FRANÇOIS BOVON

# New Testament and Christian Apocrypha

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François Bovon

# New Testament and Christian Apocrypha

## Collected Studies II

edited by

Glenn E. Snyder

Mohr Siebeck

*François Bovon,* born 1938; 1956 baccalauréat ès lettres, Lausanne; theological education at Lausanne, Basel, Göttingen, Strasbourg, and Edinburgh; 1961 lic. theol., Lausanne; 1965 Dr. theol., Basel; 1967–1993 Professor at the University of Geneva; 1993 to the present Frothingham Professor of the History of Religion, Harvard University.

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# Preface

Five years after my first collection of essays published by Mohr Siebeck, *Studies in Early Christianity*, I am pleased to offer a second volume of collected papers. Ten of them appear here for the first time in English and have been translated from the French with enthusiasm by Jonathan Von Kodar and Dianne Marie Cole. My first duty and intention is to thank both of them warmly for the time, the energy, and the competence they have given me. My thanks are also due to Stephen Hebert, who scanned the English articles and put them into a common file format.

I would like also to express my gratitude to Professor Jörg Frey and Dr. Henning Ziebritzki. The first, editor of the series, and the second, Theology Editor at Mohr Siebeck, have both shown an interest in my work that not only surprised me but moved me deeply. I am also grateful to Ms. Ilse König from Mohr Siebeck, who did such a good job as copy editor.

My friend Professor Bertrand Bouvier has looked at all the Greek quotations, and his famous accuracy has found some wrong breathing marks and—what is worse—some misplaced accents. I am also grateful to him.

This book would not have seen the light without Glenn E. Snyder's collaboration. His role has been so decisive that I asked the publisher to add his name as editor to the title page. Glenn, who is currently writing a dissertation on the *Acts of Paul*, took the time to check the translations and scannings, harmonize the abbreviations, coordinate the whole matter, and prepare the indices. His kindness and his competence have produced marvelous fruits. I thank him with all my heart.

In the course of my academic career I have trodden on two fields, the New Testament and Christian apocryphal literature. It is therefore not surprising that here, as in the first volume and in my *New Testament Traditions and Apocryphal Narratives* (trans. Jane Haapiseva-Hunter; Princeton Theological Monograph Series 26; Allison Park, Pa.: Pickwick, 1995), I brought together papers devoted to these two complexes of religious literature.

I am using in the Table of Contents the term "Transitions," for I believe that there have been changes in literary form and theological thinking in the first decades of Christianity, as well as in the following centuries. But I am also convinced that these changes were not εἰς ἄλλο γένος. There were always continuity and kinship despite the changes and differences. "Transition"

therefore seemed the appropriate word for evoking such transformation without break.

I did not update these essays, and I apologize for that. Dialogue with more recent research on the same topic would have forced me to add developments that I have not the energy to spend now and that the book would not have the wish to accommodate. The dates of original publication, going from 1970 to 2006, are therefore important.

Cambridge, MA, September 15, 2008 F. B.

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# Part I
# Early Transitions

# “The Good” and “the Best” in Paul’s Thinking

## Introduction

In recent years, the apostle Paul has often been ignored or attacked by scholars. In American scholarship the apostle has been eclipsed by Jesus. Preferring a reconstructed historical figure to literary sources, history over creed, many publishers promote innumerable books on the prophet from Nazareth, leaving his major spokesman to occupy the shady corner of omission. When he is not completely neglected,[1] Paul has fallen victim to several attacks: in a self-critical movement Christian theologians have reacted not only against the Augustinian, Lutheran, and Calvinist reception of Paul, but also against the most evident Pauline affirmations of election over works and grace over law. Other scholars reproach Paul, the Hebrew among Hebrews (Phil 3:5), for having willingly or unwillingly launched the theory of Christianity’s supersession of Judaism. Among the most critical are some feminist New Testament scholars, who dislike Paul altogether because of his patriarchal attitude toward women.

For the topic of this conference,[2] the most relevant conflict over interpretation turns on the apostle’s identity. While Daniel Boyarin wrote his book *A Radical Jew: Paul and the Politics of Identity*, Troels Engberg-Pedersen published a book entitled *Paul and the Stoics*. A conference organized in 2001 even suggested that the comfortable distinction between Judaism and Hellenism be questioned.

In choosing an ethical topic for my paper, I do not intend to neglect Paul’s theological concerns. I share with Rudolf Bultmann that the “message of the cross” is decisive in Paul’s thinking, that there is no paraenetic teaching without the kerygma. But I read the Pauline epistles with the conviction that the creed remains vain if there is no ethical embodiment, if righteousness by faith does not

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[1] Strangely John Dominic Crossan willingly omits Paul’s letters from his reconstruction of the first years of Christianity. See John Dominic Crossan, *The Birth of Christianity* (New York: HarperSanFrancisco, 1998). For a review of this book, see François Bovon, “A Critical Review of John Dominc Crossan’s *The Birth of Christianity*,” *HTR* 94 (2001) 369–74.

[2] St. Paul: Between Athens and Jerusalem, the 3rd International Philosophical Conference, Athens, 10–11 June 2004. See *St. Paul: Between Athens and Jerusalem: The 3rd International Philosophical Conference Proceedings, Athens, 10–11 June 2004* (ed. John Panteleimon Manoussakis; Athens: The American College of Greece, 2006). The title chosen for this conference is built on Tertullian’s famous sentence: “*Quid ergo Athenis et Hierosolymis?*” (*De praescriptione haereticorum*, 7.9).

bear the fruit of the Spirit, which is love, joy, peace, etc. (Gal 5:22–23). Presented within the framework of a colloquium entitled “St. Paul between Athens and Jerusalem,” and not “between Jerusalem and Athens,” my paper first will focus on a central aspect of Paul’s ethical thinking: in practical matters Paul offered two solutions, one called “the good” and the other called “the better,” with an expressed preference for the better. I will then suggest that such an ethical theory is embedded in an old Greek philosophical tradition, and that that tradition influenced Judaism in general and Paul in particular.

Although the three main examples I present here are all taken from Paul’s first epistle to the Corinthians, I will claim that such an ethical attitude is present throughout the Pauline corpus: it is present in 1 Thessalonians, the oldest Pauline letter we have, and it is still present in the epistle to the Romans, considered correctly since Günther Bornkamm’s famous paper[3] to be Paul’s last will or testament.

In reviewing classical interpretations of Paul’s ethics, I realized that the question of the origin of Paul’s ethical thinking has often been the decisive one. After he analyzed Paul’s anthropological presuppositions and the roots of behavior in his doctrine of redemption, Rudolf Schnackenburg[4] demonstrated the struggles of early Christians who lived “between the times,” between the first and second coming of Jesus the Messiah, underlining Paul’s contribution to the construction of moral conscience. Schnackenburg’s interpretation took into account the influence of both the Jewish and the Hellenistic worldviews.

In his history of the early Christian ethos, Herbert Preisker[5] traced a continuous, historical line of development from Jesus to the first Christians, and from them to Paul. According to Preisker, even if the apostle is faithful to the eschatological presence of God in human time through the christological kerygma and the outpouring of the Spirit, he is forced to adapt his radical requirements to the human condition. To live in Christ becomes a prosaic reality but, Paul insists, his conception of the ethical life is different from – and even opposed to – the legalism of the Judaizers and the euphoric freedom of the Gnostics. According to Preisker’s view of Paul, the Christian is at the same time both detached from the world and superior to the world (*weltgelöst* and *weltüberlegen*). Here also Paul’s ethics is perceived in a historical context, albeit more precise than in the solution proposed by Schnackenburg.

[3] Günther Bornkamm, “Der Römerbrief als Testament des Paulus,” in *Geschichte und Glaube, zweiter Teil: Gesammelte Aufsätze, Band IV* (BEvT 53; Munich: Kaiser, 1971) 120–39.

[4] Rudolf Schnackenburg, *Die sittliche Botschaft des Neuen Testaments* (2 vols.; 2d ed.; HTKNT Supplementbände 1–2; Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder, 1986–1988).

[5] Herbert Preisker, *Das Ethos des Urchristentums* (2d ed.; Gütersloh: Bertelsmann, 1949; reprinted in Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1968).

Rudolf Bultmann,[6] to take a third example, presents Paul's ethical conception from a theological as well as historical perspective. He presents a dialectical, and not a chronological, interpretation of the famous pair "indicative" versus "imperative," placing the doctrinal indicative of redemption in the terminology of the mystery religions and the ethical imperative of commitment in the sphere of the Jewish morality. For Bultmann, ethics is another way of saying "doctrine." To be a Christian is to become what one is.

What these scholars neglected and what the attention of subsequent researchers failed to capture was what constitutes the heart of my own investigation: the Pauline unfurling of ethical solutions. The traditional Jewish – actually it is not only Jewish – opposition between the good and the bad is presented in the text of Deut 30:15–20, where the contrast between obedience and disobedience is expressed according to the opposition of life and death: "See, I have set before you today life and prosperity, death and adversity. If you obey the commandments of the Lord your God … then you shall live … But if your heart turns away and you do not hear … you shall not live long in the land … ."

The apostle Paul offers a more complicated, more sophisticated view than this one: there is of course the decision he rejects, the sinful attitude, the path of the wicked; but for the righteous, there is first a good decision or way, followed by a second better one. In 1 Corinthians, for example, once he has reckoned the word of the cross and the knowledge of Jesus Christ – and only of Jesus Christ crucified – as the core of Christianity (1 Cor 1:18–2:5), he immediately adds that there is a superior wisdom possessed by those who are the perfect (1 Cor 2:6–16). Similarly, as soon as he prescribes a Christian attitude, he suggests a better one. Let me now present three examples of this structure of Paul's ethics, before I locate this Pauline conception in the field of ancient Greek philosophy and connect it to the apostle's vision of Christ and, as attested in the scriptures of Israel, his doctrine of God.

## The Good, the Bad, and the Better

In our first example Paul considers himself to be responsible for the well-being of the Corinthian community. Hearing that when they are confronted with tensions and disagreements the Corinthian Christians bring their divergent opinions to secular, imperial courts for trial, he voices complete opposition to this solution: "When any of you has a grievance against another, do you dare to take it to the court before the unrighteous, instead of taking it before the saints?" (1 Cor 6:1).

