55, a more appropriate comparison would be Isaiah 56-66, which portray YHWH's kingship as operating in a world ultimately without Gentile control (see Isa 66:22-24), without promising the restoration of a human ruler over Judah.

Does this mean that these texts saw a native Israelite/Judahite monarchy as theologically and politically obsolete, or merely secondary in importance? Does the absence of the human king in Psalms 90-106 (except in Ps 101) imply a commitment to a non-monarchical form of government, or merely a concession to the uncertainty of the moment, a sort of hedging of bets? Certainly, in an ancient Near Eastern context, the human king ordinarily featured as the viceroy of the divine realm, a trustee of the chief deity's earthly realm. That view also appears in various forms in the royal psalms (Ps 2; 18; 20; 21; 45; 72; 89; 101; 132; and 144) and elsewhere (2 Sam 7). The silence of the *YHWH mālak* psalms on this point is susceptible to over-interpretation, though it must mean something. The ambiguity of the texts allows their liturgical use in a variety of settings, even if the Israelite monarchy was somehow restored (as it briefly was under the Hasmoneans).

This ambiguity takes us back to the question of what has happened in the narrative now performed by the congregation singing these psalms. Book 4 narrates the period of the ancestors and the exodus, though emphasizing liberation and

promise, not lawgiving (Ps 105-106). It has also narrated the primordial time of creation (Ps 93; 104). It presupposes the calamities of the eighth-sixth centuries BCE but without naming them as such. This silence is surprising if Book 4 is really an answer to Psalm 89 (and Book 3 more generally).

This silence is compounded by another. Corinna Körting (2019, 249–253) in a recent essay has noted that the appearance of Zion in Psalm 99 is conspicuous for its singularity – none of the other *YHWH-mālak* psalms explicitly locates YHWH anywhere on earth. For Körting, this absence of location means that the reference to Zion entered the Psalms only at a comparatively late stage in their development. It would follow from this understanding that the emphasis on Zion comes only during the period after the Babylonian deportations and the return of the deportees to their homeland. That conclusion might be correct, though it is striking that, while the psalms in question do not otherwise place YHWH in Zion, they also do not locate the deity anywhere else on earth.

If we consider the placement of the reference to Zion in Psalm 99:2 in its context, an alternative understanding presents itself. Psalm 99 begins with the third affirmation of YHWH's kingship (cf. 93:1; 97:1). It follows the differently focused Psalm 98, which like Psalm 96, calls upon the people to sing. In other words, Psalm 99 names the primary focus of these psalms, YHWH's kingship, to which the secondary focus (the congregation) must respond. The congregation itself exists in Zion, not only in Psalm 99 but throughout the *YHWH mālak* psalms and, indeed, Book 4. There is no evidence that the psalms existed elsewhere than Jerusalem. Nor does placing them in that city speak to their date of composition or incorporation in the list. In other words, Körting has answered a narrative question historically, and possibly mistakenly.

What does it mean that Zion appears for the only time in Psalm 99:2? The delay in naming the place has deepened a sense of suspense and accentuated the ritual scenery of the psalms. The congregation sings them in YHWH's "gates" (Ps 100:4), again making Zion the site of their storytelling in song. The theme of the revelation of the temple after the establishment of the divine rule is a theme long predating these psalms, already evident in the Ugaritic "Baal Epic," for example. In other words, the story of the deity's rule must end in a temple. For the Judeans composing the *YHWH mālak* psalms before the fall of Jerusalem and the creators of Book 4 of the Psalter reappropriating them decades later, Zion was the inevitable location of that temple. The delay of its identification serves a dramatic purpose, clarifying once and for all the center of YHWH's rule and the focus point of the worship of YHWH's subjects.

If we understand the placement of the Zion reference here as a decision made in the narrative, in which the disclosure of vital information can be reserved for a critical moment, then another idea may follow. It may be possible to resolve the problem of the two seeming omissions in one motion. The most important thing

that has happened in the narrative is the restoration of Zion itself. The time of its destruction goes unnamed because it was not necessary to name it. It exists again as a place of worship. It is the throne room of the creator and redeemer, YHWH.

Psalm 99 depicts YHWH's rule in Zion as having several characteristics: rule over all the peoples (על כל העמים), hence the end of imperial rule over the land of Israel (v. 2); justice for Jacob (v. 4); and a functioning priesthood that intercedes for worshipers, continuing the era of Moses and the origins of the people (vv. 6-8). Jerusalem, as imagined and experienced space, will be, the liturgy of these psalms avers, the center of an empire operating by rules differing from those of earthly empires, an idea also presented in Isaiah 56:9-59:21, possibly a text contemporaneous with Book 4.

Conclusion

To conclude, Fludernik describes narrative as involving characters who are "existentially anchored" in their stories. The *YHWH mālak* psalms as placed in Book 4 of the Psalter focus the attention of a renewed Judean community on a deity so anchored, committed to the well-being of a people in spite of appearances. The suffering of the mid-to-late sixth century BCE could not offer the final verdict on the divine attitude toward Israel. In celebrating the rule of the divine king, Book 4 tells a story of Israel's present and future that draws upon pre-exilic traditions for key plot points and character roles while also continuing the story into a new era. The period of deported people and ruined cities becomes a parenthesis, not a determining element in the overarching story. By celebrating YHWH's kingship centered on a renewed Zion, Book 4 of the Psalter invites the community of Israel during the Persian period to live with hope even in times of political uncertainty. That invitation still stands for those praying these psalms today as part of their own story.

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Mark W. Hamilton

Pripovijedanje o YHWH-inoj kraljevskoj vlasti u Psalmima

Sažetak

Svrha je psalama 93–100 u Četvrtoj knjizi Psaltira da promiču pripovijest o YHWH-inoj kraljevskoj vlasti nad svemirom. Bez obzira na njihovo porijeklo, njihov trenutan redoslijed u Knjizi 4 ublažava očaj koji se javlja u psalmima poput Psalma 89, kojim završava Knjiga 3. Kao vrsta pripovijesti koja se koristi u liturgiji, ovi psalmi razvijaju likove i radnje koje se koncentriraju na YHWH-inoj kraljevskoj vlasti i ispravnom poretku svijeta, što zauzvrat koristi Izraelu i, po njima, cijelom svijetu. Služe kako bi dalje razvili pripovijest o njegovoj vlasti nad svemirom.

On the Newer Literary-Critical Approach to Biblical Poetry[1]

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Abstract

This presentation discusses the views of three renowned authors – James Kugel, Robert Alter, and Jan Fokkelman – known for their literary-critical approach to the Bible, concerning biblical poetry. According to Kugel, looking at the Bible through the lens of division into poetry and prose (lyrical and epic literature) means looking at it wrongly. He maintains that even meticulous analyses of parallelism can be distorted if viewed through this lens. Therefore, Kugel asserts that there is no poetry in the Bible but rather a "continuum" of loosely connected parallel structures in what we see as prose sections and "heightened rhetoric" in what we often erroneously consider verses. According to Alter, biblical poetry is based on semantic parallelism. However, he points out that poetic expression deliberately avoids complete parallelism, just as language resists mere synonyms by introducing subtle differences between related terms. In contrast, Fokkelman believes that combining prose and poetry, and even transitioning between them, is possible because most Hebrew sentences contain two to eight words and are usually linked in sequences through parataxis (using "… and… and… but… and then"). All three opinions lead to the conclusion that biblical poetry, like prose, is to a large extent sui generis, and that any distinction between poetry and prose, if it exists at all, is not of

1 This article is associated with the project: *Narrative and Metanarrative in Biblical Psalmody and Biblical Psalter: How the Narrative in Biblical Poetry is used for Conveying Content and Message* (project leader: Danijel Berković).

the same nature as in Western literary culture and it is, therefore, inappropriate to refer to prosimetrum in the Bible.

Keywords: *Bible, poetry, versification, James Kugel, Robert Alter, Jan Fokkelman*

I.

In contrast to Classical Greece, ancient Israel has not left us any theoretical discussions about literature. The Bible does not include explicit literary-critical comments known as metatexts, which would problematize the text itself, including its literary procedures, referentiality, and construction. However, there are several biblical expressions (*ir*, *mizmor*, *qina*) that refer to poetry. These expressions are ancient and part of the biblical text. Although they were seen as a certain kind of literary terminology, their meaning, especially generically, was not completely clear. The extrabiblical tradition is somewhat more directional, which is especially evident in the medieval Masoretic manuscripts, which highlighted individual passages through versography (Berlin 1991, 7–8).[2] Since the Bible was usually compared to classical Greek literature, and meter was seen as the *sine qua non* of poetry, biblical poetry was left largely unexplored. Biblical poetry did not conform to the traditional metrical structures of ancient Greek literary culture. For example, in his *Poeseos Asiaticæ Commentarii* (1774), William Jones attempted to prove that biblical poets relied on quantitative versification; however, he had no other way to prove it but by altering the punctuation of biblical texts. As a result, Eduard Sievers (*Metrische Untersuchungen*, 1901, § 53) argued that Hebrew prosody differs from classical prosody in that it does not rely on the alternation of long and short syllables.[3]

During the early modern era, there was a significant growth in the production of vernacular literature, particularly in the form of poetry. For poetry to gain some legitimization, other than appealing to its divine origin, appeals were made to the Psalter and some other biblical texts. Such strivings led to new attempts to discover the source of poetry in the Bible. Since, especially in Italy, models of vernacular syllabic poetry (where the emphasis was not on length but on the number of syllables) replaced the classical ones, syllabic versification became the pattern for approaching biblical poetry as well. Jewish authors were not familiar with the

2 The print "destroyed" the Masoretic versography, but modern scientific editions of the Bible reversed this trend. In *Biblia Hebraica Kittel* and *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia* not only are the traditionally versographical parts so printed but also anything considered poetic by modern standards, including the speeches of the prophets and "poems" inserted into narrative sections (for example, 1 Sam 15:22-23), is printed in versography.

3 See Stuart 1976.

concept of biblical poetry being based on syllabic versification. Although it is difficult to assess the extent of the Jewish influence, it is known that many Jewish advocates of syllabic versification in the Bible, or something similar, lived in Italy for a time (Abravanel, Ibn Habib, Moses ibn Tibbon) (Berlin 1991, 41). Besides, some think that biblical poetry was based on something like accented versification (taking into account only those syllables that carry the basic accent) (e.g., Julius Ley, *Grundzüge des Rhythmus, des Vers- und Strophenbaues in der Hebräischen Poesie*, 1875).[4] There were also other approaches. One of them was Parry-Lord's hypothesis of the oral composition of Homeric epics, which briefly influenced the study of biblical poetry. However, this approach demanded that the so-called fixed pairs of words in parallelism be replaced by conventional expressions that signalized oral origin, which was quickly dismissed as insufficient.[5] Moreover, it was discovered that the Psalter and the Book of Job likely were not orally transmitted. Interestingly, although poetic figures and tropes were identified and cataloged mostly according to the classical Greco-Roman terminology and definitions, their impact on biblical poetry, for the most part, did not cause significant interest.

The most known solution regarding understanding biblical poetry was proposed by Robert Lowth (*Prælectiones de Sacra Poesi Hebræorum*, 1753). He abandoned the search for a versification system and, instead of turning to the classics or the vernacular literature for his conceptual frame, the way his medieval and early modern predecessors did, Lowth tried to read the Bible according to the "way of the Hebrews," i.e., the way he thought ancient Hebrews would have read it (Prickett 2016, 309). He realized that the fundamental principle of ancient Hebrew poetry is "parallelismus" (also known as *parallelismus membrorum*), in which two (and sometimes three) short "verses" are juxtaposed to create the effect of symmetry. Lowth's work had a significant impact on the study of biblical poetry for nearly 200 years, beginning in the late 18th century and lasting until the 1980s.[6] Due to the popularity of narratology during the 1970s and 1980s, and even onward, the literary-critical approach to the Bible was dominated by studies mostly focused on prose (Erich Auerbach's study, *Mimesis: Dargestellte Wirklichkeit in der abendländischen Literatur*, 1946, is widely regarded as the starting point of this approach).[7]

4 See Kurylowicz 1972.

5 R. Alter points out that literacy is remarkably old in the Middle East, so that there is no preliterary phase of an already existing Jewish nation. Record keeping is part of the formative experience of ancient Israel (Alter 1987, 13).

6 Rabbinical circles were not thrilled by the research into the uses of parallelism in the Bible. In fact, they were not interested in biblical versification at all. The concept of biblical poetry, advocated by Josephus and others, is completely absent in rabbinical texts. J. Kugel highlights that Moses, David, and Isaiah could certainly have been described as "poets," at least to magnify their abilities above those of ordinary singers. However, they weren't! (Kugel 1981a, 129).

7 A. Berlin suggests that contemporary Biblicists and literary critics (theorists) may give the im-

Still, poetry was not completely relegated to the background. There are two reasons for the renewed interest in biblical versification. One is the discovery of the ancient Ugaritic (North Kanaan) epics, in many ways similar to biblical poetry and thus good for comparatist analyses. The other is the influence of structural linguistics, which offered patterns for intertextual linguistic analyses.[8] One of the more extensive and remarkably erudite contributions to the study of biblical poetry is Michael Connor's *Hebrew Verse Structure* (1980). He noted that the patterns in biblical poetry were not metrical or rhythmical, but rather syntactical. This led him to base his study on the "line," which is mostly paralleled in rhetori-

pression that they are the first to approach the Bible from a literary perspective, but this is not the case. Some of the oldest methods of understanding the biblical text are literary approaches. Although it is true that modern literary and linguistic theories are far from their patristic and medieval ancestors, the earlier approaches still contain many modern observations about biblical language and style, albeit in a different form. This, according to Berlin, is not so surprising because the biblical texts did not change. What did change are the models and theories used to explain them. The more we understand the earlier models and theories, the more we begin to realize that the modern approaches are actually integral parts of a long tradition whose goal was to analyze the form and style of the Bible (Berlin 1991, 3). Relying on Kenneth Gros Louis' article, Methodological Considerations (Gros Louis 1982), here are the determinants of contemporary literary-critical approaches:

1) Approaching the Bible as literature means giving importance to the text itself, without considering its historical and textual background, or the circumstances that led to its present form, or even its religious and cultural foundations, which is typical of the historical-critical approach. In short, the literary-critical approach to the Bible is ahistorical.
2) The literary critic assumes that the text is a unified whole.
3) The literary critic is primarily interested in the structure or organization of the work.
4) Literary critics are primarily interested in the literary reality of the text and not its historical reality. Literature is here equated to fictionality: "Is it true, we wonder, not in the real world but in the fictional world?"
5) The literary reality of the Bible can be studied through literary criticism methods used to analyze any other nonbiblical text.

J. Kugel argues against such literary-critical approaches that view the Bible as literature. Instead, he believes that we should ask what the meaning of "as" in the phrase "Bible as literature" actually is. Kugels says the short answer might be that "it has many meanings." The Bible has been read *as* literature since the Greek and Roman times. Tropes and figures of classical rhetoric, allegorizing of Homer and Hesiod, hexameter and trimeter of both epic and lyrical literature were found in the Bible, too. The Bible *as* literature in the sense of interpretation has been obvious since the early days of biblical exegesis, dating back to Hellenistic Judaism and patristics. Modern Bible criticism developed from *Literarkritik*, or *Formkritik*, and then began to apply methodical starting points of Russian formalism and its French branch, structuralism, and starting points that take biblical texts as wholes, which is related to the American New Criticism. According to Kugel, such criticism can be traced back to the 16th century, when people stopped distinguishing between prophecy and poetry, divine and literary inspiration, and not to the 18th century. It brought about a new direction: reading the Bible began to be viewed as reading a "sacred" text as any other text (Kugel 1981b, 217–128).

8 For the influence of linguistics on the study of biblical poetry, i.e., understanding the biblical parallelism, see Berlin 1985, 7–30.

cal records by the term *colon* (pl. *cola*), as the foundation of biblical poetry. Due to the extensive and complex nature of O'Connor's study on biblical poetry, I will use the monographs of three authors – James Kugel, Robert Alter, and Jan Fokkelman – as my guide through literary-critical studies.

II.

According to Kugel, Lowth was the most insightful and sensitive writer on the topic of biblical poetry, as well as a remarkably talented writer. But even as such, he made a mistake while classifying various types of parallelisms into three comprehensive types: synonymous, antithetical, and synthetical parallelism. Instead of providing clarity on potential nuances, Lowth's classification resulted in ambiguity (Kugel 1981a, 12). Moreover, Kugel is correct to point out that, although Lowth was a philologist of rare sensitivity, ability, and even courage to pursue his ideas that diverged from the cannons of his time, one should question how such a striking and fundamental phenomenon like *parallelismus membrorum* may have already been predicted by numerous earlier researchers and critics. Kugel believes that the answer lies in the fact that *parallelismus membrorum* was not so much a discovery as an invention.[9] Lowth depicted parallelism as a system working in what is not systematic at all. Namely, "synonymous" parallelism, as Kugel has shown through many examples, was rarely truly synonymous, and there is no real difference between it and "antithetical" parallelism (Kugel 1981a, 57). "Parallelism of all the members" is not a structural constant, the *sine qua non* of biblical poetry, but something less consistent and more widespread than any organizational characteristics of Western poetry (Kugel 1981a, 68). Kugel resolutely asserts that Lowth's entire approach is incorrect.

