A METHOD FOR IMITATION: LEARNING

FROM PAUL, PETER, JOHN, AND THE

WRITER OF HEBREWS

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by

David Jonathan Trepanier

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APPROVAL SHEET

A METHOD FOR IMITATION: LEARNING

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David Jonathan Trepanier

Read and Approved by:

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Jonathan T. Pennington (Faculty Supervisor)

_____
Brian J. Vickers

Date_____

To my beautiful wife, Keara,

who sacrificed immensely for this thesis.

You are a gift from the Lord.

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PREFACE

I am grateful for the godly heritage that was passed down to me by my parents, Dan and Linda Trepanier. Having a pastor for a father not only shaped my desire to be in full-time, pastoral ministry, but also influenced my desire to receive as much education in the Word as possible. Both parents have fully supported my endeavors to learn, even though it has resulted in my distance from them.

I am thankful for my patient and loving wife, Keara, who willingly sacrificed her time and own convenience so I could go to grad school and pursue this doctorate. She has always been supportive and truly represents the ideal wife of which Paul speaks. I could not have been able to pursue these endeavors apart from her support. Not only has my wife sacrificed for my doctoral pursuits, but so have our children. Every hour I have spent on this thesis has been a sacrifice on their part in some way. I only pray that the fruit of this labor will help instill in them a desire to become more like Jesus.

I am thankful for Dr. Pennington for being willing to supervise my thesis. I know he is very busy, yet he still was able to offer valuable input that made this thesis sharper. His insights and willingness to push me in this process were invaluable. He helped me persevere through the writing process, pushing me to focus on clear communication. Furthermore, his teaching moved me to start seriously considering the role of the *imitatio Christi* in the Christian life. I would never have ventured down this road without his encouragement.

This thesis has caused me to think about Christ in greater ways. I could not think of a better way to engage my studies than focus on the life of Christ. My appreciation for Christ as my Savior as increased as I have better understood how he has

left an example for me to follow. I have realized how overcomplicated I have made the Christian life. This thesis has help simplify discipleship. I am grateful to have studied Christ at such lengths.

<div align="right">Dave Trepanier</div>

Connoquenessing, Pennsylvania

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

What would Jesus do? Is there a more fundamental question Christians should ask as guidance for their spiritual life? Probably not. So concluded Janie Tinklenburg, a youth minister in Holland, Michigan. After reading Charles Sheldon's *In His Steps*,[1] this question became *the* question she believed her youth group must ask. To help, she had three hundred bracelets made with the initials "W.W.J.D." Every time the bracelet caught the eye, the mind was supposed to be reminded to ask that very question. The goal seems that she wanted her youth group to become a youth group that imitated Christ.[2]

Tinklenburg wanted her youth group to explore this concept. She thought the best way to do this would be for the group to ask an overriding question—"How does on truly imitate Jesus Christ? Or, what does it really mean to do what Jesus did?" Whatever the scenario, imitate what Christ would have done. Simple enough.

On the surface, this question seems straightforward, but the practical outworking of imitating Christ proves to be quite complex. Knowing what exactly ought to be imitated from Jesus' life eludes many Christians.[3] The difficulty in determining what true imitation looks like today has resulted in extreme applications on the one side (e.g. diets or car choices) to an absolute denial of practice on the other side.[4] What the

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[1] Charles M. Sheldon and James S. Bell, *In His Steps*, special ed., Billy Graham Evangelistic Association (Tulsa, OK: Honor Books, 1998).

[2] Justin Rowlatt, "What Would Jesus Do? The Rise of a Slogan," *BBC News*, December 8, 2011, Magazine, http://www.bbc.com/news/magazine-16068178.

[3] It does not help that theologians fail to come to a consensus on a definition of imitation.

[4] In his research, Richard Burridge found the most radical example of imitation. He noted that some scholars defended apartheid through the *imitatio Christi*. See Richard A. Burridge, *Imitating Jesus:*

imitatio Christi[5] is or how one goes about actually imitating Christ becomes difficult to ascertain.[6]

The challenge is further complicated by the reality that the very validity of imitation is debated. Not all evangelical scholars agree that the *imitatio Christi* is a valid biblical conclusion. They point to its abuses and tendency to minimize God's grace as justification for its neglect. Alister McGrath echoes the sentiment of this approach. He notes that the imitation of Christ "is deficient in two crucial areas. It is seriously inadequate in its Christological foundations, and it rests upon a soteriological assumption that is close to Pelagianism."[7] He sees imitation as close to Pelagianism because in his mind, imitation is closely associated with an "exemplarist" view of Christ's life.[8] He concludes, "This 'moral example' theory, then, rests upon a totally unrealistic and unchristian view of human nature."[9] He believes "conformity to Christ" should become the language, not imitation. This semantic switch safeguards against works righteousness and a man-centered approach to sanctification.[10]

McGrath's concern is valid. If the *imitatio Christi* becomes a means of

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An Inclusive Approach to New Testament Ethics (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007), 376–82.

[5] The terms *imitatio Christi*, *mimesis*, and the imitation of Christ refer to the same idea. They will be used interchangeably throughout the paper.

[6] Mark Galli, "Why I Don't Imitate Christ: The Christian Life Is Not a Game of Simon Says," *Christianity Today* 46, no. 8 (2002): 58–58. He devotes over half of his article to the abuses of the *imitatio Christi* from the past two thousand years. F. Scott Spencer points out similar abuses. F. Scott Spencer, *What Did Jesus Do? Gospel Profiles of Jesus' Personal Conduct* (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 2003), 58.