[6] In addition to Rudolf Bultmann, *Theologie des Neuen Testaments* (ed. Otto Merk; 8th enlarged ed.; UTB 630; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1980), see Rudolf Bultmann, "Das Problem der Ethik bei Paulus," *ZNW* 23 (1924) 123–40; reprinted in idem, *Exegetica* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1967) 36–54.

Pagans, Paul observes, should not solve the problems of Christians; this is the negative answer. Then, if one reads 1 Cor 6:1–11 carefully, instead of offering one unique positive solution, we discern that Paul offers two. He suggests first a kind of minimum in Christian attitude: solve your problems in the community, for example, by establishing a court of wise and independent believers. This solution should be sufficient to smooth tensions and extirpate the conflicts: "Are you incompetent to try trivial cases?" (1 Cor 6:2), he asks in his rhetorical style. But once he has advanced this good, though not perfect, solution he adds another: "In fact, even to have lawsuits against one another is already a defeat for you. Why not rather be wronged? Why not be defrauded?" (1 Cor 6:7); why not suffer; why not accept being on the losing side? This is indeed the better solution.

The second example arises out of tensions and sexual problems at Corinth. Here again, Paul feels it is his responsibility to provide guidance and advice. Entering examples of several concrete situations, he takes the risk of introducing casuistic rules: What should one do if your spouse is not a Christian? What happens to the children in such a union? What about those who are widowed or single? One thing is clear: in each instance, after rejecting the bad solution, Paul offers first a solution that is good, a solution that is in harmony with justice. But, just as love is better than equity (see 1 Cor 12:31: "And I shall show you a still more excellent way"), so also self-denial, personal sacrifice, ascetic options, love for one's enemy, and non-resistance constitute the better Christian path. In the case of sexual behavior, this perfect road is already presented in the first sentence: "Now concerning the matters about which you wrote, it is well – such is the opinion of Paul and not the Corinthians – for a man not to touch a woman" (1 Cor 7:1).

Our third example concerns alimentation, food being as basic to the human condition as sex and competition. Here again Paul offers a subtle range of comments in 1 Corinthians 8 and 10. Both passages share Paul's reflection on freedom: Christians are free and therefore they can eat everything. The ritual aspect of the mosaic regulations is abandoned; only the spiritual remains: "Hence, as to the eating of food offered to idols, we know that no idol in the world really exists, and that there is no God but one" (1 Cor 8:4). Christians, therefore, are not prohibited from eating meat offered in sacrifice to pagan gods, considered here as idols, or from buying it on the common market. This is a good solution (one finds an echo of it in two Pastoral Epistles, 1 Tim 4:3–5 and Titus 1:15).

But here again wisdom and freedom are not superior to the way of love; if one's freedom hurts a Christian companion who is weak then this is not the wisest solution. There is a better way, a solution that respects totally the opinion of brothers and sisters in Christ: "Therefore, if food is a cause of their falling, I will never eat meat, so that I may not cause one of them to fall" (1 Cor 8:13). To abstain from the pleasure of one's freedom and to abstain from it freely is the superior ethical road.

It is clear that the better solution is always connected with the well-being of the community. Personal progress does not reach the highest level of attainment if it does not contribute to the οἰκοδομή of the churches.[7] The best solution to the particular sexual problems in Corinth will bring peace to the whole community.[8]

These three cases are not exceptions in Paul's thought. They represent regular concretions in Paul's approach to ethical thinking. Our most ancient document written by the apostle, the first letter to the Thessalonians, already brings this way of thinking to the attention of new converts. In 1 Thessalonians 4, the oldest ethical treatise written by a Christian, Paul already draws a distinction between the minimal attitude that each believer should adopt, namely to walk and to please God (1 Thess 4:1), and a superior, higher commitment. This superior goal is summarized in a sentence attached to a statement about minimal obedience: "To walk and to please God" is the first step on the scale; it should bring a Christian to the second step, which Paul calls "to become more abundant," probably in kindness and love, in wisdom and perfection (1 Thess 4:1).

In another quotation from 1 Thessalonians we again find the progression from the good to the better: "And may the Lord make you increase and abound in love for one another and for all, just as we abound in love for you" (1 Thess 3:12). "Love for one another" is the correct, the good ethical attitude, the fulfillment of Johannine mutual love (John 15:12); but love "for all" – love for those who do not love you, love for those who exist outside – is the better solution, the one that fulfills Jesus' command in the Sermon on the Mount that we love our enemies (Matt 5:44//Luke 6:27).

Such a possible – and even desirable – crescendo from a good to a better solution is also readily apparent in one of Paul's last letters, the epistle to the Philippians. There, Paul says that a Christian's initial love should progress toward greater abundance (Phil 1:9). The apostle does not hesitate to use the vocabulary of "progress" (εἰς προκοπήν, Phil 1:12) to describe this movement. Even in his own personal case, Paul hesitates between two goods: to live in the flesh, which means to be alive and fulfill his pastoral duty for the Philippians, or to be with the Lord, which means to die and to be united with Christ. For Paul, to live means to suffer and imitate Christ's passion; to die means to participate in the glory of the risen Christ. To remain on earth is the better solution, because it is the most ethical solution, the most profitable for the others. It is therefore only from the standpoint of Paul's self-interest that the famous sentence in Phil 1:21, "For to me, liv-

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[7] I express my gratitude to Helmut Koester who underlined this point in a letter of March 22, 2005: "Whatever is 'the Good' may be good for the establishment of personal morality, but whatever is 'the Best' seems to me always related to *oikodome*."

[8] On the notion of οἰκοδομή, see Pierre Bonnard, *Jésus-Christ édifiant son Église. Le concept d'édification dans le Nouveau Testament* (Cahiers théologiques de l'actualité protestante 21; Neuchâtel: Delachaux & Niestlé, 1946).

ing is Christ and dying is gain," makes sense. From the perspective of Paul's superior commitment to his communities, dying is the easy solution and to live is gain. Similarly, for the Philippians, to believe is good but to add suffering for the apostle's sake is better (Phil 1:29).

The two ethical solutions appear even at the grammatical level, where the use of comparative forms confirms the progression. It is good for Paul to see his disciple Epaphroditus recuperate from illness; but it is better to send him back to his community, revealing in this way his greater zeal (σπουδαιοτέρως, Phil 2:28). The Greek expression πολλῷ μᾶλλον, "much more," to choose another example, helps Paul express this desirable progression: "Therefore, my beloved, just as you have always obeyed, not only in my presence, but much more (πολλῷ μᾶλλον) now in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling" (Phil 2:12).[9]

To be precise, I should mention a difference between the examples drawn from 1 Corinthians and those taken from the other epistles.[10] In the Corinthian cases, Paul, after rejecting the bad solution, places before his local readers a choice: the good or the best. In his early writing to the Thessalonians he supposes that the good is not static and must lead to the best. The passages quoted from the late epistle to the Philippians confirm the early perspective of 1 Thessalonians. Actually the difference between the alternative or the progression relies on a difference of situation. Considering the bad inclination of the Corinthians, Paul invites them as a minimum to choose the good and preferably to select the best. When writing to the Thessalonians or the Philippians, the apostle is pleased to see that they already are walking accordingly to a right attitude. He can only wish for them to reach the better path, to follow the best ethical standard. Behind all the examples given in these pages there is therefore the ethical structure of the good and the better. Skillfully the apostle applies this structure according to the different circumstances to which he and his communities are confronted.

## Paul's Thinking and the Philosophical Tradition

The religious tradition of Israel was determined by the opposition that exists between the pure and the impure, the sacred and the profane, the holy and the unholy. This distinction was respected at the ritual level as well as the moral. Fundamentally, the ethical structure of the good and the better does not reflect this Jewish perspective. Rather, it was the Greeks who experienced that the good of a city, or of an individual, could take several different shades or degrees: this could be the average good or the most precious one. The discovery of conflicting refer-

[9] Even if most of the time Paul opposes in the epistle to the Romans the good and the bad, he alludes to the structure of the good, the bad, and the better in Rom 5:1–11; 8:30; and 12:1–2.

[10] I am grateful to Glenn E. Snyder who drew my attention to this difference.

ences to several goods forced the Greeks to create a hierarchy of goods. The well-being of the Greek confederation, whose unity was manifested through language and ritual celebrations, was located above the well-being of the local city. In Sophocles' *Antigone* (lines 449–55), Antigone clearly appeals to a higher dimension than Creon's reference to the laws of city of Thebes. She appeals to the law of the laws. This same distinction appears in Plato's writings, when he distinguishes in the *Republic* degrees of justice (*Resp.* 2.367), and when he affirms that there is a truth about the gods that is higher than myth (*Resp.* 2.378).

In his *Nichomachean Ethics* (1.5.2–7) Aristotle likewise distinguishes – in a way that may almost be considered arrogant – three groups in their relationship to philosophy. The first group, the crowds, represent the bad: those who have no access to wisdom. The second group, consisting of politicians, represent the good: those who are able to reach a certain level of understanding, but not the highest; they can conceive justice but not real wisdom. The third group consists of the philosophers, who alone are equipped to enter the realm of contemplation. They enjoy not only the good but also the best.

This intellectual distinction finds its concrete application – if I am well informed – in the way teaching was organized at the Athenian Lyceum. In the morning Aristotle would deliver the esoteric, or acroamatic, teaching, to those few who were considered fit for this higher education.[11] Then early in the afternoon he would teach the men of action, bringing them the rudiments of political wisdom. This was exoteric teaching.

I will not elaborate the history of this distinction, but I will insist on its presence as a common heritage in the first century C.E. It survives in the distinction the Stoics drew between the ἁμάρτημα, the bad action, the ἀδιάφορον, the indifferent, and the κατόρθωμα, the right action. It also survives in late Stoicism when the προκόπτων, the one who improves, the one who makes progresses, is inserted between the φαῦλος, the mean, the bad person, and the τέλειος, the accomplished person, the one who is perfect. The distinction also survives in Valentinian thought, as attested by Irenaeus in his *Adversus haereses* 1.7.5 and 1.8.3. According to Irenaeus, the Valentinians distinguished three kinds of human beings: the hylic, or the material; the psychic, that is, the human; and the pneumatic, or spiritual people.

It is probable that this division between the good and the best was accepted into Judaism, which was so widely influenced by the dominant culture of the Greeks from the time of Alexander the Great. It is clear to me that Paul, a Jew but also a Greek, trained in grammar, rhetoric, and perhaps philosophy at Tarsus, used this distinction with ease and profit.