Kugel believes that the parallelist style in the Bible is not based on sequencing sentences that carry some semantic, syntactical, or phonetic similarity. He also thinks they do not "say the same thing twice." Rather, he claims they are based on the sequence _____ / _____ // in which B is the continuation of A (A and B are denotations which Kugel uses for what Lowth calls *membrorum*, while biblical versification studies use the Greek-derived term *colon*), but is also separated from it by a, typically emphatic, pause. It is about a "seconding" style in which parallelism is important but not essential – the essence being the *seconding sequence* (Kugel 1981a, 53–54). Aware, on the one hand, of the lack of clear cut between A

9 It is noted by J. Kugel that R. Lowth called his discovery *parallelismus membrorum* with full knowledge that *membrum* is the standard Latin translation of the Greek "colon" in all writings on rhetoric. Lowth's expression is misunderstood. Namely, it was believed to indicate the parallelism of all members (words) of A (the first line) with all members (words) of B (the second line) (Kugel 1981a, 2).

and B (which means that those two merges into one statement) and, on the other hand, the lack of clear connection between A and B (which means that those two become isolated, independent statements), Kugel carefully examined how the subjunctivity of B is created. The separation of A and B, or rather their separability, is mostly a matter of syntax. When forming their connection, the essential elements to consider are the grammatical and semantic factors. Finding parallelism in both prose and poetry, Kugel questions the division of the biblical text into those categories.

The Bible contains a large number of genre classifications – words for different types of Psalms, hymns, songs, sayings, proverbs, curses, blessings, prayers, narratives, genealogies, laws, speeches, moral exhortations, prophecies, consolations, and rebukes. However, it does not group these genres into larger categories using a specific word that would correspond to what the Anglo-Saxon milieu calls poetry and prose (or what continental literature would classify as lyrical and epic genres). For example, talking about Solomon, Sirach 47:17 says: "Your songs, proverbs, and parables, and the answers you gave astounded the nations." Of course, the Bible does not contain any expression that would point to parallelism *per se*, as some *differentia specifica* between poetry and prose. Kugel believes that discussing poetry in the Bible, even when not based on metrics, imposes foreign concepts on the biblical world. However, we continue to do it because we have an idea about the topical, generic, and organizational characteristics of poetry. When we find those characteristics in the Bible, we observe them through the lens of accepted literary theory terminology. It can be hard to resist the seductiveness of this approach. The regularity seen in some parts of the Bible should not automatically be identified as denoting poetry. Biblical critics who label them as such may be unwittingly making assumptions about the Bible (and parallelism). However, a closer reading of the Bible reveals that it does not contain consistency comparable to that which we are familiar with in Western literary tradition. Parallelism is frequent, but not unambiguous, and so cannot be taken as the criterion for the poetry and prose division. The equation which states that parallelism = poetry has pushed critics into overlooking parallelism in "unpoetic" places, such as laws, cultic regulations, etc. (Kugel 1981a, 69–70). Francis Andersen arrived at similar insights. In his study, *The Sentence in Biblical Hebrew* (1974), he writes about "epic prose" in the Bible which is sometimes marked by the use of the same lexical props (repetitive parallelism), which often come in established order (Andersen 1974, 43). However, Genesis is "neither poetry nor prose, but epic composition containing both poetic devices and extended rhetorical structures" (Andersen 1974, 124).

Kugel points out that, even if the Bible contained something similar to meters of ancient Greek literature, such as parallelism, poetry as a generic term could only be used among Hellenized Jews. However, the Bible was not written in meters, and Greeks or Hellenized Jews who were steeped in the metric idea would

probably view parallelism as too loose a device to distinguish between poetry and prose. If this were not the case, we should be able to find a statement such as: "Jews even write their laws in verses" or something similar. Instead, the opposite happened – only those genres that were poetry in Greek were called poetry, or rather, metric, in the Bible. In describing Hebrew songs, Jewish writers did not recognize parallelism and instead imposed Greek terminology. Philo consistently did this, but occasionally emphasized the great variety of "meters," as if hinting that their structure is no longer understood (Kugel 1981a, 128).

So, according to Kugel, looking at the Bible through the lens of division into poetry and prose (lyrical and epic literature) means looking at it wrongly. He maintains that even meticulous analyses of parallelism can be distorted if viewed through this lens.

III.

Alter notes that discussions on biblical poetry tend to lean towards two extremes. At one end is an orientalist from the 1930s named Paul Kraus who believes that the entire Hebrew Bible is written in verses. According to Kraus, we only need to accentuate the verses properly to make them visible (this idea was already anticipated by Sievers thirty years earlier). Kugel stands on the other end of the spectrum. He claims that there is no poetry in the Bible but rather a "continuum" of loosely connected parallel structures in what we see as prose sections and "heightened rhetoric" in what we often erroneously consider to be verses (Alter 2011, 1–2).[10] According to Alter, biblical poetry is based on semantic parallelism. However, unlike, e.g., Theodor Robinson and Ruth Aproberts (cf. Robinson 1947, 21 and Aproberts 1977), who highlight parallelism in terms of synonymity, which is, according to Alter, a certain *statis* within the "poetic line" – Alter points out, appealing to Viktor Šklovski, the importance of understanding that the poetic expression avoids complete parallelism, just like language resists mere synonymity so that it constantly brings in small differences between cognate notions. This is somewhat close to Kugel's criticism of synonymous parallelism. Alter therefore believes that in the case of semantic parallelism, that many biblical texts are structured on, besides the sometimes almost bizarre repetitions in the "poetic line," "semantic alterations" keep showing up, too (Alter 2011, 9–10). Alter believes that

10 B. Hrushovski uses the term "sentence," while R. Alter uses "poetic line" (made up of two or three parallel lines) – which indicates that the term "verse" was not appropriate for biblical poetry. J. Fokkelman emphasizes that the so-called "biblical verse" is primarily a practical and liturgical unit that varies significantly in length, ranging from one up to ten "pauses" (Fokkelman 1999, 171–173).

many biblical texts, structured on semantic parallelism, exhibit not only bizarre repetitions in the poetic line but also semantic alterations.

Alter points out that at first, it might seem that semantic parallelism is an operation taking place concerning what Roman Jakobson calls the paradigmatic (metaphorical) axis or axis of word choice. More specifically, the poet introduces a certain term, such as "orphan," in the first line. Then he chooses another term, such as "widow" from the same general category for the second line. However, Alter continues, this is an incomplete and misleading description of what happens in biblical parallelism. The connections between the lines are often closer to what Jakobson called the syntagmatic (metonymic) axis – a movement along the axis of closeness that the poet turns into a real connection. According to this observation, it is more practical to reject Jakobson's "axiological imaginary," because what we usually find in biblical poetry is the derivation of the syntagmatic from the paradigmatic. Based on this, Alter concludes that biblical poetic compositions have a "narrative" (Alter 2011, 37–41). He disagrees with Shemaryahu Talmon's claim that biblical writers (although there are numerous allusions to Canaanite-Ugaritic mythology in the Hebrew Bible) avoided narrative poetry because of its association with mythological compositions and says this should not lead us to the conclusion that there are no narrative elements in biblical poetry. On the contrary, Alter claims that the narrative impulse, though mostly invisible in the structural aspects of biblical poetry, often reveals itself between the "poetic lines" in careful articulation (Alter 2011, 31). Admittedly, Hebrew writers used "verses" for celebratory poetry, lamentations, prophecies, liturgy, and insertions in prose sections, but very rarely to tell stories, unlike in the ancient Mediterranean literary culture. For example, Ugaritic literature was written around 1300 BC. It was composed in a language similar to the Bible's and follows the same poetic conventions, such as parallelism. This form of literature included long and complex verses with recognizable epic elements, such as alternating narration and dialogue, and a slower narrative pace that allowed for more detailed character descriptions, etc. There is nothing similar in the Hebrew Bible, and supposedly "epic" elements such as the historical Psalms (Ps 78; 105; 106) are very rare exceptions that are catechistically minded versified summaries of Israel's history without narrative "realization." We can observe a similar pattern in the poem of Deborah and Barak (Judges 5), where the exposition of the narrative event is omitted, assuming that the addressees are already familiar with it (Alter 2011, 29–30).

In his monograph, *The Art of Biblical Poetry* (1985), Alter outlined his understanding of parallelism and illustrated it through many examples. He conducted a thorough analysis of the poetics of the Psalms, Job, Proverbs, and the Song of Songs. He adopted Benjamin Hrushovski's concise definition of biblical poetry, which was introduced in *Encyclopaedia Judaica* (cf. Hrushovski 1971). Based on this, Alter discovered that, beyond strict parallelism, there existed a network of

flexible formal linguistic and semantic patterns. He showed that every couplet could utilize parallelism through elements such as sound, morphology, lexical associations, syntactical structure, or a combination of these factors. However, what appears to be crucial is the "discovery" of the joining of the "poetic lines" and their expansion into larger sequences. Alter claims that there is a connection between the formal properties of any given prosodic system or poetic genre and the type of meaning that is most easily expressed in that particular system or genre (Alter 2011, 75). He repeats this claim when he points out his allegiance to the insights of American New Criticism and, admittedly, from a completely different perspective to Russian literary semiotics. Then, namely, he notes that from his own reading experience (which confirms neocritical and semiotic insights) he came to the realization that poetry uses a system of complex connections of sound, image, word, rhythm, syntax, theme, ideas to transmit (opaque) meanings that cannot be conveyed by other types of discourse. This, Alter points out, is not "the idolatry of the text" (Alter 2011, 141–142). Poetry, in this case biblical, is therefore not just a set of techniques for impressively expressing what could be expressed otherwise. It is a special way of imagining the world, in a twofold sense: 1) poetry as such has its logic, its ways of connecting, and the implications that arise from it, and 2) each system of poetry has certain recognizable semantic effects that follow the momentum of its formal expressions (Alter 2011, 189). Alter points out that the prophets primarily conveyed their messages through poetry. This was not solely for the sake of poetic language's memorability or because of the feeling that poetry is a medium of sublime and solemn discourse, but because parallelism offered an especially effective way to convey imaginative knowledge of inevitability, a strong manifestation of the idea that what they were saying could happen soon (Alter 2011, 92). According to Alter, poetry from the later, early modern, and even post-romantic eras not only borrowed phrases, motifs, and themes from the Bible but also its way of viewing the world (Alter 2011, 263). A similar belief was held by Auerbach, who argued that the Bible had a decisive impact on the development of Western "realist" literature.

IV.

According to Fokkelman, the difference between poetry and prose in the Bible is radical in principle, but not in practice. The definition of (narrative) prose largely depends on the plot. However, only competent readers (I don't know what Fokkelman means by competent readers, probably readers of the original text) can see the development of narrative linguistic material. These readers may identify two basic principles of narrative arrangement: sequential and thematic. The story presents a sequence of events, actions, and speeches that follow a chronological order. Any accidental interruptions of the narrative flow by a sudden change are simply

exceptions that prove the rule. Meanwhile, the course of events and dialogues consists of a series of elements that are all thematically marked: every word, sentence, and paragraph is selected or crafted to contribute to the theme of the narrative. There are no unnecessary ornamentations, including descriptions of the countryside, someone's appearance, etc. Everything is utilized for the action. In principle, the poetry in the Hebrew Bible resists any definiteness through narrowing and corresponding plot rules and chronological order. A reader who has read Judges or Kings and then the longest and most famous poetic biblical books (Psalms, Proverbs, and Job) will notice this immediately. According to Fokkelman, it is instructive to study the literary culture of the time to understand the difference between biblical prose and poetry. In ancient Israel, storytelling in verse was quite common. The Greeks had Homer, the Mesopotamians, who spoke Babylonian or Assyrian for over two millennia (both being Semitic dialects related to Hebrew, Aramaic, and Arabic), had Gilgamesh and other epic poems, and the Ugarites had their epics that narrated stories about King Kirtu or about Daniel and Baal). On the other hand, Israel, as we have repeatedly said, did not leave any epic poems. If we carefully examine the Psalms or the Book of Job, we realize there is another difference and it is related to prosody. In poetry books, pauses are usually only one line long and are often grouped into two or often even three lines. The main difference between biblical poetry and narrative prose is based on negative and positive characteristics. Negatively, the poet did not follow chronological order or action, and there is no epic poetry. Positively, the clauses in biblical poetry follow the rules of quantity and meter, are more compact on average, and use all kinds of means for varied repetition more intensively. However, literary production in ancient Israel managed to blur the rigid boundaries between poetry and prose. For instance, while books like Isaiah, Joel, and Amos are almost entirely composed of poetry, the prophecies in Jeremiah and Ezekiel are associated with prose texts, and there are passages where it's hard to distinguish between the two (Fokkelman 1999, 171–174).

Fokkelman highlights two main reasons why the distinction between prose and poetry should be loosened: (a) descriptive and (b) explicative.

a) Prose writers like to add poetry to their prose at specific moments. We regularly come across pieces of poetic art in prose works, ranging from perhaps just a single verse or stanza to sometimes poetry of considerable length: a series of sayings or a poem consisting of six to twelve stanzas.
b) Sometimes, prose texts do not only consist of poetry that can be read as an independent whole, such as Lamech's Song of the Sword (Gen 4:23-24). Instead, the language the writer uses in narration can become more condensed and compact, suddenly approaching poetry (Fokkelman 1999, 175).

Fokkelman believes that combining prose and poetry, and even transitioning between them, is possible because most Hebrew sentences contain two to eight words and are usually linked in sequences through parataxis (using "… and… and… but… and then"). Poetry embedded in prose, on the other hand, serves different functions. It articulates the narrative material, conveys a lesson or message, and amplifies the meanings that are already hinted at or implied in the surrounding prose. These functions are mostly subject to prose, but sometimes we encounter a reversed situation where the prose is written to complement the poetry (Fokkelman 1999, 178–179).

Fokkelman begins his definition of Hebrew prose from old starting points, although he considers them to be inadequate. He asserts that the biblical poem is determined by two factors: a) meter and b) parallel arrangement of "verses" (technically referred to as *parallelismus membrorum*, which was introduced by Robert Lowth, as mentioned earlier) (Fokkelman 1999, 22). Regarding meter, he points out that 19th-century biblical science came to an important negative conclusion: although the "verses" in the Hebrew Bible may give the strong impression of rhythm, they are subject to rules that are very different from those governing the metric of Greco-Roman poetry and its offshoots in the poetry of the Western vernacular literature. Homer, Vergil, Sophocles, and Plautus all used a quantitative meter based on a clear distinction between long and short syllables. However, the difference between long and short syllables does not work in classical Hebrew. At the end of the 19th century, scientists concluded that the Hebrew poetic line was best described as a sequence of interchangeable accented and unaccented syllables, also known as an accentuated "verse." It was necessary to count the number of accents. However, Fokkelman concludes, there is a fierce debate about the nature of the Hebrew "verse" and it is very unlikely that the consensus will ever be reached. As a result, the focus has shifted to parallelism.

To adequately define Hebrew poetry, Fokkelman produced a critique of Lowth's three-part structure of parallelism (synonymous, antithetical, and synthetic). He raised three main areas of objection: (a) epistemological criticism (criticism of Lowth's terminology); (b) strictly literary criticism and (c) criticism of a structural nature.

a) Referring to parts of a verse as synonyms obscures the fact that they are not the same. Words are never identical, and their meanings are never quite the same, creating gaps between them. There are thousands of "verses" that at first glance appear to consist of synonymous articles, but upon closer analysis, reveal differences. Therefore, it is not appropriate to use the term "synonymous parallelism" for the relationship between articles. Lowth's second term, antithetical parallelism, deserves similar criticism. If we call two articles, X and Y, opposites, we are already assuming an antithetical relationship. But only when X and Y have something in

common, it is possible to meaningfully talk about the antithesis between them. This means that in every instance of synonymous parallelism, differences between the articles are evident, and in every example of antithesis between adjacent articles, there must be a common basis.

b) In the United States, contemporary scientific research has led to another criticism of Lowth's triad, which is more linguistic and literary than the first. This criticism suggests that biblical parallelism cannot be reduced to just three types, but rather has multiple forms. As a result, the term "parallelism" should be used as a very broad category with subdivisions within it. Recent research has revealed many different linguistic means by which parallelism is realized, making Lowth's three-fold division outdated, arbitrary, and oversimplified. This is because Lowth's model disregards the role of phonological and grammatical factors and focuses primarily on the semantics of words.

c) Criticism of the structural nature of parallelism comes from Fokkelman's structural view of poetry. He holds the belief that every poem warrants examination beyond just its words and meanings. According to him, there are numerous parallelisms present on multiple levels within the text that require detailed analysis and discussion. Essentially, the text is made up of a hierarchy of layers, each with its distinct characteristics and rules that contribute to the poem's overall effect on the reader. This textual hierarchy includes eight layers for short and medium-length poems and nine for longer poems such as Deuteronomy 32 (The Song of Moses) or Psalm 89 (Hymn and Prayer).

V.

