

Is Christian Morality Unique?

Part 2

Michelle Nailon CSB



*Time and Place World Views
in Tension*

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Michelle Nailon CSB

B.Arts, B.Theol., M.Theol., GradDipTheol

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Abstract of Parts 1 and 2

Part 1 of *Is Christianity Unique* uses historical critical exegesis to show that the theme of “money, power and sex” pervades the writings of Paul and the Gospels. This theme is based on the commandments of “Thou shalt not kill, commit adultery or steal”.

Part 2 uses a sociological approach to do a semiotic analysis of the gospels. It shows that Christian society is based on a hybrid of Judaic (cf. time) and Hellenistic (cf. place) world views. Tension between these two world views generates a unique energy. This energy fashions a Christian morality approach to “money, power and relationship” that idealises the commandments. It provides a base and also agenda for industry.



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CHAPTER ONE

TOWARDS A SOLUTION TO THE QUESTION

A RE-CAP OF PART ONE

A Focus on Money, Power and Relationship

(a) The problem of interpretation

Is Christian Morality Unique? Part Two continues on from the line of argumentation developed in *Part One*. This opened with the premise that an understanding of the uniqueness of Christian morality, needs to begin with an exploration of morality as expressed in its most basic texts, that is, the gospels. However from the beginning of Part 1 the question of interpretation has arisen. What would be the most authentic approach to take in looking at gospel morality? On-going reference has been made to the 1993 document put out by the Catholic Pontifical Biblical Commission “The Interpretation of the Bible in the Church”.¹ This document concedes the most dominant method of interpreting Scripture is in the “Historical Critical Exegesis” method of interpretation. The Commission says “The historical-critical method is the indispensable method for the scientific study of the meaning of ancient texts.”² However, the Commission also concedes that this approach is “diachronic”, meaning it only looks at one small section of the text at a time. The Commission admits there is need for the development of

¹ Pontifical Biblical Commission, “The Interpretation of the Bible in the Church,” In *Origins*, Vol 23, n. 29 (Washington: C. N. S., 1994), 500.

² Pontifical Biblical Commission, “The Interpretation ..”, 500.

“synchronic” approaches to interpretation in order to complement the now established and dominant diachronic approach. It describes some synchronic approaches including rhetorical, narrative and semiotic (cf. structural) analysis. It also recommends that such approaches to interpretation be taken in order to take advantage of human sciences such as sociology, anthropology, psychology and psychoanalysis.³

Part One of *Is Christian Morality Unique?* points out, that despite the Commission’s endorsement of synchronic interpretation of Scriptural texts there are points of conflict between the approaches. Thus some synchronic approaches even appear to conflict with other synchronic approaches. A case in point here is semiotic analysis and its exploration of “concentric circles” within the text. With such analysis, paragraphing for instance can appear to run “backwards” and therefore conflict with the linear approach of narrative criticism.

Part One of *Is Christian Morality Unique?* weighs up some further difficulties connected with the use of semiotic analysis in interpreting Scripture. It considers the apparently low opinion of this approach and this appears to be displayed by Joseph Fitzmyer, who was a major proponent of historical critical exegesis. Fitzmyer gives a critique (also explored in Part 1) of the Commission’s statement “The Interpretation of the Bible in the Church”. In a note connected to the subject of semiotic analysis, he talks about “pulling a rabbit out of a hat”.⁴ Such an simile reflects a lack of credibility in semiotic analysis both on his part and possibly if not probably amongst scriptural scholars in general. The discipline and exactness of historical critical exegesis, does not sit easily with the general

³ Pontifical Biblical Commission, “The Interpretation ...”, 502.

⁴ cf.. Joseph A Fitzmyer, *The Biblical Commission’s Document “The Interpretation of the Bible in the Church: text and commentary,”* (Roma: Editrice Pontificio Istituto Biblico, 1995).

“sweep” of a synchronic approach, especially semiotic analysis.

After weighing up the range of interpretations, including contextual approaches and fundamentalism, the Commission says later on in its document, “Exegetes may have a distinctive role in the interpretation of the Bible but they do not exercise a monopoly.”⁵ Unfortunately, one could say that given the apparent disparity between diachronic and synchronic approaches one is tempted to think such a statement by the Commission is one of wishful thinking rather than fact!

Partly because of the credibility factor relating to semiotic, structural analysis, Part One’s exploration as to whether or not Christian morality is unique, avoids the use of semiotic analysis altogether. Instead, use is made of historical critical exegesis itself in order to try and sort out what are the “key” foci of Christian morality. At the same time in some instances both narrative and rhetorical approaches to interpretation are also used.

In the contents of Part One, there is firstly an examination of Paul’s presentation of morality followed by an exploration of the morality presented in the synoptic gospels (including the Acts of the Apostles). The reason for this sequence is that Paul’s writings preceded those of the gospels and Paul’s theology was basic to gospel-writing. For instance “Paul’s problem with the law lies in its incapacity to address human sinfulness at sufficiently radical depth.”⁶ The gospels pick up on this.

⁵ cf. Pontifical Biblical Commission, “The Interpretation ...”, 520.

⁶ Brendan Byrne, *Galatians and Romans* (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 2012), 181.

(b) Paul's writings which preceded the gospels

Despite the fact that Paul's life and mission were a following on from the Apostles and about twenty years after the events described in the gospels, his mission and writings went before the writing of the gospels, again by about twenty years. Paul set out to provide a cosmological, theological and morality "map" for the Christian theologians who would come after him.⁷ This "map" provided a basis for the writing of the gospels.

Take a closer look at the overall time framework involved here. Gospel events took place in the 30's CE. Paul was writing in the 50's CE.⁸ Scholars believe the first gospel written by Mark was about 70 CE when Jerusalem and its Temple were being destroyed.⁹ Scholars consider that Matthew and Luke wrote in about 85 CE.¹⁰ John's gospel was about twenty years later still.¹¹

For Matthew, the 80's CE was around the time that Christian Jews were being excluded from the local synagogue via a curse to be recited in the Synagogue against Christians. This "curse" was put out by the leaders in mainstream Judaism in an edict from Jamnia.¹² For Luke on the other hand, in 85 CE he was in a community where the dominant membership now

⁷ cf. Murphy O'Connor, *St Paul's Corinth* (Collegeville, Minn: Liturgical Press, c.2002) 156-7.

⁸ B. Ehrman, "Paul as Pastor," in *Yale Bible Studies Series* (New Haven, USA: Yale University) https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pMVatCd_1xM [accessed march 2016].

⁹ Daniel J. Harrington, *The Gospel of Matthew*, (Collegeville, Minn. Liturgical Press, c. 1991), 15.

¹⁰ Harrington, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 22.

¹¹ Scott Huhn and Curtis Mitch, Intro. Cm. Notes, *The Ignatius Catholic Study Bible: The New Testament*, Revised Standard Version, 2nd Catholic Edition (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2001), 157.

¹² Michael Wilcockson, *A Student's Guide to AS Religious Studies* (Rhinegold Publishing Limited, 2003), 101.

consisted almost entirely of people from a Gentile rather than a Jewish background.¹³ A major question being faced by Luke and his community was whether or not the Church could continue on in its existence and mission with a congregation that was based from a pagan culture. John had a different task again. He was trying to meld together people from the two quite different backgrounds of Judaism and Hellenism.

(c) A “re-vamped” focus on money, power and relationship, beginning with Paul

In Part One of *Is Christian Morality Unique*, it was demonstrated that a key concern of Paul and the synoptic gospel writers after him was related to “money, power and sex”. It was claimed that this concern parallels the fifth, sixth and seventh commandments of “Thou shalt not kill (cf. power), Thou shalt not commit adultery (cf. sex) and Thou shalt not steal (cf. money) (cf. Exodus 34).

It was shown in Part 1 how these concerns undergird the presentation of the teachings of Jesus in the gospels of Mark, Matthew and Luke and in the story of his life. A particular study was made of the passion narratives in the synoptic gospels. It was shown how Mark puts special emphasis on the deprivation of material wealth (cf. money). Matthew puts special emphasis on the testing of trust (cf. relationship). Luke puts an emphasis on self-determination (cf. power). Thus it was demonstrated that the emphasis on money, power and relationship are distinctive features of the Christian approach to morality. But a question still remained. Are these emphases unique to Christianity?

¹³ Ulrich Luz, *New Testament Theology*, J. Bradford Robinson, trans.(Cambridge:Cambridge University Press, 1993), 144.

A brief comparison was then made with other world religions, namely Judaism, Islam, Taoism, Hinduism and Buddhism. It was pointed out that in these religions also, there is a particular interest in the morality relating to money power and sex. Also, like Christianity, these world religions encourage in varying degrees a “raising of the bar” in the observance of edicts relating to money, power and sex. So the exploration of *Is Christian Morality Unique? Part One* finishes with the comment that perhaps Christian morality is not so unique after all.

However a question is then raised as to whether or not it is the social framework that Christianity is based upon, that distinguishes its uniqueness. In such case it is the social background of Christianity that forces its practice of morality to take on a unique approach. .

B THE SOCIOLOGICAL BASE OF CHRISTIANITY

(a) The New Testament Writers

Throughout Part One, despite the negative comments made here about the dominant method of interpretation (historical critical exegesis), it was this diachronic method that was used in the exploration of morality in Paul and the three synoptic gospels. As a re-cap of this method. “Historical” looks at the historical situation at the time of both the gospel story itself and the background of when the stories were written. Then “critical” looks at the meaning of the language being used. “Exegesis” takes one small section of text at a time.

The question about whether or not the “uniqueness” of Christian morality rests in its sociological background leads to further questioning. For instance:

- “What is this sociological background of Christianity?”
- “Do the frameworks of the gospels indicate such a sociological background?”
- “How does the sociological background force Christians to take a unique approach to their practice of morality and what does this look like?”

If we go back to Paul, we find there is an underlying theme both in his writings and in the writing of those who wrote immediately and twenty plus years after him. This concerns the unification of Jews and Gentiles into one people cf. “For Christ himself has brought us peace, by making the Jews and Gentiles one people.” (Eph. 2:13).

Paul’s belief in the possibility of a unity between Jews and Gentiles, as with all his theology, stems from the overpowering experience that he had at the time of his conversion as described in Acts 22:8.¹⁴ Here, Jesus Christ appeared to Saul (to be renamed Paul) in the form of a blinding light. A voice called out,

Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me? Saul replied, “Who are you Lord? The answer came “I am Jesus the Nazarene whom you are persecuting (Acts 22:8).

Paul’s encounter with the risen Christ, revealed there is a corporate, organic link between the followers of Jesus and the person of Jesus himself. Paul realised that a new “corporate” life had emerged from such an organic unity. He realised that

¹⁴ F.F. Bruce, “The Epistles of Paul” *Peake’s Commentary on the Bible*, ed. Matthew Black (London: T. Nelson 1962), 929.

the followers of Jesus Christ have been enabled to share in the resurrected life of Christ (cf. 1 Corinthians 15).

From the time of this visitation on, Paul faced the challenge of bringing together the two different types of society of Judaism and Hellenism into the one hybrid community. On the one hand there was the Judaism of Paul's heritage and he was a Pharisee within it. On the other hand there was Hellenism, the culture of the Greco Roman Empire. Paul was a Roman citizen.

Paul was familiar with both societies. However he also realised there were two quite different world views involved here. Judaism puts a heavy emphasis on law and the sense of history and time. The Hellenism of the Greco Roman Empire put a heavy emphasis on order and the imposition of order over a vast area of space. Thus, in the world of the first century CE, Greco-Roman architecture, systems of government and even the straightness of the road systems all reflected a Hellenistic focus on order. An outcome of this for instance would have been that in the world of Paul's day, when the Roman Empire so strong, it would have been safer for someone like himself to travel around than it would have been in centuries to follow.

The question faced by Paul about the unity between the Jewish and Gentile followers of Jesus, was also faced by the gospel writers. Thus on one level the gospels dealt with the story of Jesus amongst the Jewish people of Palestine in the 30's CE. But on another level, the background of the historical situation of the gospel writers was also being reflected. For instance, as the years progressed more Gentile people were joining the church. The church was spreading out into the Roman Empire. Mark, writing at the time of the destruction of Jerusalem would want to show that the followers of Jesus were not in open conflict with Rome. Matthew, writing in a community now rejected by Judaism would want to assert the validity of its claim to a Jewish heritage. Luke, writing from within a

Gentile neighbourhood would want to show that the power of God was still operating from within the community. Later still, as mentioned above, John was concerned about the unity between people from both differing backgrounds. Those of a Jewish background needed to accept Jesus more fully.

All these background concerns influence the shape of each gospel and the interpretation each gospel presents of the life of Jesus.

(b) A problem with sociological research in its overlap with Human Sciences

If the social background of Christianity as reflected in the gospels, is to be explored more fully then logically, a sociological method of interpreting the gospels would need to be used. However, the discipline of sociology is a “human science”. It is more abstract and generalised than the “natural sciences” of mathematics or for that matter of historical critical exegesis. Thus a sociological approach to interpretation is not likely to sit easily with historical critical exegesis which is described by the Biblical Commission as both the dominant and the scientific method of interpretation. .¹⁵

This difference in approach and acceptability is likely to detract from the status and credibility of a sociological approach to interpretation. Thus, despite the encouragement given to the latter by the Catholic Pontifical Commission, the abstract elements of sociology would be yet one more reason why people would (and do) downplay the importance of sociological findings.

¹⁵ Pontifical Biblical Commission, “The Interpretation ...”,500.

Perhaps a descriptive definition of sociology would be of some help here. It can shed light on frameworks and difficulties faced by those trying to do a sociological investigation into a particular society. In the case at hand here, the investigation is into a society consisting of the elements of both Judaism and Hellenism.

Eight Essential Characteristics of Sociology **Bharat Kumar ..**

1. Sociology has its own field of study, boundary and method. It is **not treated and studied as a branch of any other science** like philosophy or political philosophy or history.
2. Sociology concentrates its attention on man, his social behaviour, social activities and social life. The fact that sociology **deals with the social universe** distinguishes it from astronomy, physics, chemistry, zoology, mathematics and other physical sciences.
3. **Sociology is a categorical and not a normative discipline: Sociology confines itself to statements about what is.** not what should be or ought to be"..... it cannot deal with problems of good and evil,....It cannot decide the directions in which sociology ought to go.
4. Sociology as a pure science has its applied fields such as administration, diplomacy, social work, etc. .. the immediate aim of sociology is the **acquisition of knowledge about human society**, not the utilization of that knowledge.
5. Sociology is more concerned with the form of human

events and their patterns. Sociology is an abstract and not a concrete science. ...This does not mean that sociology is an art and not a science.For example, sociology is not concerned with particular wars and revolutions but with war and. revolution in general, as **social phenomena as type's social conflict.**

6. Sociology **tries to find out the general laws or principles about human interaction and association** ... about the nature, form, content and structure of human groups and societies. ... It tries to make generalizations on the basis of the study of some selected events....For example, a sociologist makes generalizations about the nature of secondary groups... by **observing and studying a few.**

7. Sociology.....The area of inquiry of sociology is general and not specialized..... It is concerned with human interaction and human life in general..... . It only studies **human activities in a general way**.....This does not, however, mean that sociology is the basic social science nor does it mean it is the general social science.

8. Sociology is **both a rational and an empirical science:**There are two broad ways of approach to scientific knowledge. One known as empiricism, which is the approach that emphasizes experience and the facts that result from observation and experimentation. The other is known as rationalism, reason and the theories that result from logical inference.

The empiricist collects facts, the rationalist co-ordinates and arranges them.¹⁶

It is proposed in the pages to follow to make a comparison between the above description of sociology and the approach that was taken by the gospel writers. Weight will be given to the fact that as they were writing, these people were also involved in an interpretation of the life and meaning of Jesus Christ. It will be argued here, that amongst the many dimensions of their interpretations, they were also taking a sociological approach.

Does this claim that the gospel writers were “sociologists” fit with the 1993 statement of the Pontifical Commission? In its description of semiotic analysis, the Commission talks about the possibility of the overall content of a text being analysed at three different levels. These levels are the narrative level, the level of discourse and the logico-semantic level. In an explanation of the logico-semantic level, it says:

This is the so-called deep level. It is also the most abstract. It proceeds from the assumption that certain forms of logic and meaning underlie the narrative and discursive organisation of all discourse. The analysis at this level consists in identifying the logic which governs the basic articulations of the narrative and figurative flow of a text.¹⁷

Compare this statement of the Commission, with the summary statement above about sociology, “The empiricist collects facts, the rationalist co-ordinates and arranges them.” It is to be argued here in Part 2 of *Is Christian Morality Unique?* that the approach of semiotic analysis can demonstrate how the

¹⁶ Bahart Kumar, “8 essential characteristics of sociology” <http://www.preservearticles.com/sociology/8-essential-characteristics-of-sociology/2509> (www.preservearticles.com.) [accessed 1 August 2019].

¹⁷ Pontifical Biblical Commission, “The Interpretation....”,504.

gospel writers were collecting facts about the societies of the first century CE. They were arranging these in order to “do” a sociological analysis of the emerging church. Thus in the “the basic articulations of the narrative and figurative flow of a text”, the writers were defining and demonstrating the nature of a social organism that consists of the elements of both Judaic and Hellenistic societies. The “underlying logic” of the gospels therefore describes a hybrid of two different types of societies - societies that are based on two different world views.

A Semiotic analysis of the gospels also shows the awareness that the gospel writers had, that these two differing world views were based on the two differing emphases on time and place.

(c) Proposal to use semiotic analysis in a sociological analysis

The quote below provides further details about semiotic analysis. This also comes from the description of the Pontifical Commission which in turn has based its description on that of Algirdas J. Greimas.¹⁸ The Commission says:

Semiotics is based upon three main principles.

- The principle of immanence: Each text forms a unit of meaning complete in itself; the analysis considers the entire text but only the text; it does not look to any date “external” to the text such as the author, the audience, any events it describes or what might have been its process of composition.

¹⁸ Pontifical Biblical Commission, “The Interpretation...”, 504.

- The principle of the structure of meaning: There is no meaning given except in and through relationship, in particular the relationship of “difference”; the analysis of the text consists then in establishing the network of relationships (of opposition, confirmation, etc.), between the various elements; out of this the meaning of the text is constructed.
- - The principle of the grammar of the text; Each text follows a ‘grammar,’ that is to say, a certain number of rules or structures;.... in the collection of sentences that we call discourse there are various levels, each of which has its own distinct grammar.
- (note also the narrative, discourse and the logico-semantic levels referred to above.)¹⁹
-

Further points made by the Commission include “.. each biblical text is a coherent whole, obedient to a precise linguist mechanic of operation...” Also it points out “The semiotic approach must be open to history: first of all to the history of those who play a part in the texts; then to that of the authors and readers.”²⁰

A final point made by the Commission about semiotic analysis has special relevance to those who have limited knowledge of the gospels to start with.

When it does not become lost in remote and complex language and when its principal elements are taught in simple terms, semiotic analysis can give Christians a taste for studying the biblical text and discovering certain of its dimensions, without their first having to acquire a great deal

¹⁹ Pontifical Biblical Commission, “The Interpretation ...”, 504.

²⁰ Pontifical Biblical Commission, “The Interpretation ...”, 504.

of instruction in historical matters relating to the production of the text and its socio-cultural world.²¹

(d) Semiotic analysis also follows a “science”

In the context of an ongoing discussion in these pages about the credibility of semiotic analysis as compared with Historical Critical Exegesis, a point made by the Commission above has special relevance. It says “Each text follows a ‘grammar,’ that is to say, a certain number of rules or structures; in the collection of sentences.” This implies the task of the semiotic analysts would be to search out and observe the rules of such a “grammar” in their analysis of the text. In this sense then semiotic analysts would be objectively following a scientific type of discipline dictated by the text rather than “pulling a rabbit out of a hat” as implied by Fitzmyer in his notes about the “semiotic” approach.²² However this “grammar” would fit with the “science” of “human sciences” rather than the “natural sciences”.



²¹ Pontifical Biblical Commission, “The Interpretation ...”, 504.

²² Cf. Joseph A Fitzmyer, *The Biblical Commission's Document “The Interpretation ...”*,

C THE SYNOPTIC GOSPELS (INCLUDING ACTS)

(a) Gospel of Mark

(i) Historical Position of Mark

In order to do a semiotic analysis of Mark's gospel which was the first gospel written, it is appropriate (cf. the warning by the Commission) to briefly consider Mark's historical position. There are a number of references to a "Mark" in the New Testament. Probably it could never be proved whether or not these were references to the one, single person or that they referred to the Mark who, according to tradition, finally pulled together the gospel that now carries his name. However the early Church must have seen similarities between such a person (or persons) and the final writer of the first gospel.

The Mark referred to in Acts 12:12 was apparently a young man at the time of the crucifixion. How so? In the months following the crucifixion of Jesus, Herod thought it would please the Jews to execute the key followers of Jesus. Therefore, according to Acts the apostle James was executed (Acts 12:2). Then Herod arrested Peter with the same intention (Acts 12:5). However in Peter's case an angel of the Lord set him free. Peter then went to the house of Mark's mother where the disciples were assembled (Acts 12:8). It also appears that in the years to follow, Mark retained a strong link with Peter who in 1 Peter 5:13 referred to him as "my son Mark".

Someone called Mark also had links with Paul. In Acts we are told Mark started out as a companion in Paul's mission. But for some reason (possibly fear) he backed out. Later on when

he wanted to accompany Paul and Barnabas on their mission Paul refused to take him. Paul and Barnabas had a major split about this (Acts 15:38). The result was that Barnabas took Mark who was his cousin (Col. 4:10), as his missionary companion. Paul took Silas. (Acts 15:40). Yet apparently the rift between Mark and Paul was eventually healed. Mark reappears in a letter written by Paul later on and he says that he finds Mark very helpful in his work (2 Tim. 4:1-8).

There is a bottom line to these references to Mark that has some relevance to the gospel that was written in his name; In Galatians 2:8 Paul says how he and Peter had agreed that he, Paul, would go on mission to the Gentiles while Peter's mission would be to the Jews. In the time that followed, missionary activity apparently panned out in this way. But apparently in Paul's view the divergence went too far. In Galatians he reprimands Peter for identifying too much with customs of the Jews, because Peter and even Barnabas had began eating apart from the Gentile converts (Gal. 2:11-13).

However overall, the figure of Mark was associated with both Peter and his Jewish roots and mission. And, at the same time he was associated with Paul whose missionary outreach was to the Gentiles. Thus "Mark", would have imbibed an understanding of how the message of Jesus fitted into both a Jewish context and also the Hellenistic context of the Gentiles.

This sort of referencing in the New Testament (and possibly the historical background) fitted out someone called "Mark" for the writing of the first gospel in about 70 CE. This was a time when clarification of the nature of the emerging church was urgently needed.²³

²³ Moloney, *Mark, Storyteller, Interpreter, Evangelist* (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson Publishers, c.2004), ix.

In 70 CE, some decades had passed since the life and teaching of Jesus in the 30's. During the intervening decades, stories about the life of Jesus would have been told and retold. Given the general illiteracy situation of people at the time, it is likely these stories were collected and structured in a way to enable “performers” to retell them. The use of inverted circles for instance (cf. ABCDEDCBA) helped with memorisation. This approach to story-telling was to be found in the Jewish literature of the time. A quote by Daniel Beaulieu about devices used in Hebrew poetry is relevant here.

Parallelism is not merely a stylistic device of formularistic syntactical duplication. It is intended to achieve a result reminiscent of binocular vision, the super imposition of two syntactical images in order to endow them with solidity and depth.²⁴

This structure was also a feature of Homer the favourite Greek author of the time as noted by Cicero “I’ll be like Homer and put the cart before the horse.”²⁵

In the decades after the life and death of Jesus one can imagine a small group of people assembled together at night and/or involved in a manual task during the day. Stories about the life of Jesus would be re-told in clusters. At the same time the storytellers, even before the time of Mark’s gospel, would have been mindful of Paul’s aim “to weld the Jews and Gentiles one people”.

²⁴ Note: Cf. Daniel Beaulieu “5 Literary Devices in Hebrew Poetry” (Prezi.com, May 2014) <https://prezi.com/w4p3o7zrx8e/5-literary-devices-in-hebrew-poetry/>

²⁵ Cicero, *Letters to Atticus* ed. T. Page and W. Rouse, Trans. B. Winstedt (London: William Heineman, 1919) Note: also can be found at http://archive.org/stream/letterstoatticus01ciceuoft/letterstoatticus01ciceuoft_djvu.txt.

At the time of 70 CE first hand witnesses of the events in the life of Jesus were dying out. The Roman army was in the process of wiping out Jerusalem and its temple which had been the keystone of Judaism. At the time, the followers of Jesus were generally thought to comprise a small and strange “sect” within Judaism. Indeed they are described as such in Acts 24:5 and Paul is supposed to be a “ringleader” of them. In the 60’s CE Christians were living on the outskirts of Rome when a huge fire broke out there in 65 CE. Because they were not affected by the fire it was easy for the Emperor Nero to direct blame away from himself and foist blame upon them instead. This meant that when Mark was writing, the followers of Jesus had already faced harsh persecution. They had already faced betrayal within their own ranks.

Such persecution was yet another reason why around 70 CE it was time to clarify where Christians stood in relation to both the Jews and the Roman Empire? A more formalised statement by the community was needed. People were already familiar with the constitutions of various types of societies. Aristotle for instance had made a collection of over a hundred largely city-state constitutions.²⁶ As far as the followers of Jesus were concerned, they also needed a definitive type of statement about who they were. Hence the gospel of Mark.

(ii) Semiotic Analysis and the “Grammar” of Mark’s text

If, as the early Church understood, their community was based on elements of the societies of both Judaism and Hellenism, it was logical to ask in turn what were these societies based upon?

²⁶ Aristotle, *Politics and Athenian Constitution*, edited and translated by John Warrington (London, J.M.Dent, E.P. Dutton, 1959).

A possible “structure” for a gospel could fall into four sections. In fact it is possible that clusters of stories about Jesus that were already being retold in this format over the decades after the 30’s CE, and they fell into sections before the gospels had been written. Four possible Sections for Mark could be as follows:

- a. If Judaism could be understood as being based upon Law (-the law of God), then a question to be dealt with is “What would the authority of law be based upon?”.
- b. If Hellenism (the Greek culture of the Roman Empire) could be understood as being based upon Order then, “What would be needed to prevent “order” from imploding into chaos?”
- c. A question to be dealt with here would be “Is there some sort of “personality type” that would enable people to move backwards and forwards between the two types of societies?”
- d. What are the social pressures people need to deal with in responding to and following this more fluid personality type?

It is proposed in the following paragraphs to use semiotic analysis to sort out whether or not Mark did structure his text at a logico-semantic level in order to deal with these questions. If so, how did he do it? What sort of “grammar” did he use?

In the context of literary devices that were used in the first century CE, one could expect that chiasmus that is, inverted circle constructions, could be part of the writer’s “grammar”. Also as noted and in the context of the times, it was likely

Mark would want to show that “the way” of Jesus was not a threat to the Roman Empire. Even in Judaism people were aware of Homer, Hellenism’s favourite author. Homer shows how the hero sets out and goes from place to place. The urns of C8th BCE show Homer’s hero doing this.²⁷ In the case of the stories of Homer in each place where the hero goes, there was some sort of adventure. In the case of Mark’s gospel writing he could take a similar approach. He could use places to delineate the range of stories about his hero, Jesus Christ. At the same time, at a logico-semantic level Mark could be putting forward a definition about the basis of a society that is based upon law (cf. Judaism). Then in the next Section he could show the basis for a society based upon order (cf. Hellenism).

What are further details about the “grammar” Mark could be using? Consider a proposed first Section.

- He could construct a paragraph “chiasmus” (that is paragraphs that form an inverted circle). When showing Jesus going from place to place, Mark could at the same time, be matching up the places mentioned. These places in common could also be acting as paragraph “hooks”. They could “pair up” the paragraphs they pull together into a chiasmus formation. At the same time Mark could be matching up a first and second paragraph in order to make a key point in common. When all these points in common are added up they comprise a list of the characteristics that define what authority (and law) is based upon.

²⁷ Darrell L. Bock, "The Son of Man in Luke 5:24," *Bulletin for Biblical Research* 1 (Winona Lake, in: Eisenbrauns, 1991),109-121.

- A paragraph “hook” that names a place such as the sea, a boat, a house, a mountain etc. would need to match up in a credible way with the place named in its pair, so that this also would refer to the sea, a boat, a house a mountain etc.
- There could only be one such “hook” (or place) per paragraph.
- The “hook” would need to belong to the paragraph, that is, it would need to form an essential part of it. An advantage in this of course would be that it could not be easily deleted or changed in the course of a re-telling (or copying) of the stories.
- Further parallels between the paragraph pairs could reinforce the key points that they had in common.
- The summary would need to fit with the underlying line of logic of the gospel and indeed all the other gospels as well.
- The whole text of the gospel should be able to fit into structures that accord with the underlying “grammar”.
- Some sections of the text could “deviate” from the grammar that applies to the rest of the text. But in such case these Section(s) would have their own “grammar” and still retain a purpose that fitted with the whole.

Can such a “grammar” be found in the text of Mark’s gospel?
Or is one tempted to state with others “I can’t make head or
tail of this?”

(iii) The Analysis

(a) Mark’s Section A What Authority is Based Upon Was Mark a Sociologist?

With the above introduction, consider a list of places where Jesus went in a first section of Mark’s gospel> This stretches from Mk 1:9 to Mk 3:35. Each of the places introduces a paragraph. There are seventeen of these. It is being argued here that they form eight paragraph pairs in the formation of a concentric circle. The middle paragraph forms a centrepiece which makes a key point about all the others. The formation of this concentric circle and the points made by the paragraphs, allow the points to be presented in a three-dimensional way. Once again one is reminded of the “binocular” vision that is a result of such repetition. In such a view the first, last and middle points are given extra emphasis because of their location in relation to the whole.