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[11] See Jean Voilquin, "Préface," to Aristote, *Éthique de Nicomaque* (Paris: Garnier-Flammarion, 1965) 6.

## The Christological Model

Paul's ethical prescriptions are not only rooted in the Jewish opposition of the good and the bad and the Greek distinction of the good and the better. They find their final relevance according to the christological model. The apostle's source of his personal attitude and of the conduct he prescribes to his converts is a person and not a code of rules or an abstract ethical structure. The person of Christ is for him a redeemer and a model. Through his death on the cross, Christ not only brought believers into the realm of freedom, but he also offered his own life as a model of ethical behavior. To be redeemed, to be in Christ, does not separate a Christian from history and society. But to be alive, to be "in the flesh" – to use the apostle's words – neither forces a Christian to compromise nor compels him to sin. The way to be in the world is to behave according to Christ. This is valid for the individual as well as for the community.

Paul does not hesitate to use the vocabulary of imitation.[12] He asks the Corinthians to be his imitators as he is an imitator of Christ (1 Cor 11:1). But there is an understanding of imitation that does not coincide with Paul's understanding of it: imitation as a human effort to reach the qualities of the model to the greatest extent possible. In such a case imitation remains a subjective activity relying on the personal responsibility and forces of the individual. It is often in such a way that the Greek philosophical tradition understood imitation. But according to its origin in the cult of Dionysos and its manifestation in the Greek theater, imitation is rooted in participation in the god. Such is Paul's understanding of imitation: it is not the external appropriation of Jesus' gestures, but first the surrender of the believer to Christ and second the display of Christian virtues practiced by this regenerated person.[13] For Paul, Jesus, who gave himself to others, is primarily the redeemer, but his way of life and of dying becomes also a model of behavior.

It is interesting to note that Paul is able to bring together the christological model and the ethical structure of the good and the better. In Jesus' life, certain aspects, his faith and his just conduct, belong to the first, namely the good; other aspects, his love of others and his death for others, belong to the later, namely the better.

Several expressions and metaphors make this christological model more visible. Just as Christ was sent into the world by God, so Christians are sent out to those who stand outside their community (Gal 1:16; Rom 10:14–15). As Christ has entered this world (Phil 2:6–8), so Christians shall pass through a door – such is the metaphor in 1 Cor 16:9 and 2 Cor 2:12 – opened by God himself. As Christ

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[12] Paul has a preference for the substantive μιμητής (see 1 Thess 1:6; 2:14; 1 Cor 4:16; 11:1; see also Eph 5:1), but the verb μιμέομαι is present in 2 Thess 3:7, 9; see Hans Dieter Betz, *Nachfolge und Nachahmung Jesu Christi im Neuen Testament* (BHT 37; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1967).

[13] I thank here Helmut Koester who in discussing this paper with me correctly insisted on this aspect.

offered himself in a sacrifice of expiation (Rom 3:25), so Paul considers it to be his apostolic duty to fulfill a sacerdotal function – according to the metaphor in Rom 15:15–16 – in order that the nations may become a sacrifice, an offering (προσφορά), agreeable to God and sanctified by the Holy Spirit. As Christ brought light and divine glory into the world, so Christians are to be – using still another metaphor – lamps or stars (φωστῆρες) in the world: "Do all things without murmuring and arguing, so that you may be blameless and innocent, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, in which you shine like light-giving bodies in the world" (Phil 1:14–15). As Christ achieved victory over death, so also Christians are to bring to the world the fragrance (ὀσμή), the aroma (εὐωδία) of life in Christ, to those who will be saved (2 Cor 2:14–16). Or, using the classical vocabulary of love, the word ἀγάπη and the verb ἀγαπάω, Paul urges his communities to practice hospitality, forgiveness, and reconciliation.

According to Paul's argument, it is even possible to understand the reason why Christ can be imitated: it is not because of Jesus' historical behavior but, more deeply, because of Christ's incarnation that this is possible. If a believer is able to become a Jew with the Jews and a Greek with the Greeks, this is in imitation of Christ, who abandoned his divine sphere in order to enter into the realm of humanity. The Son's priority was not to bring people to himself, but to move towards them, to reach out to them. The hymn in Philippians 2 expresses the risk Christ took in order to do this, namely, he left his divine nature and made himself empty (κενόω): "Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited, but emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness. And being found in human form, he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death – even death on a cross" (Phil 2:5–8). This passage is the hermeneutical key to verses in 1 Cor 9:19–21, where Paul expresses his apostolic mission as well as a Christian's ethical commitment: "For though I am free with respect to all, I have made myself a slave to all, so that I might win more of them. To the Jews I became as a Jew, in order to win the Jews. To those under the law I became as one under the law (though I myself am not under the law), so that I might win those who are under the law. To those outside the law I became as one outside the law (though I am not free from God's law but am under Christ's law), so that I might win those outside the law." For Paul, as for any Christian, to become a Jew with the Jews or a Greek with the Greeks is an expression of love, even an acceptance of death; but even if it means a loss of life, it is not a loss of identity.

To lose one's life is a way of saving it: in giving up his secure position at the side of God the Son took a risk, but he never lost his identity as the Son. Similarly, the ethical way to reach the other, through fulfilling the law or breaking its commands, does not destroy the core of one's identity in Christ. As long as communion with God is respected and one's relationship with Christ is preserved, free-

dom does not become a tool, a selfish tool but remains an instrument of charity. Such was Christ's behavior when he joined himself to the human condition out of love and in the hope of redemption. The crescendo from good to better applies even to Christ, and the Christian counterpart reflects in its humanity the divine model. Life in the realm of God was of course good for the Son, but the Son chose the better, the more difficult way to fulfill his divinity, namely to cross the border and assume the human condition. This movement toward the other was not an exotic selfish experience, but a generous translocation, a way of reaching the place where human beings exist, in order to help them move to a better place.

Paul's missionary theory follows this christological model. Paul refuses to receive the revelation of the Son on the road to Damascus (Gal 1:15–16) in a passive way. He is not content simply to enjoy redemption. To that good gift he prefers the better duty: he accepts being sent, and he expects all his disciples and all the Christian communities not to keep themselves quietly in the harbor of peace; as *navis ecclesiae* they must sail bravely to reach others in their own turbulent situations.

In his inimitable pictorial style Luke the evangelist captures this choice for the better in his description of the apostle in the book of Acts. Paul could stay in Caesarea as a pastor, fulfilling the dearest wishes of the community there. But, according to Luke, he prefers instead to exchange this good solution for a better one: he will leave his fellow Christians and go to Rome, where his apostolic mission will end in martyrdom. Luke's account of this decision reads as follows:

> The next day we left and came to Caesarea; and we went into the house of Philip the evangelist, one of the seven, and stayed with him … . While we were staying there for several days, a prophet named Agabus came down from Judea. He came to us and took Paul's belt, bound his own feet and hands with it, and said, "Thus says the Holy Spirit, 'This is the way the Jews in Jerusalem will bind the man who owns this belt and will hand him over to the Gentiles.'" When we heard this, we and the people there urged him not to go up to Jerusalem. Then Paul answered, "What are you doing, weeping and breaking my heart? For I am ready not only to be bound but even to die in Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus." Since he would not be persuaded, we remained silent except to say, "The Lord's will be done." (Acts 21:8–14)

## Scriptural Authority and the Doctrine of God

As a Jewish theologian Paul aims at the harmony between his thinking and the scriptures of Israel. But here he faces a difficulty since the Hebrew scriptures, even in their Greek translation of the Septuagint, do not witness the ethical structure of the good and the better. The interplay of biblical quotations, particularly in Galatians and in Romans, makes this particularly clear. To find an agreement between his conviction and Israel's holy books, the apostle follows a double path: he dares to use the ancient scriptures according to the new model. According to

the apostle, to understand righteousness in a dynamic way leading from a good beginning to a better one through a progressive moral effort is not opposed to the divine commands of the Law. But Paul is pushing his reflection even further. He risks the following hypothesis: the scriptures of Israel, which display so vividly in an antithetic position the good and the bad, the righteous and the sinner, manifest an image of God, as personal entity, promoting the ethical structure of the good and the best. Eternal and eternally faithful to himself, the God of Israel does not need the structure of the good and the best. But facing his creation and even more, his fallen creation, he will adopt in his economy of redemption a project compatible with the Greek ethical structure.

It is Paul's conviction that the God of creation is the same as the God of redemption. Paul's use of tradition, his use – for example – of early Christian hymnic and homologetical material, as in 1 Corinthians 8, makes this clear. In this brief quotation of an early liturgical fragment, Paul considers the Father as well as the Son. The mediation of the Son is made clear by the use of the preposition διά ("through"): it is through Christ that the world was created and it is also through Christ that the creation is redeemed. The authority of the Father is underlined by the use of two other prepositions, ἐκ at the origin of everything and εἰς at the destination of everything: "Indeed, even though there may be so-called gods in heaven or on earth – as in fact there are many gods and many lords – yet for us there is one God, the Father, from whom (ἐξ οὗ) are all things and for whom (εἰς αὐτόν) we exist, and one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom (δι᾽ οὗ) are all things and through whom (δι᾽ αὐτοῦ) we exist" (1 Cor 8:6).

From this fragment, as well as from other Pauline passages in which the apostle establishes a symmetry and a contrast between creation and redemption, we can say that if the creation was good – and the text of Genesis says that it was – then the redemption is better. The redemption can be called a "treasure" that is poured into the "clay jars" of human creatures (2 Cor 4:7). The harmony that exists between the creatures' prayers ("the creation itself," αὐτὴ ἡ κτίσις) and the redeemed community's requests ("we," ἡμεῖς) reveals by the same token that the God of creation has reached a kind of fulfillment through his work of redemption (Rom 8:21–22).