Therefore, based on three renowned authors – James Kugel, Robert Alter, and Jan Fokkelman – known for their literary-critical approach to the Bible, we can conclude that biblical poetry, like prose, is to a large extent *sui generis,* and that any distinction between poetry and prose, if it exists at all, is not of the same nature as in Western literary culture, and it is therefore inappropriate to refer to *prosimetrum* in the Bible. Of course, one must bear in mind that literary-critical analyses (of poetry as well as prose) mostly refer to the Hebrew Bible. When poetic "verses" appear in the Gospels and other New Testament texts, they are mostly quotations from the Psalms or the prophets. For instance, Luke includes two poems in the first chapter of his Gospel: *Magnificat – the Song of Praise* spoken by Mary after visiting Elizabeth who was to become John's mother (Luke 1:46-55), and, shortly afterward, at the birth of John the Baptist, *Benedictus* – a "prophecy" spoken over the child by his father Zacharias (Luke 1:68-79). Both texts strongly rely on Hebrew poetry and its rules. They are collages of terms and phrases from the

Old Testament (cf. 1 Sam 2:1-11 – Hannah's Song of Thanksgiving). Fokkelman notes that the only original New Testament poetic text is the ode to love in 1 Corinthians 13 (Fokkelman 2001, 231, note 1). In somewhat rare literary-critical approaches to the Gospels, it is often pointed out that they use elements of ancient biography and romance, although their meaning was utterly different (cf. Elsom 1987).

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Krešimir Šimić

O novijem književno-kritičkom pristupu biblijskoj poeziji

Sažetak

U članku se iznose mišljenja trojice reprezentativnih autora – Jamesa Kugela, Roberta Altera i Jana Fokkelmana – važnih predstavnika tzv. književno-kritičkoga pristupa Bibliji, o biblijskoj poeziji. Prema Kugelu, gledati na Bibliju kroz leću podjele na poeziju i prozu (liriku i epiku), znači krivo gledati. Ako tako gledamo, čak ni minuciozne analize paralelizma neće biti od koristi – jer će se i one distorzirati. Kugel stoga smatra da u Bibliji ne postoji poezija, već samo „kontinuum" sačinjen od labavo povezanih paralelnih struktura u onome što smatramo proznim dijelovima do „pojačane retorike" u onome što pogrešno označavamo stihom. Alter smatra da je osnovica biblijske poezije semantički paralelizam. Ali, pritom ističe da je važno uvidjeti da pjesnički izraz zapravo izbjegava potpuni paralelizam, baš kao što se jezik opire pukoj sinonimnosti tako da neprestano uvodi male razlike između srodnih pojmova. Fokkelman pak smatra da je miješanje proze i poezije, pa i prijelaz proze u poeziju moguć jer velika većina rečenica na hebrejskom sadrži dvije do osam riječi. Štoviše, obično se povezuju u sekvence parataksom („...i ... i ... ali ... i onda ..."). Iz sva tri mišljenja proizlazi zaključak da je biblijska poezija, kao uostalom i proza, u velikoj mjeri *sui generis*, da razlika između poezije i proze, ako uopće postoji, nije iste naravi kao u zapadnoj književnoj kulturi, pa je stoga neprimjereno govoriti o prosimetrumu u Bibliji.

A "Religionless" Mission? — Reflecting on Creation's Place in Mission Theology with Reference to the Croatian Context[1]

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Abstract

Our world continues to change as a result of things such as rapid technological and scientific advances, the rapidly spiraling climate crisis, and shifting geopolitical dynamics. If mission is defined as God's ongoing work to reconcile, heal, and renew all of creation, the Church must spend serious time reflecting on what God might be currently doing and how to best participate in it. Dynamic missional praxis emerges from a robust missional theology reflecting upon the realities in both local and global contexts—thus, missional praxis must always be creatively adapting. This paper urges evangelical churches in Croatia to reflect on their past understanding of mission and engage in a missional hermeneutic involving the witness of scripture, the context, and the theology of the church. In this regard, it highlights a central issue in current mission theology and praxis—a missing doctrine of creation in evangelical theology. This has contributed to a church with a disembodied mission ill-equipped to speak to the crises of today. However, because of the current challenges, there is also a significant opportunity for missional engagement in Croatia.

Keywords: *mission theology, doctrine of creation, dualism, Croatia, context*

1 This article was written as part of a research project of the Biblical institute from Zagreb entitled "Evangelical Churches in Croatia: 1990-2020."

Introduction

The world continues to change as a result of things such as rapid technological and scientific advances, ongoing wars, and shifting geopolitical dynamics. In addition, there is the threat of massive biodiversity loss and climate change. There are now nearly eight billion people on the planet, and in the developed world, humans consume several planets' worth of resources every year, meaning many others go without. There are eight million known animal and plant species, with at least a million of those species threatened with extinction. For example, 50 percent of tropical rainforests have disappeared, which means 50 percent loss of biodiversity. Meanwhile, humans have reduced soil productivity by 23 percent, dumping 400 million tons of toxic waste into oceans every year. Climate change perpetuates the growing divide between the rich and poor- since the 1960s it has increased by 25 percent (Hayhoe 2020, Forward). Millions of people are leaving their homes because of war, violence, economic hardship, and climate change.

Such statistics are grim and overwhelming and thus can result in a variety of Christian responses ranging from prayer, intentional engagement, and theological reflection, to confusion, willful ignorance, or apathy. At a grassroots level, there is often an implicit dualism in evangelical orthopraxy— a subtle message that Christians should just focus on their personal salvation and holiness until going to heaven. This kind of thinking, according to Jonathan R. Wilson, can beget a religious system critiqued by Dietrich Bonhoeffer when he writes about a "religionless" Christianity— "religion" is something that accepts the way things are and offers rituals and management to cope (Wilson 2013, 70; Bonhoeffer 2010, 362–364).

Part of theological work is disentangling ideas from competing interpretative frameworks for one's theology to fuel an orthopraxy suited for the challenges of the current times. In this vein, one reason humans face such a crisis today is the natural consequences emerging from a set of ideas about the world that emerged in modernity and the Industrial Revolution. As Katherine Hayhoe puts it, inherent in modernity was the myth of the infinite earth and limitless human progress and development (Hayhoe 2020, Forward). This problematic ideology all too often became a lens by which evangelical churches in the West interpreted the Genesis mandate to subdue the earth and have dominion, intertwined with an eschatology asserting that the heavens and earth will completely burn up—resulting in a Christian perspective that is at best careless or apathetic towards God's beloved creation and at worst, just as exploitive as certain secular forces. Naturally, at least some of this theology would have been exported to Southeastern Europe by the waves of evangelical missionaries from the West sent over after Croatia's Homeland War.

Without careful theological reflection on the importance of physicality—matter, the world, our bodies— Jonathan R. Wilson (2013, 8) argues that this missing doctrine in evangelicalism has resulted in what he terms "church pathologies" of Gnosticism, de-emphasis on our bodies, and a narrowed concept of salvation. He argues that mission must be a "matter of witnessing to God's whole work in Christ for the salvation of the cosmos." These issues go to the very heart of the gospel as it has implications regarding our posture toward the world and our neighbor in terms of justice, love, and holistic action. Thus, if evangelicals take into consideration some of the current realities mentioned above, this requires a careful reevaluation of our mission theology and praxis just as has been the case in other eras when missiologists have been forced to disentangle a biblical concept of mission with the reigning philosophy or socio-cultural values of the day.

Fortunately, there are increasingly numerous theological resources that emphasize the importance of embodiment, creation, and a non-dualistic eschatology reorienting the church's engagement with the material world.[2] In addition, there has been a notable shift in the last few decades in which Christian traditions, denominations, ecumenical initiatives, and parachurch organizations promote the inextricable connection between Christian mission and care for the earth as our common home.[3] However, how well has this shift in mission theology moved into the grassroots of local church praxis? If the local church has no thoughtful response or engagement to the multitude of crises, that means the church cannot offer a convincing narrative to the surrounding community by which people can interpret the signs of the times—that is, the story of God's creation, reconciliation, redemption, and renewal of God's beloved world.

This paper first discusses the importance of understanding how context and ideas have influenced mission theory and praxis, highlighting the gap that often exists between theory and praxis. Second, it summarizes ideas and factors contributing to how the doctrine of creation gradually became de-emphasized in theology. Third, it focuses on one aspect of the doctrine of creation—the intertwining of creation and redemption and how that is of critical importance to mission theology. Finally, the paper brings these discussions together, suggesting the need for an analysis of mission theology in the Croatian evangelical context and arguing that global realities and contextual questions are an opportunity for deep reflection, asking the question of what would a "religionless" mission look like in the

2 See, for example, Volf and McAnnally-Linz 2022; Wright 2011; Willard 2009.

3 See, for example, the 5 Anglican Marks of Mission: https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2017-11/mtag-the-5-marks-of-mission.pdf; the Capetown Commitment: https://www.lausanne.org/content/ctcommitment#p1-7; Pope Francis's encyclical "Laudio Si": https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20150524_enciclica-laudato-si.html, and the global work and publishing of A Rocha: https://arocha.org/en/.

Croatian context in which the church lived as if salvation and redemption mattered for the whole cosmos?

1. The Interaction of Mission, Theology, and Context

Christian mission flows from our theology—our beliefs about God and God's relationship to the world through history. Although the Church's call to participate in God's mission has not changed— in every generation and cultural context, new questions and challenges should compel the Church to revisit her theology undergirding her mission praxis as well as the missional praxis itself. Mission theology necessarily changes in different contexts and historical periods, as it seeks to discern what the Trinitarian God wants to do in a particular time and place through God's people (Van Engen 2017). Thus, constant discerning and critical analysis is needed.[4]

In addition, there is always a need for a critique of past approaches to mission; through the trajectory of history, at times the church operated captive to the dominant socio-cultural and philosophical paradigms or subsumed faith within nationalism. The study of mission history is replete with examples, although a thoughtful critique is not so much about harshly condemning past mistakes, but rather about learning from the past as well as understanding the process by which the church becomes captive to the dominant interpretative paradigms. As a term, "mission" has been developed in different contexts and periods, sometimes holding unwieldy baggage as a result. For example, the concept of "mission" became fused with empire, power, and conquest during the era of Constantine, and this kind of entanglement resurfaced again as mission became intertwined with colonial conquest in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries (Van Engen 2010, 13). As Stephen Neill (1964, 450) summarized this period,

> Whether we like it or not, it is the historic fact that the great expansion of Christianity coincided in time with the world-wide and explosive expansion of Europe that followed the Renaissance; that the colonizing powers have been the Christian powers; that a whole variety of compromising relationships have existed between missionaries and governments; and that in the main Christianity has been carried forward on the wave of western prestige and power.

As another example, in the nineteenth century, spurred on by William Carey's writings and the evangelical awakenings, Protestants used what became known as the "Great Commission" in Matthew's gospel as an impetus for the mission. However, because of philosophical and cultural norms of the time, their interpretation carried the assumptions of individualistic salvation and assumed that the new

4 Charles Van Engen (2017) suggests as a helpful model that this analysis transpires within the nexus of concentric circles which include the Bible, church reflection, culture, and personal experience.

churches in the South and East should resemble the particular sending church from the North and West—Western culture was considered to be the height of civilization and that assumption became inextricably connected to Christianity (Van Engen 2010, 15). In the later twentieth century and into the twenty-first century, in response to some of the entanglement of mission and power and increasing individualism, evangelical missiologists emphasized a kingdom of God approach which is qualitatively holistic and purposes transformation. This is based on the *Missio Dei* or the mission of God.[5] As David Bosch (1991, 10) explains it, the *Missio Dei* is "God's self-revelation as the One who loves the world, God's involvement in and with the world, the nature and activity of God, which embraces both the church and the world, and in which the church is privileged to participate."[6]

Despite the need of every era and generation to evaluate the idea of mission according to the questions and issues in both the local and global context, often mission theology and mission praxis are operating in different spheres— mission praxis continues to operate from old paradigms and thus becomes irrelevant or ineffective. For example, the concept of polycentric mission—that is, mission is from everyone to everywhere, based on radical shifts in global Christianity—has been an accepted fact and researched phenomenon for years. However, in some places, the word mission still too often conjures up a geographic understanding of mission being missionaries from the "Christian West" going out to the non-West (Goheen 2014). Some churches in America might still be deeply shocked to run into missionaries from other places in the world. There are some mission organizations or missionaries sent from churches in America who have not deeply reflected on their mission theology or praxis in light of the dramatic global changes in the last fifty years. Conversely, some nations who have been traditional "receivers" of mission, such as Croatia, are also often locked into this idea of geographic mission—that mission is something that happens "out there," from "us to them" or "them to us."

Secondly, another gap between praxis and theory is the missiological discussions on the quality of mission regarding the focus on word or deed. More than a century ago, missiologists did not separate the two concepts; however, in response to sweeping changes resulting from war, social upheavals, and the birth of new nations, evangelicals began to emphasize personal salvation and preaching instead of ecumenical approaches to socio-political goals fostered by other Prot-

5 *Missio Dei* was first used by Karl Barth in 1932 and was connected to a Trinitarian theology in 1952 at an IMC conference. It has since become a foundational concept in mission discussions (Van Engen 2004, 98).

6 I summarize some of this history in another article: Wachsmuth, Melody. 2013. Missional Insights: Exploring the Foundations of Mission in the Southeastern Context. *Kairos* 7/1: 69–78. However, there are many excellent summaries of the evolution of mission as a concept. See, for example, Van Engen 2010; Bosch 1991.

estants. However, as the church in the West continued shrinking, the church in other places was often poorer and more oppressed, thus making "mission as only proclamation" less contextually relevant. In the mid-twentieth century, missiologists such as René Padilla developed the concept of "integral mission" emphasizing a more holistic approach to mission (Van Engen 2004) and the first Lausanne Congress in 1974 tried to seriously bring these two foci together. Today, some missiologists prefer the concept of "mission as transformation," defining it as the "change from a condition of human existence contrary to God's purposes to one in which people can enjoy the fullness of life in harmony with God" (Tizon 2008, 5).[7]

As mentioned earlier, care for God's creation as intrinsic to mission has come increasingly into focus—from various Christian traditions and denominations—through conferences, books, theological education, and organizations. However, at the grassroots level in numerous contexts, it still all too often remains a "side issue" at best, secondary to the real issue of personal salvation.[8] I contend that it is not just our rapidly changing world that calls for more analysis and reflection, but a deeper reflection on how an absence of a doctrine of creation impacts the theology of evangelical churches in Croatia and the church's mission to the world.

2. A Diminished Creation

A robust doctrine of creation poses the reality that the whole cosmos is created for God's glory, God loves his world and non-human creation has value to God outside of humanity. The diminishment of the implications of this doctrine has historical roots. Richard Bauckham (2012, 20–24) traces Christian attitudes toward nature through history, arguing that the concept of "dominion" in Genesis was interpreted through Greek philosophy from the Church Fathers to the early modern period, which emphasized a utilitarian view that creation was only created for the benefit of humanity. This was a hierarchical view in which creatures were irrational and thus questions of justice or morality were not relevant regarding human relationship with non-human creation. However, this view also empha-

7 This term also has its own history of development in missiology, with missiologists and institutions from Latin America, England, Africa, Philippines, and the USA. This idea was most prominently developed by Vinay Samuel and Chris Sugden, and they developed key elements to expound on this holistic missiology to demonstrate what holistic mission in a particular context means. The eight elements are as follows: "1. An integral relationship between evangelism and social change 2. Mission as witness and journey in the world 3. Mission in context 4. Truth, commitment to change and imagination 5. Theology, Christian mission and understanding are always local 6. Freedom and power for the poor 7. Reconciliation and solidarity 8. Building communities of change" (Tizon 2008, 5).

8 I've written on this issue already, see: Wachsmuth 2021.

sized God's supremacy over angels, humans, and the rest of creation's role in glorifying God (Bauckham 2012, 29) and thus is still distinguishable from the modern technological view and its aggressive expansion of nature. Moreover, there was also a parallel view, evidenced by those saints and mystics who went to live among nature and the animals as they strove to live lives dedicated to God.[9]

Bauckham (2012, 43) roots the modernist spirit of domination over nature in Renaissance humanism, which emphasized the dignity of humanity, highlighting people's divinely inspired creativity. However, the primary catalyst, according to Bauckham, was Francis Bacon's ideas regarding the role of science and technology in increasing human dominion over nature to alleviate the troubles of humanity in the sixteenth century. Bacon believed it was a human duty to use and even exploit nature as much as possible for the benefit of humanity (Bauckham 2012, 50). He believed that religion—which was more for a disembodied spiritual concern— had little relevance to the practical concerns of life which instead could be answered and addressed by technology (Wirzba 2003, 66). This gradually shifted the idea that humanity was part of creation, rather humanity became separate and an interpreter of creation's meaning (Wirzba 2003, 67).