Places Jesus went act as headings for the paragraphs to form an inverted circle: Consider:

Place and Paragraph Reference		Place and Paragraph Reference	
1	Nazareth (home) (1:9)	17	Home (3:20)
2	Into the desert (1:12)	16	Into the mountain (3:13)
3	Galilee/Sea (1:16)	15	Sea (3:7)
4	Capernaum/Synagogue (1:21)	14	Synagogue (3:1)
5	House of Simon (1:29)	13	House of God (2:26)
6	Lonely place (1:35)	12	Corn fields (2:23)
7	Came out (of home) (1:38)	11	Came out (2:17)
8	Galilee/seaside (1:39)	10	Beside sea (2:12)
	9 Capernaum (Home base) (2:1)		

Space does not allow for a full exploration of all parallels within each paragraph pair. But at least some of these parallels need to be shown in order to demonstrate these exist. In other explanations of a semiotic analysis of the gospels, for example in PowerPoints related to www.valuesclarification.org parallels between the first, second and third paragraph pairs have been shown. So, in this explanation of the analysis, parallels in the fourth, fifth and sixth pairs are shown instead.

The central point emerging from all the paragraph pairs appears to come under the heading of “What Authority (and law) is Based Upon”.

Points in Common

1st Paragraph in a pair	Focal Point	2nd Paragraph in a pair
4 Capernaum/ Synagogue Accusation against “be quiet” Unclean spirit out Astounded at authority	Challenges corruption	14 Synagogue Accusation against “be quiet” Hand was restored Plotting to destroy
5 House - Simon She served them Question of identity	Gives priority to people	13 House - God He gave them bread Question of identity
6 Lonely place Need to pray Looking for him	Respects human needs	12 Grain fields Need to eat “Look”

As stated above, in a mainly illiterate society that relied on oral traditions, “techniques” for memorisation such as inverted circles (chiasmus) were common. Also, because people were accustomed to such a “pairing” within a group of stories a general sweep of commonality in the parallels would be sufficient for them to realise that this was the structure being used. People were not expecting a “mathematical” accuracy in such parallels. Also, opposites were used at times in order to

connect the parallels, for example “a bad spirit” could be paralleled with “a good spirit”.

If one goes through all the eight paragraph pairs in a proposed Section A in Mark and a ‘pivotal,’ point in common, noted within each pair then the following list can be compiled.

Ref.	Point in Common	Ref.
<i>1:9-12</i>	In accord with the cause of existence	<i>3:20-35</i>
<i>1:12-13</i>	Extends to good and bad	<i>3:13-19</i>
<i>1:14-20</i>	Requires support	<i>3:7-12</i>
<i>1:21-28</i>	Challenges corruption	<i>3:1-6</i>
<i>1:29-34</i>	Gives priority to people	<i>2:26-28</i>
<i>1:35-37</i>	Respects human needs	<i>2:23-25</i>
<i>1:38</i>	Can innovate new order	<i>2:15-22</i>
<i>1:39-45</i>	Reaches to crowds Ready to forgive (<i>2:1-12</i>)	<i>2:13-14</i>

Then if one looks at the list as a whole, a summary statement about them can be made. In this case they all give an indication as to “What Authority is Based Upon”. Or, putting this another way, the list points to elements of true authority, which in turn is the basis of authentic law. .



(d) Mark's Section B
Order Needs a Sense of Direction

Moving on, and following the same “technique” of analysis and assuming that the writer may be using the same “grammar” of paragraph construction, a Section B emerges from the text of Mark 4:1 – 9:1. Consider:

Locations where Jesus went-- in a concentric circle.

Place and Ref.		Place and Ref.	
1.	Beside the sea (4:1)	19	Caesarea (seaside) (8:27)
2,	Alone (4:10)	18	Bethsaida retreat (8:22)
3	other side of sea (4:35)	17	other side of sea (8:13)
4	out of boat (5:2)	16	in the ship (8:10)
5	Other side of sea (5:21)	15	Decapolis near sea (7:31)
6	into a house (5:39)	14	into a house (7:24)
7	into own country (6:1)	13	into private house (7:37)
8	in ship (6:32)	12	out of ship (6:54)
9	mountain to pray (6:46)	11	Gennasarat/ anchored (6:53)
10.	walking on the sea (6:49)		

If we again take the fourth, fifth and sixth paragraph pairs, we can see further parallels between the stories. Note parallels are in the same sequence cf.

1st Paragraph in pair	Point in Common	2nd Paragraph in pair
4 out of ship		14 in the ship
Country of Gerasenes Man.. unclean spirits Unwelcome sign of drowned pigs	Realise big picture is complex	Region of Dalmanutha Pharisees (bad spirit) Unwelcome sign of a warning
5 other side sea		13 Decapolis bysea
Lay hands upon Touched his garment (in a great crowd)	Value personal contact	Put hand upon Touched his tongue In a great crowd
6 into a house		12 into a house
Uproar Daughter asleep Lack of belief Daughter cured	Believe in own power	Could not be hidden Daughter possessed Great belief Daughter cured

If one goes through all the paragraph pairs in this proposed Section B and compare them in order to find a key point in common the result is as follows:

<i>Ref. in Mark.</i>	Point in Common	<i>Ref. in Mark</i>
4:1-9	Be receptive	8:27-9:1
4:10-34	Perceive as well as see	8:22-26
4:35-41	Note dignity of the person	8:13-21
5:1-20	See big picture is complex	8:10-13
5:21-34	Value personal contact	7:31-8:9
5:35-45	Believe in own power	7:24-30
6:1-30	Avoid bad actions	7:17-23
6:31-45	Avoid over-formality	6:54-7:16
6:46	Stay anchored	6:53
	Avoid hard-heartedness (6:47-52)	

Also, if one looks at the above list in terms of a “sweep” of the points made, a summary heading can be seen as relating to the need for a sense of direction. Again, if one bears in mind that Mark may well be working out a basic definition of law (cf. Judaism) and order (cf. Hellenism), then the following heading “Order is Based on a Sense of Direction” fits with this. There is the implication that the above points are needed if either an individual or a society as a whole, is going to have a sense of direction. A sense of direction is needed in a society that is based upon order. Otherwise it could implode.

One is reminded here of the Shakespearian tragedy of *King Lear*. King Lear wanted to retain his status as King with an army contingent of one hundred soldiers. But he also wanted

his daughters to take over the responsibility of running his kingdom. This meant Lear's soldiers had nothing to do. Their "order" imploded into riotous behaviour and chaos because they no longer had a 'sense of direction'. Lear's position was untenable.

(c) Mark's Section C
A Golden Rule is the Way of the Child

If we continue with the use of semiotic analysis and the background idea that Mark's gospel has an underlying "logico-semantic" level beneath the surface of the text that relates to Christianity's basic social structure, then we reach a Section C. Here, it appears that Mark is exploring what type of person could function within a hybrid society that consists of the two differing world views of Judaism and Hellenism.

The text from Mk 9:2 to 10:31 which appears to form a Section C, arguably consists of three sub-sections. The first deals with the transfiguration of Jesus on a mountain in which his garments become white as snow and a voice out of the cloud says "This is my son, the Beloved. Hear him." (Mk 9:7). The next sub-section, by contrast, shows a man trying to rid his son of an evil spirit. The disciples try to help here but only Jesus can expel such a spirit (Mk 9:14-29). The next sub-section consists of Jesus (in Capernaum) putting a child before the disciples and saying "Whoever receives such children in the name of me, receives me" (Mk 9:37). Further along in this same sub-section (now in Judea) Jesus asserts the need for a stable family. He again asserts the need to respect children.

Let the children come to me. Do not prevent them. For of such is the kingdom of God. Truly I tell you, whoever fails

to receive the kingdom of God like a child may not enter into it. (Mk 10:14-15.)

It is evident in this Section C that Mark is drawing the attention of the auditor/reader to the teaching of Jesus about children. The implication here is that people who can enter into “the kingdom” (arguably a hybrid, organic society consisting of both Judaic and Hellenistic world views) need to be like children.

Towards the end of this Section C, an apparently young man approaches Jesus wanting to inherit eternal life. Jesus puts out the challenge to him “Go sell what things you have and give them to the poor and you will have treasure in heaven. And coming follow me.” (Mk 10.). In the story this man who had great wealth, was not prepared to give up his wealth and he went away sad. If one looks more closely at what Jesus says to the man, there is a parallel between the challenge here and the lifestyle of a child. A child does not have the sense of owning property. Nor does a child in general exercise power or run a household. By implication there are also parallels with a lifestyle that is based upon the renunciation of money, power and sex.

Part One of this research project, *Is Christian Morality Unique?* has elaborated on the three concerns about money, power and relationship,, as being basic to the exercise of Christian morality. It also made brief reference to the lifestyle of Religious who takes the vows of poverty (cf. money), chastity (cf. sex) and obedience (cf. power). They arguably undertake the lifestyle of an “adult-child”.

Consider the challenge here in terms of sociology and a logico-semantic level of Mark’s text. It appears the renunciation of these three things, or at least detachment from them, enables one to have the flexibility and openness needed to move

between a society that is based upon Judaism (and law) and a society based upon Hellenism (and order). How so? Without the attachments that relate to money, power and sex there is less likelihood of someone being entrenched in one or other of the two world views. That is, they are less likely to be afraid of what they might lose by being more open to another point of view. They have a “cultural” flexibility.

(d) Mark’s Section D
The Power of One Depends Upon Coping

A possible Section D in Mark, Mk 10:31 to 16:8 (according to this analysis), begins with the journey of Jesus towards his crucifixion. For Mark, organising the material here around “place hooks” for this Section would not have worked so well. The drama of the passion is played out in only a few places. In any case it appears Mark the writer wanted to emphasise here, the importance of a following of Jesus who is the archetype as it were, of the adult “child”. The Section therefore explores how people responded to Jesus during the drama of his passion and how they continue to respond to him. It appears in such case that the paragraph “hooks” in this Section, are responses to Jesus. These hooks also enable a Section D in Mark to link back to a Section C, when Jesus challenges the (young) man and says to him “Come follow me.” By implication, in Section D, it is a person’s response to Jesus that will play a key role in defining who they are who they will become.

In Mark’s Section D paragraphs are again structured into a concentric circle with parallels between each pair. Also again, if the key point common to each pair is isolated out and these points are then listed together, there emerges an overall heading which is common to all the paragraphs in the Section. Such a heading could be, “The Power of One is Based Upon Coping”.

The result of this structuring is that at one level, Section D presents Jesus as an individual who has to face up to his crucifixion in extreme desolation. At the same time there is also a theme being developed here that shows how the destiny of the individual is affected by their own, personal response to Jesus. Consider the paragraph pairs, the hooks and the points in common as follows:

THE POWER OF ONE IS BASED UPON COPING

1st Paragraph in pair	Point in Common	2nd Paragraph in pair
1 Following afraid (10:32-34)	Fear	27 Women flee (16:8)
2 James, John (10:35-45) Wanting to sit on right	Place getting	26 Magdalene et al (16:1-7) Angel sitting on right
3 Bartimaeus (10:46-47) Asking to see	Asking	25 Joseph of Arimathea (15:42-47) Asking for body
4 Crowd deny (10:48-52) title of “Son of David	Crowd Pressure	24 Crowd deny (15:22-41) Title of “King of Jews”

5	Colt carries Jesus (11:1-8)	Accepting help	23	Simon of Cyrene carries Jesus' cross (15:21)
6	“The ones” Call out (11:9-26) “Hossanna”	Praise and mockery	22	soldiers Call out (15:16-20) “Hail King of Jews”
7	Chief priests ask (11:27-12:12) “By whose authority?”	Belief in self	21	Chief priests, elders, scribes, Pilate ask (15:1-15) “King of Jews?”
8	Pharisees, Herodians (12:13-17)	Civic authority	20	priests, elders, scribes (14:53-72)
	Re authority of Caesar			Usurp authority of Caesar
9	Sadducees (12:18-27) Query resurrection	Regeneration	19	Young man in nightgown (25:51-52) Cf. shroud
10	Scribe asks (12:28-34) “love neighbour”	Love and loyalty	18	One betrays (14:44-46) betrayal
	Crowd Heard gladly (12:35-44)	Crowd fickleness		Followers Fled (14:47-50)

11	one of disciples (13:1-2) insecurity	Insecurity	17	one of the twelve (4:42-43) insecurity
12	Peter, James, John (13:3-37) asking	Finding support	16	Peter, James, John (14:12-41) grieving
13	priests/scribes (14:1-2) plotting	Plots and criticism	15	Judas (14:10-11) plotting

14
Anointing woman “To be remembered”

Taking initiative

(14:3-9)

The 10th paragraph pair has a change in paragraph sequence? However the exception here proves the rule. It appears Mark is deliberately tying together individual guilt with corporate guilt.

For Sections A and B above, the extent of parallels between paragraph pairs was demonstrated by showing further parallels between the fourth, fifth and sixth paragraph pairs. To continue this demonstration of similarities, the fourth, fifth and sixth pairs of Section are compared below. Again there is commonality in the sequence of details.

4	<p>Crowd deny (10:48-52)</p> <p>Denied title He cried out Let me see Immediately saw Followed him</p>	<p>“Son of David” “King of Jews”</p> <p>Crowd Pressure</p>	24	<p>Crowd deny (15:22-41)</p> <p>Denied title Jesus cried out Let us see (immediately) saw Followed him</p>
5	<p>Disciples & Colt (11:1-8)</p> <p>Co-opted to carry</p>	<p>Carries Jesus Carries cross</p> <p>Accepting help</p>	23	<p>Simon Cyrene (15:21)</p> <p>Co-opted to carry</p>
6	<p>The ones (11:9-26)</p> <p>“Hosanna” -coming Kingdom Inadequacy of fig tree Inadequacy of temple system</p> <p>Promise re power in kingdom Will forgive</p>	<p>“Hosanna” “Hail King of Jews”</p> <p>Praise and mockery</p>	22	<p>soldiers (15-16-20)</p> <p>“Hail King of Jews”</p> <p>Mockery re power in kingdom Will crucify</p>

A Summing Up of Mark as an Introduction to the Gospels to Follow

Mark, the first gospel writer, set out a “grammar” relating to the logico-semantic level of his text. This text and its logico-semantic level, was largely followed by the writers Matthew and Luke and even John. Scholars estimate that the gospels of Matthew and Luke were written around 85 CE, fifteen years after Mark²⁸. Matthew and Luke relied heavily on the text of Mark.²⁹ They also continued on with Mark’s interest in demonstrating the characteristics of Judaism and Hellenism at the logico-semantic level beneath the text of their gospels. In their case however they put a focus on one or the other. Matthew put focus on the characteristics of Judaism as adopted by the followers of Jesus.³⁰ Luke put focus on Hellenism as adopted by the followers of Jesus.³¹ Luke also wrote a Part B to his gospel called *The Acts of the Apostles*. This starts with the ascension of Jesus into Heaven. It is in book of *Acts* that the hybrid society consisting of Judaism and Hellenism is “launched” into the world of the first century CE.

The fourth gospel, the gospel of John, was written around the turn of the century.³² John deals with the dialectical tension that continued on within the hybrid society that gradually came to be called Christianity. John puts special emphasis on the identity of Jesus as the “lynch pin” of the two constituent societies. In terms of a logico-semantic level uncovered by the semiotic analysis, it is in the person of Jesus that his followers

²⁸ Moloney, *Mark, Storyteller, Interpreter, evangelist* ix.

²⁹ Mark Allan Powell, *What are They Saying About Luke?* (New York/ Mahwah: Paulist Press, 1990), 18.

³⁰ Cf. Daniel J. Harrington, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 22.

³¹ Powell, *What are They Saying About Luke?*

³² Cf. Neusner, J. “Judaism in a time of crisis: Four responses to the destruction of the second Temple.” *Judaism* 21 (1972) 313-27.

http://preteristarchive.com/Books/pdf/1980_jacoby_the-destruction-of-jerusalem.pdf [accessed September 2019].

are to find their identity. Thus it is in a following a Jesus that Christianity is to be defined.

(Note: Scholars believe the Mark 16:9-30 was added later on and it is not included in this analysis.³³)



³³ The R.S.V. Interlinear Greek-English New Testament, trans. Alfred Marshall (Basingstoke: Marshall Pickering, 1988), 215.

**(b) Semiotic Analysis
of the Gospel of Matthew
“Internalise the Law”**

Was Matthew a Sociologist?

The basic proposal of Part 2 in *Is Christian Morality Unique* is to show the uniqueness of Christianity is to be found in its structural identity. The analysis of Mark above shows the two bases of Judaism, a law based society and Hellenism, an order-based society.

The demonstration that these two societies are embedded in the structure of Christianity is to be further shown by an analysis of the gospels of Matthew and Luke. Matthew shows the essentially Judaic foundations of Christianity. Luke shows the essentially Hellenistic (Greek philosophical) foundations of Christianity.

A semiotic analysis of the gospel of Matthew shows how, structurally, he follows on from the gospel of Mark. Matthew was writing from within a community of Christians who could be described as Jewish Christians.³⁴ They had been raised as Jews: they were heavily steeped in its traditions and expectations and they wanted to retain this heritage. He set out to show them the message and a following of Jesus was a follow-on from their own background. Scholars observe the frustration that Matthew the writer felt with mainstream Judaism and its refusal to accept a following of Jesus. Mainstream Jews were instead looking to the Pharisees for

³⁴ Cf. Stegner, William Richard, “The Temptation Narrative: A Study in the Use of Scripture by Early Jewish Christians,” in *Biblical Research* 25, 1990.

leadership.³⁵ Scholars point out that Matthew wrote from within a community that had in fact been alienated from mainstream Judaism.³⁶ As mentioned above around the time the gospel was written (about 85 CE), an edict from a Jewish leadership meeting in Jamnia had ordered that a “prayer” should be recited in all Synagogues that put a curse on Christians.³⁷

Because of the edict some people were reeling from being ostracised from the Synagogue because they had considered themselves to be Jews who followed Jesus. Outsiders and apparently some members thought of themselves as being part of a “sect” within Judaism (cf. Acts 24:5). Recall how the gospels show that in the time of Jesus back in the 30’s CE there were a wide range of groups within Judaism. These included the Pharisees, the Sadducees, the Zealots, the Scribes, the priestly caste, the elders and so on. There were also groups such as the Essenes who (for some reason) are not mentioned in the gospel texts but who at the time of Jesus were a strong presence within Judaism.³⁸ Matthew needed to show that instead of being part of such a group the followers of Jesus were something more. He used the underlying structure of his gospel to help in this.

However, how does an underlying structure of his gospel continue on from the structure of Mark? In the present context one can ask “How can a semiotic analysis of the gospel demonstrate this?” If we focus upon the sociologist dimension as in the above analysis of Mark, then a suggested outline of Matthew’s gospel is as follows:

³⁵ Luz *New Testament Theology: The Theology of the Gospel of Matthew*, 40.

³⁶ Luz, *New Testament Theology*, 2.

³⁷ Wilcockson, *A Student’s Guide ...*, 101.

³⁸ Cf. Robert Broderick, *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, (London: Nelson Publications, 1990), 194-5.

Section A Matthew's gospel picks up and carries on from Mark's Section A. Here Mark describes the basis of authority and law cf. Judaism. Matthew's Section A consists of an introduction showing that Jesus emerged from the traditions and expectations of a Judaic society.

Sections B, C Matthew then points out, in his Sections B and C, the attitudes needed to internalise the morality of Jewish law. At this level he argues such attitudes enable the individual to move beyond external observance into taking on the positive attributes of a law-based society.

Section D In his Section D Matthew goes on to describe the qualities that characterise a whole environment that is based upon internalised law and the spirit of Wisdom.

Section E In his Section E Matthew sets out the difficulties that such a society has to deal with because of its tendencies towards narrowness and an over-stress on external law.

Section F. Finally in a Section F, which is about the passion narrative, Matthew shows the example of Jesus who leads through a forgiving relationship.

Throughout the gospel of Matthew the follower of Jesus is presented in the figure of the disciple.

How can it be demonstrated this proposed structure undergirds the gospel. It could be pointed out first of all, that Matthew's description of this type of Judaic-Christian community is presented in a "time capsule". Donald Senior for instance quotes comments of the scholar David Bauer about the great discourses in Matthew. They are:

like the flowing lines of a symphony (rather than) the fixed girders supporting a building.... seams of turns within the

gospel's organic structure rather than as potential keys to a single fixed blueprint³⁹

In terms of a semiotic analysis of this gospel, it appears that instead of organising paragraphs according to patterns based upon place, Matthew instead begins virtually all of his paragraphs with a statement about time, whether specified or implied.

Actually, this emphasis on time fits in with his underlying theme about Judaism and the law. Observations about the natural law for instance are based upon causes and effects within nature and these in turn are framed within a time-span.

However, the emphasis of Matthew on time rather than place presents a problem in the organisation of his material. Paragraphing based on the "hooks" of places are fairly self-evident. Time statements on the other hand, can be vague. Also, whatever about the viability of Matthew starting individual paragraphs with a time statement, one could wonder how he would organise whole sections of his material in a similar way.

A reader of the gospel, reflecting on such a problem, can in fact uncover the "break" that Matthew has apparently devised in order to separate one main section of his text from the next one. If we assume that he, like Mark, wanted to "break" up his text into sections in order to describe a society which, in his case was Judaism, then we can first look for any obvious mechanism that could break one section from the next. An obvious Section A at the start of the gospels includes stories about the birth of Jesus. An obvious last section of the gospel is the Passion narrative. One can ask the question. If

³⁹ David Bauer, *The Structure of Matthew's gospel: A Study in Literary Design* (Sheffield: Armond, 1988) Note: Quoted in Senior *What are they Saying about Matthew*, 36).

Matthew is dividing off the Passion narrative from the preceding parts of the gospel how does he do this? Immediately before the Passion story we find the sentence “After Jesus had finished these words.” (Mt. 26:1). If Matthew is using this sentence to wind up the second last section before moving into the last section of his gospel, is he using the same sentence to break up the other main sections? In fact, in going backwards through the text we find much the same sentence occurring in Mt. 19:1, then in Mt. 11:1, then in Mt. 7:28. Also when Matthew is finishing off the first section of infancy narratives and moving into a Section B there is the sentence, “Opening his mouth he said.” This verse of Mt 5:2 also fits with the “divider” sentence. “After Jesus had finished these words.”

Using a Section break with mention of “the word” of Jesus also fits with Judaism. Recall the opening verses of Genesis “God said “Let there be light” (Gen 1:3) etc. To show the “words” of Jesus were also sacred, it was fitting to use a statement about the “words” of Jesus as the link between gospel sections.

The suggestion being made here, that the sentence “After Jesus had finished these words” divides up Matthew’s gospel into sections, is not a new one. In the 1930’s the writer Benjamin Bacon pointed out how this sentence was possibly being used to divide up the gospel.⁴⁰ Donald Senior makes a comment about this, saying that whether someone agrees with him or not, “Bacon highlighted certain aspects of Matthew’s narrative that are featured in almost every attempt to solve the riddle of its structure.”⁴¹

⁴⁰ Benjamin Bacon, *Studies in Matthew* (London: Constable, 1930).

⁴¹ Senior, *What are they Saying About Matthew*, (New York: Paulist Press, 1996), 26.

A semiotic analysis of the gospel of Matthew is as follows:

Matthew’s Gospel “Internalise the Law”

A Infancy Narratives Mt. 1:1-4:25

Finishing with: *“opening his mouth he taught them saying”*

B Push Beyond the Bare Outlines of Law
Mt.5:1-7:23

Each paragraph opens with an exhortation

		<i>Mt.</i>
Avoiding sin	Blessed are the poor in spirit	5:1-12
Being average	You are the salt of the earth	5:13-16
Being literal	You heard... but I say	5:17-48
Show	righteousness..but not with a	6:1-18
view to be seen		
Treasure	Do not lay up treasure	6:19-34
Judging	Judge not	7:1-12
The easy	Enter through the narrow gate	7:13-23

Finishing with: *“And it came to pass when Jesus finished these words” (7:28)*

C Acquire Attributes to Internalise Law

Mt.8:1-10:42

Paragraph “hooks” cf. present participles of coming and going

		<i>Mt.</i>
Ask for help	Leper	8:1-4
Recognise authority	Centurion	8:5-13
Accept touch	Simon’s mother-in-law	8:14-15
Accept healing	Possessed and sick	8:16-17
Be independent of crowd	Break away from crowd	8:18
Be ready to move	Foxes have holes	8:19-20
Leave excuses	Bury my father?	8:21-22
Follow	Embark on ship	8:23
Trust	He rebuked the winds	8:24-27
Prioritise	Herd of pigs drowned	8:28-34
Forgive	paralytic forgiven	9:1-8
Entrust	Matthew called	9:9-13
Renew	New wines new skins	9:14-17
Lead	Jesus follows Jairus	9:18-19
Touch	woman with blood flow	9:20-22
Ignore ridicule	(from) Flute players	9:23-24
Believe in own power	Jesus raises girl	9:25-26
Believe	Two blind men	9:27-34
Teach and heal	Proclaim gospel	9:35
Pray for harvesters	Harvest	9:36-38
Reach out.	Sent forth twelve disciples	10:1-42

Finishing with: *And it came to pass when Jesus finished giving charge to his twelve disciples (11:1)*

**D Develop Environment of
Internalised Law**
Mt 11:2-18:35

Paragraph “hooks” an opening time statement
made or implied

Attributes of Wisdom (and Jesus) and
Generalised quotes at the end of the paragraphs

			<i>Mt.</i>
1	Proves	Wisdom is justified by her works	11:2-19
2	Excuses	More tolerable for Sodom	11:20-24
3	Relieves	Yoke is easy	11:25-30
4	Prophecies	Son of Man, Lord of the Sabbath (cf. cornfields)	12:1-8
5	Brings hope	Nations will hope (cf. Sabbath)	12:9-21
6	Justifies	Justified by your words (v.Beelzebub)	12:22-37
7	Discerns	Thus it will be to this generation (worse spirits)	12:38-45
8	Relates cf. God’s will	Whoever does the will of the Father	12:46-50
9	Bears fruit	Sower whoever has ears hear it	13:1-9
10	Hears	Sower a hundred fold, sixty, or thirtyfold	13:10-23
11	Proclaims	I will utter things hidden from the foundation	13:24-35
12	Retrieves	Housemaster – new and old things	13:36-52
13	Is affected by	Not powerful deeds because of unbelief	13:53-58

14	Listens	Reported to Jesus	14:1-12
15	Is concerned	wind was blowing against him	14:13-24
16	Heals	As many as touched were completely healed	14:25-46
17	Dismisses petty	that which comes out of mouth defiles	15:1-12
18	Sees clearly	Unwashed hands not defile the man	15:12-20
19	Praises	Great of thee the faith	15:21-28
20	Feeds	Ate all and were satisfied	15:29-39
21	Warns	Not to take heed from leaven of Pharisees	16:1-4
22	Recalls	Be wary - teaching of Pharisees & Sadducees	16:5-12
23	Builds	on this rock I will build of me the church	16:13-20
24	Foresees	Some here by no means taste death	16:21-28
25	Shines	they saw nobody except Jesus	17:1-8
26	Anticipates	Son of man about to suffer	17:9-13
27	Empowers	Nothing will be impossible to you	17:14-20
28	Grieves	Grieved	17:22-23
29	Pays dues	Give them (money) for me and thee	17:24-27
30	Is present	Where 2 or 3 assembled there am I	18:1-20
31	Forgives	Forgive brother of him from heart	18:21-35

Finishing with: *And it came to pass when ended Jesus these words (19:1)*

E **Avoid Over-stress on Law External**

Mt. 19:3-25:46

Paragraph “hooks” -- an opening time
statement made or implied

(secondary hook i.e. not strictly one per paragraph
– “Jesus said”)

			<i>Mt.</i>
1	Selfish use of law	Pharisees re. Divorce	<i>19:3-12</i>
2	Belittling of children	children	<i>19:13-15</i>
3	Many possessions	one approaching	<i>19:16-30</i>
4	Making demands	House master paying cf. agreement	<i>20:1-16</i>
5	Condemnation	They will deliver him	<i>20:17-20</i>
6	Ambition	Request Zebedee sons	<i>20:20-28</i>
7	Controls	2 blind men rebuked by crowd	<i>20:29-34</i>
8	Vestiges of greatness	2 disciples with ass- garments strewn	<i>21:1-11</i>
9	Money from religion	Money lenders	<i>21:12-17</i>
10	False appearances	Curse of fig tree	<i>21:18-22</i>
11	Reliance on rank	Chief priests criticised	<i>21:23-46</i>
12	Privilege	Wedding Feast	<i>22:1-14</i>
13	Separatism	cf. Caesar’s coin	<i>22:15-22</i>
14	Anthropomorphism	Sadducees re-marriage after death	<i>22:23-33</i>
15	Legalism	Lawyer tempting	<i>22:34-40</i>

16	Narrowness	Christ the son of David?	22:41-46
17	Hypocrisy	Scribes	23:1-38
18	Temple reliance	Not a stone left on a stone	24:1-2
19	False prophets	False prophets will be raised	24:3-24
20	Lack of watchfulness	Watch ye therefore	24:25-51
21	Presumption	ten virgins with lamps	25:1-13
22	Lack of development	dug earth and hid	25:14-30
23	Lack of accountability	least ones	25:31-46

Finishing with:

“And it came to pass when Jesus ended all these words” (26:1)

F Lead Through a Forgiving Relationship

Mt.26:1-28:20

(Paragraph “hooks”, mention of word “disciple”)

Disciples hear passively	26:1-5
Disciples V ointment woman	26:6-16
Disciples make a routine inquiry	26:17
Disciples follow instructions	26:18-19
Twelve disciples deny betrayal	26:20-29
Disciples initiated into covenant	26:26-29
All disciples claim will never betray	26:30-35
Disciples asked for support	26:36-39
Disciples fall asleep	26:40-44
Disciples – one betrays	26:45-55
Disciples all leaving him, fled	26:56-27:56

27:56

(Crucifixion narrative, and then)

A disciple (Arimathaea) asks for body	27:57-66
Disciples told of resurrection	28:1-7
Announce to brothers (disciples)	28:8-10
Disciples maligned by others	28:11-15
Eleven disciples challenged to “disciple”	28:16-20

Finishing with:

“I will be with you until the end of time” (28:20)

Recall that Mark in his gospel as analysed above, makes an exception to the concentric patterns of his gospel with his Section C which is about “the child”. Matthew’s Section A is also about “the child”, which in this case a child of Judaism. In Section A of Matthew there is also an “informal” approach to the structure of the text.