Rudolf Bultmann said – not without some excess – that New Testament theology is anthropology.[14] What is true in Paul's statement concerning the good and the better in God remains for the most part only implicit, being deducible from his affirmations concerning its human counterpart. In 2 Cor 3:18, for example, Paul does not hesitate to say that the believers already share in the divine glory;

[14] See Bultmann's statement that "Es zeigt sich also: will man von Gott reden, so muß man offenbar *von sich selbst reden*" (italics Bultmann's) in Rudolf Bultmann, "Welchen Sinn hat es, von Gott zu reden?," *TBl* 4 (1925) 129–35; reprinted in idem, *Glauben und Verstehen*, vol. 1 (3d ed.; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1958) 26–37; the quotation appears on p. 28 of the collection of essays.

but even more, they are progressively transformed from glory to glory, revealing in their own being the better part of the good creator, his wish to redeem definitively: "And all of us, with unveiled faces, seeing the glory of the Lord as though reflected in a mirror, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another; for this comes from the Lord, the Spirit."

## Conclusion

By way of a conclusion, I ask one final question: What advantage does recourse to this ethical structure of the good and the best offer? As a response, I will propose that simple antithetical oppositions such as holiness and sin, the righteous and the wicked, God and Mammon, were efficient in the context of preaching, mission, and conversion. But the development of a more complex crescendo, or hierarchy of goods, made it possible for philosophers as well as the theologians to offer a wider spectrum of ethical solutions in the context of teaching and catechism. These solutions brought movement, flexibility, and freedom to what could have become a static system. It is not, after all, by chance that Paul uses the term "progress," προκοπή, in such a context; nor is it by chance that he refers to the metaphor of the way and uses the preposition εἰς, "toward," "to." On their ethical way, namely in their daily lives, Christian can ascend from glory to glory, ἀπὸ δόξης εἰς δόξαν (2 Cor 3:18). Finally it is not by chance that Paul speaks of abundance and even superabundance, for he took the risk of adding sanctification to justification, love to equity, perfection to goodness, σοφία to κήρυγμα.

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## Names and Numbers in Early Christianity

### Introduction

It is my hypothesis that the early Christians used the categories of 'name' and 'number' as theological tools.[1] Often they consciously interpreted names and numbers in a symbolic way. Even their non-reflexive usage relied on implicit conceptualizations very different from our nominalist-based thinking. They presupposed that names and numbers are inextricably related.[2] Is the Jewish and Christian confession εἷς ὁ θεός not a cogent expression combining a name and a number? Like other Jewish movements, the first churches were immersed in a multi-ethnic ocean reflecting centuries of Greek epistemology and Babylonian mathematics. It is therefore simplistic to imagine early Christian thought as influenced merely by Semitic, biblical thought.[3] I suggest that early Christian reflections on names and numbers not only bear witness to a strong relationship between language and reality, but also manifest a significant difference between signifier and referent. God is the master of names and numbers, thus conferring an ontological quality to any creation.[4] As the race of humans, however, is differ-

[1] Presidential address, Studiorum Novi Testamenti Societas, Tel Aviv, 2000. I would like to thank my colleague and friend Gabriel Widmer who discussed the matter with me. He gave me also some bibliographic references, such as the articles "Nombre" and "Nomen (nom)," in *Les notions philosophiques. Dictionnaire* (vol. 2 of *Encyclopédie philosophique universelle*; ed. Sylvain Auroux; Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1990) 1755–62. I would like also to express my gratitude to Elizabeth Busky who revised my English, Anna Miller who checked numerous references for me, David Warren who read the proofs with me, and particularly to Ann Graham Brock who following the preparation of this paper revised its form and content with talent and diligence. I thank finally those auditors of my address, members of the SNTS, who gave me their reactions and comments.

[2] On the contrary, in modern times, fighting an aristocratic society and Christian personalism, Lenin proclaimed that it was time to abandon names and introduce the language of numbers; see Bastian Wielenga, *Lenins Weg zur Revolution* (Munich: Kaiser, 1971); Yann Redalié, "Conversion ou libération? Actes 16,11–40," *BCPE* 26:7 (1974) 19–31, esp. 21–22. I owe my interest in the topic of names and numbers to discussions in the 1970s with Yann Redalié.

[3] I agree here with James Barr, *The Semantics of Biblical Language* (London: Oxford University Press, 1961).

[4] Irenaeus, *Adv. haer.* 2.25.1, insists on this theocentrism: it is God who is the master of names and numbers. In *Adv. haer.* 1.15.5, the bishop of Lyons criticizes Mark the Magician for imprisoning God in human names and numbers.

ent from the race of the gods, to speak with Pindar,[5] so names and numbers are also human expressions. Accordingly a total equality between language and reality cannot be reached and remains an illusion.

Not everyone may be convinced of the importance of names and numbers in early Christianity, particularly of speculations as to their various meanings.[6] Many ancient authors, both Jews and Christians, tried to inquire concerning the name of "God" with a will both to know and to communicate a religious knowledge. Certain that the real name of the divinity eludes human perception, they believed that God had revealed his sacred names, such as "Lord" or "Sabaoth," to humans.[7] For example, some manuscripts of *3 Enoch* contain an impressive list of divine names.[8] A similar interest led several ancient authors to communicate the names of angels,[9] of the fallen angels or watchers,[10] of Satan,[11] of demons,[12] of Jesus,[13] and of his disciples.[14] Those who wished to establish such enumerations were interested not only in names but also in numbers: for instance, how many angels, how many names?[15] The numerous instances of a census in the book of

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[5] Pindar, *Nemean Ode* 6.1. I thank Ellen Aitken who helped me to find this reference.

[6] On names see Hans Bietenhard, "ὄνομα κτλ.," *TWNT* 5:242–83; A. Heubeck, "Personennamen, A. Griechische," *Lexikon der alten Welt* (ed. Carl Andresen et al.; Zurich: Artemis, 1965) 2267–68; W. Krenkel, "Namengebung," ibid., 2056; Lazlo Vanyó, "Nom," *Dictionnaire encyclopédique du christianisme ancien* (ed. Angelo Di Berardino; trans. François Vial; 2 vols.; Paris: Cerf, 1990) 2:1759–61; on numbers see Oskar Rühle, "ἀριθμέω, ἀριθμός," *TWNT* 1:461–64; Peter Friesenhahn, *Hellenistische Wortzahlenmystik im Neuen Testament* (Leipzig: Teubner, 1935); Jören Friberg, "Numbers and Counting," *ABD* 4 (1992) 1139–46.

[7] See the *Prayer of Jacob*, difficult to date (1st–4th cent. C.E.); James H. Charlesworth, "Prayer of Jacob," in *OTP* 2:715–23. See also the riddle on the name of God in *Sibylline Oracles* 1.137–46.

[8] *3 Enoch* 48B; *Quaest. Barth.* 4.23. One knows the interest of Islam for the 99 names of Allah. For this idea see Arthur Jeffery, ed., *A Reader on Islam: Passages from Standard Arabic Writings Illustrative of the Beliefs and Practices of Muslims* (The Hague, Netherlands: Mouton and Co., 1962) 553–55.

[9] *2 Enoch* 40; *3 Enoch* 17.

[10] On the fallen angels, see *1 Enoch* 6.7; 69.2–14. Strangely, Kasb'el, the chief executor of the oath, has a number and a name (*1 Enoch* 69.13–14). On the watchers, associated with the angels in passages like *1 Enoch* 21.10, particularly with those in Gen 6:1–8 that were sent from heaven, see *1 Enoch* (1.4–5; 10.9; 12; 15) as well as *Jubilees* (4.15; 7.21; 8.3). See also *Acts Phil.* 8.11 and 11.3 for reference to these beings.

[11] *Quaest. Barth.* 4.23, 45.

[12] Mark 5:9.

[13] As for God, the real name of the mediator remains hidden; only "Jesus," as a name of this world, is revealed, according to *Ascen. Isa.* 8.7–9.5; see *Acts Thom.* 163.2.

[14] From Mary Magdalene to Peter, from Paul to James.

[15] On the symbolic value attributed to numbers by peoples of antiquity see Georges Ifrah, *Histoire universelle des chiffres. L'intelligence des hommes racontée par les nombres et le calcul* (Bouquins; 2 vols.; Paris: Laffont, 1994) passim; Friberg, "Numbers and Counting," 1143–45. Number speculation was characteristic of Pythagorism; see Adela Yarbro Collins, "Numerical Symbolism in Jewish and Early Christian Apocalyptic Literature," in *ANRW* 2.21.2 (1984) 1250–53; but Porphyry also may have written a work on numbers; see H. Kees, "Porphyrios," in *Paulys Realencyclopädie der classischen Altertumswissenschaft* (66 vols.; ed. Georg Wissowa

Numbers is an example of this phenomenon.[16] Actually the title "Numbers" (ἀριθμοί) is not the original one; it was given by the translators of the book into Greek. In the Hebrew Bible it is called "In the wilderness," according to its first word. Another example is the use of a particular number, such as 12,[17] which occurs many times: it is used for the tribes of Israel, then for the 12 apostles,[18] and later by the author of the *Book of the Resurrection according to Bartholomew* for their 12 thrones and their 12 garments.[19] The evangelist Luke is not the only one interested in marking time.[20] Mark has already eagerly mentioned the exact moment of several episodes of Jesus' passion: the sixth hour, the ninth hour, the evening, and early in the morning.[21] The theological significance of the number 40 is well known,[22] beginning with Moses[23] and continuing with Jesus' temptations[24] and appearances.[25] The number seven, so significant for the book of Genesis, still has a special role in the book of Revelation, as seen in the seven churches (Revelation 1–4), the seven letters (Revelation 2–3), the seven seals (Revelation 5–8), the seven trumpets (Revelation 8–11), the seven cups, and the seven angels (Revelation 15–17).[26] Often numbers are used as a cryptic way of referring to names and people, such as the famous 666 of the book of Revelation.[27] On the

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et al.; Stuttgart: J. B. Metzler, 1953) 43:300. Plotinus's *Enead* 6.6 deals with numbers and Augustine knew this treatise; see Olivier du Roy, *L'intelligence de la foi en la Trinité selon saint Augustin. Genèse de sa théologie trinitaire jusqu'en 391* (Paris: Études augustiniennes, 1966) 70 n. 1. Quintilian, *Inst. or.* 1.10.35: geometry has two divisions; one is concerned with numbers, the other with figures. Now knowledge of the former is a necessity not merely to the orator, but to anyone who has had even an elementary education.

[16] The book contains also the mention of the 70 elders (Num 11:24–25), the names of the 12 explorers (Num 13:4–16), and the episode of the 12 rods (Num 17:1–11; see below n. 58). See also the Jewish reflection on the numbers of the biblical books.

[17] According to *4 Ezra* 14:10–12, time is divided into 12; it gets older because 9.5 periods have gone already.