The separation of humanity from creation, the so-called "spiritual" from matter, placed humanity as the "meaning-maker" through science and technology. This had significant future repercussions, influencing an aggressive domination over nature which developed from the seventeenth to the twentieth centuries. The contributing philosophical factors were complex, for example, the development of nominalism, which emphasized the omnipotence of God to the point where no connection to God's creation could be made resulting in the reality that "we could no longer speak of creation in terms of God's concern, delight, and involvement in a rationally defensible manner" (Wirzba 2003, 67). In terms of economic changes, Wirzba (2003, 69) points to a shift of economies driven more by the quest for personal wealth rather than some "transcendent vision of justice and the good." The loss of a doctrine of creation gave way to this anthropocentric view of a vertical, hierarchical, and utilitarian relationship between humans and nature. Heaven and earth became "objects" that were made for humanity and creation had no value to God outside of humanity. In Wirzba's (2003, 70) summation: "The sense of humans as microcosms of creation, as containing within themselves the responsibility to bring creation to its perfection in God, is eclipsed by the autonomous

9 Bauckham (2013, 36) tells the story of one such saint: "The Saxon saint Benno of Meissen (d. 1106) was disturbed in his contemplation by the loud croaking of a frog, and so he commanded it to be silent. But he then remembered the words of the Benedicite, which, among its exhortations to all creatures to worship God, includes, 'Bless the Lord you whales and all that swim in the waters' (Dan. 3:79). Reflecting that God might prefer the singing of the frogs to his own prayer, he commanded the frogs to continue praising God in their own way."

self who, with the aid of scientific technique, transforms the world according to a human plan."

This resulted in an "amputated" view of salvation, a kind of weak Gnosticism in which matter is not evil, but not that important. Christians continued to retreat from science and eventually, became focused on personal "redemption" displaced from the cosmos. It also resulted in a disembodied mission, rather than an "integral" or holistic mission. If bodies are not that relevant and separated from mind and spirit, then surely one must prioritize the spirit for salvation. Not only that, one must question to what extent these values of progress and development contributed to the mission enterprise, rather than a Trinitarian view of mission. Certainly, even today there are echoes in triumphalist plans of "finishing" the Great Commission or exploding church growth schemes regardless of contextual factors. Finally, a Christianity only suited to personal spirituality effectively removes theology from the public forum—material matters can be addressed by science and technology. Our ability to live the "with-God" life is removed from work, play, art, beauty, life, and death (Wirzba 2004, 70).

3. Creation and Redemption – A Kingdom Dialectic

To introduce a doctrine of creation back into our working theology, a helpful place to start is to meditate on the inextricable connection between creation and redemption. This relationship is what Jonathan R. Wilson (2013, 51) calls the dialectic of the kingdom – the kingdom being the "reality of God's redemption in creation." As he writes: "Apart from redemption, creation loses its purpose as declared in the gospel of Jesus Christ. Apart from creation, redemption has no purpose in the gospel" (Wilson 2013, 49). In Moltmann's (1985, 56) words, salvation history has no meaning outside of new creation because the ultimate meaning of history is the consummated creation. In other words, we cannot address the formidable challenges of our time apart from answers rooted in Christ; on the other hand, we cannot understand the true meaning of Christ's death and resurrection without applying it to the material world, the entire cosmos. This dialectic finally comes together in the new creation when the telos or purpose of creation is ultimately fulfilled (Wilson 2013, 53). The *telos* of creation, for which it was created is life— life sustained, rooted, and made possible by the Trinitarian God. Often in evangelical thinking, as Wilson points out, we think of God's redemption saving us from our life *in* creation as if creation is merely a stage for the play of salvation history—a static place where a cosmic drama is played out before whisking the drama to another reality, rather than creation also being an actor in God's redemptive work (Wilson 2013, 60). God's final renewal is made complete in the eschaton, when God, in all his holiness, dwells with all that he has made. Miroslav Volf (2022, 212) articulates the *telos* of the relationship between creation

and God in this final consummation: "Though indwelled by God, the world is not the divine other of God; precisely as the holy of holies, the world is the nondivine reality become itself by being indwelled by God."

What does this creation-redemption dialectic mean for mission theology? It means re-conceptualizing the word "mission" with this in mind. For eco-theologians, the mission begins with creation (Bookless 2023). Our identity as image bearers was intimately related to our relationship to God's beloved creation. As eco-theologians have noted, Genesis 1:26-28 and 2:15 is the first Great Commission—that is, to rule over our fellow creatures, to work and take care of the garden. The word "rule" must be placed within the framework of Jesus' model of leadership, which is "to serve." This first Great Commission can be connected to the second in Matthew 28—we are to make disciples in every tribe and tongue. These disciples are embedded in God's beloved world, in their own cultures and contexts—one foot planted in the beginning with God's reign in the garden and the second foot planted in the eschatological new creation of God's reign.

In terms of mission as transformation, part of community transformation is the ecosystems around the people. In the Bible, the land's desecration and suffering are often tied to the people's idolatry or practice of injustice. For example, in Jeremiah, Hosea, and Isaiah, the prophets decry the effects of sin not just on the people, but also on the land and animals, and the land itself goes into mourning.[10] In the present day, revivals and renewals in different contexts have also documented a return of wildlife or marine life.[11] An almost-extinct species coming back to life or rehabilitation of the ocean's coral reefs should compel Christians into worship a redemptive God in action—a small foretaste of a consummated creation teaming with the joyful cacophony of species freed from the curse. As Dave Bookless (2023) puts it: "Anything less than an integral approach to mission – seeking God's kingdom rule in every dimension of society and creation – is ultimately a denial of the lordship of Christ."

4. Mission in Croatia - Research Questions and Possible Trajectories

In light of global realities and this discussion on mission theology and the doctrine of creation, what are the implications for the Croatian context? Before engaging with questions of context, however, one must step back further and question what is the current mission theology or theologies undergirding evangelical churches in Croatia. This question is too large for this present discussion but suffice to say that it is a vitally important question in need of further research. As noted earlier,

10 See, for example, Hosea 4:1-4 detailing the people's sin and the effect on the land.

11 See, for example, documentaries of transformation on Fiji and the Inuit made by the Sentinel Group: https://www.sentinelgroup.org/.

Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) has been a receiving region of numerous missionaries in the last decades.[12] Macelaru (2021, 81) points out that often there was a significant sacred-secular divide, that the concern was people's souls without a more encompassing view of the Christian life.

In Croatia's case, there was an explosion of missionaries just after the Homeland War, primarily, although not exclusively, from the West (America, Australia, Western Europe). Even as Croatian evangelicals were active on many fronts (advocating for their legal status in the new democracy, theological education, humanitarian aid, evangelism, and church planting), undoubtedly Croatian evangelicals were also profoundly influenced by this mission-receiver, mission-sender relationship, and therefore concepts of mission were at least partially shaped by this relationship and influenced by values and theology bound up in Western mission organizations. To what extent this happened would be difficult to assess without substantive qualitative research. It would be an interesting research focus to ask regular members of evangelical churches in Croatia how they define "mission" and "missionary." For those who are in churches that have hosted short-term mission groups and/or long-term missionaries, certainly, answers would be shaped by these relationships and experiences and one could compare them to answers from churches that did not receive many missionaries.

A second question critical for this discussion of mission-in-context is understanding the critical questions emerging from Croatian culture and, given the tightly globalized world, the world at large. Is the evangelical church reflecting on the questions the culture is asking, or is it having a different discussion altogether? If, for example, some young people are concerned about the state of the earth, but the church's theology does not speak or cannot speak to that concern, they would likely be drawn to an alternative narrative that does address this question. As Dave Bookless writes about the history of A Rocha, an international Christian organization concerned with creation care, when A Rocha began 40 years ago, many thought its practice of studying and conserving birds and flowers was absurd since it was not evangelism. However, when this model of mission began spreading, he writes, "People of many backgrounds were attracted to an expression of Christian faith, often lived in community, and demonstrated by integrated care for people and planet undergirded by Bible study and prayer. As evangelist Rob Frost later explained, 'When Christians take the earth seriously, people take the gospel seriously'" (Bookless 2023).

12 Marcel Macelaru (2021, 80) writes that some missionaries and agencies operated from the premise that they were bringing Christ to "Eastern European 'godless' lands" despite the ongoing witness of the Church in times of Communism.

Thirdly, how can the evangelical church in Croatia connect these two Great Commissions—bringing together redemption and creation—as relates practically to mission in Croatia? Croatia is a highly relational context, so perhaps Moltmann's idea of a community of creation—human and non-human creation engaged with dialogue and praise to the Creator (1985, 5) is a helpful image. Caring for creation is not so much a *task* to be done, but a relationship to foster, honor, and enjoy as we move into our full expression as image-bearers.[13] This moves us away from the drive of progress and development that has so dominated modernity and modern missions—not being focused on results as our motivation. As Bauma-Prediger notes, "Many things are worth doing simply because they honor the intrinsic value of another creature or shape us into good people" (2020, chapter 2).

Part of this is making explicit connections between these areas of mission praxis, spirituality, theology, Bible, and relationship. For example, many people are unhappy when they see others treating creation with contempt—but perhaps do not know what to do with that other than get angry at people or the government. Or, for example, groups such as BIOM in Croatia which are doing wonderful work regarding conservation but are puzzled regarding how Christian faith could be connected to their work.[14] In addition, there are other groups with different guiding meta-narratives providing answers and actions to the questions people are asking, such as the radical group "Extinction Rebellion."[15] In this regard, there are tremendous opportunities and creative openings for evangelicals to engage in mission—to reconnect redemption and creation in a way that provides community, truth, nourishment, and ultimately the full picture of the good news of the gospel.

However, there are also more implicit connections. As mentioned in the introduction, it needs to be recognized that our posture with creation is related to the love of neighbor. Injustice, structural inequality, and racism can often play out in the environmental sphere—and there are many examples of this in Southeastern Europe within the general population but more potently with minority groups such as refugees, migrants, and Roma communities. Those without power are fre-

13 David Warners and Matthew Heun (2019, Introduction) refer to this in the book *Beyond Stewardship* when they told the story of the garbage in Plaster Creek. When the attitude was just on the task of removing the garbage, this did not solve the problem. Rather, they realized that people were treating the creek like an abusive relationship. Thus, the goal became about repairing the relationship between the creek and the people. In their words: "Plaster creek didn't need cleaning, it needed reconciliation!"

14 https://www.biom.hr/.

15 Extinction rebellion just held a gathering on the island of Krk in August 2023. I merely want to point out that although goals to conserve the environment may be similar, the view of reality and what will be in the future is different from a Christian perspective.

quently at the mercy of corporations, particularly when they are in alliance with political parties, and the poor lose access to quality land, water, and air.[16] As I have written about previously, a concrete example of this is when a displaced Roma community, from the war in Kosovo, was relocated to the grounds around the Trepça mine—a place polluted with dangerous lead levels. Although the global community eventually realized the danger in the lead levels (thus removing their personnel), the 600 Roma families were kept there for 10 years, eventually resulting in long-term disabilities and illnesses in the children (see Wachsmuth 2021). A biblical concept of justice is intertwined with the poor and marginalized and the land.

Final Words

A "religionless" mission is, among other things, rooted in the doctrine of creation—the dialectic of creation and redemption through which the Trinitarian God is bringing about the ultimate purpose of all creation. This is not a religion that manages our holiness, but simply an orientation toward true life, a daily *being* with God that frees us to honor, care for, and love our neighbors and non-human creation. The consummation of creation is eternal life—that is, God, dwelling in his full glory with humanity in creation. We are at home here in God's world, embedded in a complex web of life that testifies to the Trinitarian God's glory in diversity, creativity, and unity, but we are also pilgrims, waiting for the fullness of life. Such a theology connected to mission praxis could truly be a salty-seasoned witness of hope in a complicated world.

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Melody Wachsmuth

„Bezreligijska" misija? — Promišljanje o mjestu tvorevine u misijskoj teologiji u hrvatskom kontekstu

Sažetak

Naš je svijet pod utjecajem munjevitih promjena potaknutih velikim otkrićima u tehnologiji i znanosti, sve većim klimatskim problemima i pomacima u geopolitičkoj dinamici. Ako misiju definiramo kao stalan Božji rad na pomirenju, iscjeljenju i obnovi svega stvorenog, Crkva se mora ozbiljno posvetiti razmišljanju o tome što Bog trenutno čini i kako najbolje sudjelovati u tome. Dinamična misijska praksa proizlazi iz robusne misijske teologije koja promišlja o stvarnostima u lokalnom i globalnom kontekstu i stoga se uvijek mora kreativno prilagođavati. Ovaj članak evanđeoskim crkvama u Hrvatskoj predlaže da promisle o vlastitom razumijevanju misije u prošlosti i upuste se u misijsku hermeneutiku koja uključuje svjedočanstvo Svetoga pisma, kontekst i teologiju Crkve. U tom pogledu,

naglašava glavno pitanje u sadašnjoj misijskoj teologiji i praksi, naime, izostanak nauka o tvorevini u evanđeoskoj teologiji. Ovo je stvorilo Crkvu s bestjelesnom misijom koja nije spremna progovoriti o današnjim krizama. Međutim, u svjetlu sadašnjih izazova, postoji i značajna mogućnost za misijski utjecaj u Hrvatskoj.

Joshua's Journey of Discipleship[1]

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Abstract

This paper aims to explore the dimensions of Joshua's journey of discipleship. The thesis of the paper is that such a journey begins with Joshua's movement from the shadow of Moses to the shadow of the Lord. And that means that Joshua is not only a person who follows in the footsteps of Moses, but he also advances uniquely towards fulfilling the call of God. And that is seen secondly, in the way he continues his journey, in a movement from the generation of Exodus that became the generation of failure, to which he belongs, by age, to the generation born in the wilderness that became the generation of entering the Promised Land. Joshua became part of that generation, through a continual advance, characterized by a constant submission, in obedience to the will of God. This continual advance in faithfulness, enables Joshua, as it is argued in the third part of the paper, not only to create a generation of obedience but also to become an inspirational model for future leaders and generations in the history of the people of God. Therefore, the exploration of the beginning, continuation, and fruit of Joshua's journey of discipleship, reveals the necessary ingredients of any journey of discipleship, beginning with the departure from human models and patterns, and continuing with a constant alignment with the patterns of the will of God. Only as such, a journey of discipleship could have as its fruit a relevant legacy, whose helpful illustration is Joshua and his life.

Keywords: *discipleship, journey, beginning, obedience, faithfulness*

1 This article was written as part of the Zagreb Biblical Institute research project: "The Concept of Discipleship Among Evangelical Churches in Croatia."

Introduction

Discipleship is an important subject of the spiritual life. In his article, titled, "Evangelism and Discipleship: The God Who Calls, the God Who Sends," Walter Brueggemann, defines discipleship as: "… to follow God's presence and purpose and promise with the disciplines necessary to the project" (Brueggemann 2004, 122). Yet, it is regularly connected with the theology of the New Testament. In this context, the argument of this article is rooted in the conviction that one could find in the stories of the Old Testament many illustrations of the subject of discipleship, for example, "Moses and Joshua; Elijah and Elisha; sons of the prophets; sages; Israel as YHWH's disciple" (Măcelaru 2011, 11). In this context, Joshua's experience is a great model for the growth in spiritual maturity, a reality that is obligatory for any person who is engaged in ministry, and for the Christian communities in every generation.

Moreover, Joshua's story is a helpful reminder of the fact that discipleship is a journey of transformation. In this regard, Joshua's journey of discipleship, is also an informative one, regarding the necessary ingredients for such a journey to be a transformative one. When someone compares the beginning and the end of the book of Joshua, one will realize that the entire book is in one sense the revelation of the way Joshua sojourns from the condition of being the assistant of Moses (Josh 1:1) to the status of becoming the servant of the Lord (Josh 24:29). And this is for Joshua a lifelong journey.

However, for the embarkment on this spiritual journey of transformation, from the starting point of God's call addressed to Joshua (Josh 1:1-3), some vital movements needed to become reality. One is the move from being part of a generation of disobedience to God, to a generation of obedience to God. Yet, this move is not automatic, rather it takes a consistent embrace and internalization of the will of God that leads to being animated by God's perspective of reality (Num 14:6-9). In addition, the embarkment on this journey of transformation has as its fruit, the growth in spiritual maturity, that replaces the naivety of an immature assistant (Exod 32:15-18), with the discernment of an experienced servant (Josh 24:19-2).

1. The Beginning of Joshua's Journey of Discipleship

An attentive reader of the Old Testament will observe that in all the appearances of Joshua in the Pentateuch, he is under the authority of Moses. If in Exodus 17:8-13, he is portrayed as one of the warriors fighting under Moses' authority, in Exodus 24:13, he is portrayed as Moses' assistant, joining Moses in the unique ascension to the mountain of God (McConville & Williams 2010, 13). The next appearance in the book of Exodus, joining Moses, is in the context of the urgently required return from the mountain in the context of Israel's idolatrous deviation (Exod 32).

With this occasion Joshua positions himself outside the devastating circle of Israel's sin of idolatry, making the tent of meeting his refugee place: "Thus the LORD used to speak to Moses face to face, as one speaks to a friend. Then he would return to the camp; but his young assistant, Joshua son of Nun, would not leave the tent" (Exod 33:11). He positions himself as a loyal assistant in Numbers 11:28 and travels the road towards becoming Moses's successor. There are two instances in the narrative of the Pentateuch that are important for this evolution. One is the sending of the spies in Numbers 13, where "we learn for the first time that Moses renamed Hoshea from the tribe of Ephraim as Joshua (Num 13:16; also, in Deut 32:44)" (Hess 1996, 22). Hess' comment about the significance of this act for Joshua's future role, as Moses' successor, is very relevant. He compares Moses' act with the act of God in renaming Abraham and Jacob, a naming that symbolizes the future role of that person (Hess 1996, 22). Hess continues:

> Joshua is commissioned to succeed Moses in Numbers 27:18–23. There he is referred to as someone in whom is the spirit. The public commissioning involves Moses' laying of his hands upon Joshua and commissioning him (Heb. *wayĕṣawwēhû*, v. 23). The public transfer of Moses' authority (Heb. *hôd*) is partial, as Moses will continue to lead the people for a time. As part of his responsibilities, Joshua will stand before Eleazar the priest who will discern God's will through the Urim. Joshua is to command the people (Hess 1996, 22).