Because Matthew’s gospel appears to be structured around statements of time, some of which are implied, the actual delineation of paragraphs is not so easy to pick up. As well, occasionally an apparent time statement such as “now” is used to emphasise a point rather than make a statement about time. However despite the more abstract approach, there are two interesting indications in Matthew’s Sections B and C that suggests he is setting out his gospel structure in reference to the structure of Mark. If we look at the central paragraph in Mark’s Section A, it tells us about a man being let down through the roof of a house to get access to Jesus. If we look at the central, eleventh paragraph in Matthew’s Section C, this is also about the man being let down through the roof. In both these cases it appears the key emphasis in this story is about forgiveness. Extra stress is given to this quality because of its

position in the middle of the Section. One might think such a parallel in placement is a coincidence. However consider Mark's Section B and Matthew's Section D. The central story in Mark's Section B tells about how Jesus walked on water. Compare this with Matthew's Section D with its thirty-one paragraphs. In this case, in the sixteenth paragraph which is in the middle of the section, we are again told about Jesus walking on water!

Another parallel that suggests more than a coincidence in structuring, is that the final paragraph in this same Section D of Matthew, is about forgiveness. It again appears that as with Mark's gospel, the act of forgiveness is being emphasised.

While the text of Matthew's gospel follows that of Mark, the details of Matthew's text show that he is putting a heavy emphasis on relationships between people and the development of these relationships. His interest in this theme can be seen in the shifts being made to describe the disciples just before the end of each section. As shown above, the sections close with "After Jesus had finished these words". However note how the followers of Jesus are being described. At the end of Section A we are told about the "many crowds" who begin to follow Jesus (Mt 4:25). At the end of Section B we are told of the "prudent" man who built his house upon rock (Mt 7:24). At the end of Section C we hear of "these little ones" who are given a cup of water in the name of a disciple (Mt 11:1). At the end of Section D we are told of the need "to forgive each of your brothers from your heart". (Mt 18:35). At the end of Section E we hear "if you failed to minister to one of these least ones, you failed to minister to me." (Mt 25:45). Finally at the end of Section F and the gospel Jesus tells his disciples to go out and make disciples of others. In this sense they are described as "disciplers" (Mt. 28:19).

There is a gradation here, from "crowds" to "a prudent man" to "little ones" ", to "a brother", to the "least ones" and finally to

one who makes disciples of others. A personal growth has been taking place.

Matthew's final Section F shows particular interest in discipleship. In fact here, the word "disciple" appears to be used as a hook for the paragraphs that frame the passion narrative. In this Section F the disciples are challenged to grow from a passive following of Jesus to active participation in his mission. During the Section we are told "the disciples, all leaving him fled" (Mt.26:56). Mark had said "all fled" (Mk 14:50). But Matthew wants to remind the auditor/reader of the failure of the disciples. Yet despite the desertion, at the end of the Section the disciples are challenged to become "disciplers" of others throughout the whole world (Mt. 28:19) The gospel finally concludes with the promise of Jesus to be with his disciples until the end of time. (Mt. 28:20).

As a sociologist, Matthew provides a "best" description of Judaic-Christianity as expressed within a society based upon Law. At the same time, in his Section E, he describes the pitfalls of such a society. It can become too narrow, rigid and bogged down with external rules and regulations. Ironically enough it can also lack accountability. Matthew finally shows how Jesus puts out a challenge to the people in this sort of society to open up and extend internalised law towards the whole world.

We could understand this "description" provided in Matthew's gospel, to represent one side of Christian society.

(c) A Semiotic Analysis of the Gospel of Luke:

“Give Direction to Order”

Was Luke a Sociologist?

Like Matthew, Luke relied heavily on the gospel of Mark.⁴² Also like Matthew he redacted the text to suit his own interpretation of the life of Jesus and the interests of the community from which he was writing.⁴³ Scholars suggest Luke was writing at about the same time as Matthew around 85 CE.⁴⁴ But his was a different type of community. On the one hand Matthew was writing within a community steeped in the heritage of Judaism but which was in conflict with mainstream Judaism.⁴⁵ Luke on the other hand was writing from within a community dominated by people from a Hellenistic/Greek philosophical background. Hence the name of Theophilus which he addresses at the start of both the gospel and Acts is a Greek name.⁴⁶ Luke assures Theophilus he will take care in presenting “the truth” in his “orderly account” of the life of Jesus (Lk 1:3):

At the logico-semantic level Luke uses “the grammar” that was developed by Mark and continued on with some exceptions by Matthew. Like Matthew and arguably as a sociologist, Luke sets out to describe the best model of the particular society that he wants to present. In this case it is a Hellenistic society. After doing this, like Matthew, Luke points out the shortcomings of the society he is describing. In the case of

⁴² Powell, *What are They Saying About Luke?* 18.

⁴³ Cf. Powell, *What are They Saying About Luke?* 9.

⁴⁴ Powell, *What are They Saying about Luke*, 48.

⁴⁵ Powell, *What are they Saying about Matthew*, 49.

⁴⁶ Powell, *What are They Saying About Luke?* 1990.

Luke's society such pitfalls appear to centre around an over-stress on idealism.

Again like Matthew, Luke begins his gospel with a Section A with an informal type of structure. This provides narratives about the birth and early life of Jesus. However in Luke's case, rather than showing Jesus as coming from the heritage of Judaism, he presents him as a child of the universe (cf. Lk 3:38).

A closer look at the gospel structures is as follows. If we compare the gospels of Luke and Matthew, after a Section A on infancy narratives, both of the writers move into a description of the individual attributes that are best suited to the society which they are describing. They then provide a description of the best characteristics of these societies at the corporate level. For Matthew such characteristics reflect the qualities of a well-run household as evidenced in "the works of wisdom" (cf. Matthew's Section D) and an environment of internalised law. . For Luke at the corporate level these "best" qualities parallel those of a democratic society which is open to improvement (cf. Luke's Section C). Each writer also provides a description of the limitations of the society they describe. A society such as Matthew's has to be wary of over-emphasis on external law (cf. his Section E). A society such as Luke's has to be wary of an over-emphasis on idealism (cf. his Section D) . To some extent the two sets of failings can be summed up as "narrowness" on the part of Judaism and "a loud voice" on the part of Hellenism. Then we find these both negative traits appearing in Luke's account of Jesus' so-called trial.

Both the evangelists finish their gospels with the narrative of the passion of Jesus (Matthew's Section F and Luke's Section F). Scholars note that the passion narratives across the gospels

are quite similar.⁴⁷ They also say deviation from Mark's account highlights a gospel writer's own particular interests. In Matthew the passion narrative stresses the testing of Jesus' trust in relationship, both in his disciples and in God (cf. Mt. 27:42). For Luke the narrative shows the self-empowerment of Jesus despite his powerless situation (cf. Lk 23:34).

Luke's Gospel "Give Direction to Order"

Section A

INFANCY NARRATIVE

Luke 1:1 – 4:30

(with a general prose structure)

Luke's Section B:

Acquire Qualities for Ordered Community

Luke's Section A is his infancy narrative with an informal structure. In Section B of Luke, paragraphs are structured around the paragraph "hooks" of place and these describe the location of Jesus and the disciples. In Luke's use of these "place" hooks his "grammar" is similar to that of Mark. However there is also a difference. On the one hand, in Mark's Sections A and B he is setting out "definitions" of a law base for a society and then an order base for a society.

⁴⁷ Cf. Burton H. Throckmorton, Jr, *Gospel Parallels: A Synopsis of the First Three Gospels* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1979).

Luke on the other hand, is focussing on a Hellenistic society and its emphasis on order. Mark's description of the base of a Hellenistic society in his Section B is arguably summed up by, "Order is based on a Sense of Direction". In Luke's Section B, he appears to recognise this observation of Mark, that is, a society based upon order needs a sense of direction. He is therefore wary about setting out the structure of his "place hooks" in the pattern of a concentric circle in the way that Mark has done before him. The last thing Luke needs is the suggestion that this sort of society is "going around in circles". Luke's society is to reflect a multi-cultural, urban environment that relies on ideas and rationalism to unite people rather than the ties of blood and tribalism. Because of this reliance on ideas it does not have the same kind of stability as a tribal "organism". As Mark had already "pointed" out in his gospel, it needs a united sense of direction. Because of this therefore, rather than rely on Mark's chiastic type of paragraph pattern (cf. ABCDCBA) Luke sets out his paragraph "hooks" in two linear patterns (cf. ABCDABCD). Thus, the second half of the "hooks" and their paragraphs repeat (and reinforce) the first half. The result is that once again the auditor/reader is given a "binocular" look at the points being made. At the same time these are headed in a specific direction, that is, Jerusalem.



Section B**ACQUIRE QUALITIES FOR ORDERED COMMUNITY**

Luke 4:31-9:50

Paragraph hooks are place names cf. Jesus & disciples

1	Capernaum	14	Capernaum,
2	Synagogue/city	15	City Nain
3	House of Simon	16	House Simon
	disciple		Pharisee
4	Desert/cities/ synagogues	17	Cities & villages
5	Boats	18	Boat
6	City	19	Gerasenes/city
7	Deserts	20	Journey
8	In a house	21	To a house
9	House of Levi	22	Villages/houses
10	Cornfield	23	Bethsaida (retreat)
11	Hostile Synagogue	24	Alone
12	Mountain to pray	25	Mountain to pray
13	Down mountain	26	Down mountain

Go to Jerusalem

When discussing the parallel paragraphs in Mark's gospel, it was shown above that parallels within each paragraph pair extend beyond the "hook" parallel. In an illustration of the extended parallels in Mark, the fourth, fifth and sixth paragraph pairs were compared. To demonstrate the similarities again, parallels within Luke's fourth, fifth and sixth paragraph pairs are shown below. The many parallels found in the sixth pair, which are set out in the same sequence

in both paragraphs, strongly suggest that these paragraphs were deliberately crafted in order to highlight such parallels. Recall also that the two paragraphs come from quite different parts of the text, that is, Lk 5:12-15 and Lk 8:26-39.

Proclamation

- | | | | |
|----|--|-----|---|
| 4. | Desert/cities/synagogues
<i>Lk 4:42-44</i>
Proclaiming | 17. | Cities & villages
<i>Lk 8:1-21</i>
Proclaiming re sower |
|----|--|-----|---|

Power in Nature

- | | | | |
|----|---|-----|--|
| 5. | One of the boats
<i>Lk 5:1-11</i>

Put out into the deep
“Master”
Power of Word in nature
Astonishment seized them
Wind and water obeyed | 18. | Boat
<i>Lk 8:22-25</i>

Put out to sea
“Master”
Power of Word in nature
With fear they marvelled |
|----|---|-----|--|

Against Disease and Bad Spirits

- | | | | |
|----|---|-----|--|
| 6. | City
<i>Lk 5:12-15</i>

Outside city
Outsider/leper
‘on seeing Jesus’
Fell on his face and begged
Commands disease to go
Leprosy left
Tell nobody

“show yourself”
Jesus moved on
Accompanied
What Jesus said and did | 19. | Gerasenes/city
<i>Lk 8:26-39</i>

Outside city
Outsider/possessed
‘on seeing Jesus’
Fell prostrate and cried out
Commands unclean spirit
Demons left
Reported in city and farms

Went to see
Jesus moved on
Accompany?
What Jesus had done |
|----|---|-----|--|

An outline of Luke's Section B is again shown as follows, this time showing qualities that are needed for an ordered society.

ACQUIRE QUALITIES FOR ORDERED COMMUNITY

Place, Event, Ref	Quality	Place, Event, Ref
Capernaum <i>4:31-32</i> with authority	1. Authority	Capernaum <i>7:1-10</i> centurion/ authority
Synagogue/city <i>4:33-37</i> Demons all astonished	2. Compassionate Power	City Nain <i>7:11-35</i> widow & son all fear
House of Simon Peter <i>4:38-41</i> mother-in-law	3. Bodily care.	House of Simon Pharisee <i>7:36-50</i> ointment woman
Desert/cities/ synagogues <i>4:42-44</i> preaching kingdom of God	4. Proclamation	Cities & villages <i>8:1-21</i> preaching kingdom of God
Boats, <i>5:1-11</i> Big catch	5. Power in nature	Boat, <i>8:22-25</i> Stills storm
City, <i>5:12-15</i> leper	6. Opposes Disease & bad spirits	Gerasenes/city <i>8:26-39</i> demonised man

Deserts, <i>5:16</i> prayers	7.	Prayer	Journey <i>8:40-48</i> woman touching him
in House <i>5:17-26</i> forgives paralytic	8.	Forgiveness	House <i>8:49-56</i> raises Jairus' daughter,
House of Levi <i>5:27-39</i> Disciple .. new wineskins	9.	Proclamation	Villages/houses <i>9:1-10</i> Disciples...."who is this?:"
Cornfield <i>6:1-5</i> eating on Sabbath	10.	Nurturing	Bethsaida - retreat, <i>9:10-17</i> feeds 5,000
Hostile Synagogue, <i>6:6-11</i> What they might do to him	11.	Union with God	Alone <i>9:18-27</i> things to suffer
Mountains <i>6:12-16</i> to pray, picks 12	12.	Invitation	Mountain <i>9:28-36</i> To pray, picks 3
Down mountain, <i>6:17-49</i> foundation laid	13.	Solid foundation	Down mountain, <i>9:37-50</i> lay foundation re sayings

"Go to Jerusalem"9:51

Note that while Matthew uses a statement about time and the spoken word of Jesus to finish up his Sections, Luke uses a statement about the need for a sense of direction. Thus auditor/readers are constantly reminded to "Go to Jerusalem" cf. Lk 9:51.

Luke's Section C

Improve on Democracy

Moving on to Luke's Section C. Here, Luke apparently uses parties addressed (both singular and plural), as his paragraph "hooks". This is another reminder that the task of such a society is to unite a whole range of differing types of people.

Luke's Sections C and D about the corporate group appear to be set out on the one continuum line. Thus on the one hand, in his Section C, attributes appear to apply to a "well-run democracy". Then in his Section D there appears to emerge the failings that are to be found in a totalitarian society which has an over-stress on idealism. In the commonality of the paragraph "hooks" being used, there also appears to be the suggestion that the one sort of society described in Section C can slide into the failings of another social type as described in Section D. One is reminded here of some Taoist verses,

Beneath good fortune disaster crouches. ...The straightforward changes again into the crafty and the good changes again into the monstrous. ⁴⁸

⁴⁸ Lao Tzu, *Tao Te Ching* (London: Penguin Classics, 1963), 119.

If one also looks at this sort of a continuum line from the perspective of the twenty-first century, one wonders if it expresses both the contrasts and the comparisons between the two modern social systems of capitalism and communism. That is to say, they are two sides of the same coin!

The people “hooks” for Luke’s Sections C and D are as follows. Note that these are **not** set out in pairs. They are listed in the following format to show the wide range of people being addressed.

**Parties addressed in
Section C**

James & John
said one
to another
Another
seventy-two
certain lawyer
Martha
certain disciple
the crowds
woman in crowd
this generation
Pharisee
Lawyer
Disciples
Someone
Little flock
Peter
Crowds
Some
bent woman
Synagogue ruler

**Parties addressed in
Section D**

Someone
Pharisees
Lawyers & Pharisees
one inviting
one reclining
Crowds, many
Pharisees & scribes
Disciples
Pharisees
Disciples
Ten lepers
Pharisees
Disciples
them
Some
Disciples
Certain ruler
ones hearing
Peter
Twelve

throughout cities

A more detailed look at Luke's Section C is as follows:

Section C

IMPROVE ON DEMOCRACY

9:52-13:22

Paragraph "hooks" are Parties Addressed

Summary Point	Ref	Parties	Key Quote
1. . Stay peaceful	9:52-55	James & John	"He rebuked them (re fire to destroy)
2. . Be detached	9:56-58	said one	"Foxes have holes"
3. . Look to future	9:59-60	to another	Leave the dead to bury the dead
4. . Keep moving	9:61-62	Another	"looking behind not fit for kingdom"
5. . Reach out	10:1-24	seventy-two	"Two by two . . . sandals"
6. . Make love basic	10:25-37	certain lawyer	"Love Lord the God of Thee"
7. . Prioritise reflection	10:38-42	Martha	"(Mary has) better place
8. . Ask	11:1-13	certain disciple	"Our Father"
9. . Use spiritual power	11:14-26	the crowds	"The one not being with me against me is"
10. . Listen	11:27-28	woman in	"Blessed the womb"

		crowd	
11. . Seek wisdom	<i>11:29-36</i>	this generation	"Queen of the South"
12. . Prioritise integrity	<i>11:37-44</i>	Pharisee	"Outside clean, inside robbery"
13. . Accept outsiders	<i>11:45-54</i>	Lawyer	"build tombs of prophets"
14. . Prioritise truthful speech	<i>12:1-12</i>	Disciples	"what said in private proclaimed"
15. . Direction not treasure	<i>12:13-31</i>	Someone	"re inheritance"
16. . Focus on direction	<i>12:32-40</i>	Little flock	"seek kingdom & things added"
17. . Internalise honesty	<i>12:41-53</i>	Peter	"blessed slave . . faithful steward"
18. . Discern	<i>12:54-59</i>	Crowds	"face of earth you discern, this no"
19. . Nurture nature	<i>13:1-9</i>	Some	"Leave fig tree until I dig around it"
20. . Dignify woman	<i>13:10-13</i>	bent woman	"woman was bending double"
21. . Loosen bonds	<i>13:14-17</i>	Synagogue ruler	"Loosen bonds"
22. . Start from small	<i>13:18-22</i>	throughout cities	"mustard seed"

“to Jerusalem” 13:22

Luke's Section D Avoid Over-stress on Idealism

Section D

AVOID OVER-STRESS ON IDEALISM

Luke 13:24 - 18:31

Paragraph "hooks" are Parties Addressed

Opposition to Totalitarianism (V means against) Ref	Parties addressed	Key Quote
1. . V . "Saved" Leader <i>13:23-30</i>	Someone	"there are first ones who will be last"
2. . V . Rejection <i>13:31-35</i>	Pharisees	"c/f mother hen re Jerusalem"
3. . V . Hierarchy <i>14:1-11</i>	Lawyers & Pharisees	"chief places at table"
4. . V . Payment base <i>14:12-14</i>	one inviting	"invite poor persons"
5. . V . Elitism <i>14:15-24</i>	one reclining	"certain man a great supper"
6. . V . Ideological foundations <i>14:25-35</i>	Crowds, many	"lay foundation of house"
7. . V . exclusion of difference <i>15:1-32</i>	Pharisees & scribes	"hundred sheep . . prodigal son"
8. . V . over-absorbing system <i>16:1-13</i>	Disciples	"render account, shrewd steward"

9. . V . material obsession <i>16:14-31</i>	Pharisees	"rich man and Lazarus"
10. . V . inflexibility <i>17:1-10</i>	Disciples	"you should forgive"
Forgive	To Jerusalem	(17:11)
11. . V . ingratitude <i>17:11-19</i>	Ten lepers	"but where the nine?"
12. . V . alienation of dignity <i>17:20-21</i>	Pharisees	"Kingdom of God within you"
13. . V . predictability <i>17:22-37</i>	Disciples	"2 men on a couch, one taken"
14. . V . over-formalised justice <i>18:1-8</i>	them	"pray . . widow & judge"
15. . V . self-aggrandisement <i>18:9-14</i>	Some	"2 men went up to temple to pray"
16. . V . exclusion of children <i>18:15-17</i>	Disciples	"allow the children to me"
17. . V . over-focus material security <i>18:18-25</i>	Certain ruler	"all things sell & follow me"
18. . V . total self-reliance <i>18:26-27</i>	ones hearing	"things impossible . . possible with God"
19. . V . this life only <i>18:28-30</i>	Peter	22 "left house etc - receives life....."
20. . V . closure to the new <i>18:31-33</i>	Twelve	"Jerusalem, Son of men rise again"

“Behold we are going up to Jerusalem” 18:31

(Note the focus on both forgiveness and a sense of direction in the middle paragraph)

Luke’s Section E Act with Direction like Kingdom Figures

In the gospel, before Luke moves into his passion narrative, he outlines characteristics of a person who can be identified with Jesus in the setting of a Hellenistic society. This figure is either a follower of Jesus or a metaphorical presentation of Jesus himself. In this analysis they are both given the descriptive name of a “Kingdom figure”.

There is actually a marked difference between the “Kingdom” figure presented here and the follower of Jesus who, in the gospel of Matthew is a “disciple”. In Matthew the “disciple” has similarities with ‘the disciples’ as described in the gospel of Mark. Often in Mark’s account the disciples do not understand Jesus (cf. Mark 47:52). In Mark’s Section D they are firstly presented as people who follow Jesus in fear (Mark 10:32-34). Then at the end of the Section, which is set out in a concentric circle, the women disciples are told by the angel to report the resurrection of Jesus to the others. But they go away in fear (Mark 16:8). In a similar way in Matthew’s gospel when Jesus needed the disciples most “All the disciples fled” (Mt. 26:56). In contrast, Luke’s “kingdom figure” shows a personality type that is prepared to stand up for their own rights and challenge the secular society around them.

Luke's Section E is as follows:

Section E

ACT WITH DIRECTION LIKE KINGDOM FIGURE

Luke 13:35 – 21:37

Paragraph "hook" is Kingdom Figure

Action	Kingdom Figure	c/f Gospel
1. . obtains needed pity <i>18:35-43</i>	the disabled	Blind man of Jericho
2. . makes retribution <i>19:1-10</i>	the reformed public servant	Zaccheus the tax collector
3. . increases profits <i>19:11-27</i>	the investor	a certain man
4. . accepts welcome <i>19:28-38</i>	the king	Procession into Jerusalem
5. . warns of danger <i>19:39-44</i>	the teacher	the stones will cry out
6. . exercises stewardship <i>19:45-48</i>	the house master	Expelling the temple sellers
7. . exerts rights <i>20:1-19</i>	the owner	Husbandmen of vineyard
8. . maintains order <i>20:20-26</i>	the politician	Pay tribute to Caesar
9. . points beyond this life <i>20:27-40</i>	the teacher	cf, Widow had 7 husbands
10. . signals future	the ancestor	David calls 'him'

	20:41-44		Lord
11. . donates their only mite		the very poor	Widow giving mite
	20:45-21:4		
12. . comes with power		the Son of man	affects whole earth
	21:5-36		

Temple (in Jerusalem) 21:37

Luke's Section F

Let Forgiveness Prevail over Narrowness and the Loud voice

Luke's final Section is the passion narrative. As already noted, scholars say the few changes made to the Mark's passion account are of special significance to the purpose of the gospel.⁴⁹

Luke has an extra task at the end of his gospel because he tries to pull together the descriptions of both the Judaic and the Hellenistic societies. This is in preparation for his second book which is the *Acts of the Apostles*. In terms of the semiotic analysis being used in this project the *Acts* is described as "Launch the Society"

Recall that Paul, writing in the 50's CE before the gospel writers of 70CE and 85 CE, constantly insisted that Jesus brought together the Jewish and Gentile societies making them the one people, This teaching for instance is repeated in *Ephesians* cf.

⁴⁹ Donald Senior, *The Passion of Jesus in the Gospel of Mark*, (Wilmington, Del.: Michael Glazier, c. 1985).

For he is our peace, who has made us both one, and has broken down the dividing wall of hostility, by abolishing in his flesh the law of commandments and ordinances, that he might create in himself one new man in place of the two, so making peace, and might reconcile us both to God in one body through the cross, thereby bringing the hostility to an end. (Ephesians 2:14-16)

By the end of Luke's gospel and in the *Acts* the society described has two sides to it. This society had (and has) two arms to it. In preparation for his Part Two, the *Acts of the Apostles* when the leaders of Judaism are accusing Jesus (Luke 23:35) Luke shows the tendency towards narrowness that can be found in the Judaic law system. Then, as people shout out for the execution of Jesus, Luke also shows how a Greco Roman system of government can cave in to the "loud voice". In this case Pilate gives way to the loud voice. (Luke 23:23). Thus in Luke's passion narrative both the narrowness of the accusers and the "loud voice" of the mob, both contribute in their own way to the execution of Jesus.



A more detailed outline of the Passion narrative in Luke's Section F is as follows:

Section F

LET FORGIVENESS PREVAIL

OVER NARROWNESS AND THE LOUD VOICE

Luke 21:38-24:52:38

Paragraph "hook" is where Jesus is Located

	Action	"place" of Jesus	Key Quote
1	Crisis builds up <i>21:37-22:6</i>	Mt of Olives/ Temple	"Judas to betray him" <i>(22:5)</i>
2	Kingdom given to disciples <i>22:7-38</i>	Supper room	". . .to you a kingdom" <i>(22:29)</i>
3	Jesus faces betrayal <i>22:39-53</i>	(Mt Olives) "place"	"authority of darkness" <i>(22:40)</i>
4	Narrow law system & outside authority <i>22:54-71</i>	House of High Priest	"right of power of God" <i>(22:69)</i>
5	Loudness & Greco/Roman rule <i>23:1-25</i>	Around Jerusalem	"prevailed –voices of them" <i>(23:23)</i>
6	"forgive them" prevails <i>23:26-49</i>	"Place" of skull	"man this righteous was" <i>(23:47)</i>

- | | | | |
|---|--|-----------------------------|---|
| 7 | New life emerges
<i>22:50-24:11</i> | body
"placed"
in tomb | "He .was raised"
<i>(24:6)</i> |
| 8 | Inevitable crisis is
explained
<i>24:13-32</i> | from
Jerusalem | "behoved it to suffer"
<i>(24:26)</i> |
| 9 | Proclamation
(repent/forgive)
<i>24:33-53</i> | Jerusalem | "forgiveness
the nations"
<i>(24:7)</i> |

they returned to Jerusalem 24:52

Luke's *Acts of the Apostles* is a follow on from his gospel.



**(d) A Semiotic Analysis of
Acts of the Apostles
“Launch the Society”**

Again, Was Luke a Sociologist?

**Acts Section A
Intro to Identity and the Re-tracing of Steps**

As Luke moves into his second book he refers to details that actually go “backwards” into his gospel. These form a concentric pattern such as ABCDEDCBA.

Consider some of these details as follows:

**Narrative at the start of
Acts**

**Narrative at the end of
Luke’s Gospel**

(Refs going forwards)

(Refs going backwards)

Jesus taken up to heaven
“Stay in Jerusalem”
Restore Israel
2 men shining robes
Olive grove
Upper room
Judas betrays

Jesus withdrew
Begin from Jerusalem
Hoping to redeem Israel
2 men shining robes
Mountain of olives
Supper room
Judas betrays

Etc.

The pattern of referencing found at the start of Acts enables Luke's second book to pick up on details in the Gospel and show a continuity between the two. At the same time, Luke's book of *Acts of the Apostles* is not constrained by the need for a close following and redaction of the Gospel of Mark. A reading of *Acts* therefore shows that the text here is looser. There is an ordering of the paragraphs but they do not appear to be as "tightly" controlled as in the gospel itself.

Also the *Acts* has a different story to tell. Actually much of the material in the second half of this book describes events that took place in the life of Paul in the 50's CE.⁵⁰ The events reflect a quite different situation from what the gospels describe in the life of Jesus twenty years beforehand. Over this time a lot of reflection had been going on to develop a new theology that explained the life of Jesus. Moreover Luke was writing in the 80's CE, fifty years after the ministry of Jesus and thirty years after Paul.

As he wrote, Luke was doing his own interpretation. This interpretation would have been influenced by the writings of Paul, the first Christian theologian. In *Acts* Luke shows the vital contribution of Paul to the emerging church. He also presents himself as being part of Paul's mission in the "we" passages e.g. Acts 16:10-17.

In a Section A in the opening passages of the book of *Acts*, Luke describes the early and arguably "heady" days of the Church's beginnings. In this way there is a similarity with the opening of Luke and Matthew's gospels which about a new beginning.

⁵⁰ Carl R. Holladay, *A Critical Introduction to the New Testament: Interpreting the Message and Meaning of Jesus Christ* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2005) 382-383.

Some of the parallels between the start of Acts and the end of Luke's gospel are again shown below, this time with references.

LAUNCH THE SOCIETY

As in the Acts of the Apostles

SECTION A

INTRO TO IDENTITY AND THE RE-TRACING OF STEPS

Acts 1:1-6:8

Narrative at the end of Luke

Refs

Judas betrays	21:6
Supper room	22:12
Mountain of olives	22:39
2 men shining robes	24:4
Hoping to redeem Israel	24:21
Begin from Jerusalem	24:27
Jesus withdrew	24:50

Narrative at the start of Acts

Jesus taken up to heaven	1:2
"Stay in Jerusalem"	1:4
Restore Israel	1:6
2 men shining robes	1:10

Olive grove	1:12
Upper room	1:13
Judas betrays	1:16

Acts' Section B

Recognise Outside Autonomy

Section B of *Acts* provides a narrative of efforts that were made in the early Church to follow the command of Jesus to “go out into all the world” (Mt 28:19). Luke is mindful that immediately after the life of Jesus the majority of his followers were Jews. How were these early followers to begin their “outreach”?

In such a social setting and if (as argued here) Luke is developing his text at a logico-semantic level, it is credible that he would use examples of early “outreach” to link together the paragraphs of his Section B. An emphasis here would be on showing how the church leadership recognised authenticity within people who were outside of Judaism. A suggested outline is as follows:

SECTION B RECOGNISE OUTSIDE AUTONOMY

Acts 6:8-11:25

Beyond religious law system	Location	Disciple and ‘outsider’
Power is in the Person (not a ..) 6:8-8:3	Outside Jerusalem	Stephen and Saul

Separation of spiritual favour 8:4-25	Samaria	Philip & Samaritans
Inter-racial 8:26-40	Ethiopia	Philip & Ethiopian
Power outside of priests 9:1-31	Damascus	Ananias & Saul
Movement promoted 9:32-34	Lydda	Peter & Aeneas
Oriented towards re-birth 9:35-43	Joppa	Peter & Dorcas
Inter-cultural 10:1-48	Caesarea	Peter & Cornelius
Readiness to adjust 11:1-1-18	Jerusalem	Peter & ones of circumcision
Mutual financial support 11:19-29	Antioch	Barnabas, Paul & 'Christians'

Christians at Antioch sending alms to elders in Judea.. cf. Acts 11:25

This Section B appears to end with what is described as “reverse mission”, that is, the people to whom an outreach had been made, are now reaching back in order to encourage and support the original missionaries.