[18] Mark 3:13–19 par.; Matt 19:28 par.

[19] *Book of the Resurrection according to Bartholomew* 21.8.

[20] See the famous synchronism in Luke 3:1; the date of Elizabeth's pregnancy in Luke 1:36; the end of Mary's visit to her cousin in Luke 1:56; the three periods of Jesus' life and those of the history of salvation.

[21] See Mark 15:25, 30, 33, 34; 15:42.

[22] Other numbers were believed to be pure and for some of them to represent plenitude, like 4, 7, 8 and 10; see Friedrich Hauck, "δέκα," *TWNT* 2:35–36; Karl Heinrich Rengstorf, "ἑπτὰ κτλ.," *TWNT* 2:623–31; Horst Balz, "τέσσαρες κτλ.," *TWNT* 8:127–39.

[23] Exod 34:29; Deut 9:9; *Barn.* 4.7–8; there are also the 40 days of the explorers (Num 14:34) and the 40 years of punishment in the wilderness (Num 14:33); see Origen, *Hom. Num.* 8.1.5.

[24] Matt 4:2 par.

[25] Acts 1:3.

[26] See Collins, "Numerical Symbolism in Jewish and Early Christian Apocalyptic Literature," 1221–87. *4 Ezra* 7:132–40 enumerates seven attributes of God: God is merciful, gracious, patient, bountiful, abundant in compassion, giver, and judge. The treatise *On the Origin of the World* (NHC II, 5 and XIII, 2) 101.24–102.2 names the seven androgynous names of the seven divine forces. The number seven is also important for the author of the *Poimandres* (*Corpus Hermeticum* 1) 9: God, called νοῦς, creates seven governors, probably the seven planets.

[27] Rev 13:18.

other hand, names can also encapsulate numbers, as when the name of Jesus is abbreviated to the number 888 according to the Valentinian Mark the Magician.[28]

In ancient Jewish or Christian texts, when a divine message is received and written, inherent in the narrative are concerns about the name of the revealing entity as well as the individual to whom the revelation is delivered. When a reflection on a sacred legacy or history emerges in these texts, numbers may articulate periods of time and destiny.[29] When the eyes of the wise contemplate creation, including heaven and earth and its many peoples, then measure and dimension, as expressed with numbers and names, appear to justify a theological claim or defend a religious orientation.[30] Such is the case in the Wisdom of Solomon.[31] Likewise, the establishment of a holy people as the recipients of divine revelation goes hand in hand with numbers. While the author of *4 Ezra* is preoccupied with the small number of the saved,[32] others are proud to be part of the happy few; still others apply the title "the many" to their congregation,[33] and the book of Revelation fixes the boundaries of the community at 144,000.[34]

Twenty centuries separate us from the origins of Christianity. Among the obstacles that scholars of early Christianity must overcome, the most difficult are also perhaps the most abstract. With our logic influenced by the binary system of modern technology, can we understand a mind that works according to another, probably ternary, logic?[35] Influenced by centuries of nominalist thinking, are we able to imagine another relationship between language and thought, or between names or numbers and reality?[36]

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[28] See Irenaeus, *Adv. haer.* 1.15.2; see also, the first book of the *Sibylline Oracles*, analyzed below, pp. 31–32 (*Sib.* 1.324–31). In *Adv. haer.* 1.15.1–3, Irenaeus gives his interpretation of the name of Jesus.

[29] See Collins, "Numerical Symbolism," 1224–49; James C. VanderKam, *Calendars in the Dead Sea Scrolls: Measuring Time* (The Literature of the Dead Sea Scrolls; London/New York: Routledge, 1998).

[30] Such as monotheism. See *1 Clem* 29: "The bounds of the nations are established κατὰ ἀριθμὸν ἀγγέλων θεοῦ, according to the number of the angels of God."

[31] See Wis 11:20; C. Larcher, *Études sur le Livre de la Sagesse* (EB; Paris: Gabalda, 1969) 187, 218–21; David Winston, *The Wisdom of Solomon: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (AB; Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1982) 234–35; see nn. 61 and 91 below.

[32] *4 Ezra* 7:45–61.

[33] See in the Dead Sea Scrolls for example 1QS 6.1–7.25; Joachim Jeremias, "Das Lösegeld für viele (Mark 10,45)," *Judaica* 3 (1947) 249–64; Géza Vermès, *The Complete Dead Sea Scrolls in English* (New York, N.Y.: Penguin Books, 1997) 28.

[34] Rev 7:4. Absorbed by polemics, the leader of a community can disregard another group in the following way: "And there shall be others of those who are outside our number who name themselves bishops and also deacons ... " (*Apocalypse of Peter* [NHC VII, 3] 79).

[35] See Johann Mader, *Die logische Struktur des personalen Denkens. Aus der Methode der Gotteserkenntnis bei Aurelius Augustinus* (Wien: Herder, 1965).

[36] The reader should not forget the importance and power of name and numbers in magic; see Fritz Graf, *Magic in the Ancient World* (trans. Franklin Philip; Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1997).

## Biblical Memories

The Jewish Scriptures are clearly concerned with names and numbers. These passages of the Hebrew Bible or the Septuagint contained an authoritative teaching and a model for new speculations. The New Testament and early Christian literature likewise continued and even added to this reflection on names and numbers.

At the burning bush, Moses' request to know God's name is answered with a riddle that camouflages the divine name. In the Septuagint, the Tetragrammaton is translated with the present participle of the verb "to be," which represents a theological interpretation: ὁ ὤν, "the one being" (Exod 3:14).[37] This understanding of God[38] was continued but modified by the first Christians. In John 8:58 the evangelist makes an allusion to this episode with Moses and gives it a christological interpretation.

The numerous biblical attestations of the expression "name of God" or "Lord" witness the distance between God as a person and God as a name.[39] They confirm also the respect that is due to this hidden and yet revealed God.[40] The hallowing of God's name and the avoiding of the profaning of God's name are central to Israel's religion. Likewise the Decalogue, particularly its third command to the members of the covenant, states: "You shall not make wrongful use of the name of the Lord your God, for the Lord will not acquit anyone who misuses his name" (Exod 20:7 par.). Likewise, the first request of the Lord's prayer, "Hallowed be

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[37] The episode is remembered by Josephus, *Ant.* 2.264, but with no insistence on the revelation of God's name.

[38] See *Celui qui est. Interprétations juives et chrétiennes d'Exode 3,14* (ed. Alain de Libera and Emilie Zum Brunn; Patrimoines. Religions du livre; Paris: Cerf, 1986). Josephus, *Ant.* 11.331, tells the story of Alexander refusing to kill the high priest of Jerusalem and showing on the contrary great interest by greeting the name of God inscribed on the golden plate of the Jewish hierarch.

[39] There is a shift in the location of the name of God: in the Hebrew Bible it dwells in the ark of the covenant (see 2 Sam 6:2; see also Exod 25:8), then in the Temple (see 1 Kings 9:3; see also 2 Sam 7:13; 1 Kings 8:10–11; Jer 7:10). In the early Christian writings it dwells in the new temple, the community (1 Cor 3:16), or the believer (1 Cor 6:19).

[40] Origen, *On Psalm* 2:2, tells us that the name of God was read as Adonai by the Hebrews and as κύριος by the Greeks; see Gustav Adolf Deissmann, *Die Hellenisierung des semitischen Monotheismus* (Leipzig: B. G. Teubner, 1903); Ralph Marcus, "Divine Names and Attributes in Hellenistic Jewish Literature," in *Proceedings of the American Academy for Jewish Research* 2 (1931–1932) 45–120; Efraim Elimelech Urbach, *The Sages: Their Concepts and Beliefs* (trans. Israel Abrahams; Jerusalem: Magnes, 1975) 97–134; Colin H. Roberts, *Manuscript, Society, and Belief in Early Christian Egypt* (London: Oxford University Press, 1979) 29 n. 2, 30; Marguerite Harl, "La langue de la Septante," in Gilles Dorival, Marguerite Harl, and Olivier Munier, *La Bible grecque des Septante. Du judaïsme au christianisme ancien* (Initiations au christianisme ancien; Paris: Cerf and C.N.R.S., 1988) 255–56; Martin Rosel, *Adonaj, Warum Gott "Herr" genannt wird?* (FAT 29; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2000).

thy name" (Matt 6:9 par.), fits perfectly into this religious framework, as does the early Christians' reverence for the "name of God" (for example, John 17:6).[41]

According to the book of Exodus, Moses, the admired leader, needed the help of his brother Aaron (Exod 4:10–17). Greek-speaking Jews, particularly Philo of Alexandria, contemplated why such help was necessary. Philo concludes that Moses represents the experience of God's presence while Aaron represents the need for words, particularly names, to express this religious experience.[42] God as a person remains transcendent; God's real name, nature, and person cannot be known,[43] but the experience of God can be known and needs to be expressed. There is, therefore, a correlation between religious reality and religious expression. The words are so important that some texts stipulate that this spiritual experience must be expressed in Hebrew, the divine language of creation, a language thought to have been forgotten after the fall but rediscovered in the time of Abraham.[44]

According to Gen 2:19–20 the importance of naming begins with creation because God entrusted Adam with the responsibility of giving names to the animals.[45] Even for us today, bestowing names is still an important matter (a name must fit and be well chosen). If the given name seems artificial or does not fit, often a nickname is chosen that does fit. In antiquity different solutions were given to the question of the link between *res* and *verbum*. Several pre-Socratic philosophers and all the sophists thought that names were given not by nature (φύσις) but by convention (θέσις). The Stoics, on the other hand, believed in an intrinsic relationship between names and reality. Their theory of the universal λόγος invited them to insist on the natural aspect of names. The Platonic tradition chose a middle way. Names are given by convention, but they are also the way, the only way, to reach reality. They are like the shadow cast by a body. From their δόξα there is for the industrious mind a way to go back to the realm they express.[46] Philo participates in this discussion by saying that Adam played a decisive

[41] See for example *Apocalypse of Paul* 6–12; Theodore Silverstein and Anthony Hilhorst, *Apocalypse of Paul: A New Critical Edition of Three Long Latin Versions* (Geneva: Patrick Cramer, 1997) 75–85.

[42] See Philo, *De migratione Abrahami* 76–85; *Quod deterius potiori insidiari soleat* 75–78, 126–32.