The preparation of Joshua, as Moses's successor is signalized further by Moses' confession in front of the entire nation of Israel. This confession contains not only a recapitulation of the past experiences with God (Deut 1:1-33, but also of God's judgment of Israel for disobedience, a judgment that includes Moses (Deut 1:33-37). It also includes God's validation of Joshua in the commands given to Moses, regarding him (Deut 1:38). God's validation is enhanced by God's direct address to Joshua (Deut 31:23). Hess' comment is again helpful:

> As the end of Moses' time on earth approaches, God assures Joshua that his role will include leadership of the people as they enter the Promised Land. Deuteronomy 32:44 describes how "Moses came with Joshua son of Nun" to teach the people the song of that chapter. However, Joshua's name is spelled "Hoshea," like his original name (Num. 13:16)…The intention of these events in Deuteronomy is to demonstrate that Joshua's leadership is based upon God's instructions, through Moses, to appoint him (Hess 1996, 23).

The entire evolution of Joshua presented in the Pentateuch, happens in the shadow of Moses. And this is signalized in the beginning of the book of Joshua where the death of Moses is connected with the address of God (Josh 1:1).

However, in the book of Joshua, he is the main character, "named about 205 times in the Old Testament, 148 times in this book…twice in the New Testament…" (Gangel 2002, 10). And in the way Joshua is presented, signalizes the

road he embarked, from the shadow of Moses (Kissling 1996, 69; Hawk 2000, 3), to the shadow of the Lord (Ps 91:1). It is another of "God's 'Now'… a turning point in history… The old age has passed… The news is about to begin…" (Hamlin 1983, 4). Goldingay (2011, 2) states this move when observes the fact that "Joshua takes up the story from the end of Deuteronomy," succeeding Moses "as the person designated by God to take the Israelites into the land."

Yet, Joshua demonstrates along the narrative of the book that he fully embraces this transformation under the guidance of the Lord. And for the narrator, this journey from the description of Joshua as Moses' assistant (Josh 1:1) to the description of Joshua as the servant of the Lord (Josh 24:29), seems to be an important theme, with important connotations for the understanding of discipleship as a journey with and under God's guidance. Kissling (1996, 87) underlines that:

> We have seen that a pattern emerges in the portrayal of Joshua. Joshua begins by being the recipient of encouragement from others (1:6, 7, 9, 18; 2:9–11, 24; 8:1; 10:8; 11:6) and develops into a character who gives encouragement to others (10:25; 17:14–18; 18:3; 23:6). The pattern is not a simplistic one of continual upward progress, for Joshua receives encouragement from Yahweh on one occasion even after he had stopped the sun. But the pattern is, nevertheless, clear.

2. The Continuation of Joshua's Journey of Discipleship

If Joshua's spiritual journey of discipleship starts with the road from the condition of being Moses' servant to the status of being God's servant (Josh 1:1; 24:29), it continues with the road from being part of a generation characterized by disobedience as a way of living, that leads to failure, to becoming part of a generation that makes obedience a way of living, that leads to success (Josh 1:2-4; Num 14; Judg 2:7). Joshua was, by age, part of the generation that was judged by God because their constant hardness, that became their way of living. Martin Noth (1968, 101) notices that the cause for their attitude was the "lack of trust in the powerful guidance of their God" and this is punished by God's decision that the present generation of Israelites should not enter the land.

The writer of the epistle to Hebrew underlines this reality as a warning for the recipient community of his address:

> do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion, as on the day of testing in the wilderness, where your ancestors put me to the test, though they had seen my works for forty years. Therefore, I was angry with that generation, and I said, "They always go astray in their hearts, and they have not known my ways" (Heb 3:8-11).

Joshua witnessed not only the spiritual deviation of his generation, the Exodus generation, but he witnessed also the fulfillment of God's judgment against them (Num 14:28-38). And this judgment is a consequence of their unbelief expressed in the acceptance of the spies' report that described the entrance into the Promised Land as an impossible task (Num 13:31-33). This report triggered not only people's old desire to return to Egypt (Num 14:1-4) but also endangered Joshua and Caleb, whose report was different, yet expressing their trust in the Lord (Num 14:6-10). In this regard, Matties is right when notices the distinction of Joshua, seen in his decision to continue to rely on God and His promise: "Major characters in biblical texts are often portrayed as ambiguous and complex figures. Joshua proves to be an exception. Based on the choices he makes, and the motives attributed to him, the narrator depicts him as relying completely on God and trusting God's capacity to do what God intends" (Matties 2012, 394).

Joshua was part of the Exodus generation, a generation that received great promises from God, yet it became the generation of failure. By contrast, Joshua demonstrates that even surrounded by people that make unbelief in God a lifestyle, is possible to be different. Joshua's life became a path to be followed by an entire generation, the generation of those born in the wilderness. He creates actually through his life (together with Caleb and Phineas) the premises for the formation of a generation that will experience the fulfillment of God's promise regarding the land of Canaan. He becomes "a paradigmatic Israelite who receives the gifts of God's active presence and who responds in faithful obedience…" (Matties 2012, 394).

The contrast between the two generations, the generation of the Exodus that became the generation of failure, and the generation of wilderness that became the generation of fulfillment, is one of the themes that seem important for the editor of the Pentateuch, for "God has preserved his holiness (in judgment), and his faithfulness to his promises (their children will inherit the Promised Land)" (Pakula 2006, 70).

This contrast constitutes not only a warning from the past, with an explanation for the fact that failure in obedience that becomes a way of living, is judged by a righteous God but also an encouragement that the generation of obedience transcends the age limits (Joshua, Caleb, and Phineas were by age part of the generation that perished in the wilderness). Moreover, this generation will always be characterized by a journey towards obedience as a way of living. And this is illustrated by Joshua's journey from being part of a generation disqualified by their spiritual deviations, to becoming part of a generation that experiences the fulfillment of God's promises for His people. The coordinates of God's promise's complex manifestation, as related in the book of Numbers, are summarized accurately, by Dennis T. Olson (1996, 85):

> The birth and promise of a new generation of God's people will rise phoenix-like out of the ruins of this old rebellious generation. The children of the old generation whom the rebels used as an excuse for not entering the land (14:3) will become the new inheritors of God's promise (14:31). The new census list in Numbers 26 is a sign of the final death of the wilderness generation (vv. 63-65). But at the same time, the new census list is tangible evidence that God's promises will be kept. A new generation of Israelites will indeed enter the long-awaited land of Canaan.

The entire book of Joshua demonstrates that Joshua is not the only exception, being accompanied by Caleb and Phineas. This evolution leads to a great legacy of Joshua and his companions.

3. The Fruit of Joshua's Journey of Discipleship

I argued at the beginning of this article that Joshua's journey of discipleship starts with the road from the shadow of Moses to the shadow of the Lord. Then, I argued that this journey continues with Joshua's separation from the generation of disobedience and his constant effort to be part of the generation of obedience. Now, I argue that Joshua's journey of discipleship ends with the road from the naivety of an immature assistant of Moses to the discernment of an experienced servant of the Lord. Joshua is acting as naive in a great crisis of the people of God, brought by their idolatrous deviation. At the urgent return, from the mountain where he was joined by Moses, Joshua thought that the noise from the camp was due to their preparation to fight the war of the Lord (Exod 32:17), and he needed to be corrected by Moses (Exod 32:18).

Towards the end of his life, Joshua demonstrates that he traveled a long way to achieving a mature spiritual discernment. And this is the first fruit of Joshua's journey of discipleship that constitutes his perennial legacy: the demonstration that only under the shadow of the Lord, one could develop the required spiritual maturity. One episode is relevant in this regard. It is the last assembly of the people under the leadership of Joshua, narrated in Joshua 24. He is facing the so often seen, confession of the people that they will obey God (Josh 24:16-18), and warns them that this will be impossible for them. His warning demonstrates a profound knowledge of their limits and propensity to failure seen in the Book of Judges 1:27-33, called by Serge Frolov, "A Litany of Failures" (Frolov 2013, 57). It is also a demonstration of Joshua's profound knowledge of God's character (Josh 24:19).

Gordon Matties (2012, 394) sees in this episode the fact that Joshua "takes up Moses' mantle and becomes the servant of the Lord (24:25–26)." David G. Firth (2021, 70), argues that the expression God's "servant," used to describe Moses, associates him "with David and the enigmatic servant in the book of Isaiah," yet, is used also regarding Joshua in the end of the book, provide a clarification that

Joshua continues "the pattern Moses laid down." For Matties (2012, 394), Joshua is a "prototype of the ideal royal leader," yet, more a "prophetic/royal figure who models faithfulness to the Lord and his Torah and who exhorts the people to do the same" (Matties 2012, 394).

Richard Nelson adds to the characterization of Joshua as a model, an important dimension. Nelson (1997, 21) notices first, the fact that "the plot of Joshua stretches out between the death of Moses and the death of Joshua, who begins as the servant of Moses ('attendant,' 1:1), but at the end is called 'servant of Yahweh' (24:29)." Then he notices that Joshua is portrayed as "a royal figure, one who particularly resembles Josiah." Furthermore, Nelson (1997, 22) writes:

> This becomes evident when one compares:
> 1:6–9 to Deut. 17:18–20 and 1 Kings 2:1–4, the royal standard of courage and obedience
> 1:7 and 23:6 to 2 Kings 22:2, the royal standard of undeviating integrity
> 5:10–12 to 2 Kings 23:21–23, royal sponsorship of a correct Passover
> 8:30–35 to 2 Kings 23:2–3, royal leadership in pledging loyalty to the law.
> In the context of Deuteronomy through 2 Kings, the figure of Joshua serves as a forerunner for the ideological role played by later kings, and especially for the expansionistic and reforming policies of Josiah. As his name seems to signify (Sir. 46:1), Joshua was the ideal "savior," who not only won battles and secured possession of the land but was able to hold the people to perfect loyalty his whole life (24:31).

The legacy of Joshua as a model for a mature, faithful servant of the Lord, is underlined also by the editor of the book of Judges. What becomes clear in the beginning of the book of Judges, is that Joshua is not only "a foil for the Israelites of the judges' era" (Webb 1987, 120), but also that Joshua creates a generation of obedience and faithfulness (Brensinger 1999, 40), a people that distinguish by serving God (Smith and Bloch-Smith 2021, 158–159; Wilcock 1992, 28). John Hamlin (1990, 59) rightly states: "Joshua's generation had 'served the Lord' (2:7) and 'obeyed the commandments of the Lord' (v. 17). The listening community may have been reminded of the good kings, Hezekiah (715–687) and Josiah (640–609), who 'did what was right in the eyes of the Lord' (2 Kgs. 18:3; 22:2). This was 'the generation of the upright' (Ps. 112:2) 'who seek' the Lord (24:6)."

Conclusion

This paper aimed to explore the dimensions of Joshua's journey of discipleship. First, the exploration focused on the beginning of this journey, a transformative one, as he departs the shadow of Moses and enters more and more under the shadow of the Lord. The fact that this movement is a reality in Joshua's life, was seen, in the second focus of the exploration of Joshua's journey of discipleship,

namely, his departure from the patterns of his generation, a generation of failure in embarking on a path where to benefit of God's promises, through obedience.

Joshua's life constantly contrasts the life of his generation, and his obedience, transformed in a way of being, qualifies him to be not only the successor of Moses but also to become a prototype for future leaders of the people of God, in history. Yet, in the end, was observed the fact, that the uniqueness of Joshua, is rooted not only in these spiritual movements that were decisive for his formation as a faithful servant of the Lord but also that his transformation became the key to the formation of an entire generation characterized by service of the Lord, in obedience and faithfulness.

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Daniel G. Oprean

Jošuino putovanje učeništva

Sažetak

Ovaj članak nastoji istražiti dimenzije Jošuina putovanja učeništva i pritom postavlja tezu da takvo putovanje započinje Jošuinim izlaskom iz Mojsijeve sjene i ulaskom u Gospodinovu sjenu. To znači da Jošua nije samo osoba koja ide Mojsijevim stopama, nego da jedinstveno napreduje prema ispunjenju Božjega poziva. Drugo, to se vidi u načinu na koji Jošua nastavlja svoje putovanje, krećući se od naraštaja Izlaska koji je postao naraštaj neuspjeha, kojemu i sâm pripada, prema naraštaju rođenom u pustinji koji je postao naraštaj ulaska u Obećanu zemlju. Jošua je postao dio tog naraštaja stalno napredujući pokoravanjem u poslušnosti

volji Božjoj. To kontinuirano napredovanje u vjernosti omogućuje Jošui, kako se tvrdi u trećemu dijelu članka, ne samo da stvori naraštaj poslušnosti, nego i da postane nadahnućem budućim vođama i naraštajima u povijesti Božjega naroda. Stoga istraživanje početka, nastavka i ploda Jošuina putovanja učeništva otkriva nužne sastojke bilo kojega putovanja učeništva, počinjući napuštanjem ljudskih modela i obrazaca te nastavljajući stalnim prilagođavanjem obrascima Božje volje. Samo takvo putovanje učeništva može kao plod ostaviti relevantnu baštinu, a Jošua i njegov život u tome nam služe kao korisna ilustracija.

J. I. Packer's Theology of Discipleship: Towards a Contemporary Evangelical Spirituality[1]

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Abstract

This paper is an attempt to provide a systematic perspective on J. I. Packer's theology of discipleship based on a descriptive, analytical, and critical methodology of theological investigation. Various references to discipleship in Packer's Knowing God (1973, the 2021 edition) were identified, analyzed, and contextualized to demonstrate six features of Christian discipleship (knowledge of Christ, zeal for Christ, spiritual adoption, spiritual realism, biblical anticipation, turning the world upside down) in conjunction with two fundamental aspects (Christ's personal impact and keeping God's commandments, the "two pillars" of discipleship) that constitute its foundation and were extracted from his Keeping the Ten Commandments (2008) and Concise Theology: a Guide to Historical Christian Beliefs (2011). The article shows how the six theological features of discipleship, and its two pillars are used by Packer to put together a contemporary Christian spirituality.

Keywords: *discipleship, knowledge, zeal, adoption, realism, anticipation*

1 This article was written as part of the Zagreb Biblical Institute research project: "The Concept of Discipleship Among Evangelical Churches in Croatia."

Introduction

Packer's theology of discipleship is scattered through his writings and this paper is an attempt to offer a systematic perspective on it. References to discipleship in Packer's corpus of writings are numerous, but one book that proved significantly helpful in pointing out various aspects of discipleship is his *Knowing God* (1973, although I used the 2021 edition). In this book, Packer makes some distinct references to discipleship based on which I identified six of its key features. According to Packer, discipleship should be understood as knowledge of Christ, zeal for Christ, spiritual adoption, spiritual realism, biblical anticipation, and – this last aspect is perhaps the most interesting as well as striking – turning our world upside down. Each of these characteristics of discipleship was discussed in some detail, followed by a brief evaluation of what I called "the two pillars" of discipleship: two realities that constitute the foundation of discipleship in Packer's thought, and they are Jesus' personal impact on his disciples and the keeping of God's commandments. These two pillars were found in his *Keeping the Ten Commandments* (2008) and *Concise Theology: a Guide to Historical Christian Beliefs* (2011). It is vital to notice from the beginning that Packer builds his theology of discipleship on the conviction that the Bible is inerrant in all its content, and this firm belief serves not only as a methodology for his theological endeavors but also as a source for his explanations. This is to say that both the Old and the New Testaments are employed to provide relevant texts for Packer's theology of discipleship, which he always directs towards contemporary practical applications in the lives of today's believers as the foundation for a relevant Christian spirituality.

Methodologically, I used a systematic approach that consists of identifying, contextualizing, and analyzing various references to discipleship in Packer's primary sources, specifically in his *Knowing God* (1973/2021), *Keeping the Ten Commandments* (2008) and *Concise Theology: A Guide to Historical Christian Beliefs* (2011); in this respect, I used a descriptive methodology. Then, I interacted with some secondary sources, the most important of which was Timothy George's *J. I. Packer and the Evangelical Future* (2009) – I used this book to explain Packer's perspective on biblical inerrancy. Another book that I found particularly helpful was Ted Rivera's *Reforming Mercy Ministry: A Practical Guide to Loving Your Neighbor* (2014), a source that shows how various facets of Christian discipleship reveal God's character. The last secondary source that shaped my understanding of Packer's theology of discipleship was John Armstrong's *Tear Down These Walls: Following Jesus into Deeper Unity* (2021), a book that emphasizes the need for togetherness in the community of genuine Christian disciples. My interaction with these secondary sources, as well as other books that I found relevant to the subject, is a demonstration of my analytical methodology. In providing my own, personal insights regarding Packer's theology of discipleship, I also used a criti-

cal methodology, especially in putting together Packer's primary sources and the array of secondary sources I used for much-needed clarifications regarding Packer's insights into the practical and spiritual realities of true Christian discipleship.