Luke's Section C in Acts

Cope with Opposition to Outside Reach

At the same logico-semantic level, one could expect that the historical outreach made to people outside Judaism would meet with opposition. Such opposition appears to provide a framework for a Section C as follows:

SECTION C

COPE WITH OPPOSITION TO OUTREACH

Acts 12:1 - 15:29

Paragraph "Hooks" are those
who Oppose New Conversions

Coping Response	Opposer	Likely Motive of Opposer
1. Power through prayer <i>12:1-23</i>	Herod	Politics
2. Power through truth <i>12:24-13:12</i>	Sorcerer	Monetary
3. Material independence <i>13:13-52</i>	The Jews	Influence amongst wealthy
4. Perception to escape <i>14:1-6</i>	The disobeying Jews	Crowd influence
5. Stress on humanness <i>14:7-18</i>	Crowds	Adulation
6. Brotherly support <i>14:19-28</i>	Iconium Jews	Desire for

7. Salvation through grace <i>15:1-29</i>	Some of the Pharisee sect	leadership Sect control
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This ends with

**Apostles and elder brothers sending reduced rules
throughout Antioch, Syria and Cilicia (15:29)**

The Council of Jerusalem a “pivot” in the story of *Acts*

Section C above concludes in *Acts* 15 with the Council of Jerusalem and its determination. In order to further explore the logico-semantic level of *Acts* it is necessary to dwell on the significance of this Council. To a large extent its decisions can explain why, in the sections to follow, Luke was exploring definitions such as “the Word” and he was endorsing the authority that lies within the wide range of people. In fact the later Sections of D and E in *Acts* help to provide an “undergirding” for the democratic institutions of Hellenism while at the same time endorsing the theology of the early church.

Such definitions were needed, because at the Council (it is argued in these pages), the emerging Church incorporated essential elements of Hellenism into the fabric of Christianity. How so?

In Part One of this whole research project *Is Christian Morality Unique?* the Jerusalem Council and its implications were dealt with at some length. Some of the points made in Part One are being repeated here as a prelude to further exploration of the logico-semantic level of *Acts*.

It was at the Jerusalem Council described in *Acts* 15 that the emerging Church needed to sort out what its morality rules should be, when Gentiles joined the church. At the time such rules were an extremely divisive issue. Conflict about them almost split the Church. It seems Paul was caught between the two streams of morality. On the one hand he calls out the laxity of Hellenistic Corinthians “You should be ashamed...” (1 Cor.15:34). On the other hand, he also calls out the legalism of Galatians cf. “O foolish Galatians...”(Gal.3:1).

Chapter Fifteen in *Acts* begins by telling how influential leaders with a Jewish background had been wanting Gentile converts to undergo circumcision and adopt all the minutiae of regulations that were (in theory) practiced by mainstream Jews (Acts 15:10). But a ruling from the Council that favoured circumcision and the many rules within Judaism, would keep the movement of a following of Jesus within Judaism and would be against their mandate. How could a ruling retain an emphasis on the commandments and also allow the church to move out into the whole world as commissioned by Jesus? (cf. Mt 28:19).

In Luke’s *Acts* 15, as a master narrator, Luke gives an optimistic view of what happened. Actually his picture is a little over-optimistic. We know from Paul’s letter to the *Galatians* that the issue of circumcision and law observance continued to be an on-going problem (cf. Gal. 2:11-13). In fact judging by Paul’s letter to the Galatians it appears that some of the people (including Peter and Barnabas) who attended the Council actually went back on what the Council had decreed. They were supposed to welcome Gentile membership on an equal footing. But Peter and others were eating apart from the Gentile converts (Gal 2:11-13).

To put this in context. Scholars still argue about whether or not the Jerusalem Council was before or after the *Galatians*

letter.⁵¹ If the Council and its edict was after the confrontation in *Galatians* it may have helped heal some of the division. But this edict was still not likely to entirely resolve the issue. Also Paul refers to a trip to Jerusalem about the issue (Gal.2). This suggests the Council was before the confrontation.

Within the story of the Council as told in *Acts* 15, Paul and Barnabas attended as delegates from Antioch (a city in Galatia). They recounted the many conversions being made amongst Gentiles. Peter (the leader designated by Jesus) stood up and spoke on the topic of Jewish observance of rules. He pointed out that neither he, nor many of the people present, were observing all the Jewish rules because these were so tedious. Why therefore he asked, should they be imposed on Gentile converts? (*Acts* 15:10). James who was now the apparent leader of the Church, gave a speech that recalled “the prophet”. In doing this, he was quoting the prophet Amos who had railed against unjust business practices (*Acts* 15:15-16). James then proposed that the Gentiles members be obliged to refrain from “fornication, blood and strangling” (*Acts* 15:29).

This “formula” for membership appeared to solve the problem of membership (at least according to Luke’s account). But there were layers to the meaning in this edict of *Acts* 15:20. At one level the edict was parallel to rules that had already been prescribed in the Old Testament book of *Leviticus* cf:

“Anyone, native or stranger.. must pour out its blood” 17:13
(the blood of an animal)

“You must not give your marriage bed to your neighbour’s wife” 18:26

“You must not steal nor deal deceitfully or fraudulently with your neighbour.” 19:11

⁵¹ Cf, Murphy O’Connor, *Paul: A Critical Life*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), 51.

For centuries these rules had already been applied to non-Jewish people who wanted to live within the boundaries of Judaism in Israel. On that level of Leviticus, the “Conservatives” at the Council could hardly object because the Council’s ruling reinforced their insistence of keeping with established tradition. Luke’s account of the Council says “all approved” (Acts 15:25).

If Paul’s letter to the Galatians on the other hand was written **after** the Council of Galatians “we went to Jerusalem,” (cf. Gal. 2:1) the *Leviticus* meaning of the edict may be what some people were thinking of when they left the Council. They were thinking that the Gentile followers of Jesus were now in some sort of “co-existence” relationship with the Judaic followers of Jesus. It would then have seemed quite reasonable for them to eat apart from the Gentile converts, which after all was required by Jewish law cf. Acts 10:11.

Whether the Council was before or after the confrontation, Paul saw things quite differently. He had remained affected by his conversion experience in which Jesus identified in his person with all of his followers. In this sense, they together formed a corporate organism. This organic existence was celebrated and reinforced most particularly at the Eucharist in which all shared in the one body of Christ. As Paul said later in Romans 2:11 “God has no favourites.”

In his teaching Paul had continually promised that all of the followers of Jesus would share in the resurrected life of Jesus (1 Cor. 15:1-29). He therefore insisted that all the followers of Jesus, Jews and Gentiles alike, should share in the Eucharistic celebration as equals. They should also all share in the same, corporate practice of morality.

In Part One of this research project *Is Christian Morality Unique? Part 1*, it was shown over some chapters how Paul

put particular focus on the three commandments of “Thou shalt not kill, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not steal.” A close look at the structure of the text in Chapter Fifteen in *Acts* shows how it was that Paul could understand and interpret the Council’s prohibition against “fornication, blood and strangling.” (*Acts* 15:29). With Paul’s understanding of the threefold edict of Council, morality was being interpreted in terms of the commandments. At the same time the “bar” of observance of these commandments was being raised. Thus a prohibition against “fornication” could apply to all uncommitted sexual intercourse and not just to participation in pagan temple fertility rites (cf. “Thou shalt not commit adultery”). As regards “blood”, the wider context of publicly endorsed cruelty in the Roman Empire, was being taken into account. Paul for instance was well aware of and admitted his fear of the blood letting that went on in the arenas of Ephesus etc. (1 Cor 15:32). The Council’s prohibition against “blood” could therefore have implied a prohibition against cruelty as such (cf. “Thou shalt not kill.”). Within the discussions of the Jerusalem Council, James’ quote of “the prophet” in *Acts* 15:29 from Amos chapter nine was a reminder of Amos’ protests against the “strangling” of the poor through unjust business practices (*Amos* 2:6-7). Thus implied that reference to the commandment “thou shalt not steal”, was now being extended to unfairness as such in business dealing.

The following of Jesus for both Jews and Gentiles, alike involved a “raising of the bar” of the Commandments. In this sense there was a move beyond them. The commandments were in a sense “idealised”.

A morality interpretation of the Council’s edicts, rather than a dietary one, fits with early accounts of the Council in ancient texts.⁵² These texts show that there was an early

⁵² Ernst Haenchen, *The Acts of the Apostles: A Commentary* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1971), Intro.

understanding the Council's edicts went beyond dietary laws and they included an interpretation of the commandments.⁵³

A Formula for Christian Morality

Luke considered that the Jerusalem Council now equipped Paul with a morality "formula". Rather than being 'bogged down' with Jewish rituals and regulations, the Gentile converts and indeed all the followers of Jesus would now be challenged instead to set their sights on "raising the bar" of the three commandments about money, power and relationship. The "formula" was closely linked in with "the way" of the followers of Jesus. Early on in Acts Paul had confessed that he had no end of trouble trying to help people understand "the way" cf. Acts 19:21. When he was accused of being a 'ringleader' of the Nazarene sect in Acts 24:5 he said in Acts 24:14 he was rather, a follower of "the way".

A morality interpretation of the Council edicts helps to explain the structure of *Acts* in the Sections to follow Section C of *Acts* (according to this analysis). It also shows a Church endorsement of the rationalism and idealism upon which the Hellenism of the Greco-Roman Empire functioned. At the same time there was a continued insistence on observance of the key social commandments of Judaism.

The commandments were being "idealised" by "raising the bar" of their observance. This move "beyond" the commandments provided a challenge to help the self-determination of all people (cf. "Thou shalt not kill"). The move provided a challenge to reinforce basic social structures (cf. "Thou shalt not commit adultery"). It also provided a challenge to provide all people with the basic necessities of life

⁵³ Haenchen, *The Acts of the Apostles...*, Intro.

(cf. “Thou shalt not steal”). Arguably these three edicts are at the base of the modern industrialised world of today.

After *Acts* 15 the narrative centres around the mission of Paul to the Greco-Roman Empire.

Section D of *Acts*

Heed Multiple Voices and the Living Word

At the logico-semantic level of the structure of *Acts*, Luke continues on with the themes of his gospel and the sociological understanding that he was developing in these two books. In his gospel he had already demonstrated the “best practice” of a society that is based upon the Greek culture of Hellenism (cf. Sections B and C). In *Acts* he goes on to provide an understanding of “the voice of the people” which is at the base of Greek democracy (cf. *Acts* 15:30-20:32). Luke shows how ultimately, such a voice reaches back into the “word” of God.

In his Section D in *Acts*, therefore and at the textual level, he uses a wide range of words to describe the “voice” of the people. This in itself demonstrates that such a “voice” comes from a wide range of perspectives. The original words that Luke used are of course in Greek. But the following translated list of some of these words, show how he attempts to provide a comprehensive understanding of “voice” and therefore the “word”. Some of the repetitions are also given here.

Exhortation	Urged	Persuaded	Evangelise
Speech	Practising	Command	Spoke
Confirmed	soothsaying	Addressed	Dismissed
Teaching	Urged	Being spoken	Exulted
Preaching	Charge	Scoffed	Announced

Announced	Commanded	Witnessing	Said
Witnessed to	Charging	Blaspheming	Reported
Decrees	Praying	Bidding	Proclaims\
Speak	Praised	Confirming	Besought
Beseeching	Called	Spoke boldly	saying
			Lectured
			etc.

SECTION D

HEED MULTIPLE VOICES AND THE LIVING WORD

Acts 15:30 - 20:31

Paragraph "Hooks" are references
to the Word of God

Steps towards the "Living Word"

*Paragraph Ref
and Verse Ref to
the "Word"*

1. .The "**word**" is taught and preached by
manv 15:30-35
.. *Paul and Barnabas . .teaching and preaching . .* 15:35
2. . The "**word**" continues to live on with 15:36-41
.. *let us visit . .(where) . we announced the word .* 16:33
3. .Speaking the "**word**" is permitted by 16:1-16:10
.. *prevented by - Holy Spirit to speak - word in* 16:6
4. . The "**word**" is spoken to those ready 16:11-40
.. *Believe . . and they spoke to him the word of God* 16:32
5. . The "**word**" is received by people who 17:1-34
.. *and these were more noble . . who received the* 17:11
6. . The "**word**" has opponents 17:13-34
.. *announced by Paul the word of God, they (Jews)* 17:13
7. . The "**word**" urges proclamation 18:1-6

... <i>Paul was urged by the word to solemnly witness</i>	18:5
8. . Teaching the " word " is commanded	18:7-23
.. <i>said . Lord . speak and not keep silence . I am</i>	18:11
9. . The " word " expects attention	18:24-19:10
.. <i>some hardened and disobeyed, (others) came to</i>	19:9
10. The " word " is increased and	19:11-20
.. <i>by might of the Lord the word increased and was</i>	19:20
11. . The " word " is linked in with "the	19:21-41
. <i>no small amount of trouble concerning 'the way'</i>	19:23
12. . The " word " continues the work of "I	20:1-38
.. <i>I commend you to the Lord and to the word of</i>	20:32

The Section ends with:

Paul being escorted to the ship by a range of people to journey to Jerusalem then Rome

In each of the above paragraphs, where “the word” is considered to be a paragraph “hook”, a paragraph forms comfortably around such a “hook”. These paragraphs provide a description of what “the word” is. The one exception here amongst the paragraphs, which appears to ‘prove the rule’, is found in paragraph eleven. Here there is an apparent paragraph but no mention of “the word”. However when one considers the subject matter of the paragraph, it is found this is about “the loud voice”. According to the narrative in this paragraph, someone had organised a riot in which there was loud shouting. It appears from Luke’s avoidance of reference to “the word” in such a context. he is showing the presence of “the word” does not co-exist with the “loud voice”.

As an aside, recall how in recent and present history, the propaganda of totalitarian regimes attempts to snuff out the

presence of “the word”. For instance some concentration camps have loud speakers blaring all day with the “party line”.

It appears paragraph eleven in this section of *Acts* Luke mentions “the way” as a substitute “hook”. This is also a reminder that “the way” is linked in with the presence of “the word”.

Section E of *Acts*

Recognise Authority in the Range of Figures

The narrative in *Acts* continues on to narrate the adventures of Paul and the many obstacles he encountered. In Section E it appears Luke is showing how a whole range of people exercised their own sphere of authority in helping Paul. They do this in terms of what they say.

SECTION E

RECOGNISE THE RANGE OF AUTHORITY

Acts 21:1 – 26:32

Paragraph "Hooks" are parties who promote the Power of One (Paul)

	Authority Figure	Names	Assistance given
1.	Disciples <i>21:1-6</i>	Disciples, women, children, brothers	Accompanied

2.	Prophets <i>21:7-14</i>	Philip's daughters & Agabus	Warned
3.	Church leadership <i>21:15-26</i>	Ancient disciples and James and elders	Required purification
4.	Law-enforcers <i>21:27-39</i>	Chillarch of the cohort	Protected
5.	The people <i>21:39-22:23</i>	The crowd	Challenged
6.	State Law <i>22:24-29</i>	Re rights of citizens	Imposed respect
7.	Religious leadership <i>22:30-23:10</i>	Chief priests and all the council	Provided forum
8.	Kith and kin <i>23:11-24</i>	Son of Paul's sister	Gave secret help
9.	The Governor <i>23:25-24:27</i>	Felix	Gave on-going protection
10.	The Successor <i>25:1-7</i>	Festus	Weighed up case
11,	The Emperor <i>25:8-12</i>	Caesar	Provided base for world outreach
12.	Monarchy <i>25:13-26:32</i>	Agrippa & Bernice	Gave a hearing

Paul to Caesar at Rome 26:32

Section E finishes with Paul en route to Rome where he hopes to put his case to the Roman Emperor himself. He wants to explain to the Emperor that he is not trying to undermine Judaism (or for that matter, Hellenism). In the narrative he continues to be a prisoner of the Romans, largely for his own protection.

In the final section, Section F, Paul behaviour reminds us of the “Kingdom Figure” that Luke has described in the Section E of his gospel. Thus even as a prisoner, he functions within and indeed contributes to the secular society around him.



Section F of Acts

Challenge the Power Base of the World

SECTION F

CHALLENGE POWER BASE OF THE WORLD

Acts 27:1 – 28-31

**Paragraph "Hooks" are references to the
Centurion**

Authority Figure (Centurion)	Background
1. Kingdom figure sets sail under secular law enforcer <i>27:1-5</i>	"we" set sail for Italy
2. Kingdom figure offers advice <i>27:6-10</i>	"now dangerous"
3. Law enforcer refuses Kingdom figure's advice <i>27:11-29</i>	he took wrong advice and shipwreck -

- | | | |
|----|---|--|
| 4. | Law enforcer heeds
Kingdom figure's warning
<i>27:30-41</i> | Centurion
forbids the
killing of |
| 5. | Law enforcer saves
Kingdom figure
<i>27:42-28:10</i> | Paul's
'internalised
law' accepted |
| 6 | Law enforcer accepts
internalised law
<i>28:11-31</i> | Paul's
'internalised
law' accepted |

Paul in Rome proclaiming the kingdom (to the world) 28:31

At a metaphoric level, one could wonder if Luke uses the storm in the lengthy narrative of Section F to provide a description of the Church's efforts to define itself in the years that stretched from the life of Jesus in the 30's CE up until the time of the gospel and *Acts* (around 85 CE). In many ways the Church was required to weather a storm during the first century.

D Inferred References to the Hybrid Nature of Christianity

The above pages demonstrate that the synoptic gospels of Mark, Matthew and Luke as also Luke's *Acts of the Apostles* follow a logico-semantic level of construction. In doing this they provide a sociological explanation of Christianity. They show the basic social structure of the gospels and therefore

Christianity is a hybrid that consists of Judaism and Hellenism. They also show how the world view of Judaism is based on the sense of time (and law). The world view of Hellenism is based on the sense of place (and order). They sit with each other, but not very comfortably.

In an obvious sense, these two world views are complementary to each other. Yet they are also distinctly different. Inevitably there is tension between them. This tension carries over to the personality “type” of each, that is, the disciple of Matthew’s gospel and the Kingdom Figure of Luke. One could expect that at times the tension between the two would break out into open conflict. On the other hand one could hope that the dialectical tension between the two world views, would provide energy to the whole. In an on-going way the one society would be constantly critical of the excesses of the other.

At the historical level of Christian societies, it could be argued that there has been a constant struggle for dominance between the two world views and their personality types. There has therefore been and continues to be, an oscillation between them.



CHAPTER TWO

THE CREDIBILITY FACTOR

A THE CONTRADICTORY POSITION OF CURRENT NEW TESTAMENT SCHOLARSHIP

At the very start of this Research Project, in fact in the opening sentence the difficulty of doing a sociological analysis of the gospels was mentioned. The opening tells how the project was started after the fourth separate and unsuccessful attempt to find a Biblical Studies Supervisor for a Ph D thesis.⁵⁴

Part of the background to this opening is as follows. A sociological analysis of the gospels and Acts was worked out using semiotic analysis. But the analysis generally met with a “blanket of disinterest” at the local level. It was thought there was a credibility block with regards to the analysis and receptivity towards it would be improved if a Ph D thesis was written to demonstrate its viability. However upon sending a copy of the analysis to a New Testament scholar at a Melbourne University the reply came back that this material did not fit into the category of New Testament studies at all. It in fact it fitted into the discipline of Sociology of Religion.

A professor qualified in Sociology of Religion was then found at another university and was prepared to help, on condition a secondary supervisor in New Testament Studies was also found. This did not happen. Arguably people approached were thinking much the same thing as the first New Testament scholar approached, that is, the analysis (insofar as they looked

⁵⁴ Michelle Nailon *Is Christian Morality Unique? Part 1, A focus on Money, Power and Relationship* (Melbourne: Project Employment 2018), www.realitysearch.com.au p.1 [accessed Oct 2019].

at it) did not fit into the discipline of New Testament Studies. Academics appeared to be equating New Testament Studies with the use of Historical Critical Exegesis.

There is a contradiction here.

The Catholic Pontifical Commission, in its article “The Interpretation of the Bible in the Church” says:

No scientific method for the study of the Bible is fully adequate to comprehend the biblical texts in all their richness. For all its overall validity, the historical-critical method cannot claim to be totally sufficient in this respect. It necessarily has to leave aside many aspects of the writings which it studies.⁵⁵

The Commission goes on to describe synchronic (as distinct from diachronic) approaches to New Testament interpretation. These include rhetorical analysis, narrative analysis and semiotic analysis. The Commission encouraged the use of human sciences approaches to interpretation such as a sociological, cultural anthropology, psychological and psychoanalytical approaches. Of the sociological approach, it says “In the course of the last 20 years (1970-1990), the sociological approach to biblical texts has become an integral part of exegesis.” However it would seem this is not the universal case! So on the one hand the Commission promotes semiotic analysis and a sociological approach in the interpretation of the New Testament.⁵⁶ But on the other hand such an analysis and approach is dismissed as not fitting into New Testament studies at all.

Contradictions aside, it might be validly asked if the findings of a semiotic analysis and sociological approach as outlined above, are likely to be accepted as being credible. The main

⁵⁵ Pontifical Biblical Commission, “The Interpretation..” 502.

⁵⁶ Pontifical Biblical Commission, “The Interpretation..” 506.

finding of the analysis is that Christianity is in fact a hybrid society. If this finding is the case, inferences to such structures should be found in both Church teaching and in general interpretations of the gospels. A proponent of the analysis would need to admit these references are few.

However inferences about the existence of the hybrid nature of Christianity do exist both within the New Testament and within contemporary writings. Three instances of this are as follows:

1. The letters of Paul teach that the “body of Christ” consists of a hybrid.

- (a) In *Romans 11* he uses the image of an olive tree. He talks of the Gentiles as people coming from a wild olive tree and they have been grafted onto a cultivated olive tree (Judaism). He talks of Jews who lack faith as breaking away from such a tree but (they are) people who could be ‘grafted’ back onto the tree. He also reckons that the presence of Gentiles who are now “on the tree” are of benefit to the whole. “ so all Israel will be saved” (Rom 11: 26).
- (b) Consider again a quote from the letter to the Ephesians. *Ephesians* may have been written after Paul’s death but traditionally, the letter has been considered to be in the Pauline tradition.⁵⁷

Now, in union with Christ Jesus, you who used to be far away have been brought near by the death of Christ. For Christ himself has brought us peace, by making the Jews and Gentiles one people. With his own body he broke down the wall that separated them and kept them enemies. He abolished the Jewish Law, with its commandments

⁵⁷ Carl R. Holladay, *A Critical Introduction*, 382-383.

and rules, in order to create out of the two races one new people in union with himself, in this way making peace. By his death on the cross Christ destroyed the enmity; by means of the cross he united both races into one body and brought them back to God. (Eph 2:13-16).⁵⁸

2. Another inference about the hybrid nature of Christianity can be found in contemporary biblical scholarship. Francis J. Moloney for instance, implies this in an article called “The gifts of the Holy Spirit”. Reflecting on the interaction between Jesus and Nicodemus in John 3:2,3 Moloney explains that within Christianity there is a co’existence of people who come from differing world views⁵⁹

In order to enter the Christian community, one must cross the road from **either the Jewish Synagogue or the Gentile Temple, and enter the new community of Jesus Christ** through a Baptism that is an external rite marked by the pouring of water (‘born again’), and a gift which is the spirit (‘born from above’).....This biblical ‘journey’, made possible by God’s gift of the spirit through the waters of Baptism, took place at the beginning of a longer, and even more challenging journey: a lifelong imitation of the way of Jesus.

One can gather from the above quotation that after baptism and into the future, Christian people would need to continue coming towards an imitation of Jesus from a background that is based on either the “Jewish Synagogue” or the “Gentile Temple”. In this sense therefore, at baptism they come from a

⁵⁸ *The Jerusalem Bible: New Testament* ed. Alexander Jones (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1967).

⁵⁹ Francis J. Moloney, “The Gifts of the Holy Spirit” in *Melbourne Catholic*, editor David Halliday (Melbourne: Archbishop Peter A. Comensali., Dec 2018).

model of society that is “outside” Christianity. At the same time, over the whole of their lives, they still need to continue the journey of coming from an “outside” model of society towards Jesus, because their social roots are in a sense, on the “outside”.

One can gather from the above quote that baptised Christians cannot make the assumption that after baptism they are now naturally and securely rooted in a mid position between these two types of societies. Their journey to a mid-point is ongoing. Moloney infers, that the text of John 3:2,3 that the quote is based upon, is not just referring to the contemporary situation in Palestine in the 30’s CE or even that of the writer around 100 CE.⁶⁰ Rather, as a text of revelation, John’s gospel has a contemporary application as well.⁶¹

3. A third instance of the existence of a hybrid type of society within a Judaic-Christian society is reflected in a recent apostolic letter *Rejoice and Be Glad*, written by Pope Francis and also in his homilies.⁶² He talks about two major forms of heresy that people can tip into.

CONTEMPORARY GNOSTICISM

36.Gnosticism presumes “a purely subjective faith whose only interest is a certain experience or a set of ideas and bits of information which are meant to console and enlighten, but which ultimately keep one imprisoned in his or her own thoughts and feelings....They think of the intellect as separate from the flesh, and thus become incapable of touching Christ’s suffering flesh in others, locked up as they

⁶⁰ Cf. Ben Stevens, “When was the Gospel of John Written?” in <https://www.quora.com/When-was-the-Gospel-of-John-written/> (Mountain Village, California: Quora Inc.) [Accessed 30 Sept 2019].

⁶¹ Cf. Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, trans J. Weinsheimer and D. G. Marshall (London: Bloomsbury, 2013). xxv.

⁶² Pope Francis, *Rejoice and Be Glad: on the call to holiness in today’s world*, Encyclical Letter 2018.

are in in an encyclopaedia of abstractions. In the end, by disembodiment the mystery, they prefer “a God without Christ, a Christ without the Church, a Church without her people”.^[36]³⁹... They absolutize their own theories and force others to submit to their way of thinking. ^[39] Gnosticism is one of the most sinister ideologies ^[40] ⁶³

In the above quotes there are echoes of Paul’s dealings with the *pneumatikoi* in his letter of 1 *Corinthians*. These people were discussed in Part 1 of *Is Christian Morality Unique?* Like the Greek Stoics they believed themselves to possess a divine spark as part of themselves.

Consider the second critique by Pope Francis:

NEW PELAGIANISM

This can occur when some groups of Christians give excessive importance to certain rules, customs or ways of acting. This may well be a subtle form of pelagianism, for it appears to subject the life of grace to certain human structures.^[58]Once we believe that everything depends on human effort as channelled by ecclesial rules and structures, we unconsciously complicate the Gospel and become enslaved to a blueprint that leaves few openings for the working of grace. Saint Thomas Aquinas reminded us that the precepts added to the Gospel by the Church should be imposed with moderation “lest the conduct of the faithful become burdensome”, for then our religion would become a form of servitude.^[64] ⁶⁴

⁶³ Cf. Pope Francis “*Homily at Mass in Casa Santa Marta*”, 11 November 2016 : *L’Osservatore Romano*, editor Andrea Mondo (Rome: Vatican City State, 12 November 2016), p. 8.

⁶⁴ Cf. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, I-II, q. 107, art. 4. (Venetiis: Cudebat Simon Occhi, 1787).

There are parallels here between the description that the Pope gives of people who over-rely on rules and regulations and the problems that were faced in Matthew community in 85 CE. This problem is reflected in Section E of the analysis above of Matthew “Avoid over-stress on External law.” Also, recall Paul’s anger as shown in 1 Galatians about over-stress on external law such as circumcision. In the Galatian context, Jewish regulations were being imposed upon Gentile converts and Paul railed against such “threats” to their freedom and self-determination (Gal. 2:4).

In conclusion, writings attributed to Paul, recent biblical studies and current church teaching, all reflect an understanding that Christianity is based upon both a Judaic world view and a Hellenistic/Greek philosophy world view. Both these world views can be taken to extremes. They both affect the practice of Christian morality and are a prescription for tension between them.

A Blanket of Disinterest

Unfortunately demonstrations such as the above, of a co-existence of world views within Christianity are of limited value, if the mainstream Church remains “disinterested” in them. A few examples of the disinterest are as follows:

An educationalist was shown a book with the headings of a semiotic analysis of the gospels *On Building a Society* (cf. www.onbuildingasociety.org). She turned to the back cover of the book and page by page came through it backwards, saying as she did so “I can’t make head or tail of this.” Another educationalist was given a copy of the analysis in the hope of obtaining some feedback. The suggestion came back “Do a feminist analysis.” (?). Another example of disinterest is as follows. It was thought the RealitySearch analysis may be of

interest to schools so a web site with workshops on the analysis of Mark's gospel was set up. At the time there were about 2,000 unique visitors coming into the RealitySearch web sites each month. A flyer was made of the new workshop site and this was sent out to a hundred Religious Coordinators around Victoria. It was thought people would open the Australia post letter with the flyer in it when they were seated in front of their computer. Little effort therefore would be needed to open up at the site's home page as shown in the flyer. But a couple of weeks later, according to the Awstats, only about two unique visitors from Australia had at that time, gone into the site.

Why the "blanket of disinterest"? a few clues might come from a 1967 book called *The Medium is the Message*.⁶⁵ This book by Marshall McLuhan pointed out that because of the rapid changes in technology with the advent of television etc. the new mediums of communication had themselves become "the message". It was largely because of the shifts in such mediums that so many people were undergoing what Alvin Toffler described as "future shock" in his 1970 book called *Future Shock*.⁶⁶ The two books were written before the advent of computerisation and the internet. Today the digital world has now become "the message" more than ever. The relevance of McLuhan's book to the present discussion is that word processing can isolate out slabs of the gospel texts and "juggle them around" in a search for a logico-semantic level. However people who have grown up with the set, linear-printed book of the gospels would find such a "juggling around" of paragraphs foreign to them. In such case, "the medium has become the blockage". Oddly enough the "juggling around" of stories with word processing has parallels with the practice of oral performance in the 1st century CE. as

⁶⁵ Marshall McLuhan, *The Medium is the Message* (UK: Penguin Books, 1967).