[43] Justin Martyr, *1 Apol.* 61.11: "For no one can give a name to the ineffable God: and if anyone should dare say there is one, he raves with a hopeless insanity."

[44] See *Jubilees* 12.

[45] The episode is mentioned in the book of *Jubilees* 3.2: "And Adam named all of them, each one according to its name, and whatever he called them became their names" (trans. O. S. Wintermute, in *OTP* 2:58); see also *Midrash Rabbah*, *Genesis (Bereshith)* 17.4; *Midrash Rabba*, I, *Genèse Rabba* (trans. Bernard Maruani and Albert Cohen-Arazi; intro. and ann. Bernard Maruani; Les Dix Paroles; Paris: Verdier, 1987) 200–1. Adam knows the names of the animals while the angels ignore them.

[46] See Plato, *Cratylus*; see also Bietenhard, "ὄνομα," 245–48. The prestige of the wise ὀνοματοθέτης, the "one who gives names," the "namer," in the Greek philosophical tradition underlines the importance of names and naming; see Plato, *Charmides* 175b v.l.; *Cratylus* 389d

role in the first act of naming. Adam was the first and the only individual to assign the names of the animals, whereas Greeks in antiquity believed that many sages of the past had participated in this act of choosing names. Use of the figure of Adam and this episode in Gen 2:19–20 by the author of Mark probably lies behind the enigmatic sentence in the story of Jesus' baptism: καὶ ἦν μετὰ θηρίων (Mark 1:13).

It is difficult to grasp the philosophical difference between the Hebrew text of Gen 2:19–20 and its Greek translation, but there is a subtle difference.[47] The Hebrew text does not insert any category between the animals and their names; in his writings on the Septuagint, however, Philo points out a difference between the genre (γένος) and the species (εἶδος).[48] What Adam did was to name the animals according to their species, but respecting the greater category of genre. Divine in origin, the genre preceded any human action and was imposed on Adam. As Philo says, one seal can produce many prints. Human limitation can destroy the prints but cannot touch the seal.[49] Behind Adam's names that we can hear or read are the abstract categories, the genres, which are in and of God.[50]

The Hebrew Bible offers numerous examples of symbolic names, including the children of the prophets Hosea (Hos 1:3–9) and Isaiah (Isa 8:3). In Hebrew scriptures even the change of a name is significant: for example, Abram becomes Abraham, Sarai becomes Sarah, and Jacob becomes IsraeI.[51] The first Christian authors were likewise well aware of the significance of a name. Matthew makes clear

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v.l.; if, however, the term is not from Plato himself, it may originate from Neoplatonic circles; see Édouard Des Places, *Platon. Œuvres complètes*, XIV. *Lexique*, *deuxième partie* (Collection des Universités de France; Paris: Belles Lettres, 1964) 384. Proclus, *In Platonis Parmenidem*, in Proclus, *Opera inedita* (ed. Victor Cousin; Paris: Durand, 1864) 657 line 19. Iamblichus, *Life of Pythagoras* 82, recalls a sentence of one of the two Pythagorean schools: τί τὸ σοφώτατον; ἀριθμός· δεύτερον δὲ τὸ τοῖς πράγμασι τὰ ὀνόματα τιθέμενον: "What is the wisest? Number; second the establishment of names for things."

[47] See Monique Alexandre, *Le commencement du Livre*, *Genèse I-V. La version grecque de la Septante et sa réception* (Christianisme Antique 3; Paris: Beauchesne, 1988) 281. I thank my colleague Gary Anderson for this reference. Unfortunately the notes on these verses are not developed in *La Bible d'Alexandrie. La Genèse* (ed. Marguerite Harl; Paris: Cerf, 1986) 105.

[48] *Legum allegoriae* 2.9.

[49] *Quod deterius potiori insidiari soleat* 78. On Adam naming the animals see further Philo, *De opificio mundi* 148–50.

[50] It would be enlightening to know what the first Christians believed about naming, particularly when naming newborn believers during baptism. By calling upon them God's name and giving them new names, were they performing a sacramental action or using a ritual without ontological impact? It seems – if we can use the Pauline understanding of Eucharist (1 Cor 6:12–17; 10:14–22; 11:23–26) as an analogy – that some of them at least were convinced by the internal connection between names and reality. Adam had chosen the right names, not so much because he knew the divine genres, but because he had received the divine wisdom to know and communicate God's intention.

[51] Gen 17:5, 15 and 32:27–28. Other changes of names in the Hebrew Bible: Num 13:16 (Hoseah becomes Joshua); 2 Kings 14:7 (the city of Sela receives the name of Jokthe-el); 2 Kings 23:34 (Pharaoh Neco changes the name of the King Eliakim to Jehoiakim).

a link between Jesus' name and his providential function. He writes about Mary and her child: "She will bear a son, and you are to name him Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins" (Matt 1:21). The change of Simon's name to Peter (Matt 16:17–18)[52] continues this biblical tradition. Moreover, Philo wrote an entire treatise on the changing of names.[53] According to him, Jacob became Israel for at least two reasons, first because as an individual he "wrestled with God," and second because through this wrestling with God he became the representative for the collective people of God.

The distinction between heavenly and earthly also applies here. A heavenly Israel corresponds to the empirical Israel.[54] These ancient Babylonian and Greek beliefs that there exists a heavenly counterpart either to the earthly temple or to this world also found their way into the Christian faith.[55] Ignatius of Antioch considered the bishop to be an earthly counterpart of the heavenly Father and, likewise, presupposed that the liturgy of the Church is the human counterpart of the celestial liturgy celebrated by the angels.[56] Paul,[57] a Jewish theologian, considered to be a reformist by some and a heretic by others, dared to relate the new congregation of believers to the spiritual reality of Israel.[58]

In the case of Daniel, not just a single text but the whole book is worth mentioning because of the significant use of numbers throughout: the four kingdoms of chapter 2; the seven times of Dan 4:23, 25, 32; the "numbered, numbered, weighed, and divided" of Daniel 5:25–28; the four winds and four animals (the fourth with its ten horns) of Daniel 7; the several horns and the 2,300 evenings and mornings of Daniel 8; the 70 years and 70 weeks of years in Daniel 9; the four kings and the four directions of Daniel 11; the time, two times and half a time of

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[52] The change from Saul to Paul in Acts 13:9 remains enigmatic because Luke mentions it but does not explain it. See Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *The Acts of the Apostles: A New Translation and Commentary* (AB 31; New York: Doubleday, 1998) 499–500.

[53] Philo, *De mutatione nominum*.

[54] See the *Prayer of Joseph*, Fragment A, a text probably of the 1st cent. C.E.; see J. Z. Smith, "Prayer of Joseph," in *OTP* 2:699–705, 712–13.

[55] See Heb 8:5 building on Exod 25:40; see also Rev 2:1, 8, 12, 18; 3:1, 7, 14.

[56] See Ign. *Magn*. 3.2; 6.1; 7.2; *Smyrn*. 8.1–2; *Eph*. 4.1–5.3; *Trall*. 7.2; *Rom*. 2.2.

[57] Gal 6:16.

[58] Names and numbers occur also on the garment of the high priest Aaron. The names of Israel's 12 tribes were engraved on the two stones, six on each, placed on the shoulder-straps of the ephod (Exod 28:10–14). The high priest therefore represented the people of Israel. But he also carried on his pectoral a gold tablet with the holy name of God. Inscribed on the gold tablet was the expression "Holy to the Lord" (Exod 28:36; ἁγίασμα κυρίου in the Septuagint). The high priest thus represented God when meeting the elect people. Josephus (*Ant*. 3.162–78), Philo (*De vita Mosis* 2.109–30) and the author of the book of Revelation (Rev 21:12, 19) are the witnesses of a careful reading of Exodus 28 in the first century C.E. Close to Exod 28:10–14 is Numbers 17, a passage in which each of the 12 tribes brings a rod with its name engraved in it. Only one, that of Aaron and the tribe of Levi, will bloom the next day and show the election of this tribe for the service of God. The episode is mentioned in *1 Clem*. 43 as a way of solving a crisis to avoid any kind of ἀκαταστασία, "disorder." This is the best way to glorify God's name, εἰς τὸ δοξασθῆναι τὸ ὄνομα τοῦ ἀληθινοῦ καὶ μόνου. See also *Protevangelium of James* 8–9.

Dan 12:7; and the 1,290 and 1,335 days of Dan 12:11–12. This list is most relevant for our purpose because the subsequent apocalyptic literature will rely on it.[59]

One final text must be mentioned in this section. It comes from the wisdom literature and participates in the apologetic dialogue between Israel and the intellectual Greek world, illustrating along with the Greek philosophers the importance of names and numbers. Different from the Greek presupposition, however, it reverses the perspective, transforming an anthropological opinion into a theological one.[60] According to the author of the Wisdom of Solomon, it is God, the Creator of the universe and Guide of Israel, who "arranged all things by measure and number and weight" (πάντα μέτρῳ καὶ ἀριθμῷ καὶ σταθμῷ διέταξας, Wis 11:20).[61] Likewise, the first Christians showed interest in creation and believed the world to be organized harmoniously.[62]

## Enumerations and Meaningful Names

The kinship between signs for words and signs for numbers is embedded in the origins of writing (as long ago as in the proto-Sumerian culture of Uruk, around 3000 B.C.E.).[63] It will never be lost. Some Hebrew, Greek, and Roman numerals were and still are letters.[64] The selection of letters as signs for numbers[65] reflected with some exceptions the alphabetic order (α´for 1, β´for 2, γ´ for 3, and so on). To avoid confusion, a small stroke was added to the letter to show that the letter signified a number.[66] Conversely, the name of a person not only functioned as a substitute for this person, it could also designate some of his or her belongings. In certain contexts τὸ ἐμὸν ὄνομα meant "my account" or "my bank account."[67]

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[59] For some discussion of numerology in Daniel, see Louis F. Hartman and Alexander A. Di Lella, *The Book of Daniel: A New Translation with Notes and Commentary* (AB 23; Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1978) 70, 208–17.

[60] It is my conviction that this position is also the position of the New Testament as it is that of Irenaeus (see n. 4 above).

[61] On the importance of this verse for Augustine, see n. 91 below.

[62] See Acts 14:15–17; 17:24–27; Col 1:15–17.

[63] See Friberg, "Numbers and Counting," 1140.