1. Discipleship as Knowledge of Christ

One of the first aspects that emerge rather saliently in Packer's theology of discipleship has to do with the fact that discipleship is connected with the knowledge of Christ. Thus, it is crucial for any discipleship – no matter how we look at it and from which angle we deal with it – to begin with and be built on knowing Christ. For Packer, there is no way around it: to know Christ is the first condition for genuine discipleship (Packer 2021, 38). Knowing Christ is not just having faith; in this respect, Alister McGrath writes that discipleship is "the quest to go beyond a superficial grasp of our faith, discover its depths and riches, and be refreshed and transformed by them" (McGrath 2019, ix) – a statement which is in line with Packer's perspective on what it means to make disciples.

Thus, Packer emphasizes that discipleship is a relationship; it is something concrete that happens between two persons. It is not something distant and most definitely not something abstract; on the contrary, discipleship is a concrete connection that places two beings in a bond that can be called a relationship. Furthermore, this relationship is – according to Packer – personal, which means that involvement in this liaison is neither optional nor theoretical but mandatory and practical. In other words, whoever does discipleship and whoever receives it are both involved in being together on a regular, if not even daily basis, very much like Jesus himself who spent time with his disciples and he did so every day: "… Knowing Jesus Christ still remains as definite a relation of personal discipleship as it was for the Twelve when he was on earth. The Jesus who walks through the gospel story walks with Christians now, and knowing him involves going with him, now as then" (Packer 2021, 38).

It is important, however, to notice that – contrary to (some) contemporary Evangelical approaches to discipleship which focus on a Christian discipling another Christian, Packer's model is different: it is Jesus who disciples another Christian, and this is the very foundation of genuine discipleship. Jesus walks with the Christian; he did so when he was incarnate on Earth, as well as after his ascension to this very day. Today, therefore, discipleship is as vividly and emphatically genuine only when we walk with Jesus, following in his footsteps and learning to do what he did. In promoting discipleship as a relationship between Jesus and the Christian, Packer uses the Luke-Acts paradigm which reveals the reality of Jesus' presence with his disciples irrespective of whether he was physically present with them during his earthly ministry or whether he was spiritually present with them after his resurrection and ascension. This is true because genuine discipleship is

not only a close and personal relationship between the Christian and Jesus but also the sort of relationship in which the Christian learns how to listen to Jesus' voice, hear his word, learn from him, and find rest in him (Packer 2021, 38).

One can easily notice that Packer's discipleship is based on a theological method which, as Timothy George demonstrates quite convincingly, is based on biblical inerrancy. Thus, George contends that, in the absence of such a high view of Scripture, Packer's discipleship theology would be invalid. It is biblical inerrancy that confers validity to Packer's Christological view of Christian discipleship as a personal relationship and walk with Christ (George 2009, 58). According to Packer, knowing Christ personally is the first step towards a practical Christian spirituality.

2. Discipleship as Zeal for Christ

Knowing Christ and having a personal relationship with Christ is not a sufficient definition of discipleship for Packer. True discipleship, he argues, must have a certain spiritual standard which is nothing but zeal for Christ. According to Packer, a person who starts knowing Christ and begins a personal relationship with him is a person who responds to God and this response has to be right (Packer 2021, 172). Packer's reasoning is simple: since God is profoundly preoccupied with us, so must we be with him. There has to be a devotion between the believer and God, between the disciple and Christ, but this devotion must be characterized by zeal and spiritual passion. In other words, our dedication to God as disciples must be visible to others as it is constantly informed by our reading of the Bible in its capacity as God's word. As disciples of Christ, our zeal must be total. In this respect, Packer is very clear: a disciple's zeal for Christ must engulf his or her entire life from doing good works and fighting against idolatry of all sorts to being willing to suffer for Christ in prison, like Paul, or even gladly accepting death. In doing so, Paul followed the zeal of Christ himself: "Zeal… is commanded and commended in the scriptures… Paul was a zealous man, single-minded and at full stretch for his Lord. Facing prison and death… And the Lord himself was a supreme example of zeal" (Packer 2021, 174).

Gary Parrett and Steve Kang also notice the critical importance of spiritual zeal in one's religious life, along the lines drawn by Packer. Thus, zeal must be consuming, a mandatory feature of any Christian who acts as a teacher in his or her relationship with another disciple of Christ. Zeal, however, must always be completed by knowledge – the knowledge of Christ, as in Packer's thought – because zeal without such knowledge does more harm than good (Parrett and Kang 2009, 182).

Packer himself is very passionate when he writes about spiritual zeal as a feature of genuine discipleship. Concretely, spiritual zeal must be aimed at "the house

of God and the cause of God" (Packer 2021, 174); it is the sort of characteristic that eats us up, possesses us, and consumes us (Packer 2021, 174). All these aspects of spiritual zeal, however, cannot become real in the life of any genuine disciple in the absence of prayer. Spiritual zeal is what defines the spirituality of true disciples because it is always anchored in the knowledge of Christ and a life of sincere prayer, perceived as a spiritual need. Thus, for a disciple of Christ, prayer is a "flaming" need that lights up his or her zeal for Christ as well as for Christ's body, the church. A disciple's relationship with Christ and his church must never be seen as "lukewarm;" on the contrary, it must be anything but apathetic and infused with repentance. Thus, in Packer, discipleship is zeal, coupled with repentance, and a flaming desire to work for the church, simply because working for the church equals working for Christ. But this work for Christ as disciples must also be visible in one's desire to be always revived by the Lord himself and the constant hope that Christ's word will reach those who need it (Packer 2021, 174).

For Packer, the reality of spiritual zeal is of paramount importance because it defines the veracity of one's discipleship to Christ. This is why John Steinreich points out that, as far as Packer is concerned, charismatics should be appreciated for their "positive emotional expressions of faith" (Steinreich 2016, 110) which are nothing but visible proofs of their spiritual zeal. Consequently, displaying a constant zeal for Christ is another feature of practical Christian spirituality.

3. Discipleship as Spiritual Adoption

Packer explains that each Christian should consider himself or herself as adopted; we are all, once we belong to God, adopted children of God. Each Christian, in other words, is not only a disciple; he or she is a disciple who is fully aware of the fact that he or she was adopted by God; this adoption, however, must be seen through the lens of Jesus' sonship. Since Jesus himself understood his relationship with God the Father in terms of sonship and since we are all, as Christians, bearers of Christ or *christophoroi*, we must also consider ourselves sons of God, like Jesus – but, of course, not ontologically, but rather soteriologically. We were thus saved to be sons of God or children of God and we have this capacity because we belong to God together with Jesus himself. In Packer's (2021, 209) words: "It is clear that, just as Jesus always thought of himself as Son of God in a unique sense, so he always thought of his followers as children of his heavenly Father, members of the same divine family as himself… As our Maker is our Father, so our Saviour is our brother, when we come into the family of God."

So the phrase "family of God" is the key to our understanding of ourselves as adopted children of God. Ted Rivera notices that, in Packer, the reality of our spiritual adoption as disciples "is no ancillary matter" because it reveals the very

character of God (Rivera 2014, 71–72), so adoption helps us understand not only who God is but also how he acts in creation.

For Packer, however, acknowledging that adoption is a key aspect of Christian life and discipleship is not sufficient. We must understand not only the fact that we are adopted but also how adoption should work in our daily lives. As disciples of Jesus, we must, once again, compare our lives to those of Jesus and see our adoption through the lens of his relationship with God the Father. Thus, Packer insists that adoption must take control of our lives, very much like Jesus' life was controlled by his profound understanding of his sonship. This is important to Packer because, as disciples, we are not merely part of a new family; we are part of God's family or, as Packer put it, of "the royal family" (Packer 2021, 210) – an evident reference to God's rule over creation. If we really want to know more about us as disciples in our capacity as adopted children into God's family, Packer suggests that we should read the Sermon on the Mount, which he calls "the charter of God's kingdom" (Packer 2021, 210). Having done so, we realize that genuine disciples must understand that, as adopted children of God, their lives must be featured by "Christian obedience" (Packer 2021, 210), an aspect that is fundamental to the lives of all those who want to follow Christ earnestly.

Jason Cherry does not lose sight of this issue in Packer's theology which he deals with pneumatologically. Thus, according to Cherry, it is the Holy Spirit who helps the Christian to see himself or herself as adopted "by empowering obedience" (Cherry 2023, 145). As Christians, therefore, we are disciples who lead a life of obedience as children of God through spiritual adoption. Being aware of our state of adoption, which is demonstrated by constant obedience to Christ, reveals another key aspect of Packer's Christian spirituality.

4. Discipleship as Spiritual Realism

According to Packer, spiritual realism is when a Christian understands not only that God is for him – in the sense that the Christian knows that he benefits from God's favor – but also that people who neither know God nor understand divine facts are against him or her as a disciple of Christ. As Packer puts it, spiritual realism has to do with "countering fear" (Packer 2021, 262); thus, in his capacity as disciple, every Christian must find a way to deal with fear which originates in people's opposing attitudes to Christian beliefs, values, and practices. The example Packer offers in this regard is that of Paul the apostle who was well aware of how people react to divine realities and how this issue affects a Christian's life:

> Paul knows that there is always some person, or group of persons, whose ridicule, displeasure, or hostile reaction the Christian feels unable to face. Paul knows that sooner or later this becomes a problem for every Christian, including those who before conversion did not care what anyone said or thought

> about them, and he knows how inhibiting and desolating such fear can be (Packer 2021, 262).

So, first and foremost, in their capacity as disciples, Christians must be aware of fear as a result of people's negative attitudes to conversion and godly life in general.

Greg Ogden writes about this aspect in Packer's theology when he points out, based on Romans 8:15-16, that the true disciple of Christ must learn how to deal with fear and how to put it off in the Spirit (Ogden 2019, 102). This is exactly Packer's solution: we must all think with our regenerated minds to realize that God is for us; it is the creator and supporter of the entire universe who defends us and keeps us in his eternal favor. So, Packer proposes an answer to fear, and genuine discipleship must always find a way to fight against such human fears.

To be dealt with efficiently, fear must be acknowledged; as a matter of fact, it is not only fear that Christians must acknowledge but also the opposition that comes with it. Pretending there is neither fear nor opposition is of no avail for Christ's disciples; any serious Christian will have to deal with it because fear is a human as well as a spiritual reality. On the other hand, Packer insists, that not being willing to acknowledge fear and opposition is indeed quite problematic for a Christian who claims to be a disciple of Jesus. In Packer's words: "Opposition is a fact: the Christian who is not conscious of being opposed had better watch himself, for he is in danger. Such unrealism is no requirement of Christian discipleship, but rather a mark of failure in it" (Packer 2021, 262). Christians therefore must find ways to deal with fear and opposition but all these methods must be profoundly anchored in the fundamental conviction that God is, as Packer emphatically shows, our "sovereign protector" (Packer 2021, 260).

L. Gruits-Sheppard confirms this basic truth of Packer's theology, especially from the perspective of God's graceful covenant with us (Gruits-Sheppard 2009) which allows us to liberate ourselves from all fears by giving us strength as we live as Christ's disciples. Living without fear while being spiritually aware of God's sovereign care for us reveals another characteristic of Packer's Christian spirituality.

5. Discipleship as Biblical Anticipation

In Packer, following Christ must be biblical, so discipleship – as a demonstration of our decision to follow Christ – must also be biblical. However, an aspect that Packer finds problematic (not biblically, but in terms of its reception by believers) is a sense of resignation in the face of the problems we come across as Christians. For instance, Packer makes it clear that most Christians find discipleship difficult and almost "repulsive" (Packer 2021, 266) because it seems that no rewards are attached to all the problems we are supposed to go through. History is testimony to the fact that Christians have lost loved ones, properties, their freedom, and

even their lives for their faith, so what is there to expect in this life? To provide an answer, Packer explains that Christians must adequately learn how to think in different terms about reward if they want to be true disciples of Christ. Thus, a genuine disciple will learn to live in anticipation of what he is to be given not in this life, but in the life to come – and this anticipation must always be biblically informed. The reason for such biblical anticipation is our awareness of God's sovereignty over creation, coupled with his infinite benevolence: "Paul's assurance that with Christ God will give us 'all things' corrects this inference by anticipation, for it proclaims the adequacy of God as our sovereign benefactor, whose way with his servants leaves no ground for any sense of fear or real personal impoverishment at any state" (Packer 2021, 266).

Randy Alcorn echoes Packer's sense of anticipation by what he calls "the anticipation of unending happiness in the future" (Alcorn 2018, 47), which of course calls for a dramatic and radical change of the believer's way of thinking, feeling, willing, and acting. And that can happen only when discipleship shifts the focus from the present to the future.

Packer reveals that biblical anticipation is nothing but spiritual realism focused on the age to come when we meet the Lord face to face. Any genuine disciple will have to arm himself or herself with this particular sort of thinking and the way to do so is essentially Christological. It is only in Christ that we can receive all things and it is only in Christ that we can understand, as well as accept, that our reward is to be fully received when this life has passed and we have met the Lord in the eschatological future (Packer 2021, 266). Losing things here is normal for a disciple of Christ; but so is receiving things there, in the future – we just need to learn how to accept this new way of thinking. This is why anticipation, a fully biblical sense of expectation as we patiently wait for the Lord to reward us as his followers, is a mark of genuine discipleship in Packer.

In other words, biblical anticipation means that, as disciples, Christians must learn how to wait; especially how to wait on God's perfect timing for everything. In fact, Christians have always been expected to wait in anticipation. For instance, Harold Hunter speaks about "the prophetic anticipation of the community reception of the charismatic spirit" (Hunter 2009, 115) and that was a major test for the first believers. But once the Spirit had been given, this expectation of anticipation did not wane. On the contrary, and this is quite clear in Packer, it became a feature of Christian life as we wait on Christ to teach us how "to live" on earth while having and anticipating our "treasure in heaven" (Packer 2021, 268). Such anticipation of future spiritual realities shows that Packer's Christian spirituality is consistently eschatological.

6. Discipleship as Turning Our World Upside Down

This is undoubtedly one of Packer's most interesting depictions of Christian discipleship. The idea he starts with reveals a rather disturbing reality of contemporary Christians which, in Packer's opinion, can be described in terms of being unsatisfied with our current situation. For instance, Packer writes, as Christians living today, we not only often complain about almost anything that is not up to our expectations, but we also display a sort of disturbing lack of satisfaction and gratitude about our situation and that of other people. To make things worse, Christians flock to enter formal or ordained Christian ministry but prefer the leisure of contemporary plenty. In Packer's words:

> …Look at our churches. Observe the shortage of ministers and missionaries, especially men; the luxury goods in Christian homes; the fund-raising problems of Christian societies; the readiness of Christians in all walks of life to grumble about their salaries; the lack of concern for the old and lonely and for anyone outside the circle of "sound believers" (Packer 2021, 269).

One could argue that Packer is quite optimistic about the state of today's believers because many Christians prefer not to care about their own "sound believers," to use Packer's phrase; the lack of gratitude is indeed a major problem for contemporary Christians in the entire range of Western societies. John Fonville explains why we lack gratitude: the simplest explanation is that we do not "know the adoptive love of the Father in the Son through the Spirit" (Fonville 2022, 165), so we do not possess and live out a Trinitarian faith.

What can be done in this respect? Packer has a very simple solution: we must look back in history to see how the early Christians lived their lives in ancient societies. First, Packer suggests, we must rid ourselves of the "safety first" attitude (Packer 2021, 269) which has been affecting our lives for decades. We must develop a perspective on life that is unconventional and dynamic; we should thus leave behind all the things that make us lead inhibited lives suffocated by worries and concerns of all sorts. In other words, we must live in such a way that we should turn our world upside down because this is precisely what the first Christians did. If we choose not to do that, Packer opines that "we appear as no more than halfway Christians" (Packer 2021, 269). We must no longer live in fear; we must move on boldly without concerns about our material, financial, or physical security.

Second, we must become conscious of the need to serve Christ beyond what people expect of us; as Packer puts it, we must learn how to break with "our social conventions" with the specific purpose of following Christ and serving him efficiently (Packer 2021, 269). This brings us to the third step, which in Packer's

opinion, consists of coming to terms with "the cost of following Christ" (Packer 2021, 269). This is to say that we must find new ways to move forward, not hold back when it comes to serving Christ without restraint and fear. Lydia Brownback noticed this aspect of Packer's theology, so her implied solution is that genuine discipleship should always find joy in the service that we render to Christ and, in doing so, we should learn how not to hesitate in our daily walk (Brownback 2010, 36). In conjunction with Packer's thoughts, acting courageously in all aspects of life is the only way to turn our world upside down as genuine disciples of Christ. This is the apex of Packer's Christian spirituality: genuine discipleship means living boldly for Christ in all the circumstances of our earthly existence.