⁶⁶ Alvin Toffler, *Future Shock* (US: Random House, 1970).

described by Antoinette Clark Wire in her book *The Case for Mark Composed in Performance*.⁶⁷

Another possible and indeed likely cause of the disinterest in a semiotic analysis of the gospels is the ongoing dominance of the method of historical critical exegesis in the mainstream interpretation of the gospels. It appears scholars and editors tend to sit within this discipline of Historical-Critical exegesis and they consider other approaches to biblical interpretation are outside their sphere of interest. As noted above a semiotic analysis with a sociology approach is categorised as “sociology of religion” and not New Testament Studies.

With this apparent bias in mind there is need to weigh up the limitations of the historical critical exegesis approach further. It appears it is only in this way that a semiotic analysis can be seen in its correct perspective. The German philosopher Gadamer has pointed out the limitations of historic-critical exegesis in the interpretation of Scripture. A somewhat lengthy précis of his book *Truth and Method* is to follow.



⁶⁷ Antoinette Clark Wire, *The Case for Mark Composed in Performance*, in *Biblical Performance Criticism* 3. (Eugene Oregon: Cascade Books, 2011).

B GADAMER'S CRITIQUE OF HISTORICAL CRITICAL EXEGESIS

(i) Gadamer's historical background in Nazi Germany

Hans Georg Gadamer (1900-2002) had to function as an academic within Nazi Germany.⁶⁸ Inevitably his historical situation influenced his major literary work *Truth and Method* published in 1960.⁶⁹ Some critics say the book *Truth and Method* is really about “Truth **or** Method”.⁷⁰ This is because he weighs up the ways in which “method” as such, can block out rather than facilitate the discovery of “truth”. Gadamer’s experience of Nazi Germany apparently impacted on his ideas about this subject.

In his own life as an academic Gadamer avoided both the Nazi party and involvement in politics.⁷¹ Also like other German academics at the time he avoided publishing his ideas altogether.⁷² This meant that later critics questioned what his position actually was. They pointed out that he had taken academic positions vacated by deposed Jews⁷³ Moreover many academics of the day did join the Nazi Party. For instance Gadamer’s own mentor Heidegger joined the Party (albeit temporarily).⁷⁴ Even a biblical scholar such as Gerhard Kittel joined the Party and spread anti-Semitic ideas in his reference book on the bible that was used in biblical

⁶⁸ Chris Lawn, *Gadamer: A Guide for the Perplexed* (London: Continuum, 2006), 20 ff.

⁶⁹ Gadamer, *Truth and Method*.

⁷⁰ Lawn, *A Guide...*, 13.

⁷¹ Lawn, *A Guide ...*, 21.

⁷² Lawn, *A Guide ...*, 21.

⁷³ Lawn, *A Guide...*, 21.

⁷⁴ Lawn, *A Guide..*, 20.

scholarship throughout the world.⁷⁵ Kittel's ideas reflected a belief that the Jews were no longer of relevance to the world. Therefore allowing them to continue to function in public office would be a "retrograde step" for civilisation.⁷⁶ Such ideas were seminal to the conflict of World War II in which it is estimated seventy million people died.⁷⁷

The academic output of Gadamer in 1960 apparently roused the interest of Pope John Paul II, who had also lived within the realm of the Nazis. When Gadamer died at the age of 102 in 2002 his family received a telegram of condolence from John Paul II.⁷⁸ John Paul's close collaborator, Cardinal Ratzinger, chaired the Catholic Pontifical Commission when it produced the statement of "The Interpretation of the Bible in the Church (1993). Ratzinger was to become Pope Benedict XVI.

Gadamer's critique of the limitations of natural science as compared with the human sciences applies to an over-emphasis on Historical Critical Exegesis and its "scientific method" in the interpretation of Scripture. Gadamer was a major proponent instead of "philosophical hermeneutics" which is mentioned and endorsed in the Commission's statement, cf.

The historical-critical method, in fact, cannot lay claim to enjoying a monopoly in this area. It must be conscious of its limits, as well as of the dangers to which it is exposed. Recent developments in philosophical hermeneutics.... have shed light upon many aspects of the problem of interpretation that the historical-critical method has tended to ignore."⁷⁹

⁷⁵ Wayne A. Meeks, "A Nazi New Testament Professor Reads His Bible: The Strange Case of Gerhard Kittel" in *The Idea of Biblical Interpretation: Essays in Honor of James L. Kugel*, ed. Hindy Najman and Judith H Newman (Leiden: Boston: Brill, 2004), 513-541

⁷⁶ Meeks, "A Nazi New Testament Professor Reads His Bible: 533.

⁷⁷ Note cf. Wikipedia https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/World_War_II_casualties.

⁷⁸ Lawn, *Gadamer, A Guide...*, 17.

⁷⁹ Pontifical Commission, "The Interpretation...."524.

**(ii) An underlying Critique
of Historical Critical Exegesis**

In the book *Truth and Method*, published in 1960, Gadamer avoids both the word Nazism and an explicit discussion of religion. He does briefly mention the “method” of Historical Critical Exegesis however and gives a short critique of it. For instance on page 334 he says

Legal hermeneutics was separated from theory of understanding as a whole because it has a dogmatic purpose, just as, by giving up its dogmatic commitment, theological hermeneutics was united with philological historical method (Note: that is, Historical Critical Exegesis).

Such a brief mention of the “method” of “philological historical method” almost disguises the fact that the critique of this method is aligned with the central theme of the book.

As a philosopher Gadamer had a special interest in the philosophers of ancient Greece. During the 1930’s and 40’s with the rise of Nazism and the general adoption of philosophies such as that of Hegel and Nietzsche, he would have been comparing these ideas with those of the ancient Greeks, namely those of Plato and Aristotle. He was also conscious the prevailing philosophy was heavily influenced by the German Enlightenment.⁸⁰

⁸⁰ Cf. Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 28.

(iii) *Truth and Method* compared with the Themes of Time and Place in Matthew and Luke

It is said that Gadamer's book *Truth and Method* is difficult to follow. In his book *Gadamer, a Guide for the Perplexed* Chris Lawn says his work is "long and desultory but his arguments are clearly stated".⁸¹ Ironically enough, the semiotic analysis of the synoptic gospels, outlined in pages above, helps to clarify and simplify Gadamer's basic position.

Recall that Matthew describes a society that is based upon law. Natural law is observed in terms of the causes and effects that are taking place within the frameworks of time. Also human laws are regulated according to likely causes and effects that also take place within the framework of time. In the analysis above, it was shown that Matthew was mindful of this connection between law and time. He opens most paragraphs with expressions of time. He knits the Sections of his gospel together with the time statement, "After Jesus had said these things". Matthew also sets out to show Jesus emerged from the heritage of Judaism, a law/time based society.

At much the same time, around 85 CE, Luke was writing his gospel from within a Hellenistic society. As distinct from Matthew, Luke uses expressions of place and the sense of direction in the organisation of his material especially in his lengthy Section B. Luke divides up his six major sections according to the journey of Jesus towards Jerusalem. In his second book of *Acts* he structures his material more loosely but this is also organised around a journey – this time the journey of Paul towards Rome.

Like Matthew, Luke sets out the qualities needed by an individual and then a group, to function effectively in the type

⁸¹ Lawn, *Gadamer, A Guide* ..., 26.

of society that he is describing. In Luke's case this is a place and order-based society that reflects the Hellenism of the Greco-Roman Empire in the first century CE. Like Matthew, Luke lists inadequacies of the society he is describing. In Luke's society there is a tendency for people to downplay the lessons of the past and live instead in the "now". There is also a tendency to over-emphasise rationalism, idealism and the "loud voice". .

In a general "sweep" of the two types of societies as described in the gospels one could say that a law-based society has a heavy emphasis on time. An order-based society has a heavy emphasis on place and the control of space. Because Matthew and Luke were describing such societies in the abstract, their descriptions of the good and bad points of these societies can be translated into another time and place, such as the situation of Germany in the twentieth century.

In the early C20th there were the Jewish ghettos in Europe. In contrast to these there were philosophies of the Enlightenment which had parallels with the Hellenism of the C1st CE. They had an emphasis on "the now" rather than on history and tradition. They were deficient in the sense of time.

An interesting exercise to demonstrate the need for a Hellenistic-type of society to "build in" a sense of time, would be to look again at the semiotic analysis of Luke's Section C outlined above. This Section C is labelled by the analysis as "Improve on Democracy". Apparently an underlying effort is being made by Luke the writer to 'build in' a sense of time into this "democratic" community, for example:

“Improve on Democracy”	Stress on Time
Jesus urges peace not confrontation (para 1),	instead of taking a knee-jerk reaction
He complains about the lack of a home (para 2)	which is long term
He urges people to look to the future (para 3)	i.e. plan beyond the ‘now’
He urges people to keep moving (para 4)	with a sense of direction
He urges people to reach outwards (para 5)	with a sense of direction
He urges people to make love basic (para 6)	love is long term
He urges people to prioritise reflection (para 7)	i.e. think in terms of the whole of life

When we look at the gospel of Luke in terms of the semiotic analysis above, we also find that his criticisms of a Hellenistic type of society roughly coincide with the tendency of such a society to slide into over-idealism and a tendency to live in the “now”. Thus there are parallels between the criticisms Luke apparently makes of Hellenism and tendencies in the society of Germany in the 1930’s and 1940’s. Consider some of the parallels:

Avoid Over-Stress on Idealism

(And over-emphasis on place and control of place)

	Challenges by Jesus in Luke's Gospel (and a relevant quote from the paragraph)	Comparisons with Germany's Nazism (an over-idealised society?)
1	The assumption that a leader is already "saved" <i>"There are those who are first who will be last"</i>	cf. lack of opposition to Hitler
2	Rejection <i>"Jerusalem, the one who kills the prophets"</i>	Rejection of democratic government
3	Hierarchy <i>"noting how they were choosing the chief seats"</i>	cf. the status of Hitler's SS guard.
4	Payment base <i>"when you make a party, invite the poor"</i>	cf. possessions taken by the Nazis
5	Elitism <i>"none of those invited will taste of my supper"</i>	cf. the Nazi party
6	Ideological foundations <i>"This man began to build and was unable to finish"</i>	cf. Hitler's manifesto in <i>Mein Kemp</i>

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| 7 | Exclusion of difference
<i>"This man receives sinners and eats with them"</i> | cf. Jews, gypsies, homosexuals |
| 8 | Over-absorption into a system
<i>"No household slave can have two masters"</i> | cf. the aims of Hitler
Youth |
| 9 | Material obsession
<i>"hoping for what was falling from the rich man's table"</i> | cf. conquest |
| 10 | Inflexibility
<i>"If he (your brother) repents forgive him."</i> | Whole populations enslaved |
| 11 | Ingratitude
<i>"Where are the other nine (cured lepers)?"</i> | cf. contributions of Jews |
| 12 | Alienation of dignity
<i>"The Kingdom of God lies within you."</i> | cf. In the death camps |
| 13 | Predictability
<i>"Whoever seeks to preserve his life will lose it"</i> | cf. All for the
"Fatherland" |
| 14 | Over-formalised justice
<i>"Because this woman is causing me trouble I will give her justice"</i> | cf. meticulous records of massacres |
| 15 | Self-grandisement
<i>"God I thank you that I am not like the rest of men"</i> | cf. dictatorship |
| 16 | Exclusion of children
<i>"Whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a child"</i> | cf. exclusion of childhood as such |

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| 17 | Over-focus on material security
<i>“It is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle”</i> | cf. theft |
| 18 | Total self-reliance
<i>“Things impossible .. possible with God”</i> | cf. discarding traditional morality |
| 19 | Focus on this life only
<i>“reward in this age and in the coming eternal life”</i> | cf. power of the fatherland |
| 20 | Closure to the new
<i>“On the third day he will rise again”</i> | cf. ideas outside Nazism ⁸² |

As regards the seventh point above, it might be recalled that whereas Hitler rejected homosexuals as being too “different”, such a lifestyle was acceptable within the Hellenistic society of the Greco-Roman Empire. Luke was providing a critique of Hellenism. However, whichever social grouping is to be rejected by this type of society, would likely depend on the overall social environment of the time. The point being made is rejection of difference. Also, the Hellenists generally did not reject Jews. In the first century CE they comprised about a tenth of the population of the Empire.⁸³ But rejection of “difference” can take a range of forms, for example between male and female. It is interesting for instance to compare the bodies of super-models of the present age with the long-lean looks of the young male.

⁸² Cf. Nailon, *Five Pivotal Texts*, (Melbourne: Project Employment Inc., 2006), 153.

⁸³ Note: cf Wikipedia .

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Historical_Jewish_population_comparisons.

In the time of Hitler, the most obvious target for rejection that the Nazis took on were the Jews. It could be argued that the historical awareness of Judaism, with its focus on tradition and the moral law, contradicted the “compulsed” focus upon place and the “now” that was adopted by the Nazis. Hitler spent much of his time in World War II in the Berghof with its panoramic views of place. Philosophies behind Nazism such as that of Nietzsche encouraged the rejection of time-worn tradition and its morality.⁸⁴ Also, recall that Judaism consists of an historic race of people spread throughout the world, in contrast to Nazi focus on the fatherland. At the time of the 2nd World War, Jews did not have any country or “place” to call their own or any seat at international forums where they could protest about the persecution of Jews in Europe. At a cosmic level, it could be considered there was a clash going on in Germany between the Nazi sense of place with the Jewish sense of time.

In *Truth and Method*, Gadamer constantly tries to assert the validity of a sense of time.



⁸⁴ Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 316.

C A SIMPLIFIED PRECIS OF *TRUTH AND METHOD*

Part One

TRUTH AS IT EMERGES IN THE EXPERIENCE OF ART

Section 1

The Importance of Traditional Culture and Tradition

Gadamer says the guiding concepts of humanism are based on *Bildung*, that is, culture. This involves a basic movement of the spirit in learning to affirm what is “other”. He says in contrast to this understanding, the philosopher Hegel (1770-1831) claimed that a people’s understanding works outwards from the people themselves and thus they exteriorizes what exists within themselves. (p.13).

Gadamer explains *sensus communis* that (common sense) is part of classical tradition and it is basic to the formation of community (p.19). It is distinct from *phronesis*, that is, practical knowledge. He recalls that Aristotle showed *sensus communis* presupposed a direction of the will and in that way, it was the expression of moral being. Aristotle also said such a sense is acquired through living in community and it involves a virtue of the heart rather than the head (p. 23). Unfortunately, under the influence of the Enlightenment (roughly 1685-1815), the idea of *sensus communis* lost much of its critical significance. For instance if one takes a ‘common sensed’ approach to Scripture, “the works of God can be seen in the whole and all can be seen in each” (of the works of God) (p. 27). However, in the one-sidedness of a

rational method, as stressed especially in the German Enlightenment, the *sensus communis* approach to Scripture was emptied of this full meaning and it was intellectualised.

Gadamer notes that the English moral philosophers did not diverge as widely from the ancient idea of *senses communes* as the German philosophers did. This was because the English philosophers continued to emphasise that moral and aesthetic judgments do not obey reason (p. 29).

Kant (1774-1804) and the Enlightenment

The English position of philosophy was in stark contrast to that of the German philosopher Kant who applied a “stern law of pure practical reason (to judgments)” (p. 31). For Kant, the *sensus communis* was viewed as a preliminary stage (only) of cultivated and enlightened reason. He claimed that practical concepts of good and bad should be based on empirical consequences alone. For him therefore, the basis of his *Critique of Judgement* was “**taste**” (p. 32). Originally this word “taste” described a moral idea that went back to antiquity. However later on, largely due to Kant’s influence, it was limited to its aesthetic meaning only. It was in this way that the understanding of “taste” was shifted out of the centre of philosophy (p. 38). The shift meant a major influence in the unique methodology of the human sciences (as distinct from natural sciences) was then lost.

Kant grounded aesthetics on radical subjectification. This position had an enormous influence in his own time and in the time to follow. It led to a discrediting of any kind of theoretical knowledge, except for that of the natural sciences. Because of this general influence, those who were involved with human sciences including Scripture Scholars felt

pressured into relying on the methodology of the natural sciences in order to retain their own credibility (p. 38).⁸⁵

In Section One of *Truth and Method*, Gadamer goes on to show how the sense of aesthetics was made even more subjective through the Kantian critique. Kant had stressed a subjective role in the understanding of beauty (and truth). This position ultimately undermined the communal interpretation of truth (cf. common sense) which is to be found in art and culture. In contrast to the communal interpretation, Kant claimed there is an “a priori element” within the individual and this element can in itself and on its own, judge “taste”. Thus the “a priori element” within the individual provides “a critique of a critique” (p. 39). He further claimed this “a priori element” is a universal principle. Thus in the exercise of the “a priori element”, “taste” and *sensus communis* are reduced to a subjective principle only. They were no longer seen as containing dimensions of morality that date back to antiquity and which are expressed in art and culture. “Taste” as already noted was reduced to aesthetics.

Kant was not thinking in terms of a morality being derived from an appreciation of beauty and expressed in art (as is traditionally understood). Rather he saw that nature itself provides a more direct experience of beauty. And furthermore, nature provides an unintellectualised beauty.

In a way similar to Rousseau (1712-1778), Kant (1774-1804) saw nature as being more akin to the moral (than what culture was). He also viewed nature as existing for the individual, rather than nature endorsing the ancient idea of man as such, having a role in the universe. With such an approach, beauty and morality thus became subjective. Kant went on to claim that it is “genius” that enables an individual to devise rules

⁸⁵ Note: This is also discussed by Robert Alter, *The Art of Biblical Narrative* (New York: Basic Books c. 1981).

from nature in the creation of art. In this way, “the standpoint of “genius” finally ousts that of taste” (p. 50). Ideas about “taste” and “genius” traded places. Kant considered the “a priori” of subjectivity would (and should) be the final judge of the aesthetic.

His approach to genius, as expressed in art, had some parallels with the views of Hegel (1770-1831). Hegel based aesthetics squarely on the standpoint of art. He claimed it is in art that man encounters himself and spirit meets spirit.

Historically, as it turned out, Kant’s limitation of “genius” to art did not prevail in general thinking. Rather, in the nineteenth century his concept of “genius” rose much higher and it took on the status of a universal concept of value apotheosis (i.e. with a divine status) (p. 55). Kant’s influence persuaded people to “base aesthetic judgment on the subjective ‘a priori’ of our feeling of life.” (p. 32.). Later on, Neo-Kantianism took such a position even further because of its stress on *Eriebris* (immediate experience) as being the “very stuff” of consciousness (p. 55). Thus “immediacy” (and its focus on being in the “now”) would be for the Neo-Kantians, a starting point for interpretation.

The Demotion of Allegory⁸⁶

In *Truth and Method* Gadamer discusses the philosopher Dilthey (1833-1911) at length. He describes Dilthey’s understanding of *Eriebnes* (that is, immediate experience) and says Dilthey saw this as having two parts. He said there is the

⁸⁶ Note: In common parlance, a **parable** is a story or short narrative designed to reveal allegorically some religious principle, moral lesson, psychological reality, or general truth.
https://web.cn.edu/kwheeler/documents/Parable_Allegory.pdf [accessed 30 September 2019].

experience itself and there is the result of the experience. He saw experience as a foundation of art. Thus art is not only seen as an image and idea as in a form of knowing “the truth”. It is also seen as an element in the process of life itself.

Dilthey’s approach to art actually contrasts with the original meaning of *Eriebniskunsi* which means that art comes **from** experience. He shifted the meaning of art in itself, towards something which is **to be** aesthetically experienced. This sort of understanding in Dilthey actually aligned him with Kant and the Enlightenment. Thus on the one hand Dilthey had tried in his approach, to assert the difference between the human sciences and the natural sciences (p. 222 ff) But his efforts in trying to distinguish the two were inadequate.

The influence of Dilthey’s understanding of art and experience led to a devaluation of forms of “art” such as rhetoric. How so? Rhetoric uses allegory which, by definition, points to something else and thereby raises the horizon of understanding. Allegory, it should be noted, is quite different from symbolism (p. 67). Symbols show a metaphysical connection between the visible and the invisible (p. 67). They align one’s experience to what one sees. But such a connection is on the metaphysical level only. Allegory by contrast can be a vehicle for dogmatics (p. 72).

Kant’s new stress on symbolism had divided off symbolism as such, from allegory. And, with Kant’s emphasis on the “a priori element”, it meant that mythology and religious ceremony were to be viewed in terms of symbolism alone. In fact art itself was to be seen as symbolic.

If we attempt to explain Gadamer’s observation here further: symbols connect “the thing” to one’s experience. But they do not entail an in depth exploration of the “otherness” of “the thing”. Also with an over-emphasis on symbolism “the thing” itself can be understood as a symbol. An example of such a

“slide” is as follows. After twelve years at a Catholic school, someone was saying how a work mate of his was teasing him about Catholic belief in the presence of Christ in the Eucharist. He followed up the story with the comment “I didn’t bother to tell him it’s just a symbol”

Gadamer points out in his Section One that there tends to be disproportion in the use of symbolism because meaning as such, is being devalued. (p. 71). He points out that in German classicism there was the idea that with the demotion of allegory, the concept of genius and art itself, was thereby “freed” from the constraints of common sense. But as already noted, in Greek classicism and the traditional Christian interpretation of Scripture, allegory is bound up with the rationalization of myth and also with dogmatics (p. 72).⁸⁷ “Freedom” from common sense and dogmatics means a traditional interpretation of Scripture can be by-passed.

Gadamer considers three philosophers who apparently went further than Kant himself in down-grading a traditional understanding of the interpretation of texts for example, Scripture.

The philosopher **Schiller** (1759-1805), basing his views on Kant, claimed that art and nature were contrasted as being appearance (which is art) and reality (which is nature). He claimed the “ideal kingdom” of art can transcend the frontiers of reality beyond the guardianship of state and society. He also went further than Kant by opposing poetry. Also he claimed that all forms of knowing, outside of the new (Kantian) methodology are to be discredited (p. 51).

In a parallel way, the philosopher **Helmoltz** (1821-1894) describes the work of the human sciences as being

⁸⁷ Note: an allegory is a metaphor re character, place or event. A parable has human characters. However they do compare.

“artistic”(only). He ignored extra-aesthetic elements in the human sciences such as the discernment of purpose, function and the significance of content. By ignoring the content of human sciences which induce us to take up a moral or religious stance in life, art therefore only presents as aesthetic being, or aesthetic consciousness cf.

It distinguishes the aesthetic quality of a work from all the elements of content that induce us to take up a moral or religious stance towards it, and presents it solely by itself in its aesthetic being. (p. 78).

A third philosopher considered by Gadamer in this context is **Hamann** (1730-1788). Hamann went back to the idea of Kant’s transcendental intention. He understood aesthetic consciousness to go beyond being the sole criterion of art. Aesthetic consciousness was given unlimited sovereignty over everything.

The overall point made by Gadamer in looking at these three philosophers is that their influence devalues meaning or significance to such an extent that this becomes of secondary importance. A problem with such thinking is that if aesthetic consciousness dissociates itself from everything that gives it meaning, then it becomes indifferent as to whether or not “the thing” that is being considered, is actually real.

Gadamer points out again that such philosophical position(s) contrast with that of Aristotle who saw sensory particulars in relation to something that is universal (p. 82). In a similar way Gadamer’s mentor Heidegger (1889-1976) taught that it is only when we understand a text in the context of the universal that it exists for us as an artistic creation.

In the context of this discussion, Kant did admittedly refer to the concept of form, e.g. the “motif” of an artist. However, as Gadamer points out, what makes a “motif” is the ability of an

artist to carry the motif through his or her work as a unity of meaning. Implicitly of course, this would involve the passage of time (cf. p. 41) which Kant downplays.

Kant's concept of "genius" did have a transcendental function and his concept of art was grounded in this. However, his successors extended his concept of "genius" to such an extent that it became a universal basis for aesthetics (instead) (p. 55). In the mid C 20th such a universal application appeared as a false romanticism (p. 84).

Gadamer considers philosophers that discounted the Kantian critique. Becker (b. 1939) for instance pointed out that basing aesthetics on experience alone, leads to an absolute series of points which annihilates the unity of a work of art (p. 86). The philosopher Kierkegaard (1813-1855) had described the claim made by Kant's followers to mean the self-annihilation of aesthetic immediacy. This was because the pantheon of art is not done in a timeless present that presents itself to a pure, aesthetic consciousness. Rather, it is an act of a mind and spirit that has collected itself historically (p. 86-7).

In a vein similar to that of Kierkegaard, Gadamer points out that art is a form of knowledge. Experiencing an art work means sharing in that knowledge. The experience of art contains a claim to truth which is certainly different from that of science. Yet just as certainly, it is not inferior to science. In this discussion, he refers to Heidegger (1889-1976) who saw experience as transcending the position of subjectivity. Heidegger claimed that experience is aligned with *dasein* or being as such and he described this *dasein* as time (cf. p. 260-4).

The Relevance of Gadamer's Section One to a Critique of Historical Critical Exegesis

In Section One of *Truth and Method* Gadamer discusses the tendency of German Philosophy in the early twentieth century to have an over-emphasis on subjective experience. This was at the expense of an exploration of “the other”. The approach, as influenced by Kant, downplayed the importance of culture, common sense and tradition. It downplayed the understanding of art as helping people to see their place in the whole universe. The approach also emphasised the use of symbols. It thereby downgraded allegory which is a vehicle of rhetoric and which incorporates dogmatics.

If we consider each of the gospels as a whole, for example that of Luke, he says at the start of his gospel he intends to provide an historically accurate account of the story of Jesus. Throughout his gospel Luke relies on the gospel of Mark. But he constantly redacts Mark to suit his own “rhetoric” and overall interpretation of the life of Jesus. He also adjusts various historical facts. For instance Mark says after the resurrection the women disciples went away in fear. Luke has them telling the disciples about what had happened etc. Luke’s rhetoric or overall interpretation of the life of Jesus extends right through his gospel. It shapes his story of Jesus and in a sense turns the story into a allegory which helps to explain who Jesus was (and is) and what sort of “kingdom” he came to install. The “history” was as Luke understood it.

The “scientific”, diachronic method of historical critical exegesis fails to explore the overall “sweep” of the gospels provided by a rhetorical, structural and allegorical interpretation of Luke’s message. The same point applies to the other gospels as well.

Truth and Method

Section Two

The Subjectivity of Play and Art

Gadamer begins his Section Two of *Truth and Method* with a discussion about play. Play (of course) happens within the framework of time. Gadamer argues that play only fulfils itself if the player loses himself (or herself) within it. This raises the question of the “mode of being” of a play and for that matter a work of art. The play for instance has its own essence which is independent of the person who experiences it. Play as such is capable of changing the involved person. Note that it is not the person but the play (or a work of art) that does the changing.

In such an understanding **the real subject of a game is not the player but the game itself**. Gadamer notes that every game presents a player with a task but this task does not need to point to any purposive content. There is also a self-presentation about a game. Such a self presentation compares with a drama, which is also a form of playing. Such a play or drama draws in the audience. It also puts them into the same place as the player of a game. The play (or drama) takes place within a closed world and it **measures itself by nothing outside of it**.⁸⁸ However at the same time the play or drama can throw light on realities that are outside of it but are which are otherwise constantly hidden. Through participation, people are helped to recognise such things (p. 117). Gadamer points out that this understanding of play is a central motif in the works of Plato. This is because in the dialectics that Plato uses, people recognise what they already know (p. 370, 373).

⁸⁸ Note a parallel here with the definition of semiotic analysis given by the Biblical Commission in “The Interpretation of the Bible in the Church”, 504

Gadamer says advantageous drama exists only when it is played. Because of this, it is therefore absurd to be looking for a unique, “correct” interpretation of the drama. The core thing is that the play fulfils its purpose when it draws in the audience and enables them to recognise realities that are in their lives. Such recognition is irrespective of when or in what era it is that the drama may be performed. In this sense therefore it is timeless (p. 131) as can be seen in the continued relevance of Greek tragedies.

Gadamer goes on to say that a work of art is also a form of play because it cannot be detached from its presentation (cf. p. 503). A festival is similar to this as well because it only exists when it is being celebrated. When someone is present in a festival, they are drawn to participate in it. In this sense they are being taken outside of themselves. Each “presentation” of the festival is an original event. At the same time, because the festival can be repeated the “art” involved here is timeless. Such “art” also includes religious ritual, preaching etc. Such ‘art’ also exists within its own autonomous circle of meaning. This understanding of art is the opposite of the “aesthetic consciousnesses” that has been promoted by the followers of Kant. It is the drama, festival or ritual which is the ‘subject’.

Gadamer goes on to further explain the idea of a play being the “subject”. He points to how Aristotle talked of the closed circle of meaning in a tragedy. In the case of the tragedy the spectator is drawn in and is confronted with “what is”. The spectator is challenged to recognise himself in a metaphysical order of being which is true for all (p. 133). The spectator does not stand aloof as in the case of aesthetic consciousness. Rather they are present and they participate in the tragedy. The tragedy thereby deepens the continuity that lies within the spectator.

In a similar way, a work of literature or music exists in their performance and these enable people to recognise a truth about the way things are (p. 141).

Gadamer talks about how a work of art is not a process of copying. Rather in its presentation it presents a heightened truth. It is not a means to an end but an end in itself. Also, it contrasts with a mirror image because it has its own reality and it increases the being of the original, for example the being of a portrait. In this sense the picture, and indeed the whole of art, is an event of being. This understanding contrasts with the subjectivist attitude of for example Feuerbach (1804-1872) who claimed we “invent” our gods (p. 143).

A picture, e.g. a portrait, increases the reality of what is presented because it points out things that one fails to notice by simply looking. In contrast to this, a sign points away from itself. A symbol is closer to the sign in meaning than a picture is, because the thing that is being symbolised does not exist any more fully because of the symbol.