[64] See Ifrah, *Histoire universelle des chiffres*, 1:441–621. As we have seen earlier (n. 10 above), *1 Enoch* 69.13–14 brings close the number and the name of the fallen angel Kasb'el; in *2 Enoch* 40.3 (manuscript J, longer recension): Enoch received a complete knowledge from the Lord. He says: "For not even the angels know their numbers. But I have written down all their names." Manuscript A (shorter recension) has a text very close to the text of J.

[65] Friberg, "Numbers and Counting," 1143: "The oldest examples of the use of Hebrew alphabetic numerals may go as far back as the late 2d and the 1st centuries B.C. ... The relatively late dates of these first examples suggest that the Hebrew alphabetic numeration was introduced as a result of Greek influence."

[66] See Ifrah, *Histoire universelle des chiffres*, 1:529–38.

[67] Bientenhard, "ὄνομα," 244–45.

In glorifying God or praising God's messengers there was already in antiquity a tendency to enumerate deeds or titles with numbers.[68] A tradition behind the Gospel of John, perhaps the *Semeia* Source, attributed a numeric sequence to Jesus' several signs or miracles. Traces of it are still visible in John 2:1 (the beginning of the signs), 4:54 (second sign), and perhaps 21:14 (the third time). Such a tendency, perceptible already in the *catenae* of sayings,[69] miracles,[70] or appearances stories,[71] occurs also in the lives of some apostles. The *Acts of Thomas* as well as the *Acts of Philip* organize the large material into a certain number of consecutive acts. Although there are some discrepancies within the manuscripts concerning the enumerating, nevertheless the presence of numbers, spelled out completely or abbreviated with letters depending on the manuscripts, indicates a compositional intention to organize the apostolic memories. It also expresses a missionary zeal: the lives of the Savior or of his apostles do not lack order and sequence, and numbers become tools for a faith relying on divine providence. If the plural can sometimes be the means of human limitations or even sins, it can also help to express the solicitude of the many divine messengers and their continuous intention to save.

Proper names could be spelled out or – at least for some of them – abbreviated. I wish to mention here the famous *nomina sacra*.[72] It is certain that these abbreviations were not intended to save time or space. It is also clear that four names, Ἰησοῦς, Χριστός, κύριος, and θεός, constituted the first and most ancient group of *nomina sacra* (occurring in the first half of the second century C.E.). If the belief in the ineffability of the name of God is certainly Jewish, the system of abbreviations for "Lord" (κύριος) and "God" (θεός) seems to be Christian in origin. To sum up, the system of the *nomina sacra* corresponds to a double theological movement. First, it offers a special way of writing the divine name detaching it from the human network. Second, it relates the Son more closely to the Father by including both of them in a sphere secluded from the realm of creation.

An early text, the *Epistle of Barnabas*, of around 100 C.E., is a witness for a short form of Jesus (actually the suspension is $\overline{\iota\eta}$, which exists in the beginning beside the usual contraction $\overline{\iota\varsigma}$).[73] It is certain that a theological interest lies behind this writing practice. Colin H. Roberts writes: "It seems then that there were two lines of development, the one owing something to number symbolism, the other, perhaps with an allusion to Alpha and Omega, taking the first and the last let-

[68] On the names and epithets of the gods in Greek religion, see André-Jean Festugière, "La Grèce, la religion," in *Histoire générale des religions*, II, *Grèce-Rome* (Paris: Quillet, 1948) 61–64; on the 12 deeds of Heracles, see Martin P. N. Nilsson, "La Grèce, la mythologie," ibid., 233–42.

[69] See Q, the *Gospel of Thomas*, or the *Gospel of Philip*.

[70] See *Epist. apost.* 4–5.

[71] See 1 Cor 15:3–11; John 20; 21; *Acts of John* 87–93.

[72] See Roberts, *Manuscript, Society, and Belief in Early Christian Egypt*, 26–48, 83–84.

[73] *Barn* 9.8.

ters."[74] One should not forget that the *nomina sacra* were always accompanied by a superlinear stroke, so that as they read, the ancient readers could see when they were approaching a sacred name.

The first Christians were torn between imitation of other Jewish movements and affirmation of their own identity: they paid a similar respect to divine names, but added to the name of God the name of their new Master, Jesus, considered to be the "Messiah" and the "Lord."[75] The fact that other, more recent christological titles, such as "Savior" or "Logos," did not become part of the system of the *nomina sacra* gives a clue to the early origin of the system that rapidly became universal among the early Churches.[76]

## In the Name of Jesus

In a Jewish world marked by the name of God, to proclaim the name of Jesus was perceived as a new, dangerous, even blasphemous attitude. Nevertheless, the invocation of the name "Jesus" is characteristic of the early Christian traditions.[77] The expressions "in my name" or "in your name" in the Synoptic, both Markan and Q, traditions[78] are a narrative adaptation of the christological formula: see, for example, Mark 9:37 par.; Mark 13:6 par.; and Luke 10:17. The theocentric perspective, however, still dominates in the Synoptic Gospels and the term ὄνομα is associated more frequently with the Father than with the Son. The situation is different in the Pauline epistles where christological usage predominates. Central for our purpose is the second strophe of the hymn preserved in Phil 2:6–11: "Therefore God also highly exalted him and gave him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bend, in heaven and on earth and under the earth ... " (Phil 2:9–10). In my opinion the name given to the divine messenger at the resurrection is neither "Lord" nor "Jesus," but an ineffable name, a hidden expression of the divine condition. "Lord," "Messiah," and "Jesus" are the visible side of the Resurrected.[79] Not only does the Father possess an ineffable name, the Tetragrammaton of Exod 3:14, but so also does the Son.[80]

[74] Roberts, *Manuscript, Society, and Belief in Early Christian Egypt*, 37.

[75] The *Didache* shows a parallel phenomenon concerning fasting: like the Jews the Christians decided to fast twice a week, but unlike their Jewish opponents they chose Wednesday and Friday; *Did.* 8.1.

[76] If the date is certain, the place of origin is still debated. Roberts, *Manuscript, Society, and Belief in Early Christian Egypt*, 42–46 rejects Alexandria and Rome, and chooses Jerusalem for no strong reasons.

[77] "Parmi les nombreux passages du N.T. contenant le mot ὄνομα, un peu plus de cent l'emploient à propos de Jésus" (Jacques Dupont, "Nom de Jésus," *DBS* 6 [1960] 514).

[78] See also Matt 7:22 as a redactional example.

[79] See also Eph 1:20–21 (see particularly the expression ὑπὲρ ... παντὸς ὀνόματος ὀνομαζομένου).

[80] This conception that the name "Jesus" is only the visible side of the Son's real name is

Similarly in the Epistle to the Hebrews, Jesus, the Son, God's representative and visible presence, is exalted over all creation. His name is over all other names: "Having become as much superior to angels as the name he has inherited is more excellent than theirs" (Heb 1:4). One should remember the development of angelology in this period and the bestowal of power to angels in order to understand the power of this phrase.[81] The expression "my name" is also present in the Johannine literature with a strong christological weight: see for example John 20:30–31. In the book of Revelation we find a similar consciousness of the inadequacy of any human name for Jesus Christ: "He has a name inscribed that no one knows but himself" (Rev 19:12). At the end of the second century Irenaeus adds to the existing explanations of the relationship between the name of the Father and the name of the Son.[82]

Lucien Cerfaux, Jacques Dupont, and Jean Daniélou concur in their suggestions that an early Christian theology of the "name" was a theological expression of the first community.[83] I see these hypotheses as still valid. The first Christians were confident and proud, believing in the power of Jesus' name not in a magical way but as the expression of the person himself. "But Peter said, 'I have no silver or gold, but what I have I give you; in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, stand up and walk' " (Acts 3:6). This trust in the name continued in the second century in such authors as Justin Martyr (*2 Apol.* 6.6; *Dial.* 30.3; 85), Irenaeus (*Adv. haer.* 2.32.4), the scribes of New Testament manuscripts, who sometimes added the expression "in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ" to their copies (see the variant reading of D in Acts 6:8), and the authors of the apocryphal acts of the apostles.[84] For these Christians, Jesus Christ had revealed a new and salvific aspect of God's person. The prayer of the psalmist, "Save me, O God, by your name" (Ps 54:1), had been actualized in Jesus. It is therefore not surprising that etymology was

typical of Gnostic thought; it is a vital element in Mark the Magician, a Valentinian theologian: see Irenaeus, *Adv. haer.* 1.15.1. See also *Acts of John* 98.8–12 and 109.3–17; *Gospel of Philip* 11–13; *Gospel of Truth* 38.7–15; Éric Junod and Jean-Daniel Kaestli, eds., *Acta Iohannis* (2 vols.; CCSA 1–2; Turnhout: Brepols, 1983) 2:617–21.

[81] Asserting that Jesus' name is higher than the angels' names, *1 Clem.* 36.2 depends probably on the Epistle to the Hebrews.

[82] Irenaeus, *Adv. haer.* 4.17.6. The divine name that is glorified in the world is the name of the Son and through it the Father is glorified. Like a king after painting his son can say: it is my work because it is the portrait of my son and it is my personal work; see also *Adv. haer.* 2.32.4. *The Gospel of Philip* (NHC II, 3) 56.3–15, 62.7–17, and 63.21–24 has three developments on the names and titles of Jesus.

[83] Lucien Cerfaux, *Le Christ dans la théologie de saint Paul* (2d ed.; LD 6; Paris: Cerf, 1954) 357–59; Dupont, "Nom de Jésus," 514–41; Jean Daniélou, *Théologie du Judéo-Christianisme* (2 vols.; Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 1958–1961) 1:199–216.