7. Evaluation: the Two Pillars of Discipleship

Packer's theology of discipleship is based on two pillars. The first is his conviction that discipleship should be based on the "personal impact" (Packer 2011, 114) Jesus had on his disciples. What we must realize today is that Jesus' personal impact was first and foremost a historical reality that was not only based on his "atonement, resurrection, and forthcoming reign" (Packer 2011, 113) but also anchored in his "messianic role" (Packer 2011, 113). In other words, the historicity of Jesus' personal impact must characterize discipleship through time in the very same way it did in the first century with the first disciples. Christians of all ages as well as Christians today become disciples of Christ in the same way the first twelve disciples became Christ's followers: through the influence Jesus exerted on them and through the impact he produced in their lives through who he was as Messiah – and what he did by atoning for their sins, coming back to life for their sake, and promising he would return for their final blessedness. It is not that Jesus did not use various teachings to help them understand who he was and who they were; on the contrary, he did use doctrines but, in Packer's view, Jesus preferred to work with those who were committed to him due to the way their perceived his impact on them (Packer 2011, 114).

John Armstrong discusses the idea of Christ's impact in Packer in connection with discipleship which he sees as the believers' decision "to live the mission of Jesus" (Armstrong 2021, 174). However, this application of Jesus' work in our daily lives cannot be done unless we understand what Armstrong calls the "togetherness" that exists among genuine disciples (Armstrong 2021, 174). What we must understand as disciples is that we are together in Christ doing the same work for the sake of who Jesus is and what people can become as saved, committed disciples.

The second pillar of Packer's theology of discipleship is Jesus' conviction that genuine discipleship is rooted in "keeping his own commandments" (Packer 2008, 38). This has to do with the reality of Christian love which must always

be aimed at God the Father and Jesus as his Son. A true disciple will always love Jesus as well as God in his capacity as Father, but Packer seems to emphasize this aspect to highlight the importance of God's inspired word. For instance, keeping the commandments means that any person who is dedicated to following Jesus as a disciple must focus on what God commands him to do throughout his word in both the Old and the New Testament. Packer himself notices that the Ten Commandments, as part of the Old Testament, are flawless and therefore good for Christian morality. Had they not been so, Jesus would have noticed and would have informed his disciples to act accordingly, namely to avoid them. However, he did not do so; on the contrary, he was emphatic about the need to keep God's commandments and therefore his own commandments. As Packer writes, Jesus sees the Old Testament commandments not only "as having authority forever" but also "as central to true religion" (Packer 2008, 38). This is why he concludes that "commandment-keeping is the only true way to love the Father and the Son" (Packer 2008, 38), thus showing that genuine discipleship is a matter of profound love for Jesus.

This particular connection between discipleship and the Old Testament commandments is noticed by George van Pelt Campbell who writes that, in Packer, the commandments have a pedagogical role. In his own words, in Packer, in their capacity as disciples the new Christians are taught how to "behave through the Ten Commandments" (Van Pelt Campbell 2020, 141). This is a reasonable confirmation that, in Packer, there is no true discipleship without love for Jesus and there is no genuine love for Jesus without keeping his commandments as expressed in the Scriptures of both the Old Testament and the New Testament. In so doing, Packer provides not only a solid theology of discipleship but also a consistent Christian spirituality.

Conclusion

Packer's theology of discipleship may not be organized systematically, but it can be discerned from his works and then put together systematically, and this is precisely what this work is all about. Thus, using Packer's *Knowing God* (1973, and especially its 2021 edition), six features of his theology of discipleship were identified. The first is the knowledge of Christ which indicates that there is no real discipleship in the absence of foundational information about who Christ is and what he does. Knowing Christ makes discipleship a personal reality based on what we find about him in the Bible. The zeal for Christ is the second feature of discipleship in Packer, which reveals the need for true disciples to be ardent in their relationship with Christ; prayer is one manifestation of zeal, while repentance is another one, and they both feature prominently in Christian discipleship. The third feature of Packer's theology of discipleship is spiritual adoption and that shows that

we must understand discipleship in terms of sonship: not only Christ's sonship in his relation to God the Father, but also our filiation as children of God. Spiritual realism is the fourth characteristic of discipleship in Packer's theology and this has to do with the necessity to be fully aware of who God is and then who we are; at the same time, as Christians, we must know that our allegiance to Jesus may lead to conflicts and persecution, so overcoming fear is what spiritual realism consists of. The fifth feature of Packer's theology of discipleship is biblical anticipation which teaches us to expect divine rewards in the eschatological future that awaits us as Christians, not necessarily in this world and certainly not in terms of the world. Waiting for God to respond and thus learning how to be happy in Christ are merely two aspects that define biblical anticipation in Jesus' disciples. Turning the world upside down is Packer's sixth, and last, feature of Christian discipleship and this presents us with the constant challenge of living in the world for Christ, and not for the world. To turn the world upside down, genuine disciples must learn not to expect what ordinary people want from life but to put their entire trust in God regardless of how the world treats them.

These six features of Packer's theology of discipleship are anchored in what I call "the two pillars," which are nothing but two theological aspects that provide the foundation for Packer's perspective on Christian discipleship. Having found them in Packer's *Keeping the Ten Commandments* (2008) and *Concise Theology: A Guide to Historic Christian Beliefs* (2011), these two pillars of discipleship are Jesus' personal impact and commandment-keeping. A genuine disciple of Christ, therefore, will always be fully aware that he exists as a follower of Christ due to the influence exerted on him by Christ's person and work. Then, he must know that this personal impact can only be acknowledged and shown practically by keeping all God's commandments revealed in the Scriptures which, in Packer, are God's inspired and inerrant word. Packer's theology of discipleship deals not only with theoretical issues but also with practical matters. The latter amply demonstrates that what Packer offers by his numerous references to discipleship is nothing but a sound and coherent perspective on Christian spirituality.

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Corneliu C. Simuț

Teologija učeništva J. I. Packera:
Prema suvremenoj evanđeoskoj duhovnosti

Sažetak

Cilj je ove studije iznijeti sustavan pregled teologije učeništva J. I. Packera. Temelji se na deskriptivnoj, analitičkoj i kritičkoj metodologiji teološkog istraživanja, a izdvaja, analizira i kontekstualizira različita promišljanja o učeništvu koja nalazimo u Packerovu djelu *Knowing God* (1973., izdanje iz 2021.). Studija ističe šest odlika kršćanskog učeništva (spoznaja Krista, žar za Krista, duhovno posvojenje, duhovni realizam, biblijsko iščekivanje, okretanje svijeta naglavačke) zajedno s dva aspekta (Kristov osobni utjecaj i čuvanje Božjih zapovijedi, „dva stupa" učeništva) koji čine temelj učeništva, a koje nalazimo u njegovim djelima *Keeping the Ten Commandments* (2008) i *Concise Theology: A Guide to Historical Christian Beliefs* (2011). Članak pokazuje način na koji je Packer koristio ovih šest teoloških odlika i dva stupa učeništva kako bi sazdao suvremenu kršćansku duhovnost.

BOOK REVIEWS

Dennis Allen
Disciple Dilemma
New York: Morgan James Faith, 2022, pp. 310

The New Testament concept of "disciple" is not immediately accessible to most readers today. This has led some contemporary pastors, theologians, and lay leaders to attempt to bring discipleship closer to those who claim to be followers of Jesus. Dennis Allen, and his book *The Disciple Dilemma (TDD)*, is one of the latest examples. *TDD* is Allen's passionate expression of how leaders can rediscover the New Testament call to discipleship and redirect the people they work with to follow Jesus' call authentically. This three-part book published by Morgan James Faith, contains 310 pages, and includes an introduction and conclusion by the author.

As a six-time CEO in various sectors of the business world, Allen brings a lifetime of experience to the table. His goal is that this book would "result in a strategic change of direction" (p. xxvii). To that end, Allen explores and articulates the dilemma in the first part, points to the consequences the problem has caused in the second section, and finishes the book with strategies for how to move forward. This direct, to-the-point volume ultimately engages today's reader in a conversation about how to make disciples the way Jesus did.

In the Introduction, the author equates the operating system (O/S) of computers with the Kingdom of God. Allen's conviction is that the O/S has been hacked. This leads to Chapter 1 where the various symptoms of the dilemma are demonstrated showing a decline in attendance in Western churches and a loosening of some of the evangelical's core convictions, among other things. He shows the contrast between the New Testament and modern understandings of discipleship, concluding that these symptoms demonstrate a deep cause for concern. The disciple dilemma is ultimately a question of whether leaders will leave ineffective traditions behind and lead the way toward needed changes and outcomes (p. 17).

In Chapter 2, Allen challenges the maxim "Salvation is free, lordship is optional" by looking at how this mindset arose in the 4th century during Constantine's reign. Jesus' call to give up everything (Luke 14:26-33) is recalled as the author reminds Christians that discipleship means commitment. He claims that an "optional lord-

ship" tradition has thrived from the time of Caesar to the modern day (p. 31). For Allen, this is one of the six traditions that have led to the dilemma in discipling.

Chapter 3 looks at the second tradition the author will challenge; "underdiscipled converts." To Allen, mere salvation is not the end goal of the mission - discipling is. "When converts become the mission, the imperative is getting the next convert, not developing the existing disciples" (p. 35). Allen offers examples of Christian converts "de-converting" to other religions or belief systems and cites a lack of discipleship as the primary cause. Salvation, something to be celebrated, ought to be simply the *beginning* of a life surrendered to Christ rather than the end goal.

In Chapter 4, the author turns his attention from the "underdiscipled" Christian to the corrupt leader. The third of six traditions in the disciple dilemma is dysfunctional power. "Whether unintentional or malicious, power and influence unhinged from the mission will consume everything else" (p. 57). This is seen in Constantine's rule over the Roman Empire when the church suddenly experienced unexpected legitimacy and influence. Disciples, rather than existing to advance political or social power, are called to develop other disciples. It's here that Allen emphasizes Jesus' example of humility and Paul's encouragement to boast in the Lord (1 Corinthians 1:31). Discipleship is all about living in authentic relationships rather than grasping for power.

In Chapter 5, the author discusses clericalism as the fourth tradition of the dilemma. Clericalism, as Allen defines it, is a "niche form of power and influence that sends a message to regular disciples that they are unworthy of doing things that the professional Christians do" (p. 86). This problem leads ultimately to disciples being isolated and, therefore, paralyzed. Jesus showed a different way, as did the church before Constantine (p. 89). Allen deals with the fifth unhealthy tradition in Chapter 6: size dynamics. Drawing on examples of mega-church pastors and others that react against this phenomenon, the author argues that an emphasis on size detracts from the biblical understanding of effective discipling. "If discipleship is to succeed, growth must be a symptom of a strategy, not the strategy itself" (p. 113).

In Chapter 7, the final tradition hindering discipleship is addressed, that is, letting distractions get in the way of the mission. Allen puts it this way: "When the main thing isn't driving all the other things, the other things drive the main thing. Not a good thing" (p. 121). Throughout the chapter, various distractions that have derailed the church are presented. But Allen is clear: Making disciples is *the* primary mission. Therefore, among all the things leaders are to be concerned about, discipleship must remain the main thing.

These six traditions are taken up in the second part of the book which describes the dilemma's effects. Chapter 8 looks at the consequences the traditions have on the individual disciple, while Chapter 9 examines how they affect the Christian

community. Allen summarizes the problem as it relates to both: "Disciples today live with the baggage and practices of long-embraced but dysfunctional traditions. These traditions are silencing, intimidating, and isolating disciples across the Christian landscape, taking the voices and lives out of the visible world" (p. 157).

The final part of the book suggests new paths forward. In Chapter 10, Allen presents three kinds of disciples: disciples who disciple others, students, and unbelieving disciples. Realizing that there are disciples who do not yet believe drives Allen's understanding that being a disciple involves a dynamic process of learning and growing. This development is to take place within a community of other disciples. Ultimately, being a disciple is Christ-centered. "A disciple must instinctively grasp the fact that purpose, meaning, and destiny are possible only in Christ" (p. 192).

Mission and culture are outlined in chapters 11 and 12. To Allen, "discipleship is the mission" (p. 231) therefore the vision and culture must fall in line. Anything outside of this focus will only detract from making disciples. Understanding that this could be counter-cultural in many settings, Allen offers practical ways for leaders to get started.

Chapters 13 and 14 put the exclamation point on the entire book by strongly appealing to leaders to take charge, make the necessary changes, and get started. Allen steers his reader away from celebrity and power and onto the straight road of discipling the way Jesus modeled. This includes relational leadership. Leaders that fit the model Allen is promoting are "humble, gracious followers of Christ called to lead so the community's disciples can flourish making disciples" (p. 251). Chapter 14 offers leader's encouragement and advice on how to stay focused on the mission during times of crisis. Allen concludes on a personal note conveying his conviction that leaders should take responsibility for restoring a discipleship very different from modernity's version (p. 265).

This book is for leaders who understand that something is amiss and want to be more effective in obeying Jesus' commission to make disciples. To this end, Allen has made a compelling case. Because it is penned from the perspective of a CEO and businessman who writes from a certain evangelical background, readers within this culture will likely relate easily to his colorful anecdotes and conversational style. On the other hand, this may be a drawback for audiences (including this reviewer) outside of Allen's context. Additionally, there is a certain one-size-fits-all presupposition underlying *TDD*. It appears as if Allen assumes that what he is suggesting can be implemented everywhere his readers are enthusiastic about following his lead. There very well may be legitimate cultural barriers Allen's readers encounter that would require a more nuanced approach.

Yet, Allen's focus is Christ-centered. He is at his best when he emphasizes Jesus' way of discipling in contrast to many contemporary methods and tactics. "God's

kingdom does not advance by co-opting political or social power. It does not advance demanding moral fealty by non-believers. It advances by disciples making and developing other disciples" (p. 65). Allen consistently points his readers to Christ and the way the Lord modeled discipleship. This is the greatest strength of the book.

His attention to the significance of relationships is also noteworthy. "The core of culture change is from leaders in relationship, helping people to comprehend and to want to come along on the journey of a body of believers aimed at biblical discipleship" (p. 246). As Allen notes in several passages, this important truth often gets overlooked in the busyness of many local church ministries. Leaders would do well to heed Allen's advice here. *The Disciple Dilemma* additionally offers a strong emphasis on disciples living and working among unbelievers to be salt and light. The Christo-centric understanding of lordship and the primacy of mission recommends this book to leaders trying to discern what it means to make disciples.

Jeremy Bohall

Samuel L. Bray (Editor), Drew Nathaniel Keane (Editor)
The 1662 Book of Common Prayer: International Edition
Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2021, pp. 782

In recent years, perhaps decades, Christians from free churches have shown a renewed interest in liturgy. Several friends and acquaintances of mine have, purposefully or incidentally, found their spiritual home in the evangelical episcopal churches. Then, some understand the importance of prescribed and historically grounded liturgy but are prevented by their theological beliefs from abandoning their traditions solely for liturgy. It is important to note that every church has a liturgy, regardless of how elaborate or spontaneous it may be, and even spontaneous and "Spirit-led" worship in some churches amounts to liturgical expectations that should not be violated.

In this context, several decades ago, a Croatian document titled *Bogoslužni red baptističkih crkava* (Liturgical order of Baptist Churches) was created to foster a more liturgical style of worship. It was authored by Dr. Jasmin Milić, now the Bishop of the Protestantska reformirana kršćanska crkva in Croatia, and further refined for use in Baptist churches by pastor Giorgio Grlj (2022, email). Nevertheless, Baptist pastors mainly use it for special occasions such as ordinations, baptisms, weddings, or funerals.

It is possible to approach this phenomenon as we would approach many evangelical fads. It is true that until recently, many swore that the church growth movement would change the world. So it is possible to become infatuated that liturgical renewal is the missing ingredient for our individuals and churches to become spiritually more mature. Yet, just because something is not a magic bullet, it does not follow that this is not important for the church's life. According to Dr. James K. A. Smith, a Pentecostal philosopher (Smith 2010, xii), liturgy is an integral aspect of life and worship in churches and other Christian institutions since thoughtful Christian liturgies can counter the powerful influence of secular culture, which often molds us into adopting worldly worldviews and mentalities through its own "cultural liturgies." Christian liturgies can positively shape us into more Christlike individuals since forming Christian disciples involves more than the intellectual aspect of discipleship. Smith, therefore, encourages the development of liturgical habits, the use of rituals (such as the Sacraments), and immersion in the story of Christianity (Smith 2013).

An important aspect of this immersion in the story of Christianity—which should not be identified and reduced only to the biblical story—is immersion in historical Christian words and practices. As Croatian Baptist theologian, Enoh Šeba (2022, 63) pointed out, our "acts of worship (should be) woven from decades or centuries of practice." In such liturgy immersed in history, believers can find "the security of order," as opposed to the sermon which, according to Šeba, brings the needed "variation in the existing order."

In other words, it is comforting to know that parts of our prescribed worship were used by Christians for centuries. As we recite the Lord's Prayer, we unite with fellow Christians of all denominations and collectively address God as "*Our* Father." Moreover, the recitation of one of the revered Christian Creeds which passed down through generations and resounded the walls of both Church Fathers and the Reformers, serves as a poignant reminder of our shared faith and heritage.

I trust this clarifies the purpose behind a Baptist theologian reviewing an Anglican liturgical guide. There is value in studying other Christian traditions and the strengths they possess. We can also integrate certain elements that align with our traditions, using them to inspire growth and progress.