Gadamer discusses architecture. He says this creates space and attracts attention. It also redirects one’s attention away from the detail as such to the greater ‘whole of life’ context. In this sense it is an event of being and **not** (just) an experiential event of a subjective aesthetic consciousness (p. 155).

Literature is in a borderline position here. The reading of a book remains an event in which the content is similar to that of the self-presentation of a play (cf. p.160). Also there is a living unity within the world of literature. Gadamer says all written texts share in “living unity” and such unity is to be found in the human sciences as a whole. The art of understanding texts is what is described as hermeneutics (p. 164). Hermeneutics is a kind of understanding which has to be acquired (as in learning to read!) and it surpasses the understanding of aesthetic consciousness.

Gadamer's position as regards the understanding of texts differs from that of the philosopher Schleiermacher (1768-1834) who would try to reconstruct a literary work as it was originally written. Gadamer questions whether we can ever really understand the "meaning" of a text in this way (p. 165). Rather, because of the historicity of our being, there needs to be constant mediation between a text written in the past and the present time of the interpreter. He agrees with the view of Hegel (on this point) that a thoughtful mediation between a text of the past with one's own present life is on the same level of truth as is art itself (p. 165).

Relevance of Gadamer's Section Two to a critique of historical critical exegesis

Gadamer's Section Two of *Truth and Method* explains how a work of art such as a portrait 'increases' the reality of what is portrayed. It does this by pointing out realities that one had scarcely noticed beforehand. In this sense the work of art becomes the subject and it continues to be relevant. A work of art such as a tragedy can be dramatised centuries after it was written. It can still draw in people so they gain a greater understanding of the way things are. As a subject it is a whole within itself.

In a similar way a gospel text presents itself as a "whole". In this sense it presents a "paradigm". Besides the presentation of Jesus it can draw attention to realities about societies which continue on, long after the first century CE has passed. However in order for the gospels to be understood and participated in as a whole, they need to be approached and interpreted as a whole. The diachronic approach of historical critical exegesis does not draw in the auditor/ reader in such a way that they can participate in the "whole" drama of a gospel.

Part Two **(of *Truth and Method*)**

UNDERSTANDING IN THE HUMAN SCIENCES

Section Three

Understanding within a Living Tradition

Section Three begins Part Two, of *Truth and Method*. It starts by pointing out that over time there was a shift from the Enlightenment's approach to history, to that of Romanticism. Luther (1483-1546) for instance believed that the whole of Scripture was connected with a unified sense (p. 183). But in the eighteenth century the idea of a unified canon was abandoned by some Scripture scholars. Instead, Scripture was linked in with the totality of historical reality (p. 184). For Enlightenment scholars that broke with this link, there was no longer any difference between interpreting sacred or secular writings (p. 184).

An example of such a shift can be seen in the philosopher Schleiermacher (1768 – 1834). He claimed that a scholar could not rely on a dogmatic guideline in the interpretation of Scripture. Rather there should be a reliance on the scientific method of philology (study of language) (p. 346, p. 350).

Some writers such as Chladinius (1710-1759) differed from this approach and said that understanding an author, is not the same as understanding their speech. There should be a focus on the intentions of the writer. But Schleiermacher countered such a point by outlining the likelihood of misunderstanding intentions. He described hermeneutics (understanding) as “the

art of avoiding misunderstandings” (p. 191). He stressed that understanding the exact meaning of words would involve going back to the original thought of the text (p. 192). In such case, “hermeneutics” for him should not be understood in terms of the subject matter. Rather it should be an aesthetic reconstruction of language. This approach would put focus on the orientation of language and its context (between the part and the whole), rather than on the “product” of the text. Schleiermacher said dogmatic guidelines could not claim a prior validity (p.196).

In his approach, Schleiermacher put the interpreter on the same level as the author with the idea that the interpreter’s aim “is to understand a writer better than he understood himself” (p. 198). He claimed that this could be accomplished through a study of grammatical rules and literary forms that the writer had followed without realising it (p. 198).

A major problem here, (as Gadamer points out) was that Schleiermacher focussed upon expression rather than content (cf. p. 457).

While Schleiermacher had attempted to devise a method for interpreting the language of ancient writings such as Scripture, Dilthey (1833-1911) attempted to set out a method for the study of history by following Romantic hermeneutics.

Dilthey said a text could be viewed in terms of a universal history and therefore there should be a back and forth study between the whole and its parts. His approach appeared to differ from that of the Enlightenment which considered history moved towards some kind of specific end. However his approach only appeared to be different. Gadamer challenged Dilthey by asking who can one know the totality of history? In fact Dilthey had slipped into a psychological interpretation of history and in this sense his approach to history was similar to that of the Enlightenment (and Descartes) after all. He was

actually looking at only one piece of history at a time. Moreover he was making the discipline of psychology basic to his efforts to understand history. As Gadamer pointed out, psychology can only be a small part of the whole (p. 239).

Gadamer says there is a form of continuity in history that takes place over time. This idea is similar to that of Aristotle's observation that the soul increases within itself, unlike the repetitiveness of nature (p. 260). Dilthey had failed to recognise that historical experience is different from that of nature. He was looking for connections in history rather than the causes of history such as moral powers. In this sense he failed to recognise a universal subject (over time). Yet it is this universal subject that holds together a coherence between the whole and the parts. This idea of a universal subject that stretches over the whole of history conflicts with Dilthey's view. Dilthey saw history only in terms of the historical individuals within it (cf. 259).

Gadamer does not agree with Hegel's ideas about history either. He says Hegel's emphasis on 'spirit,' turns history into a speculative concept. Gadamer talks about a spiritual reality that may look similar to the ideas of Hegel, when he talks about a "structural coherence of life" (p.227). However Gadamer's understanding stresses both the significance of what happens and also the intentionality behind it. Both of these are an expression of life and they form the real ground of the human sciences (p.259)

Gadamer points out that in Dilthey's efforts to develop a "method" for the study of history, he thought his approach could "rise above" the subjective and objective approach of the natural sciences of the philosophers of the Enlightenment. He thought his approach to history would be a human (rather than a natural) science. But his approach neglects the actual nature of history. He "conceived the historical world as a text to be

deciphered” (p 242). The result of this was that ultimately, history was reduced to intellectual history (p 243).

Gadamer again points out that knowledge in the human sciences is not the same as the knowledge gained in the inductive, natural sciences. Again he insists that natural science has a quite different kind of objectivity from human science and it is acquired in a quite different way.

Heidegger and *Dasein* - “being is time”

Gadamer based his own research on the teaching of Heidegger (1889-1976). Heidegger pointed out that the concept of substance (cf. natural sciences) is inadequate in the study of historical being (cf. human sciences). In human sciences there should be a focus on the intentionality of experience and such a focus would eliminate ‘what was not meant’. Heidegger saw the world’s horizons as being made up of anonymous intentionality. For him, this anonymous intentionality formed a communal life-world that was far removed from the idea that only the self could be known.

In relation to this line of thinking and in an appendix to *Truth and Method*, Gadamer points out what he considers to be the main difference between Aristotle’s view of the historical life of mankind and that of the German philosopher Nietzsche (1844-1900). Aristotle saw that the moral and historical life of humankind was related to the order of the cosmos. Nietzsche, on the other hand, saw the cycle of the cosmos in terms of its contrast to human life. He considered that nature does not take any account of man. (p. 521).

Gadamer describes how his mentor Heidegger set out to clarify the meaning of “hermeneutics”. It is an understanding of

something which is observed to exist on the one hand. But the cause or nature of this is in question (p. 255 ff.) At a first look at Heidegger's approach, it appears to be similar to that of Husserl (1859-1938) who went behind the objectivity of science in order to understand the life-world. But Husserl had the idea of a transcendental subjectivism which led him back to the position of Descartes (1596-1650). Heidegger strongly opposed Descartes (p. 282).

Heidegger aimed to return to the beginnings of Western philosophy and the long-forgotten Greek argument about "being" (*Dasein*) (p. 257). He saw that the horizon of "being" was shown to be time (cf. p. 248). That is, what being is, has to be determined from within the horizons of time. Heidegger's thesis therefore was that **"being is time"**. This approach burst asunder the whole subjectivism of modern philosophy. In fact it also burst asunder the whole horizon of metaphysics which had tended to define being in terms of "what is present" (p. 257-9).

Heidegger also revealed the essential forgetfulness of being (p. 258). He took Husserl's idea of the intentionality of universal life and he turned this into a question of "Being". His insight heralded a fresh beginning for the theory of knowledge. It put the human sciences on an equal footing with the natural sciences (p. 259). Now, human sciences needed to be understood in terms of time and this gave them a new dimension. Indeed it showed that the natural sciences are only a sub-species of understanding within the human sciences (p. 248).

Heidegger's focus on "being" (*Dasein*) was parallel to that of Aristotle's focus on the potentiality for being (cf. p. 323 ff). His focus also has an application to the understanding of history. For, whatever the factors may have been, that either made possible or limited potentiality of being, these therefore went before such potentiality and they are part of history.

Gadamer points out “The all-embracing world horizon is constituted by a fundamentally *anonymous* intentionality” (p. 248).

The Relevance of Gadamer’s Section Three to a Critique of Historical Critical Exegesis

In Section Three of *Truth and Method* Gadamer argues that understanding a text involves more than a translation of words or even a study of their background grammar. An understanding of history involves an exploration of the intentionality that has shaped history and the factors that have thwarted its potentialities. Heidegger pointed out that this anonymous intentionality formed a communal life-world.

An understanding of history involves more than comparing one section of history with what one might think to be “the whole” of history. Rather, a study of the unfolding of history has to be understood within the framework of time and this involves a holistic-dimensional approach.

As pointed out in previous pages, the whole of Matthew’s gospel for instance is set out within the framework of time. There is a cause and effect dynamic taking place within the text that has parallels with the enactment that takes place in a play. If this dynamic is to be explored fully, a synchronic approach to interpretation is needed. A historical, critical, exegetical approach is inadequate because it only looks at one part of the text at a time. It prevents the auditor/reader from becoming a full participant in the unfolding of the drama.

Truth and Method

Section Four

Understanding in terms of its fore-structure

Traditionally, hermeneutics has been understood as ‘the art of understanding’. For Heidegger, this “art” involved a “circular” structure for understanding that stretched backwards and forwards between the past and the present. This “art” is based on pre-conceptions. But there is also a process of re-adjustment in the pre-conceptions over time. This distinguishes it from following a “prescription” (or method) for understanding. (p.279)

Heidegger saw the value of pre-judgment that is, “prejudice”. He also recognised that the negative view that Enlightenment philosophers had against prejudice as such, as also tradition (namely religion), was in itself a form of prejudice. They insisted that under all circumstances the ultimate source of authority was reason rather than tradition.

When the period of Romanticism arrived (roughly 1800 to 1850) it may have appeared that this new movement endorsed tradition as such and therefore it contrasted with the Enlightenment. However the status Romanticism gave to tradition was only based on the esteem that it had for something being old. Thus chivalry for instance was given priority over truth. Poetry was esteemed only because it was considered to have an aesthetic effect (p.285-6).

It may also be thought that Romanticism contradicted the main tenets of the Enlightenment. But this was not the case. Before the period of Romanticism, Kant (1724 – 1804) had limited his claim of rationalism to an “a priori element” in the knowledge of nature. However his successors in the Romantic period

(roughly 1800-1850), went even further than Kant in the over-idealisation of rationalism. This was an amplification of Kant's ideas rather than a contradiction of them.

Gadamer makes the point that the Enlightenment had denigrated all authority (p.291). Apparently it also assumed that all obedience is blind obedience. However authority as such can contain dimensions of truth it has a wider view that people under authority do not necessarily have. Thus, a Superior is likely to be better informed. Moreover the tradition behind the authority of a superior also contains a moral force (p.291).

The Enlightenment (and later Romanticism) stressed the need for freedom and its followers denigrated authority and tradition. But Gadamer claims freedom also exists within tradition because tradition can and does adjust. Over time some things are preserved while other things are naturally discarded. He points out that what distinguishes the human sciences from the natural sciences is that the human sciences allow themselves to be addressed by tradition (p. 294). The process of historical research and adjustment, that is, the handing down of tradition, is actually a movement of life. Because human sciences include tradition, they are therefore wider than natural sciences. Natural sciences are only a subordinate part of human sciences rather than the other way around (p. 295).

Gadamer discusses the handing down of tradition in terms of "the classical" approach taken in ancient Greece. This was about passing on the insights of a period of time rather than passing on some sort of supra-historical value. Thus the classical tradition of Greece is preserved into the present, because it says something to the present time as well as it did in the past. These insights of ancient Greece are timeless. Understanding the classics is not a subjective act but rather a participation in the event of a tradition (cf. p. 289 ff).

As regards rhetoric, Gadamer reminds us of the movement taking place between the whole of a text and its parts. Thus in ancient languages, one needs to ‘construe’ a sentence before trying to understand a single word of the sentence. Rather than attempting to enter into an author’s mind at a metaphysical level, the interpreter needs to “transpose ourselves into the perspective within which the writer has formed his views.” (p. 303).

Gadamer’s approach to understanding language contrasts with that of Schleiermacher and the Romantics. They denied that the tradition in which an author found himself was a solid base for understanding what was meant. Instead, Schleiermacher attempted to place himself entirely into the writer’s mind in a process described as “historical consciousness”. Gadamer on the other hand, claimed that it is in the tradition that is common to both the writer and the interpreter later on, that the ancient writer is to be understood. He points out that interpretation of an ancient text is inevitably affected by the later, historical situation of the interpreter. Also, because later, historical situations are themselves constantly changing, the discovery of the true meaning of the text can never be finalised (p. 309). In any case, the process of discovery of truth within a text takes place within the context of tradition.

Gadamer claims that the naiveté of so-called “historicism” (cf. “historical consciousness”) means that its followers forget their own historicity. They fail to recognise historical effects on their own presuppositions. They focus instead, on a methodical critique of history and this results in a “deformation” of knowledge (p. 312).

The horizon of the past is always in motion. So also is our own historical horizon. In order to understand the past we need to move into an horizon that is beyond our own. But we cannot afford to let go of where we ourselves are standing,

within history. In this sense therefore there is “a fusion of horizons” consisting of the merging of our own present historical situation with the situation of the past. The tension that is caused by such a “fusion” between an historical text and one’s present situation is not something to be covered up. It needs to be brought out into the open (cf. p. 313).

The Problem of Application

In the early tradition of hermeneutics (that is, understanding) the problem of “application” (that is, the relevance of past insights to present situations) had a pronounced place. Understanding included interpretations in the areas of theology and law. In fact these two things together, made up the full concept of hermeneutics (p.319). True, there was always a tension about application in both theology and law. For instance how should a law be concretised, and/or what are the saving effects and relevance of a gospel text to the present time? Working out the relevance of past texts to present situations becomes in itself, an event. Again one is reminded here of the enactment of a play.

In contrast to the early tradition of hermeneutics the emergence of “historical consciousness” in the C 18th and C 19th has involved giving priority to philological (language) hermeneutics. Thus it has been philology rather than application that has been stressed and such a stress has resulted in an emphasis on ‘method’. Historical studies with the new emphasis on philology cut ties with the other disciplines of hermeneutics. Historical studies were turned into models of methodology for research. This in turn has led to too much subjectivity and objectivity in the approaches that were being taken.

The Hermeneutic Relevance of Aristotle

In contrast to a focus on “historical consciousness”, a focus on application (as distinct from ‘methods’ of studying history) means that a tradition has to be constantly re-interpreted in order to understand its relevance to the changing times of the present. Aristotle provides an example of such on-going re-interpretation. He founded ethics as a discipline of application and he based this upon action and not metaphysics. He taught that man becomes what he is through what he does and how he behaves (p. 323). He said that in a moral situation, it is impossible to achieve the extreme exactitude of mathematics as in Plato’s “doctrine of ideas” (p. 323). Rather, for Aristotle as with Socrates, knowledge was considered to be essential because this would help the process of reinterpretation and application that is needed in order to govern one’s action.

Aristotle’s focus on application contradicted the objectivity of method which was stressed by the Enlightenment and its successors. In fact such objectivity alienates the interpreter from what is interpreted. Method turns consciousness into a technique or “*techne*” similar to that of the craftsman. By contrast, Aristotle’s understanding of “*phronesis*”, meaning practical wisdom, is different from “*techne*”. Also, in view of practical reason Aristotle saw that law as such is distinct from what is naturally right. He said there is always a tension between law and concrete action because the “nature of the thing” is constantly asserting itself (p. 329, 424).

In making a distinction between technical and moral knowledge, Aristotle pointed out that moral knowledge is an end in itself. Technical knowledge on the other hand, has a particular end (cf. the “*techne*” of the craftsman). With Aristotle’s approach, one needs to be able to apply a text of for example, Scripture, to one’s own situation if it is to be really

understood. This process of application should not be disregarded or downgraded.

At the present time, to give credit to those who expound on the Historical Critical Exegesis method of interpreting Scripture, it appears that they do generally mention the need for an application of a Scriptural text to one's own present situation. However this application does not necessarily hold a key place in the method of interpretation they present. For instance in one "Guide to Exegesis" a step of "Application" is included. However this is the last of twelve steps in an exegesis and it looks somewhat like a post script ⁸⁹ At the same time, selecting out passages that appear relevant to the present time is not necessarily an answer to an adequate approach to interpretation either. R Alter for instance in his book *The Art of Biblical Narrative* , points out that selections of small sections of text that appear relevant for a sermon, can result in the neglect of other sections of text and also the context of the whole..⁹⁰

The Significance of Legal Hermeneutics

Gadamer puts a focus on legal hermeneutics because this can re-assert the true function of hermeneutics. In legal hermeneutics the process of application is stressed. And, as mentioned above, the traditional/classical meaning of hermeneutics requires the application of a text in order to understand it.

Legal hermeneutics endorses the need for application. The jurist studies a law which was set up in a prior situation. But

⁸⁹ B.Rod Doyle, "Guide to Exegesis of a Text from a Pauline Letter" ed. Rosemary Canavan (Melbourne: Catholic Theological College, c. 2016).

⁹⁰ R.Alter, *The Art of Biblical Narrative*, 35, 154.

now they have to see how that law of the past applies to a current, changed situation. That is, they have to apply the law. They have to recognise the ‘dogmatic’ content of the law. Legal hermeneutics is distinct from ‘historical consciousness’ (p.319) (as in putting oneself in the position of the original reader and ignoring one’s own historicity).

It is distinct from modern hermeneutics as such because this has tended to disregard dogma for a focus instead on philology (study of the meaning of words).

Legal hermeneutics requires the jurist to mediate between the past text and the present situation. He or she cannot objectify the text or ignore their own situation. Rather they have to see “the continuity of the past with the present” (p. 336). Gadamer says a historian can follow this same discipline of linking the past with the present by putting a focus on the significance of what happened in the past. In doing this, in the same way as a preacher or jurist, they cannot ‘make free with the text’.

Gadamer says that legal hermeneutics and other types of hermeneutics carried out in the same way, conflict with the approach of modern science, that is, “the natural sciences”. What makes modern scholarship “scientific”, is precisely the fact that it objectifies tradition. It methodically eliminates the influence of the present interpreter and his own time (p. 342). As in Schleiermacher’s approach, the interpreter skips the task of mediating between the past and the present (p. 342). This is different from the understanding of, for instance, a military order which needs to be interpreted according to the current situation. It involves linking the past (when the order was issued) with the present.

As regards philology as such, Gadamer does see a role for this. But philology only ‘works’ if it is tied in with an historical search for significance. Again Gadamer refers back to legal

proceedings. In a courtroom, what is significant to a trial is brought out into the open. So also, the same procedure should be followed with philology and history. What is significant in language and in events should be highlighted. Gadamer calls this “effected consciousness” and contrasts it with “historical consciousness” (p. 312).

Gadamer agrees with Hegel in his claim that the basis for hermeneutics should be the “absolute mediation of history and truth” (p.350). But he also points out that Hegel’s fusion of the whole of tradition with the present has parallels with the position of the idealism of the Enlightenment. Hegel for instance made claims about the complete limitlessness of our historical horizon. As with Schleiermacher therefore, individuality for Hegel was pantheistically embraced within the absolute. Gadamer disagrees with this.

Hegel had disagreed with Kant’s position that we cannot know ‘the thing in itself’ behind appearances because in such case, reason has set a boundary. It must have been to the other side of such a “boundary” in order to set the boundary. Hegel claimed instead, that “the other”, can be known. But this can only happen when it is recognised (and reconciled) with the self. However, as Gadamer points out, a chief problem about such a position is that, as with the sophists of Plato’s time, it tells us nothing! (p. 353-4).

In ‘classical’ times, when Plato was dealing with the sophists he realised that argument alone would not refute them. He therefore relied on myth to do this. Gadamer says that in coming to grips with Hegel (1770-1831) a similar approach is needed. But Hegel rejected myth as such and relied only on reason. In doing this he left no room for the experience of the other – such as “the Thou” (p. 355).

Gadamer turns his attention to experience and the light that this throws on Hegel’s over-emphasis on the mind.

The Importance of Experience in Understanding

Gadamer admits that experience plays an important role in the natural sciences and in the logic of induction. However he also points out that an over-emphasis on experience can actually “truncate” its original meaning. Why so? Natural sciences take note of experience. But its methods take no account of the inner historicity of experience (p.355).

The aim of science is to objectify experience in such a way that scientific experiment can be conducted methodically. This means that the “experience” of an experiment can be repeated by anyone. Gadamer points out that in the human sciences, a similar approach is taken when the historico-critical method is used (in the interpretation of Scripture) (p.355). (Note: This mention of the historico-critical method in the interpretation of Scripture is one of the few occasions when Gadamer specifically names and criticises this method of interpretation.) Gadamer points out that such a practice has the same problems that arise when natural science methods are applied in general to a human science. They omit the inner historicity of experience.

He goes on to say that on the one hand natural science methods allow the whole process of interpretation to be checked. In fact the validity of the experience in such case depends on its being repeatable. But in reality, not all of the experience can be checked.

Mention is made of the philosopher Bacon (1561 – 1626) who warned against applying induction about experience when there are no contradictory (e.g. inner) experiences being recorded. Rather he said a step by step approach should be taken (p. 356).

Gadamer returns to his reliance on the position of Aristotle. “Experience is not science itself but it is a necessary condition of it” (p. 359). He says Aristotle provides a much wider understanding of experience than what modern science (and the Enlightenment) would allow. Aristotle endorses the idea that experience is a process and it is in fact, dialectical.

Gadamer considers that the approach of Hegel is “dialectical”. However “The dialectic of experience has its proper fulfilment, not in definitive knowledge but in the openness to experience that is made possible by experience itself” (p. 364). In this context Gadamer discusses the Greek tragedy of Aeschylus in which, through suffering, one comes to realise the great barrier that “separates man from the divine.” Such an experience is not a matter of reaching a higher form of knowledge, but rather of reaching a barrier between oneself and the divine. Gadamer says that “genuine experience is experience of one’s own historicity.” (p. 365). In his own terminology, this is described as “historically effected consciousness”. He points out the importance of tradition as it is a genuine partner in dialogue. In fact it is by thinking within one’s own historicity (and tradition) that knowledge is possible.

As mentioned above this position contrasts with “historical consciousness”. In such case a person detaches themselves from their own historical reality and tradition (or they try to do this).

Plato’s dialectic and the Importance of Question

Gadamer says the readiness or openness of “historically effected consciousness” as he calls it, enables someone to ask the right questions. They know that they do not know and they therefore have a sense of direction in the questions they ask. This approach is in accord with Socrates who said that

knowledge is dialectical. The Socratic-Platonic dialectic was based on the art of questioning. Such an art was geared towards discovering the real strength in what was answered and was also based on forming concepts by working out the common meaning. Just as this method was followed with the students of Socrates, so also one can enter into a similar dialogue with a text. This, according to Gadamer, is the correct approach of hermeneutics (p. 376).

Gadamer considers the position of the philosopher R. G. Collingwood (1889-1943) cf. “We can understand a text only when we have understood the question to which it is an answer.” (p. 378). Gadamer says there is need to admit that the subjective thoughts of an individual (for example as proposed by Hegel) cannot understand the “infinite web of motivations” that have existed within history. Moreover “the sense of a text can reach far beyond what its author originally intended.” (p. 380). Thus a text is, in a sense, an event and what is significant about either history or the text, comes to light later on. Moreover when one stands in the same “living’ tradition, one is in a better position, to ask questions about significance as such.

With such an approach of questioning we may not only recover concepts of the historical past, but also develop an understanding that will include the concepts of our own time. Gadamer calls this a ‘fusion of horizons.’ (p. 382)

The Relevance of Gadamer’s Section Four to a Critique of Historico-Critical Exegesis

Historico-critical exegesis aligns itself with the “methods” of the natural sciences (p. 355). But these methods do not encompass the inner historicity of experience. Diachronic methods do not require an interpreter to “fuse” the horizon of

their present with that of the horizon of the past. They do not require the interpreter to become involved in the “living tradition” of the original writer or ask the questions to which the whole text is an answer.

Part Three

(of *Truth and Method*)

HERMENEUTICS BEING GUIDED BY LANGUAGE

Section Five

Language and Hermeneutics (i.e. understanding)

Gadamer begins Part Three and Section five of *Truth and Method* by saying we can become so involved in a conversation that this becomes an event within itself. Such an “event” is not a matter of “getting inside” another person. But rather there is a process of interpretation and mediation going on between the participants in the conversation. Ultimately “understanding and interpretation are the same thing” within the conversation (p. 406). Gadamer points out “the essence of tradition is to exist in the medium of language.” (p. 407). Thus writing and a text become “a unique co-existence of past and present” (p. 408).

“Historical consciousness” (which he opposes) excludes what makes understanding possible because in such case, one ignores one’s own historical situation. A person interpreting a text should be “bringing himself and his own concepts into the interpretation.” Moreover it needs to be noted again that

concepts themselves “are constantly in the process of being formed” (and reformed) (p. 421). Later on, in an appendix to *Truth and Method* Gadamer follows up this line of thinking by pointing out that because of this process, tradition always has something more to yield (p. 523).

Language and the Logos

In a discussion of the development of the concept of language in Western thought, Gadamer points out that in earliest times there was a unity between the word and a thing in itself. People considered that the name was part of the thing. However this position shifted with the Greek Enlightenment. Plato said that instead of this, linguistic usage should be seen as “only the source for the meanings of words.” (P. 424). He said there was therefore minimal connection between the word and the thing. Plato gave the example of numbers. The words for these have their meaning based on convention alone and the name of a number is not directly connected to the number itself. On the other hand Plato did consider that it was reasonable to think there was a similarity principle between a word and a thing. But he thought this needs to be applied in a very liberal way (p. 427). Basically therefore, Plato did not see the “word” as being directly related to an original thing, nor did he see it as being a copy of the thing.

On these same lines, Socrates the teacher of Plato, had criticised the sophists and the close link they made between the word and the thing. Rather, Socrates stressed the importance of the interplay of words in discourse and the intention of a unitary meaning in the words that were being used. He also pointed out the ability of words to present an untruth rather than just the truth alone. As with words used for the numbers in a sequence, the stress made by Socrates and later on by Plato in his *Cratylus*, was on the intelligibility of words. They

claimed that it is the “logos”, rather than the word as such, which is the ‘bearer’ of truth.

According to Gadamer the position taken by Plato in his *Cratylus* with regard to words was to “influence all further thinking about language” (p. 430). He pointed out that Plato stressed the word was “a sign” rather than “a copy” of a thing (p. 431). However from the *Cratylus* on, the “word” was reduced to a wholly secondary function in relation to the thing. It was (and is) understood to be a mere “instrument of communication.”

Gadamer goes on to point out how this approach was seized upon by the C 18th to C 20th Enlightenment. Those in the Enlightenment considered that variations that occurred between languages as they developed, were “mere flaws in their utility.” In this way their approach “objectified” language.

Gadamer admits that science, as in the disciplines of natural sciences, requires technical terms that have a set meaning within language. However there is a danger here that words that originally had a range of meanings are thereby limited to the one meaning only. This sort of practice of confining the meaning of words, contradicts the living meaning of words when these are spoken in a living language.

Gadamer holds the view that words are not just signs but are also like a copy or image of a thing as well. In this way he opposes the Greek emphasis on “ideality” and he opposes the Greek opposition to the idea, that language could in itself have a life of its own. He said for the Greeks, “The notion that language should have a being of its own, could only be regarded as a confusion.” (p. 435).

Language and “the Word”

At this point in *Truth and Method* Gadamer goes on to consider the Christian idea of “the Word”. He sees this Christian idea as being in contrast to the understanding of “word” in Plato and Greek thinking in general. He says in particular, an understanding of “the Word” that contrasts with that of the Greek *logos*, is the Christian idea of incarnation. This is expressed theologically in the doctrine of the Trinity. For the Christians, the idea that “the Word” became flesh” frees the ‘logos’ from its spirituality. Also in such case, “the word” as such becomes an event. **“The Word” is that which emerges and externalises itself in utterance.** This understanding of “the Word” also contrasts with a depreciation of sensible experience that is entirely Platonic (p. 438).

The inner “Word” has its being in its revealing. Such a connection between thought and speech undergirds the Christian, theological interpretation of the Trinity. In such case “the Word” can no longer simply mean the Greek *logos* (p. 439 and cf. Acts 15:30 – 20:31).

Note that these comments in *Truth and Method* have relevance to a comparison between Gadamer’s understanding of “the Word” and Section D of a semiotic analysis of Luke’s *Acts* as provided in the pages above. In the analysis Luke’s Section D is devoted to describing “the Word” at length. It also presents “the Word” as a subject ⁹¹.

Gadamer quotes St Thomas Aquinas in pointing out that there is a difference between the inner process of the Trinity and the processes of the mind. In the human mind “the word” is like a reflecting mirror. But it can only reflect the one thing because the human mind is essentially incomplete. Human thought

⁹¹ Nailon, *Five Pivotal Texts*, 240-247.

may be directed towards a thing but it cannot contain the whole of it (p. 443). This is not the case with the Trinity.

The Christian idea of “the Word” expressed as an event, links in with the Christian understanding of proclamation of the gospel. Proclamation of the gospel is an event which is ever new because it is, in a sense, alive.