[84] See *Acts John* 83; *Acts Pet.* 16; *Acts Thom.* 33.2; *Acts Phil.* 6.20; see Sever J. Voicu's index in *Écrits apocryphes chrétiens* 1 (ed. François Bovon and Pierre Geoltrain; La Pléiade 442; Paris: Gallimard, 1997) 1747.

applied here: Jesus would carry his name properly: "He will save his people from their sins" (Matt 1:21).[85]

This theology of the "name" is most visible in the book of Acts.[86] It is also in this work that we find the strongest statement, namely that there is salvation to humanity only through the name, i.e., the person, of Jesus Christ. This is the argument that Luke, writing the story of the healing of the paralytic at the "Beautiful Gate" (Acts 3:2), places on the lips of the apostle Peter when he is confronted with the Sanhedrin: καὶ οὐκ ἔστιν ἄλλῳ οὐδενὶ ἡ σωτηρία, οὐδὲ γὰρ ὄνομά ἐστιν ἕτερον ὑπὸ τὸν οὐρανὸν τὸ δεδομένον ἐν ἀνθρώποις ἐν ᾧ δεῖ σωθῆναι ἡμᾶς ("There is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among mortals by which we must be saved," Acts 4:12).[87]

Christians claim to represent the true people of God, "those who in every place call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Cor 1:2). Joel's prophecy was quoted with joy and profit: "Then everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved ... " (Joel 2:32 [LXX 3:5]; see Rom 10:13; Acts 2:21). Preaching, prayers, creeds, and baptisms were performed "in his name."[88] The unknown or unusual expressions in Greek, τὸ ὄνομα with the preposition εἰς, ἐν, or ἐπί, refer to two parallel movements in opposite directions, a movement from the Lord Jesus Christ to the believer and a movement from the believer toward Jesus Christ and his flock.[89]

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[85] This passage of Matthew influenced the *Protevangelium of James* 14.5–6: "But when night came a messenger of the Lord suddenly appeared to him in a dream and said: 'Don't be afraid of this girl, because the child in her is the holy spirit's doing. She will have a son and you will name him Jesus – the name means "he will save his people from their sins" ' " (trans. Ronald E. Hock, *The Infancy Gospels of James and Thomas* [The Scholars Bible 2; Santa Barbara, Calif.: Polebridge Press, 1995] 57, 59). The spiritual meaning of the proper names contained in the Septuagint interested Philo, and those in the New Testament, Origen. This is the opinion of Jerome when he decided to write the *Liber interpretationis nominum Hebraicorum* (CCSL 72.57–161). It is not so sure that Jerome could really rely on one book by Philo and another one by Origen. Jerome knew often the philological etymology of a name but respected the popular, or the spiritual, one. He believed also that God had given some secret meanings to the biblical names. See Franz Wutz, *Onomastica Sacra. Untersuchungen zum Liber interpretationis nominum Hebraicorum des Hl. Hieronymus* (2 vols.; TU 41.1–2; Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1914–1915): "Meine 'Onomastica Sacra' sind als Nachschlagewerk gedacht, in welchem über die Namen aller bislang erreichbaren Listen Rechenschaft gegeben wird" (p. viii).

[86] See Dupont, "Nom de Jésus."

[87] See also the glorification of the name of Jesus Christ in the *Acts of John* (e.g., 109), the *Acts of Thomas* (e.g., 27.2–3), the *Acts of Philip* (e.g., 7.2), the *Life of Andrew* by Gregory of Tours (e.g., 3.4), and the *Doctrina Addai* (e.g., 10). In the Christian texts it is sometimes difficult to know if the name refers to God or to Christ. In the *Odes of Solomon* the many mentions of the name (e.g., 39.7–8, 13) must refer to the Lord Jesus Christ.

[88] For the prayer, see John 14:13–16 and Acts 22:16; for the preaching, see Luke 24:46–47; for the confession of faith, see Rom 10:6–13 and 3 John 17–18; for the baptism, see Matt 28:19 and 1 Cor 6:11. Even the suffering of believers happens "because of his name" or "in his name": see Mark 13:13; 1 Pet 4:13–16; Herm. *Vis.* 3.1.9–3.2.1.

[89] See Rudolf Bultmann, *Theologie des Neuen Testaments* (UTB 630; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1980) 135–41.

## Holy Numbers

It is not necessary to wait until Origen's homilies on the book of Numbers[90] or Augustine's reflections on Wis 11:20 on measure, number, and weight to realize the strong impact numbers had on the Christian mind.[91] Irenaeus spent a great deal of time refuting the Valentinians, Mark and Ptolemy, and their speculations on numbers.[92] Although opposing their precise numerological elaborations, he did not object, however, to *any* use of numbers. It would be historically wrong to believe that such speculation was the endowment of the Gnostics. Similarly, as early as the book of Revelation or the *Epistle of Barnabas*, we read a symbolic interpretation of numbers and an interaction between letters and names.[93] In a text that cannot be accused of being either Gnostic or heretical, the so-called *Epistula apostolorum* (mid-second century C.E.), we discover the following: "We [Jesus' disciples after the miracle of the loaves of bread] were asking and saying: 'What meaning is there in these five loaves? They are a picture of our faith concerning the great Christianity and that is in the Father, the ruler of the entire world, and in Jesus Christ our Savior, and in the Holy Spirit, the Paraclete, and in the holy Church and in the forgiveness of sins.' "[94]

The mystical or symbolic use of numbers probably did not belong to the elementary doctrinal and ethical teaching of the first Christian communities. But as soon as a desire to deepen the faith occurred, such a development became possible, as we see in the *Epistle of Barnabas*. This writing connects biblical exegesis (of the Septuagint) with reflections on numbers. Abraham's use of circumcision falls short, claims the author, if we understand it as a seal of the covenant, because the author is aware that other nations, Syrians and Arabs, and even priests of pagan religions, practiced circumcision. Therefore – according to the author's words – a rich exegetical teaching needs to be gained from the book of Genesis. If Abraham was the first to use circumcision (Gen 17:9–14), he did so as a prophetic action inspired by the Spirit. The author adds: "And Abraham circumcised from his household 18 men and 300." The author draws attention to the fact that 18 in the

[90] See Origen, *Hom. Num.* 1; 4; 5.2.2–3; 7.4.4; 8.1.5; Origène, *Homélies sur les Nombres*, I, *Homélies I-X* (ed. Louis Doutreleau; SC 415; Paris: Cerf, 1996) 30–49, 98–113, 126–31, 188–89, 208–11. The following quotation manifests the importance of numbers in Origen's thought: "Tout le monde n'est pas digne d'accéder aux nombres divins, mais il y a des règles de priorité pour la désignation de ceux qui doivent être compris dans le nombre de Dieu" (Origen, *Hom. Num.* 1.1).

[91] See Augustine, *De Genesi ad litteram* 4.3.7–4.6.12; see *La Genèse au sens littéral en douze livres (I–VII)* (trans., intro., and ann. Paul Agaësse and A. Solignac; 2 vols.; Bibliothèque Augustinienne. Œuvres de saint Augustin 48–49, septième série; Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 1970–1972) 1:288–97, 635–39.

[92] Irenaeus, *Adv. haer.* 1.14–16; 2.20–28.

[93] The apostle Paul (Gal 4:22–31) applied allegorical interpretation, a phenomenon parallel to the symbolism of numbers and the etymology of names.

[94] *Epist. apost.* 5.

Septuagint is mentioned *first*, distinct from the 300. It is intentional and providential: τὸ δεκαοκτώ, ιη' ἔχεις ' ΙΗ, "Eighteen is written IH'. You have therefore Jesus." And because the cross in the form of the τ was going to bring grace, it also reads 300 (in Greek: τ'). It therefore refers to Jesus with the first two letters and the cross with the third letter. "He knows this who placed the gift of his teaching in our hearts. No one has heard a more excellent lesson from me, but I know that you are worthy."[95] This risky interpretation is not part of the first Christian preaching, nor is it part of the elementary ethical teaching, as we noticed.[96] The author of the *Epistle of Barnabas* believes in the divine origin of this teaching as well as in its implantation in us. The true meaning of Scripture *can* be known by the human mind, because there is a harmony between the external (the visible signs for 318) and the internal reality (the divine gift in us). But such a doctrine is not for anyone. Only the people of God, those who are worthy, can receive it and understand and enjoy it. Thus the role of the teacher is to bring into connection the Scripture and the reader, wherein a double link exists: on one side the christological content (ιη'), on the other the pneumatological agency ἐν πνεύματι.[97] According to the author, physical circumcision could not offer the security of salvation because it did not offer the seal of the covenant. Only the work of Christ, Jesus and his cross, could establish the true covenant.[98]

Book I of the *Sibylline Oracles* is difficult to date in its present form, but I would date it to the second or third century C.E. Even if the work can be considered a product of Christian propaganda,[99] its hexameters often contain doctrinal elements and in the example below (1.324–31) a christological teaching:

[95] *Barn.* 9.7–9. Part of a codex, the Yale Genesis Fragment, *Papyrus Yale* 1, dated approximately 90 C.E., contains Gen 14:5–8, 12–15 according to the Septuagint. The codex may have been of Christian origin. Interestingly the number 318 was not spelled out but written with letters (the passage is fragmentary but there is not enough space for the number to be spelled out). This unusual feature could open the door for such an interpretation as the one proposed by the author of the *Epistle of Barnabas*; see C. Bradford Welles, "The Yale Genesis Fragment," *The Yale University Library Gazette* 39:1 (1964) 1–8; C. H. Hoberts, "P. Yale 1 and the early Christian Book," in *Essays in Honor of* C. *Bradford Welles* (ed. R. O. Fink et al.; American Studies in Papyrology 1; New Haven/Toronto: The American Society of Papyrologists, 1966) 25–28; *Yale Papyri in the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library* 1 (ed. John E. Oates, Alan E. Samuel, and C. Bradford Welles; American Studies in Papyrology 2; New Haven/Toronto: The American Society of Papyrologists, 1967) 3–8. I am indebted to Prof. Carl Holladay for much valued advice on this fragment. See also Thomas E. Schmidt, "The Letter Tau as the Cross: Ornament and Content in Hebrews 2:14," *Bib* 76 (1995) 75–84.

[96] We have other traces of an advanced teaching in early Christianity. Ignatius of Antioch speaks of the three bright "mysteries" ignored by the Prince of this world and accomplished by God in silence (Ign. *Eph.* 19.1); *Did.* 16.6 explains the three eschatological "signs": the sign of extension, the sign of the trumpet, and the sign of the resurrection.

[97] *Barn.* 9.7–8; see Ferdinand Prostmeier, *Der Barnabasbrief übersetzt und erklärt* (Kommentar zu den Apostolischen Vätern 8; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1999) 352, 369–71.

[98] See also *Barn.* 4.6–8 and 14.1–7; Prostmeier, *Barnabasbrief*, 370.

[99] See Jörg-Dieter Gauger, *Sibyllinische Weissagungen. Griechisch-deutsch. Auf der Grund-*