In 1549, the Anglican Archbishop of Canterbury, Thomas Cranmer, authored and released the first edition of *The Book of Common Prayer*. Over time, various changes in monarchs, and thus the Heads of the English Church, led to the book being prohibited and causing disputes. Therefore, it underwent multiple revisions until it reached its current version in 1662, long after Archbishop Cranmer's death as a martyr in 1556.

Cranmer wanted to create a prayer book to bridge the gap or better keep the best parts of Catholic and Protestant liturgies. Indeed, he envisioned it as liturgical

"via Media" (Jacobs 2013, 90). He achieved this by introducing a prayerbook written in beautiful and dignified English rather than Latin. However, he also drew from various sources to create its forms, much of which had ancient roots (Jacobs 2013, 17). This innovative approach caused Cranmer and his book to face both persecution from Catholic monarchs and rejection from more radical Protestants of the time (Cummings 2018, 3).

The book commences with a preface from 1662, which presents the latest edition of the work and elucidates certain modifications made to the text to ensure its relevance to modern times. It then guides readers on utilizing the Book as a tool for "Morning and Evening Prayer on Sundays and other holy days throughout the year" (p. xxix). Subsequently, readers will find a collection of morning and evening prayers (p. 1–26), the Athanasian Creed (pp. 27–30), the Litany, and its concluding prayers (pp. 31–48).

These chapters are followed by prayers and readings from the Epistles and Gospels for use on various holy days throughout the year (pp. 49–240). The prayerbook then follows the ordinary course of human life, supplying ministers and believers with a Catechism and the order of services for the Lord's Supper (pp. 241–270), public baptism of infants, and those of "Riper Years" (pp. 271–299), Confirmation, matrimony, visitation of the sick, burial of the dead, and thanksgiving of women after childbirth (pp. 300–352). Finally, there is a liturgy of commination to be recited after the Litany, which invites sinners to repent of their sins by reading "the general sentences of God's cursing against impenitent sinners," followed by prayer for forgiveness (pp. 353–361).

Cranmer extensively used the Psalter (Jacobs 2013, 37). He divided it into 30 daily readings for each day of the month, to be repeated annually (pp. 362–561). As England was emerging as a maritime power in 1662, the committee introduced "Forms of Prayer to Be Used at Sea" (pp. 562–577) for morning and evening services, as well as for extraordinary occasions and dangers (Jacobs 2013, 89). These prayers are followed by "The Ordinal" (pp. 579–625), which guides ordaining and consecrating "bishops, priests, and deacons," indicating that Anglicans value the trifold order and apostolic succession. Finally, thirty-nine "Articles of Religion" (pp. 628–645) serve as the theological foundation of Anglicanism.

The book concludes with a letter from the modern editors (pp. 648–653) and five appendices. Appendix I is titled "The Homily of Justification," Appendix II contains "Additional Prayers & Thanksgivings," Appendix III provides "Additional Rubrics" (or alternate readings), Appendix IV presents "An Alternative Table of Lessons," and Appendix V is a "Glossary."

Cranmer and those who edited his work were careful to address Christian life from several sides. As noted, the prayer book follows the ordinary flow of human life, from baptism to funeral. It also addresses its many diverse circumstances,

giving us prayers to utter in times of joy, repentance, and weeping. Of course, it follows the church calendar year as well. Some Protestant readers will be surprised by how many holy days the prayer book celebrates. It starts on January 1st with "Circumcision of our Lord," and some of the holy days are "Epiphany of our Lord" (Jan 6th), "Conversion of St. Paul" (Jan 25th), "All Saints' Day" (Nov 1st), and then the year ends with four holidays "Christmas Day," "St. Stephen, First Martyr," "St. John, A. & E.", and "Innocents' Day" (Dec 25th-28th). Most surprisingly, with its Morning and Evening Prayers (Mattins and Evensong), the book also addresses every day of the month and prescribes worship twice a day, which was Cranmer's simplification of earlier canonical hours, namely, "Matins (midnight); Lauds (3 a.m., or, more commonly, dawn); Prime (6 a.m.); Terce (9 a.m.); Sext (noon); Nones (3 p.m.); Vespers (6 p.m.); Compline (9 p.m.)" (Jacobs 2013, 39).

We noted that the book is steeped in historical Christian forms, yet it also prescribes a rich and extensive use of the Bible itself. Jacobs (2013, 37–38) notes, "For Cranmer, regularization of the actual liturgy was important, but thorough knowledge of the Bible—by which alone people could be 'stirred up to godliness' and enabled to 'confute them that were adversaries to the truth'—was more important still." Not only was the whole Psalter read once a month, but every Communion service had four readings from the Scriptures: a passage from the Old Testament, a Psalm, a passage from a Gospel, and a passage from some other part of the New Testament.

Therefore, *The Book of Common Prayer* has many things to commend, while critiquing a book that has withstood the test of time and has tremendously influenced the spiritual life of English-speaking societies would be inappropriate. Belonging to a different tradition is probably the only reason one would disagree with it. Nonetheless, at first, I was disappointed with this *International Edition*, as I was surprised that its language was not simplified to the extent that I was expecting. The modern editors have stated that their "linguistic updating has been modest," for they sought "to preserve the prayer book's linguistic character (which was already consciously old-fashioned in 1662)." They explain that the prayers are meant to be read aloud and in community, prioritizing the ear over the eye (pp. 648 – 650). The book's purpose for non-English speakers is more educational than instructional, making their decisions understandable. "International" in this context means "pan-English."

The Book of Common Prayer: International Edition provides us with a framework, igniting ideas on enhancing our worship services with liturgical elements that will draw from biblical and historical prayers, reflections, and creeds. However, we should avoid imposing these elements on our typically impromptu services awkwardly or unnaturally. It would be beneficial if we, theologians and ministers of free churches, would create prayerbooks or guides relevant to our

traditions, culture, and time. This endeavor requires wisdom, discernment, and guidance from the Holy Spirit. In light of this, I will conclude with a beautiful prayer for illumination from Appendix II of *The Book*:

> O Lord God, who has left unto us thy holy word to be a lantern unto our feet and a light unto our steps: Give unto us thy Holy Spirit, that out of that word we may learn what is thy righteous will, and frame our lives in all holy obedience to the same, to thy honor and glory and the increase of our faith, through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen* (p. 691).

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Timothy Keller
Forgive: Why should I and can I?
London: Hodder & Stoughton, 2022, pp. 272

Forgiveness is a word that we as Christians use very often. However, it is a practice that sometimes we tend to avoid. Forgiveness is a complicated subject, a complex theme and it is a theme that is at the same time frightening. I say it in this way because the biblical perspective on forgiveness starts with Christ, his forgiveness, and it gets complicated when we start to hold grudges and bitterness against

people who harmed us, not remembering at the same time that we are forgiven by God. This is the last published book by Tim Keller (1950-2023), an alumnus of Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary (MDiv) and Westminster Theological Seminary (DMin), New York Times bestseller author, and co-founder of The Gospel Coalition and pastor of Redeemer Presbyterian Church, New York. He was called "parson in the neighborhood" (Cosper 2023), he understood the culture and how to be a witness in it. He also understood church life, evangelicalism, and the Bible. As a pastor who preached for many years, he interwoven forgiveness in his sermons quite often. Keller wrote a theological book. It is written in a very clear and sharp style and the author is very direct about many things concerning forgiveness, and a person who reads can get a sense that the author specifically wants Christians to understand what real forgiveness is. The themes of the book are problems of forgiveness, understanding forgiveness, and practicing forgiveness. The main thesis of this book is that we can only forgive if we understand Christ's work on the cross. If he forgave us, who are we to hold a grudge and not forgive others?

Keller starts his book with the parable of the unforgiving servant, found in Matthew 18:21-35. This is his basic text for the entire book. At the beginning of the book, he has a small introduction "No future without forgiveness" where he explains with the help of Desmond Tutu why we cannot live without forgiveness and how non-forgiveness keeps us in jail. There is also a fading of forgiveness, where secular groups and people take the stance that "forgiveness makes a person superior and if they can't manage something so simple, the fault lies with them" (pp. xvii-xvii). For many groups forgiveness is not the way. But like a paralyzed man from the Gospel of Mark, his first need recognized by Jesus is forgiveness of sins, not his healing primarily. We need forgiveness - that is the way of a glorious life in Christ. In the first chapter called "A Story of Forgiveness," Keller explains the story of the unforgiving servant and here we have a New Testament background info, an explanation of the biblical text, and an exegetical analysis of it. The story is about recognizing the debt we owe to God, which is the vertical dimension of Christian forgiveness because only if we get it vertically, we can do it horizontally - meaning, we can give forgiveness to others. Another part of forgiveness is a dimension of internal forgiveness, only then we can start to seek reconciliation and justice. What is forgiveness then?

> To forgive, then, is first to name the trespass truthfully as wrong and punishable, rather than merely excusing it. Second, it is to identify with the perpetrator as a fellow sinner rather than thinking how different from you he or she is. It is to will their good. Third, it is to release the wrongdoer from liability by absorbing the debt oneself rather than seeking revenge and paying them back. Finally, it is to aim for reconciliation rather than breaking off the relationship forever. If you omit any one of these four actions, you are not engaging in real forgiveness (pp. 9–10).

The first section of the book "Losing and Finding Forgiveness" has three chapters. "The Fading of Forgiveness" (Chapter 2) is about the problems that culture faces regarding forgiveness. Here Keller lays three approaches to forgiveness that have emerged in our culture: *cheap grace, little grace, and no grace*. *Cheap grace* is "the nonconditional-forgiveness model, in which all the emphasis is on the victim being therapeutically liberated from anger" (p. 28). Then there is *little grace* which is "the transactional-forgiveness model, in which all the emphasis is on the perpetrator meriting forgiveness" (p. 28). And the last is *no grace* model that doesn't include forgiveness at all. In Keller's opinion, they all contrast costly grace that is both vertical and horizontal in the Bible (p. 28). Keller names two things concerning the difficulty to forgive: therapeutic culture (inward looking on our identity based on our desires and demanding that society honors our interests) and new shame-honor culture ("cancel culture" that emphasizes honor and moral virtue to people who have been victimized in society, and if their existing social ladder is low, greater honor they receive - Keller calls it "a shame and honor culture of victimhood") (pp. 31–32). None of these models and obstacles help relationships to be healthier, and therefore we will not have a future if we don't forgive. Culture should look unto Christ who did not repay with evil or insult with an insult (1 Peter 3:9). In "The History of Forgiveness" (Chapter 3) the author seeks for forgiveness model and finds none similar to the biblical one in Greek culture, instead of finding forgiveness there is only pardoning. Only in coming with Christianity, do we see change - Christ forgives, and so Christians forgive. They have been executed, but they were patient and forgiving. Early church fathers wrote on patience in suffering and forgiving. Honor and shame in ancient culture would lay in proving yourself, but Christians honor was to seek the benefit of others. Where do we then find forgiveness? We find it in the Old Testament and New Testament (Chapter 4 "The Book of Forgiveness"). The Lord is compassionate, gracious, slow to anger, and forgiving, but does not leave the guilty unpunished (Exodus 34:6-7). We find patterns of forgiveness in the Books of Moses, Psalms, Prophets, and lastly, in the Gospels. Two main words Keller names for forgiveness, *charizomai* (contains *charis,* meaning "grace") and *aphesis* ("remission"). There is a cost for forgiveness, the debt, and someone needs to pay it or absorb it. Only Jesus can forgive real debt, and empower us to forgive others their debts.

The next section of the book is called, "Understanding Forgiveness." To understand forgiveness, one must see God who is "The God of Love and Fury" (Chapter 5). Here Keller discusses the wrath of God and love, and how those two are inseparable from understanding God in Christ. Wrath must express love, and love must express wrath. Wrath and love meet each other in the work of Christ who atoned for our sins and absorbed the wrath of God because he loved us, He forgave us our sins and we can only by looking at him be able to extend the forgiveness to others.

(pp. 79–85). In the next chapter "Justice and Love, Honor and Abuse" (Chapter 6) the author discusses how God's justice and love create a community of reconciliation, beginning with the Old Testament (Leviticus, Proverbs), and Tim's point is that while we tend to forgive, we should let go our grudge and with humility seek justice, not with revenge. True forgiveness includes both love and justice, and again Keller is pointing to Christ by pointing us to the cross, to the Lamb of God (the Exodus story), and to the doctrine of substitutionary atonement. So, what are then "The Basics of Forgiveness" (Chapter 7)? The author sets forward two texts that at first glance contradict each other. One is from Mark 11:25 and the other from Luke 17:3-4. One calls for forgiveness without repentance of the other party, and the other calls for rebuking the guilty party. How do those two agree? The answer is that sometimes asks for repentance, and sometimes not from the guilty party (p. 106). Keller says that there are two ways of forgiveness, one that is inward, which should always happen, and the second is outward depending on the situation. In Jesus, we see revolution - to love our enemies, to pray for them, but also, we are to confront evil with goodness, and to rebuke those who offended us, but with one principle, and that one is to love our enemies while doing good to them after they wronged us - all to gain them as a brother or sister again.

The last main section, "Practicing Forgiveness," leads us into the discussion of how we are to give our forgiveness. Again, Keller faces us with guilt and shame in the next chapter "Our Need for Forgiveness" (Chapter 8), where he talks about various psychoanalysis and philosophical ways (Freud, Nietzsche, and Marx) that wanted to diminish the guilt that people feel, and how this led to the new culture of shame and honor that is self-salvation. The author continues with the Genesis problem of nakedness and hiding from God and the problem of fig leaves that humans put on themselves to protect themselves, to hide their shame and guilt. We are to find what are the fig leaves in our lives that hold us from true forgiveness. By looking at Joseph's story of humility and joy - and seeing Christ as a perfect example who paid the costly price of his love toward us, we can experience humility and joy, and have a personal transformation - "and it is the great key to the work of human forgiveness and reconciliation" (p. 135). Understanding the need for forgiveness, we now look at "Receiving God's forgiveness" (Chapter 9) where the author helps us to understand that "you will never be able to fully forgive others for their sins against you unless you first experience God's forgiveness of your sins against him" (p. 138). The problem of self-forgiveness and true guilt needs to come under God's grace - taking our guilt to God. Here Keller rightly is using Psalm 51 and David's sin as an example. He names three counterfeits of repentance: blame-shifting, self-pity, and self-flagellation. In every way we "have been failing to love and honor God" (p. 150). We need to learn to turn to God, and as Christians begin to understand the doctrine of substitutionary atonement and

the doctrine of justification. And now we come to chapter 10 "Granting our Forgiveness" where Keller shows us that to cut the "root of bitterness" means to not only cut the tree but to deal with the root also. We are to internally forgive, absorb the debt (pay it), and also be willing the good of the wrongdoer (pp. 162–172). Lastly, the author leads us to the practice of "Extending Forgiveness" (Chapter 11) where the stress is on absorbing the debt oneself, meaning forgiving. But Keller doesn't leave Christians thinking only about absorbing the debt, instead, he is looking to the restoration of relationship - on reconciliation. We are to love, pray, do good to people who hurt us, and "leave room for God's wrath" - Keller cites Dr. Martyn Lloyd-Jones who said that "we must never desire the harm of the person who has offended us – never." How to do it? Keller points to Christ and his work that transforms us.

The book ends with a small "Epilogue," together with a few appendixes that give us summaries of the idea of Christian forgiveness together with practical steps to it. My opinion is that it is a helpful resource if someone wants to remind himself of some of the main principles that Keller lays out throughout the book. What Timothy Keller does in this book is that he dares to speak to the evangelical community (Christian community). Starting with the problem of forgiveness, the problem of today's culture, and leading us to the history of forgiveness, thoroughly referring us to the Holy Scriptures - Keller leaves us with a quality reading that challenges us to renew the community through forgiveness and reconciliation. The book is not a dry guide: do this and that and everything will be fine. Keller is very realistic about the difficulty of forgiveness, difficult cases, long reconciliations, and situations where things may never be fully restored. Be that as it may, Keller does not go beyond the biblical, evangelical concept of forgiveness, which is that forgiveness is indeed possible, but only through Christ, who serves us not only as an example but as the one who empowers us to live that victorious life through him. Although he wrote here in the book on inward and outward forgiveness (two main directives of forgiveness), seems to be that he is maybe a bit idealistic about reconciliations. What I mean by that is that he could have written on the inward forgiveness more and how to live in reconciliation not bringing up everything that we were offended by. I would say here that he could have been more detailed on that. Nevertheless, Keller is an excellent connoisseur of literature and a man who leads to many sources (both Christian and secular) and can use sources from Hanna Arendt and Miroslav Volf to Dr. Martyn Lloyd-Jones (there are 17 pages in notes).

I recommend the book to anyone who deals with anger, rage, bitterness, and unforgiveness, to learn through the biblical message of the gospel to understand what richness is in Christ through his forgiveness of our sins and offering forgiveness to others through him. This book is highly welcoming to the Balkans, where we try to cope with difficult memories, cynicism, and trauma. Christ is the healer,

forgiver, and the only one that brings peace and true restoration. The book is for every Christian (and secular also) reader, especially for the pastors who deal with reconciliation regularly in their churches. In the end, if we are to see the Kingdom of God, we should start with forgiveness, because without it, there is no future.

Matej Sakač

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