Language and concept formation

Gadamer says:

When the Greek idea of logic is penetrated by Christian theology, something new is born; (that is) the medium of language, in which the mediation of the incarnation event achieves its full truth. **Christology prepares the way for a new philosophy of man, which mediates in a new way between the mind of man in its finitude and the divine infinity.** (p. 445-6).

He goes on:

Individual words acquire their meaning and relative unambiguity only in the unity of discourse, so the true knowledge of being can be achieved only in the whole of the relational structure of the ideas (p. 447).

In the understanding of Aristotle, in the cases of music, mathematics and physics, where there is a field of rational objectivities already marked out, terms that are being used can no longer be really called words. This is because they do not have the ‘word freedom’ that Aristotle recognised. In this

sense Aristotle's idea fits in more with the Christian Trinitarian idea of "the Word" unfolding.⁹²

Word and speech are constantly being taken over by the thinking mind and often accidental attributes affect the meaning of a word. For instance there are 200 different words for camel (p. 452). There is an essential inexactness in human language which can be overcome only if the mind rises to the infinite, that is, to the one single Word of God that is reflected in everything.

Language as the horizon of understanding how things are

Gadamer recognises the importance of Humboldt (1769-1859) (despite his base in the Enlightenment). Humboldt considered a language-view to be a worldview. Gadamer enlarges on this, recalling how in Genesis, God gave Adam the authority to name creatures. There is a freedom being expressed here because in this sense speech brings the world into language (p. 461). The verbal world embraces every thing and in this way our insight into the reality of the thing can be enlarged and opened. This approach contrasts with the idea that language is artificial because in such case language can **only** be a tool of communication (p. 463). In an appendix to Section Five of *Truth and Method* Gadamer develops these ideas further and he goes on to criticise the subjectivist flavour of the modern concept of "expression." Here, he says, the stress is on making an impression rather than being the actual expression of an experience (as e.g. in music) (p. 524).

⁹² Note: The Christian understanding of the "Word" would be influenced by the Jewish understanding of the Word cf. "And God said "Let there be light" etc. Gen 1:3.

In Gadamer's understanding, the verbal world can be open to every possible insight and indeed each world view can be extended into every other (p. 463). There is an historical conditioning taking place here. He contrasts the 'artificial' wording and methods of the natural sciences with the open-endedness of the verbal world as reflected in the human sciences. The 'artificial' wording used in natural science is only a part of, and indeed a minor part of the whole, verbal world.

Language as medium and its speculative structure

Gadamer points out that in Hegel (and in German idealism) there is a repetition of ancient Greek opinion about thought and being. The Greeks believed that being as such was fulfilled in thought (alone). On the other hand, Plato was fascinated by the idea that a single word could come from a whole fabric of related words. This fascination is actually connected to the Augustinian understanding of the Trinity and the infinity of "the Word".

As a follow through on this point, Gadamer reminds us that for human beings language is qualified by the finitude of human experience. In this sense it is a medium. But at the same time, "Every language is constantly being formed and developed the more it expresses its experience of the world." (p. 473).

In the context of the finitude (limitation) of human experience, acts of understanding and interpretation are an "event". Also, there is the activity of the thing in itself that needs to be taken into consideration. In the example of a text, the meaning of the text asserts itself and therefore this becomes an event. Despite similarities here with Hegel's view, there is also a contrast here. Hegel fails to recognise that finitude is the basis of

experience. Also, he stresses subjectivity and he stays within the realms of thought.

Gadamer's view by contrast, allows for the influence of historical experience and he says that tradition has a key role in the development of understanding. Moreover he points out that every appropriation of tradition is historically different. This is because each time part of a tradition is made one's own, it is an experience of that part of the tradition (p. 489).

The Universal Aspect of Hermeneutics (i.e. understanding)

Gadamer's fifth and final section in *Truth and Method* deals with the "being in itself" of language. In contrast to the Enlightenment, he insists language is more than a tool to be manipulated and objectified.

Despite comparisons between the Greeks and the Enlightenment, the Greeks did not see language in the same way. Thus on the one hand, in comparison with the Enlightenment the Greeks prioritised thought. But they also saw language as "something that the thing itself does and which thought "suffers". For the Greeks, language was a speculative movement that, in a sense, takes hold of the speaker (p. 490). Plato for instance saw beauty in terms of the self-presentation of beauty. Its proportion and symmetry enabled the viewer to understand the beauty that exists in the sphere of the intellect and beyond that again, in the idea of the Good. Such a view of Plato contrasts with the emphasis that occurred in the C18th and C19th when the beauty of art was only seen as a reflection of the (human) mind. Gadamer recalls that such a trend, that moved aesthetics towards such subjectivism, began with Kant. Gadamer goes on to explain

that like “the beautiful”, language presents itself in a way that is similar to the way that art presents itself and this is also similar to his description of play. Art and play as such, become the subject and they draw people into them. The portrait also demonstrates this. It enhances the reality of the one portrayed because it enables the viewer to see what would otherwise go unnoticed. As with art, so it also is with poetry. Indeed all language enhances the reality of what is spoken about. But one needs to realise that it is the language in itself, as in the case of art, that is presenting itself.

Through dialogue and through question and inquiry, one is able to discover truth in the language of a text . This is different from thinking that by using a method that ‘objectifies’ language, one is thereby able to discover the truth.

Relevance of Section Five to a Critique of the Historico-critical method of Exegesis

Section Five explains how language, like art and play, presents itself as a subject. Language draws people in and enables them to see reality more fully. Some ‘words’ may have a set meaning but in such case they are not ‘real’ words. In general the meaning of words are in a constant state of flux. Efforts to translate words inevitably fall short. Language can only be understood by entering into its living tradition and trying to understand what questions an ancient text may be answering. The major challenge in interpretation is to search out the questions to which the text is an answer. This requires a synchronic rather than a diachronic approach.

CHAPTER THREE

TOWARDS A SOLUTION WITH JOHN'S GOSPEL

A INTRODUCTION

Inadequacy of 'the solution' thus far

If we go back to the overall line of thinking in this present project of *Is Christian Morality Unique? Parts One and Two*, a solution to the question of *Is Christian Morality Unique?* is still not complete.

Part One of the project explores the morality of Christianity as set out in the New Testament. It concludes there is an emphasis on the commandments of "Thou shalt not kill. Thou shalt not commit adultery. Thou shalt not steal", (cf. "money, power and sex"). Part One also demonstrates how within the texts of the Pauline letters there is a "raising of the bar" for these three commandments. This is clarified at the Jerusalem Council (cf. *Acts* 15). It involves an idealisation as it were, of the commandments. Paul's presentation of the commandments is picked up reinforced in the synoptic gospels. Thus the commandment about "killing" discourages cruelty as such. The commandment about adultery discourages uncommitted sex and the betrayal of family relationships. The commandment about stealing discourages the range of unfair business practices. In fact the gospels go further than this. The commandment about "do not kill" becomes a challenge to empower all others. The commandment about "do not commit adultery" becomes a challenge to reinforce the basic social

supports of all others. The commandment about ‘do not steal’ becomes a challenge to provide for the material well-being of all others.

There is a “raising of the bar” of commandment observance rather than reinforcing that observance with myriad rules. This interpretation of the commandments is at the base of modern industrialisation.

At the end of Part One of *Is Christian Morality Unique?* there was a brief examination of other world religions and their own emphasis on morality relating to “money, power and sex.” This led to the suggestion that perhaps Christian morality may not be so unique after all.

In response to this, Part Two of *Is Christian Morality Unique?* has taken up another angle on the uniqueness of Christianity and its morality. It has shown that at the base of Christianity there is a dialectical tension between two differing world views with their own values and social structures. Christian morality is worked out against a background of dialectical tension between the two and this is what defines its morality as unique.

The use of semiotic analysis with a sociological approach that has been used in this project may have followed the encouragement towards this given by the Catholic Pontifical Biblical Commission. However the analysis has been classed by at least one Professor of New Testament Studies as not being New Testament Studies at all. Rather he said it is Sociology of Religion. This view, apparently shared by others, has detracted from the credibility of showing that Christianity is based on a hybrid structure. Putting this another way. For every twenty plus New Testament academics in Melbourne Australia there might be one academic if that, who deals with Sociology of Religion. Thus when such an approach to the gospels is categorised as Sociology of Religion, it is then sidelined and “out of sight, out of mind”.

In response to the “side-lining”, the lengthy précis of Gadamer’s *Truth and Method* above raises a question instead about the “credibility” of the Historical Critical Exegesis method that dominates in New Testament Study circles. The précis also demonstrates that the so-called “Sociology of Religion” analysis provided above fits with the wider disciplines of human sciences more than historical critical exegesis.

However a question still arises. If Christianity is based on two differing and often conflicting world views then what can hold these two positions together? How can it stay united in the one, socially organic community?

How can a Divided Christianity Stay United?

An answer to this question can be explored by going back to Mark’s Chapter Ten. Jesus challenges a man searching for a better life and says to him. “Go sell what and give to the poor. You will have treasure in heaven. And coming follow me.” (Mark 10:21). Here Mark introduces a realisation that essentially, Christianity is about the following of Jesus Christ. This following applies whether one is rooted in the one world view cf. law and time or the other world view cf. Order and place. Jesus Christ stands midway between the two world views. He draws people into an identification with him.

It is shown in the analyses above, that this identity of Jesus is developed through the gospels in passages that relate to “the child”. One could suggest that this is the “adult child”. Only someone with the flexibility of a child can move between the world views of Judaism and Hellenism, cf. “Unless you become as little children you shall not enter the kingdom of God.” (Mark 9:30). In terms of the analyses of the synoptic

gospels as shown above, such “child” passages include Mark’s Section C and Section A in Matthew and Section A in Luke.

It is in the fourth gospel, the gospel of John, that a demonstration of the “midway” position of Jesus reaches a culmination. John shows that if Christianity is to “work” into the future the members of the two differing types of society need to identify with the child-like presence of Jesus. Jesus is not just an historical figure of the past. He continues to live on.

Jesus Christ

The Living Authority and the Living Word

A semiotic analysis of the gospel of John shows how Jesus portrays both the Living Authority of God (cf. Judaism) and the Living Word of God (cf. Hellenism). A key, underlying argument in John is to exhort the followers of Jesus to identify with him. It is only in this way that the hybrid community of Christianity can survive.

A semiotic analysis of the gospel actually ties in with central themes in Gadamer’s *Truth and Method* as shown above. How so? Gadamer demonstrates that there is a living tradition within the passage of time that provides a base for humankind’s understanding of morality. There is an interconnection between the tradition and the anonymous good will of people acting upon history. Implicitly this tradition links in with the will of God being enacted in a corporate way within history and over time. An analysis of a Section B of John’s gospel appears to elaborate on this same idea. It presents Jesus as the living expression of God’s Authority.

Gadamer also demonstrates how all language is interconnected and is in a process of change. It acts as a “subject” helping people to notice the reality of what is around them. In this sense it is “alive”. To extrapolate on this point. Insofar as language expresses the “truth” about reality, then this ties in with an apparent Section C in the gospel of John. This gospel Section appears to present Jesus as an expression of God’s Living Word.

Some Comments on

the “Grammar” of a Semiotic Analysis of John

Before taking a closer look at John’s gospel and in view of the lack of credibility in a semiotic, analytical approach to it, some further comments need to be made (cf. “I can’t make head or tail of this!”). The Pontifical Commission says that according to this approach. “Each text follows a “grammar,” that is to say, a certain number of rules or structures.”⁹³ Parallels between the “grammar” found in John’s gospel and the synoptic gospels include the following:

Apart from “child” sections,

- Paragraphs are organised according to a key word which is a paragraph “hook”.
- When the paragraphs are paired into a pattern of either a concentric circle or parallel pairs, each pair of “hooks” are matched.

⁹³ Pontifical Commission, “The Interpretation ...”, 504.

- There is only the one “hook” per paragraph. (Mark makes an exception here when he has an (a) and (b) in one pair to show a link between individual and corporate guilt).
- The gospels are divided up into four or six sections.
- John’s B and C Sections are organised so the sequence of paragraph “hooks”, as with Luke’s Section B, are followed by a repeat of the same sequence (that is, . 1,2,3,4,5 followed by 1,2,3,4,5).
- As with Luke and Mark’s gospel, when the texts of the paragraph pairs are compared, further parallels can be found and these reinforce the key point common to the pair.
- When all the key points of a Section are added together, they provide an overall heading for the Section.
- At the logico-semantic level of the texts, each Section develops into the next one.
- There is a “tie-in” of themes within all four gospels and Acts. For instance John’s Section C about the “Living Word” continues on from a lengthy description of “the Word” that is provided by Luke in his Section D in *Acts*. Here Luke presents “the word” as subject.

- Another instance of a “tie-in” relates to the “hooks” for paragraphs in Mark’s Section D. These are based on the range of ways in which people respond to Jesus. This theme of “response to Jesus” establishes the theme developed later on by John of the underlying need for the Christian to follow Jesus.
- In the on-going theme about the need to follow Jesus he is presented as “the child”.
- The “child” sections have a more informal arrangement of paragraphs.

A note about John’s Sections B and C. At the start of his Sections B and C, John emphasises that a following of Jesus means a new beginning. In the history of the Jews, a new beginning was marked out with the crossing of the Red Sea. Recall that God held back the waters of the sea to allow the Israelites to escape from the Egyptian army (Exod 14:21-22). In the opening paragraph pairs of John’s Sections B and C there is a crossing of water.



B THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

Pass on the Power of One

Section A

INTRO TO THE AUTHORISED, LIVING WORD

John 1:1-1:18

Section B

HEED CHARACTERISTICS OF LIVE AUTHORITY

John 1:19 - 5:47

Paragraph hooks re Locations

Role of Living Authority	Place <i>1st Para.</i>	Place <i>2nd Para</i>	Power & Event
1.Represents God	Bethany beyond Jordan <i>1:19-34</i>	Judea at Jordan <i>3:22-36</i>	Baptising
2. . Invites	Into Galilee <i>1:35-51</i>	Into Galilee <i>4:1-42</i>	Come / Give me
3. .Uses power	Cana/Galilee <i>2:1-10</i>	Cana/Galilee <i>4:43-50</i>	1st & 2nd signs,
4. Relies on Household	Capernaum/Galilee <i>2:11-12</i>	Capernaum/Galilee <i>4:51-54</i>	c/f power exercised
5. . Works for Father	Jerusalem/Temple <i>2:13-25</i>	Jerusalem/Temple <i>5:1-24</i>	re 'house' /Sabbath

6. . Gives witness	Night <i>3:1-21</i>	An hour <i>5:25-47</i>	witness re Moses
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In order to verify whether or not this Section C credibly comes under the heading of “Heed Characteristics of Live Authority,” with matching paragraphs there is the following demonstration of parallels between the fourth, fifth and sixth paragraph pairs.

	1 st paragraph	2 nd paragraph	Power & Event
4. . Relies on Household	Capernaum/ Galilee <i>2:11-12</i>	Capernaum/ Galilee <i>4:51-54</i>	power exercised
	‘Beginning of signs’ Disciples believed Jesus’ household	‘Second sign’ A father believed Man’s household	
5 . Works for Father	Jerusalem/Temple <i>2:13-25</i>	Jerusalem/Temple <i>5:1-24</i>	“House” & Sabbath
	Expels temple sellers Authority questioned will raise within three days Disciples, many believed	Cures lame man The cure criticised Father raises dead Person who believes	

6. . Gives witness	Night (Nicodemus) <i>3:1-21</i>	An hour <i>5:25-47</i>	witness re Moses
	Born of water & spirit	They come forth into resurrection of life	
	We give witness	Father gives witness	
	Moses lifted up	Moses accuses	

(The last point about ‘night’ and ‘hour’ appears to carry some exception to the rule re place hooks).

The parallel points between the paragraphs appear to endorse the idea that they give an outline of the characteristics of Living Authority. At the same time beneath the text John appears to be dealing with a more local issue. It appears that at the turn of the first century, the church was still struggling to maintain unity between Greek and Jewish converts. In his gospel John wants to put the focus on a need to follow Jesus. His Section B is dealing with Jesus as exercising the authority of God. At the same time beneath the Section, John also appears to address the group that has problems with authority as such, that is the Gentile converts. These people may have been citizens of the Roman Empire with its imposition of power over the known world. But in areas of moral authority relating to cruelty, promiscuity and injustice, the Empire’s corporate morality fell well short. It had institutionalised cruelty e.g. in the amphitheatres, its system of slavery over-rode family relationships, it imposed heavy taxes on the peoples it conquered.

Suggestions that the Gentile followers and 'outsiders' are being addressed on the subject of a Living Authority are as follows:

1. Disciples are coming **into Judea** (from outside). People are baptized (rather than circumcised)
2. Jesus goes "**into Galilee**" (Jn 1:29-51), a more Gentile setting. "Rabbi, where do you live?" echoes newcomers. The Samaritan woman is definitely an outsider. There is the statement "I sent you to reap where you have not labored. Others have labored and ye into the labour of them having entered." (Jn 7:17). This is a reminder that the ground work in demonstrating moral standards had already been done by Diaspora Jews.
3. In Cana/Galilee the miracle of water made into wine, is a reminder of Gentile people converted. In the parallel Cana/Galilee paragraph, the arrival of a courtier suggests a Gentile household.
4. In the first instance in the fourth paragraph pair Jesus is with his disciples and members of his own family. But he does not stay long suggesting he is on the outer. The second scene tells of slaves meeting the courtier who wanted his son cured. Jews were not supposed to own slaves.
5. Jesus throws out the Temple traders and is now unwelcome there. Jesus performs a miracle and is considered to be breaking a law about work on the Sabbath day. He is now on the outer of Judaism.

6. Nicodemus is told he needs to be born again of water. The second paragraph of the pair is a reminder that the authority of Jesus exceeds that of Moses.

From a reading of 1 Corinthians, one could assume that people from a Gentile background would be somewhat "light" on obedience with regard to moral standards. Paul complained about Corinthian lack of respect for community leadership (1 Cor 9). Also, at the close of each paragraph pair in Section B, people are warned about the need to have faith and to respect authority cf:

1. "the one believing in the Son has life eternal. But the one disobeying the Son." (3:36)
2. "It is no longer because of you talking we believe. We have heard for ourselves.." (4:42)
3. "The man believed the word Jesus said to him." (4:54)
4. "He and his whole household believed" (4:53).
5. "the one hearing my word ... has passed out over death into life" (5:24).
6. "If you did not believe Moses how would you believe me?" (5:47).

For Gentile Christians, belief requires them to move beyond the rationalism of Greek philosophy. They need to believe that Jesus is both alive and authorised to lead

them. They need to trust Him. Thus while Section B portrays Jesus as the Living Authority of God, it also addresses Gentile converts in particular, about the need to follow Jesus.

On the other hand in Section C, it appears John is addressing Jewish Christians in particular. These people identified themselves as Jews first of all. John's criticism of these people is much harsher. A major theme developed in this Section is that the "Living Word" outweighs all the ritualistic observance of Mosaic rules and regulations. Section C suggests that historically, whatever the problems that Jewish Christians were having in accepting fellow Gentiles, they were also having problems accepting the full reality of Jesus Christ himself?

John's Section C

HEED CHARACTERISTICS OF THE LIVING WORD

John 6:1 - 13:1

Paragraph hooks are Locations

	Characteristic	Location	Location	Event
1.	Appeals to Crowd	across sea 6:1-14	across Jordan <i>10:40-42</i>	5,000 fed many believed
2.	Is sought after	mountain alone 6:15	remained in place <i>11:1-6</i>	to make king to get help
3.	Achieves goals	sea journey 6:16-21	journey to <i>11:7-37</i>	they arrive/ brother to rise

4.	Brings life	unbelief/ synagogue 6:22-71	Tomb <i>11:38-52</i>	words of life Lazarus new life
5.	Is doubted and outlawed	not Judea 7:1-13	not openly <i>11:53-57</i>	not believe/ to arrest
6.	Is aware of death threats	Temple (c/f home) 7:14-53	Bethany (c/f home) <i>12:1-11</i>	seek to kill/ day of burial
7.	as public witness	Into Jerusalem 8:1-19	Into Jerusalem <i>12:12-19</i>	True to witness/ Hosanna
8.	Is conscious of timing	Temple 8:20-58	In Temple <i>12:20-36</i>	Hour not come/ has come
9.	Light of the world	Jesus hidden 8:59 - 9:41	Jesus hidden <i>12:36-43</i>	blind man/ blinded of them
10	Is commanded by Father	I am the door 10:1-21	I..a light have come <i>12:44-50</i>	division/judgi ng
11	Speaks like a Shepherd	Porch Solomon 10:22 – 39		

Again, in order to verify whether or not Section C can come under the heading of “Heed Characteristics of the Living Word,” a closer look is being taken at the fourth, fifth and sixth paragraph pairs.

	1 st paragraph	2 nd paragraph	Event
4. Brings life	unbelief/ synagogue 6:22-71	Tomb 11:38-52	words of life Lazarus new life
Crowd belief “sent one” “What sign?” “I shall raise up” Murmurs and desertion One is to betray		Crowd belief “sent one” “Lazarus come out” Dead one came out Some told Pharisees One is to die	
5. Is doubted and outlawed	not Judea 7:1-13	not openly 11:53-57	not believe/ to arrest
Jews seek to kill Feast of Tabernacles Brothers not believe Brothers went up “Where is he?” Murmuring about him No one spoke openly		That they might kill Feast of Passover ... Many went up They sought Jesus Said to one another Order to inform on him	
6. Is aware of .death threats	Temple (c/f home) 7:14-53	Bethany (c/f home) 12:1-11	seek to kill/ day of burial
Middle of feast Marvellous teaching “judge justly” Seeking to kill him Attendants don’t arrest Nicodemus disparaged		Before 6 day feast Lazarus at supper Mary anoints feet Judas about to betray Mary defended Plot to kill Lazarus	

(Note again that parallel points follow the same sequence)
 Section C has thirteen paragraph pairs. Implied references to Jewish Christians are as follows:

	First Paragraph in Pair Implied reference to Jews	Second Paragraph in Pair Implied reference to Jews
1.	People see Jesus as a prophet (a Jewish expectation)	They were familiar with John the Baptist
2.	People wanted a king (a Jewish aspiration)	Mention of the family of Lazarus with long-term connections
3.	Fear re taking Jesus on board (conflict with their Jewish heritage?)	(Jewish) people associated with the family of Lazarus
4.	“The Jews murmured about him.”	Betrayal of Jesus to Pharisees
5.	Brothers of Jesus do not believe him	People seeking purification (cf. Jews)
6.	“Is he about to teach the Greeks?”-distinct from Jews	A great crowd of Jews
7.	Reference to Pharisees (Jews)	Reference to Pharisees (Jews)
8.	“having believed him Jews”	“unless the grain of wheat falling into the ground dies” (need to give up customs)
9.	“they took up stones” (cf. “blasphemy”)	“We heard out of the (Jewish) law”
10.	“We of Moses are disciples”	“Even of the (Jewish) rulers many believed”
11.	"Until when the life of us holdest thou?" (reflects uncertainty)	(It appears that Jesus has gone because of non-acceptance by the Jews)

On reading the text it is hard to see how exchanges as bitter as those recorded in the gospel text would be conducted with the ordinary Jews within Judaism. One should be able to assume that in the time of John and even at the time of Jesus, many mainstream Jews may have preferred to get on with their lives and forget about the Christian message. Why therefore would these accusations be hurled at them. Rather the arguments with “the Jews” are with those in John’s community who identify as Jews first of all. It appears that arguments with them are so bitter because this has bearing on the very survival of the emerging Church.

Thus on the major level of the text John the writer is presenting Jesus as the Living Word. At the secondary level of the text he is confronting community members with a Jewish background, who are wavering about continuing to follow Jesus. At the time of John they were eroding the base of unity within the church. The underlying tension in John’s gospel about acceptance of Jesus gains momentum at both levels in the text. It appears this reaches a climax in point eleven. Those who cleave to their Jewish background undercut the full, living reality of Jesus. They are attempting to "kill" him (cf. Jn 7:1).

A Following of Jesus Offers More

If we go through the paragraph pairs of Section C again, in order to pick up on the undercurrents, we find there are points made to argue that Jesus offers something beyond what is offered by Judaism on its own. Consider

1. In the first paragraph pair one is reminded of God raining manna from heaven so Moses could feed

the chosen people. Here Jesus feeds the people directly.

2. One is reminded of the great tradition of kingship within Judaism. But Jesus flees those who want to make him a political king.
3. Salvation history placed great store on God parting the waters of the Red Sea for Moses and the chosen people. But Jesus walks over the top of the sea.
4. Elijah the great prophet brought a child back to life by stretching over the top of the child (1 Kings 17:17-24). But Jesus could command a dead person to come out of their tomb four days after burial.
5. Dispersed Jews (and Jewish Christians?) tried to attend both festivals of Tabernacles and Passover. But Jesus decided it was appropriate to stay away.
6. Observance of Sabbath rest was a key law of Judaism. But Jesus was ready to cure a maimed man on that day.
7. In Jewish law, the penalty for adultery was death by stoning. But Jesus refused to apply the law's penalty.
8. Jews (and Jewish Christians?) identified themselves as descendants of Abraham. But Jesus claimed to be greater than Abraham.
9. Jews (and Jewish Christians?) treasured the heritage of the Temple tradition even after it had gone. But Jesus deliberately went out of the temple.

10. Jews (and Jewish Christians?) claimed a blind man had been punished for sin. But Jesus broke the cycle of apparent guilt and enabled him to see.

11. Jews (and Jewish Christians?) put highest value on their observance of law. But Jesus put greatest value on doing the work of the Father.⁹⁴

One might wonder why so much focus is being put here, in this research project, on John's concern, that both Gentile Christians and Jewish Christians should focus on a following of Jesus. However this fits with the major content of the research project. Much of the material presented above demonstrates how, at a sociological level, Christianity is based on Judaism and Hellenism. These have a distinct difference in their world views. The one has an emphasis on time, the other has an emphasis on place. A logical question has to arise as to how people with such divergent world views can be held together in the one socially organic community. At the turn of the first century, John was facing this same question about unity.

Further reflection could be given as to why Jewish Christians appear to be addressed more harshly in the gospel than the Gentile Christians. One could re-consider the basic symbol of Christianity, that is, the cross or its more detailed presentation of the crucifix. At the sociological level it could be argued that a cross represents the two societies (law and order) that Christianity is based upon. They are in a dialectical tension with each other. The down beam represents Judaism with its roots in the laws of nature, history, morality and time. The cross beam represents the Gentile world with its mode of rationalism

⁹⁴ Nailon, *Five Pivotal Texts*, 256-272.

and its outreach and openness and effort to impose order in the “now”. It is the down beam (c/f a society based upon law) that supports the cross beam (c/f a society based upon order). Within Christianity the law-based group of people with their 'fixture' into the reality of time, need to support their more free-wheeling 'cousins'. If the law/time/family-based section of a community wavers and/or it closes out their “free-wheeling cousins”, then the hybrid society fails. It appears the writer of John’s gospel considers that the full “conversion” of Jewish Christians is more urgent and he is confronting them about this. In the crucifix image of Christianity, Jesus Christ is holding the two beams together.

The “bottom line” of John’s Sections B and C is that the followers of Jesus, whatever their background, need to take on the person of Jesus. John’s Section D shows a process of identification with Jesus. This could be described as a “child” section of the gospel and according to the underlying “grammar” of the gospels its paragraphing does not need to follow a pattern.



Section D

CHALLENGE TO IDENTIFY WITH THE AUTHORISED, LIVING WORD

Step One Challenge to identify with the Living Word -
13:1-14:31

Paragraph hooks are Questions

Questioner	Ref	Question	Answer
1. Simon Peter	13:1-17	Wash my feet?	Wash feet of each other
2. Beloved disciple	13:18-30	Who is it?	Who receives you receives me
3. Simon Peter	13:31-38	Where do you go?	Love one another as I loved you
4. Thomas	14:1-7	How do we know way?	Where I am ye also may be
5. Philip	14:8-21	Show us the Father?	..works I do, believing one will do
6. Judas (not Iscariot)	14:22-31	Why show yourself to us?	...the word of me he will keep "name of me" (14:26)

Step two Reasons for identification with the word
15:1-27

Paragraph "Hooks" are Reasons

- | | | |
|----------|----|--|
| 15:1-8 | 1. | because of a "vine/branch" connection (15:5) |
| 15:9-11 | 2. | to provide a fulfilling joy (15:11) |
| 15:12-15 | 3. | because of an established friendship (15:14) |
| 15:16-25 | 4. | because of being chosen (15:16) |
| 15:26-27 | 5. | because of primaevael union (15:27) |

Step three Promise of the on-going guidance of truth
16:1-32

Paragraph "Hooks" are Reasons

- | | | |
|----------|----|---|
| 16:1-7 | 1. | because it is expedient |
| 16:8-23 | 2. | because of future announcements (16:13) |
| 16:23-27 | 3. | because of having loved (16:27) |
| 16:27-33 | 4. | because of having believed (16:27) |

Step four Prayer of the Word 17:1-26

Focus on requests starting with "that"

The Section to follow this one, John's Section E, demonstrates what "the kingdom of God" looks like when a secular society reflects a balance between the Judaic stress on time and law and the Hellenistic stress on place and order.

Section E

ALLOW THE AUTHORISED LIVING WORD TO SET DIRECTION

John 18:1 - 20:30

Paragraph hooks are Persons told to do Something

	Person(s)	Direction	Direction for future	Name for Jesus
1	Judas and crowd	Allow them to go <i>18:1-9</i>	c/f legal rights	Jesus Nazarene
2	Peter	Put sword into sheath <i>18:10-12</i>	c/f non-violence	Jesus
3	Annas	Question those who have heard <i>18:13-27</i>	c/f NB witness	(not same as Peter)
4	Pilate	Hear voice of truth <i>18:28-40</i>	c/f philosophical base	Witness to truth
5	Crowd	Behold the man <i>19:1-16</i>	c/f humanity of Jesus	the man
6	Soldiers	Scripture fulfilled <i>19:16-24</i>	c/f fulfil Scripture	King of the Jews
7	Mother	Behold the son of thee <i>19:25-26</i>	c/f children of church	Jesus
8	Beloved Disciple	Behold the mother of thee <i>19:27-30</i>	c/f 'way' of the child	Jesus
9	Arimathea	(Take initiative) <i>19:31-42</i>	c/f care for	Him (c/f

			body of Jesus	Scripture)
10	Magdalene	go to brothers and tell <i>20:1-18</i>	c/f support leadership	Rabboni
11	Disciples	Peace, go, receive H.S. <i>20:19-23</i>	c/f sacrament of penance	The Lord
12	Thomas	Be faithful <i>20:24-30</i>	c/f priority of faith	My Lord and My God

SECTION F

EPILOGUE

Chapter 21

An Overall Water Image and the Need for a Following of Jesus

John's emphasis on the need to follow and identify with Jesus is demonstrated in an overall "water" image that stretches across the gospel via an extended concentric circle. Consider the following



WATER CAMEO CIRCLE A BOAT AND ITS DESTINATION

1. 1:26 Immersion in water (Initiation to mission)
2. Ch 2 Jesus serves meal using water (to make wine)
3. Ch 3 Nicodemus taught re new birth through water
4. Ch 4 "I thirst" plea to Samaritan woman
5. 4:11 "pail" mentioned for collecting water
6. 5:2 Pool of Bethsaida sign
7. 6:1 Sea of Tiberias
(cf. Emperor claim to divinity)
8. 6:19 Walks on water "I am"
/ destination gained
7. 7:38 Rivers of living water
(cf. claim re living God)
6. 9:8 Pool of Siloam sign
5. 13:8 "bowl" mentioned re vinegar
4. 19:28 "I thirst" plea on cross
3. 19:34 Water from side of Christ symbolises
new birth of Church
2. 21:1 Jesus serves meal using water (to obtain fish)
1. 21:7 Immersion in water (Initiation to mission)

The central picture here is that of Jesus walking on water. This is not the first time a gospel writer uses the image of Jesus walking on water as a "central" point. If we look back to the semiotic analysis of Mark's Section B, we find it located in the central paragraph in a set of paragraph pairs that point to the importance of a sense of direction for an "order-based" society (Mark 6:45-52). In Matthew, his

lengthy Section D is about an Environment of Internalised Law. The middle paragraph here is also about the same incident of walking on water (Mt. 14:22-33).

Consider more closely what is happening in the mid-point of the water concentric circle above in John 6:19. The disciples are in a boat tossed by the waves. At a metaphoric level this could describe the early Church in the Greco-Roman Empire. People are fearful about their fate. Then Jesus comes towards them walking on the water. It is when they opt to take him on board that they immediately reach their destination.

Note how even here in this central verse, the inter-face continues to be shown between time and place. It is “when” they make a decision to take Jesus on board and act on this that they immediately reach their destination. One wonders if historically, there was some kind of warp in time and place that took place in this event. In any case the point is made that by taking Jesus on board people will “immediately” reach their destination as a church and as a society.

John also clarifies who it is the disciples are “taking on board”. Jesus identifies himself as “It is I” (Jn. 6:20). In the context of other *ego eimi* references in the gospel this identifies Jesus in turn with the “I am” of creation.⁹⁵

⁹⁵ P. Harner, *The “I Am” of the fourth gospel* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1970), 48.

C A SUMMING UP

Parts 1 and 2 of

Is Christian Morality Unique?

Part One of this project isolated out the three commandments of “Thou shalt not kill, commit adultery or steal” as being at the base of Christian morality. Within Christianity the bar of these three commandments has been raised so people are challenged to avoid cruelty as such, avoid uncommitted sex, and avoid unjust business practices. In the practice of this approach, Jesus demonstrated that Christians are challenged to go further. They should help all people by empowering them with health and self-determination. They are challenged to support and enrich family social structures. They are challenged to provide and distribute material supports. Actually in Western Society today, with its Judaic-Christian foundations, its industries are geared towards these ends.

Towards the end of Part One *Is Christian Morality Unique?* it briefly considered how the focus on money, power and relationship is summed up and publicly reflected in the vows of Religious Life. It then briefly considered how other world religions also have an emphasis on the need for restraint in the areas of money, power and sex. This led to questions about whether or not Christianity is so unique after all.

Part Two of *Is Christian Morality Unique?* has attempted to answer the question that was raised at the end of Part One. It pointed out that it is not just the emphasis on the commandments of “Thou shalt not kill, commit adultery or steal” that mark out Christian morality as being unique.

Rather the practice of this morality is energized by the dialectical tension between its two differing world views and emphases on time and place. As mentioned a number of times above, these emphases have their roots in the culture of Judaism and in the culture of the Hellenism of Greek Philosophy.

The great contribution made by Judaism has been the realization that God, the source of creation, is a moral God. Hellenism's great contribution is the realization that at the base of the universe there is a pattern of order.

In Part Two of *Is Christianity Unique?* it has been shown that by using a semiotic analysis and a sociological approach, Mark's gospel sets out an introductory overview of the two societies of Judaism and Hellenism. Matthew has a focus on the Judaic roots of Christianity. Luke's gospel shows that Christianity has incorporated the philosophy of Hellenism as well.

However, there is also an on-going question about the credibility of a semiotic analysis using a sociological approach. Despite its endorsement by the Catholic Pontifical Commission there is still the tendency to sideline it from mainstream interpretations of the gospels.

With these factors in mind a précis has been presented of the philosopher Gadamer's *Truth and Method*. Gadamer has challenged the post Enlightenment tendency to pressure human sciences into following the narrower methods of natural science. He points out natural sciences are only a part of human sciences rather than the other way around. His arguments in *Truth and Method* help to justify the use of semiotic analysis in this research project as being within the mainstream of "human sciences".

Although Gadamer barely mentions historical critical

exegesis, the underlying argument of his book provides a critique of this dominant method of Scripture interpretation and its objectifying approach as a “natural science”. The book endorses a broader, “human sciences” approach to the interpretation of Scripture.

As regards the “unifying” presence of Jesus Christ within Christianity, Gadamer’s book actually provides a philosophical understanding that can be of use here even if “Jesus Christ” is not explicitly mentioned. Gadamer explains the existence of a “living tradition and its moral authority” within society. This is expressed through “anonymous intentionality”. He also explains the existence of “the living word”.

These reflections provide a philosophical introduction to similar same themes as shown up in a semiotic analysis of the gospel of John. In the underlying structure of John’s gospel, people of both world views are challenged to follow and identify with the person of Jesus. The Living Authority of Jesus encompasses the living tradition of people enacting God’s will. The Living Word, Jesus, incorporates the truth about reality as expressed in language. When people identify with this Living Authority and Living Word at this cosmic level they can become the “adult child” who can enter the Kingdom of Jesus.



CHAPTER FOUR

A IMPLICATIONS OF THE FINDINGS OF THIS RESEARCH PROJECT

The hybrid nature of Christianity as demonstrated above, should help to throw new light on a whole range of factors faced by the Church at the present time and in years past. These include the following:

1. Clarification of the disciplines of Scripture
Interpretation
2. Understanding the History of Christianity
3. Understanding the Catholic Church before and after
Vatican II
4. “Respect for the Body of Christ” as practised (or not
practised) in the Eucharist
5. Understanding Gospel Values
6. The Roles of Time and Place

1. Clarification of the disciplines of Scripture Interpretation

In the pages above there was reference to a Professor of New Testament Studies who said the above analysis did not fit into the discipline of New Testament Studies. He said this analysis fitted instead into Sociology of Religion. Thus the material

was “sidelined” into a subject area that is barely if at all, dealt with in Melbourne Australia.

However the Professor did have a point. At present New Testament Studies are so dominated by the Historical, Critical Exegetical method of interpretation that one could argue they are equated with the method. This fits into “natural sciences”. A semiotic analysis with a sociological approach on the other hand, fits into the category of “human sciences”. In this sense it does appear to fit with Sociology of Religion rather than New Testament Studies.

But this leads to anomalies. The domination of New Testament Studies by “natural sciences” means that someone can do a research project on for example, the excavation of Gladiators of the first century CE, or a study of Josephus a first century CE historian. They can thereby claim relevance to first century history and New Testament Studies. Yet the studies may barely mention the Gospel texts. On the other hand someone can do an analysis which includes every single verse of the gospel texts. But this is not New Testament Studies!

In the current stress on a scientific “accuracy” in the essays relating to New Testament studies broader details of interpretation are “corrected”. One is told:

- a parallel between the carrying of the cross by Simon and the carrying of Jesus by a donkey is not a ‘real’ parallel
- the “give me a drink” of Jesus’ request to the Samaritan woman is not a ‘real’ parallel with his “I thirst” statement on the cross

- the inverted circle of paragraphs that centre on the ointment woman in the Gospel of Mark is based on “conjecture”
- It is not likely the journal editors would accept articles about concentric circles in the gospels because these are “out of fashion”.

and so on.

Sandra Schneider, in her book *The Revelatory Text, Interpreting the New Testament as Sacred Scripture* points out the need for a hermeneutics for gospel interpretation.⁹⁶ Experiences related to the above research project show the need is still there.

2. Understanding the History of Christianity

Over the centuries of Christianity, there has been an on-going “interplay” between a social emphasis on time and a social emphasis on place. It is not surprising that a world view based on time tends to be weak on the sense of place. A “place world view” tends to be weak on the sense of time.

An implication of the above research project is that these two world views could be taken into consideration more when conflict within Christianity arises.

⁹⁶ Sandra Schneider *The Revelatory Text: Interpreting the New Testament as Sacred Scripture*, 2nd edition (Collegeville Minnesota: A Michael Glazier Book, The Liturgical Press, 1999), 12.

It might be argued that both of the world views complement each other. But such inter-connection has never been easy. Consider the New Testament itself. In the first chapters in Acts for instance we are told how “the Hebrews” would not include “the Gentiles” in their community meal (Acts: 6:1). We also find how Paul was struggling against Gentile converts of Corinth who had slipped back too easily into the snobbery and lax morality of paganism (1 Cor. 6:5-7). We also find Paul, the first ‘Christian Theologian’ was struggling against people in Galatia who claimed to be followers of Jesus but who remained firmly fixed in their Jewish world view and practices (Gal 2:4). The gospel writers Matthew and John also show their frustration with people who were “stuck” in the rituals of Judaism.

If we move forward a few centuries, we find how an oscillation between these two world views has continued. For centuries Greek philosophy had been obscured within Christianity. But with the Crusades of the C 12th, Greek manuscripts with Greek philosophy were rediscovered. The re-discovery triggered the Renaissance (1300 to 1600). With the re-discovery came the Protestant Reformation (1516 to 1648) which reasserted a Hellenistic approach to culture and Christianity.

Actually at the time, Greek philosophy in Christianity had already been continuing on within the teachings of Augustine. But Church leadership had not realised this. For instance *The New Catholic Encyclopaedia* explains:

The intellectual influence of Augustine dominated the west through the C 12th ...But it must be noted that this theological synthesis had assimilated much of Neoplatonism. Many C 13th theologians viewed with alarm

the newly re-emerging Aristotelianism for they thought it incompatible with any number of revealed truths.”⁹⁷

They had not recognised the Neo-Platonism (and Greek philosophy) in Augustine.

An emerging Hellenistic “world view” in the Renaissance with its stress on rationalism, challenged the traditional Church which had slipped into a “mechanistic” system of sacramental graces, for example through the promotion of indulgences. With the advent of printing (1439) people now had direct access to the Scriptures. Their own interpretation of Scripture was possible.

In the centuries to follow, the Protestantism that emerged from the Renaissance was largely based on the philosophy of Plato. Catholics on the other hand, defined their own position in terms of the *Summa Theologiae* of Aquinas which was actually based on Aristotle.⁹⁸ The tensions between Plato, with his emphasis on idealism and Aristotle with his emphasis on potentiality were played out yet again about two thousand years after these two people had co-existed for twenty years in Plato’s school in Athens in C. 5th BCE.⁹⁹

Overall in the conflict, Catholics were more aligned with their Jewish roots. Protestantism was more aligned with Hellenism. In retrospect, the Reformation posed a threat to the traditional church. However it also triggered the Catholic Council of Trent (1545-63) which helped eliminate much of the corruption which, over the centuries, had crept into the church.

⁹⁷ - *New Catholic Encyclopaedia Supplement 2012-13: Ethics and Philosophy Vol 1*, 141.

⁹⁸ Broderick, *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, 578.

⁹⁹ *New Catholic Encyclopaedia, Vol 1*, 8-10.

The above research project shows how both sides of Christianity, the Catholic and Protestant positions have their roots in the gospels.

3. Understanding the Catholic Church before and after Vatican II

From the time of the Reformation and up until Vatican II, there were two clearly defined world views to be found within Christianity. There was Catholicism, which continued on from the Middle Ages with its traditions, lines of authority and emphasis on law and ritual. There was Protestantism in its many forms, with an emphasis on individual conscience, individual reading of Scripture and involvement in establishing secular order.

If we consider the Catholicism in the years prior to the Vatican II Council of the 1960's, we can also see how this type of society had tended, yet again, to slip into an over-emphasis on external law. Perhaps such an over-emphasis was no more apparent than in the rules and regulations that governed Religious Institutes and in particular their novitiates. These places had many positives. But they could also be described as training grounds for mechanistic obedience. Examples of over-regulation in the traditional novitiate are as follows.

The every day life of the novice was governed down to the smallest detail. For instance, within the first twenty minutes of getting up a novice could be expected to observe about forty regulations. There were rules about how the novice was to get out of bed cf. "the ideal novice would leap out of the bed at the first sound of the bell".¹⁰⁰ There were rules about stripping back the bed and re-making it. There were rules about how to

¹⁰⁰ N.Metuchen, *Manual for Novices* (US: Brothers of the Sacred Heart, 1960).

wash, dress, walk, be silent in action etc. During the day there were rules about when the novices could speak, who they could speak to and what subjects they had to avoid. They were taught that their Superior, together with all the rules they were expected to obey, were the expression of God's will for them.

Arguably an upshot of this tightly regulated lifestyle was that people were more focussed upon the observance of rules and regulations rather than they were upon the development of their own personal maturity and morality. This sort of "mechanistic" morality was actually picked up by Jesus himself in the gospel when He challenged the Pharisees for dedicating their property to God. According to Pharisaic rules they thereby avoided having to support their parents (Mark 7:117). A danger with mechanistic obedience and the belief that all of these rules encompassed God's will, meant that people's moral compass could become embedded in the keeping of rules and regulations. With the coming of Vatican II and the cancellation of a "ruled" way of life, so it could be argued, was the moral compass of too many.

Vatican II (1962-65) brought a dramatic "about turn" in the church. Many of the insights of the Protestant traditions were now applied to the Catholic Church. The rationalism of a Hellenistic type of society was now endorsed. New emphasis was given to the exercise of one's own conscience and the development of maturity and personal fulfilment. People who for years had been discouraged and disciplined out of exercising initiative, were suddenly told to use this. Tragically for many, the maturity and initiative was not there! Many people felt lost. In the early 1970 's there was a "wave" of nervous breakdowns in Religious Life!

There was also a shift in the understanding of who the "follower of Jesus" should be. Status once given to the "disciple" in a closely knit, spirituality-focused community was now downgraded. People were no longer living a

“common life”. In the imagery of Luke’s gospel (Section E), emphasis was given instead to the individualised Kingdom Figure, out there in the world, seeking justice for themselves and for all. There was no longer a ‘womb like’ environment where other people could be “discipled” as especially, in the institutional boarding school. Recall that at the end of Matthew’s gospel, Jesus had urged his disciples to go out into the world and “disciple” others (Mark 7:11); In this command there was the urging to “go out”. But there was still the emphasis on being part of the group.

After Vatican II the “bottom fell out” of the numbers of people who were seeking membership of Religious Orders. Many of the Religious Institutes in the Western world now face extinction. Perhaps this has especially been the case with women’s orders.

The above Research Project sheds some light on the oscillation that has taken place.

4. Respect for the Body of Christ as practised in the Eucharist

What has happened to the “Lay” Catholics before and after the Council? If we look back to the second last section in John and use the semiotic analysis provided above, it is suggested there is an outline of what a society should look like when it is influenced by the “living authority” and the “living word” of the cosmic Christ. Using the paragraph “hook” of persons being told to do something, we find the following list of attributes.

(Gospel of John)**Section E****Allow the Authorised, Living Word to set Direction**

Direction for the future would include:

- legal rights
- Non-violence
- The status of witnesses
- A philosophical base
- Recognition of the humanity of Jesus
- Fulfilment of Scripture
- Child-like qualities for those in the church
- The 'way' of the child
- Care for the body of Jesus
- Support for leadership
- The sacrament of penance
- The priority of faith

Going through the above list, it appears as expected, that these factors are largely present in a society where a faith community is respected and free. However, one attribute that may appear to be out of place is "Care for the body of Jesus" (Jn 19:38-42). In the gospel the paragraph that this point comes from is about Joseph of Arimathea. After the passion and death of Jesus, he goes to Pilate and asks for the body of Jesus. He then puts it in his own newly made tomb. Surely such an action is about "caring for the body of Jesus".

At the same time the paragraph actually has bearing on a whole underlying theme of John's gospel. There is a need for the followers of Jesus to not only follow him but also to identify with him. In the early Church (and in the centuries to follow) the key liturgical practice where such an identification has taken place is in the celebration of the Eucharist. People

have shared in the Eucharistic presence of Jesus in the consecrated bread and wine.

If the Christian community, especially the Catholic community, is to continue as a viable community into the future, one could expect that priority needs to be given to the celebration of Mass. In this way “care for the body of Jesus” is continued.

However as the saying goes “people are people”. Christians have a tendency to veer from the extremes of one type of society to the extremes of the other. So, just as there can be an over-stress on external law, people can flip over into an over-stress on idealism. Therefore “care for the body of Jesus” is not as simple as it may sound.

Looking back to the 1960’s, with the conduct and aftermath of the Vatican II Council, much of the scholarship of Protestantism was then applied in the Catholic church. But in the Catholic Church there was a different situation. On the one hand in Protestant circles, people would study Scripture and go through a careful process of rationalisation and research in order to reach their own individual convictions about both Scripture and morality. However prior to Vatican II, Catholics in general only read small sections of translated Scripture when they were attending the weekly Latin Mass. They rarely put a focus on Scripture in their on-going education but relied instead on the Magisterium of the Church for its interpretation. They also relied on Church rules for direction about their personal morality. These rules included regular attendance at Mass.

In Australia all Catholic children were required to memorise the “Penny Catechism”. This included the exhortation to accept Church rules, for example:

138. Are we bound to obey the commandments made by the Church?

Yes we are bound to obey all the commandments of the Church

140. What are the principal commandments of the Church?

The principal commandments of the Church are:

To hear Mass on Sundays and Holy days of obligation (etc).¹⁰¹

A common interpretation of the above teaching was that Catholics who did not attend Sunday Mass would go to hell.

Besides the imperative about attending Sunday Mass there was also a mechanistic and ‘superlative’ understanding of the Mass cf.

This oblation made by Jesus and the Church is of infinitely greater importance than all other acts of worship, infinitely greater than all actions, even the most heroic of the saints, for all these prayers, all these virtues, all these merits, when they are put together are limited, while those of Calvary are super abundant.¹⁰²

Arguably, prior to Vatican II, Catholics had in many ways been “trained” out of a mature approach to their faith. They

¹⁰¹ 4th Plenary Council, 1937 *Catechism for General Use in Australia* (Melbourne: Australian Catholic Truth Society, 1937), 33.

¹⁰² Dom Gaspar Lefebvre, *How to understand the Mass: Liturgical Manuel*, trans. The Grail (Belgium: Venhave SSQ, 1938), 3.

Note: This book was not written by the Cardinal Lefebvre who defected from the church over changes in the Mass though the two approaches are similar.

were told to “Do this or else!” After Vatican II it was hard for them to suddenly take on the “mature” approach to their faith that was now required. It appeared that stress was now being put on “loving, caring and sharing” rather than on dogma.¹⁰³

The Vatican II shift affected compliance with the laws of the Church including those about Sunday Mass. One can attend a Sunday Mass where there is not a single school aged child in the congregation. Yet there could be five hundred students in the Primary and Secondary Schools that adjoin the Church yard. The question can also be asked “Where are the parents and teachers?” A teacher in one country parish put forward the explanation, “The Mass is only for old people.” (!)

There is an anomaly here between what people say they believe about the presence of “the body of Jesus” at the Eucharist and what they fail to do in practice.

After Vatican II some people, for example Cardinal Lefebvre, claimed that changes to the Mass rendered it invalid. Implicitly many now unchurched Catholics also endorse this view. In retrospect, it seems that the Church took away one understanding of the Mass with Vatican II. But the understanding of Eucharist put in its place (if any), has been inadequate.

In the presentation and defence of the gospel analysis presented above there are some pointers to an understanding of who “the body of Jesus” actually is. Arguably the analysis of John’s Section B fits with the philosophy of Gadamer who explains an “organic” unity between the “anonymous intentionality” expressed by people within history and over time. When this intentionality accords with the moral will of God, it would be aligned with the presence of Jesus who is the Living Authority of God.

¹⁰³ Note: This was a favourite saying of a school Principal nun in the 1960’s.

The idea of the living will of God being passed on from one generation to the next, can be found in the text of the Mass itself. The Mass for the Deceased says:

In baptism he (she) died with Christ, may he (she) also share his resurrection with Mary, the Virgin Mother of God, and the apostles, and with all the saints who have done your will throughout the ages.¹⁰⁴

Gadamer has also provided a philosophical base for the understanding of a “living word” which stretches across all languages. The analysis of John’s Section C about the Living Word arguably fits with this. People who express the truth also share in the presence of the Living Word.

Such reflections may make some contribution to an improved understanding of Eucharist.

5. Understanding Gospel Values

At the start of this project *Is Christian Morality Unique?* it was pointed out that there is a problem with interpretation of the gospels when trying to sort out an answer to this question. At the end of the first part of the research project, it was suggested the uniqueness of Christian morality does not simply lie with its stress on trying to control money, power and sex within a society. Other world religions and philosophies have similar emphases.

In Part Two of the Research Project it has been shown there is a dialectical tension at the base of Christian society. This

¹⁰⁴ Eucharistic Prayer II, *Weekday Mass Readings and Order of Mass* (Melbourne: Pellegrini, 1972), p.515.

provides a unique energy for its expression of morality. Christian morality is not based on a single ethnic group. Nor does it rest with intellectualism. It is based on the norms of both Judaism and Hellenism. In order to hold together the two diverging world views involved here, focus is put upon a unifying identification with Jesus Christ. He is both the Living Authority and the Living Word of God. . A key structural image in 6:21 of the John's gospel points out, "When they took Jesus on board, immediately they reached their destination."

The "sweeping" overview of the gospels as provided above, can provide a key in itself, towards understanding the dynamics of Christian morality. Instead of people with the one viewpoint "hurling" accusations at those who think differently, the analysis above should help people to see the validity of both positions. They are challenged to "identify" with both positions.

6. The Roles of Time and Place

In the analysis presented above there is an emphasis on the roles of "time" and "place". Too often the extent to which these two things affect people's basic thinking can be taken for granted. This research project may help people to be more mindful of their own underlying leaning.

The interplay of time and place also has cosmic dimensions. The interplay between the two as demonstrated above puts the Christian dynamic at the centre of an evolving awareness of the social and physical environment around us and a concern for these.

B INADEQUACIES OF THIS RESEARCH PROJECT

Questions that could not be covered in this project include the following:

1. The co'existence of different approaches to New Testament Studies.
2. What has happened to religious Orders after Vatican II?
2. Can Church Law be enforced?
3. What is the future role of the Eucharist?
4. How does the "disciple" figure fit with the "Kingdom Figure"?
5. How does present Western society fit with the sociology of the gospels?

The major focus of this research project has been to demonstrate that a hybrid of two societies exists at the base of Christianity. Within the limitations of the project there has not been scope to simply assume the existence of the hybrid and then tease out the ramifications of this. But ramifications there have been and still are. Some of these are as follows.

1. The Co'existence of different approaches to New Testament Studies.

In the present project the “natural sciences” approach of historical, critical exegesis was used in Part One. The “human sciences” approach of a sociological approach in semiotic analysis was used in Part Two. In a sense both approaches “co-exist” in this project. However there has not been an exploration in these pages as to how the two approaches can co-exist in say, a three thousand word essay or journal article. One does not for example find mathematical equations or chemical experiments described in a subject on English Literature. So a question as to how to align the two approaches has not been answered.

2. What happened to Religious Orders after Vatican II?

The Vatican II Council described Religious as a “blazing emblem of the heavenly kingdom”.¹⁰⁵ However outcomes of the Council pressured “the Religious”, especially those in Active Orders, into changing from the “disciple” persona of Matthew’s gospel to the “kingdom figure” persona of the gospel of Luke.

As a result of this, at the ground level, many Religious and clerics felt they would be more effective as a Christian if they left the community of “disciples” and they struck out into the “world” in the style of the “Kingdom Figure”. It seems this

¹⁰⁵ Vatican II Council, “Decree on the Appropriate Renewal of the Religious Life, in *The documents of Vatican II*, Gen. Ed., Walter M. Abbott (London-Dublin: Geoffrey Chaptin, 1966), 466.

same mentality has reached into Catholicism as a whole. Would-be postulants for Religious Life have believed they can practice their Christianity more effectively as individuals within the world rather than from within the community of a Religious Order. As a result of this many orders now face extinction. Such extinction has and will have effects on the Church at the local level. The public presence of Religious has offered an on-going challenge to the morality of the laity. Religious Life is rooted in a “law-based” society with their vows of poverty (cf. money), chastity (cf. sex) and obedience (cf. power). The flexibility of Religious means they have been able to cut across cultures while cultivating and presenting their own counter culture. Their demise is “everybody’s” business.

The above research project dealt with the tensions that exist between the “disciple” and the “kingdom figure” but offering a solution about their co’existence is much more difficult.

3. Can Church Law be enforced?

In the secular sphere of law, discipline is maintained, for example amongst road users, via a system of penalties. Arguably the Catholic Church has had a tendency to slip into similar “balance sheets” of penalties with regards to rewards and punishments. In the sixteenth century for instance Martin Luther objected to the system of indulgences that exempted people from the penalties of sin, if and when they gave donations to the building of St Peter’s in Rome. Later on, in the C20th, it seems the Church had again slipped into a “profit and loss” mode of thinking about penalties. Children were taught if they missed Mass on a Sunday they would suffer forever in the burning fires of hell. They had to go to confession to “adjust” their “balance sheet”.

After Vatican II with the avoidance of such threats about accountability, the church has needed to explain the negative effects relating to the non-observance of its rules. But how can it do this?

4. What is the role of the Eucharist?

A fourth inadequacy of this research project is its failure to follow through with the implications of the above analysis and the light that it throws on the celebration of the Eucharist.

This is a central focal point for the Catholic Church. However according to some estimates, between the time of before and after Vatican II, attendance at Mass on a Sunday dropped from about 74% of Catholics to about 13% in 2006.¹⁰⁶

Accompanying the decline in attendance has been the virtual disappearance of any sense of obligation to attend Mass among the non-attending Catholics.¹⁰⁷

Arguably the understanding of a Cosmic Christ as the “Authorised, Living Word” of God could be further developed.

5. How does the “disciple” figure fit with the “Kingdom Figure”?

This research project has not been able to explore further the comparisons and contrasts between the people who continue to align themselves with the “disciple” of Matthew’s gospel and

¹⁰⁶ Stephen Reid, Robert Dixon, Noel Connolly, *See I am Doing a New Thing*, (Armadale: Catholic Religious Australia, 2009).

¹⁰⁷ Reid, *See I am Doing a New Thing...*, 44.

those who think of themselves as the “kingdom figure” of the gospel of Luke.

While both personas are endorsed by the gospels, there is a difference here. What are the dynamics between these figures? Does the one figure tend to “pick” on the other? Is the one persona type more important and more basic than the other? As mentioned above we are reminded here of the down-beam of the cross upon which the side beam of the cross is resting. There are two beams in the cross but the first one supports the second.

Actually in the “grammar” underlying the logico-semantic level of the gospel texts there is the mention of Judaism and/or what it implies before the mention of Hellenism. This “grammar” is even repeated in the key phrase in John 6:21 when we are told after welcoming Jesus on board the disciples “immediately” (cf. time) reached where they were going (cf. destination and place). This same order of precedence is found today in common parlance. We talk about “law and order”. We don’t talk about “order and law”. We also say “time and place” rather than “place and time”. Also note how the words remain separate.

Are there implications here for individual “disciples” and “kingdom figures” in their daily interactions with each other? People who want to follow the basic morality rules about living without launching out into justice programs can be so easily disparaged. As one diocesan speaker said recently about young clerics who want to stick to the essentials of a bygone era, “I feel sorry for them.” Yet are these young clerics trying to master the morality essentials first of all?

6. How does present Western society fit with the sociology of the gospels?

The above research project argues that Christian Morality is unique because its focus on money, power and relationship is energised by the tension between the two world views of Judaism (cf. time) and Hellenism (cf. place). It was argued that tradition, with its understanding of dogmatics and morality, can and does adapt to a changing environment. The two world views can co-exist. However in the present environment one wonders if adaptation of tradition is fast enough to continue explaining the world? We live in a “now” type of society whether we want to do so or not.¹⁰⁸ Can we adjust and still retain our links with the wisdom of the past?

The urgency of this question challenges the dialectical uniqueness of Christian morality in the areas of:

- improved self-determination for all
(cf. “thou shalt not kill),
- improved social security for all
(cf. “thou shalt not commit adultery”) and
- increased productivity for all
(cf. “thou shalt not steal).

This research project can only point to such matters. An exercise still to be carried out would be to go through the list of industries in the *Australian Standard Industrial Classification* (ASIC) and show how all of these industries relate to an “idealisation” of the commandments.

¹⁰⁸ Cf. Shelley Gare and Tanya Cooper, “The Pretenders” in *Good Weekend: The Age*, 25th May 2019 (Melbourne: Fairfax, 2019), 11-15.

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