[7] Alister E. McGrath, "In What Way Can Jesus Be a Moral Example for Christians?," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 34, no. 3 (1991): 292. For other arguments against the imitation of Christ, see Galli, "Why I Don't Imitate Christ," and Michael Horton, "Following Jesus: What's Wrong and Right about the Imitation of Christ," *Modern Reformation* 18, no. 2 (2009): 14–18.

[8] "An exemplarist soteriology, with it associated understanding of the nature and the role of the moral example of Jesus Christ, is ultimately the correlative of a Pelagian view of the satiation and abilities of humanity." McGrath, "In What Way?" 294.

[9] McGrath, "In What Way?," 294.

[10] McGrath, "In What Way?," 296.

salvation or of ethical reform apart from internal transformation accomplished by the Holy Spirit, then imitation has moved beyond its biblical development.[11] Despite the concern, the imitation of Christ cannot be simply dismissed if it is biblical. And biblical it is. Jason Hood has provided an invaluable and biblical defense of the *imitatio Christi* in *Imitating God in Christ: Recapturing a Biblical Pattern*.[12] He argues for a biblical theology of imitation, rooted in the Old Testament and finding its full expression in the coming of Christ. The *imitatio Christi* begins with the overlap "between God's work and human work" in the Old Testament.[13] The call to righteousness, creativity, work, vocation, love, wisdom, and even redemption find their source in the ability of humanity to reflect and imitate the character of God.[14] We are to be holy because God is holy (Lev 11:44-45; 19:2; 20:7, 26; 21:8; 1 Pet 1:16). This imitation pours over into our participation with God's work. Throughout the Old Testament, God chooses to use humans to accomplish his work in the world.[15] As God builds his kingdom, he does so through human agency.[16] The image bearers of God participate in the work of God. In doing so, they imitate him and reflect his image.

With the coming of Jesus, the imitation of God now centers in on the imitation of Christ. Unlike the rest of humanity, Jesus perfectly reflected the image of God. He never sinned, making him *the* true human.[17] As the true human, he not only redeems

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[11] Imitation follows justification, not the other way around (Rom 8:28-30). This paper focuses on reading the New Testament texts through the lens of imitation. Therefore, reading the New Testament in this manner is for the converted. Imitation lies in the category of sanctification.

[12] Jason B. Hood, *Imitating God in Christ: Recapturing a Biblical Pattern*, (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2013). A brief overview of his argumentation is provided.

[13] Hood, *Imitating God in Christ,* 28.

[14] Hood, *Imitating God in Christ,* 29–40.

[15] Hood, *Imitating God in Christ,* 50–52.

[16] "God did not bring a tabernacle and a temple (his earthly throne rooms) down out of heaven. Instead, he gave Moses a blueprint and human artisans his Spirit to work on wood, linens, metals, and gems." Hood, *Imitating God in Christ,* 53.

[17] Hood, *Imitating God in Christ,* 62–63.

humanity from its sinfulness but restores humanity's lost image through his redemptive work.[18] Through this redemption, Christ restores the image lost through Adam. Through Christ's example, he provides direction on how one can reflect that image.[19]

Even a cursory reading of the rest of the New Testament reveals that imitation was part of the Christian life. Paul told the Corinthians to "be imitators of me, as I am of Christ"[20] (1 Cor 11:1). He found encouragement from the report that the Thessalonian believers "became imitators of us and of the Lord" (1 Thess 1:6). Both passages assume the validity of the imitation of Christ. Similarly, Peter reminds his readers that "Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you might follow in his steps" (1 Pet 2:21). His sufferings were a roadmap that his followers are expected to heed. Lastly, the writer of Hebrews draws attention to Christ's example to motivate the readers to endurance in the Christian life (Heb 12:1-2). It is clear that the *imitatio Christi* deserves a place in evangelical thought.

The biblical data is why Christians continue to ask the question, "What would Jesus do?" Jimmy Agan points out that "most Christians assume that as they read the

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[18] Hood writes, "If the goal of salvation is not to be less human, it is still less to rid ourselves of bodies. Nor does God leave us eternally sinful, for that is ultimately a subhuman condition. . . . Jesus came so that we might be human as God intended, sharing in the character, rule, and glory of God, 'conformed to the image of his Son' (Rom 8:29)."Hood, *Imitating God in Christ,* 64.

[19] Today, the example of Christ primarily comes through the accounts recorded in the gospels. That the gospel writers intended the reader to imitate Christ can be argued from the gospel genre. The gospel genre is highly debated, but Richard Burridge has provided important observations in *What Are the Gospels? Richard A. Burridge, *What Are the Gospels? A Comparison with Graeco-Roman Biography*, 2nd ed., Biblical Resource Series (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004). Burridge compares the Gospels to Greco-Roman *Bioi*, seeing strong parallels between the two. See especially pp. 185-232. He concludes that all four Gospels resemble *Bioi* closely enough that they could properly be labeled as such. Gregory Riley goes so far as to assert that the New Testament writers borrowed this genre to defend the legitimacy of their message. Gregory J. Riley, "Mimesis of Classical Ideals in the Second Christian Century," in *Mimesis and Intertextuality in Antiquity and Christianity*, ed. Dennis R. MacDonald (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 2001), 91–103. Both Burridge and Riley make helpful contributions, but Jonathan Pennington's understanding of the gospel genre balances the uniqueness of the gospels without completely throwing out the influence of *Bioi* on their composition. See Jonathan T. Pennington, *Reading the Gospels Wisely: A Narrative and Theological Introduction* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2012), 27–34. For a concise summary of why the Gospel genre necessitates imitation, see David B. Capes, "Imitatio Christi and the Gospel Genre," *Bulletin for Biblical Research* 13, no. 1 (2003): 1–19.

[20] All Bible references from the English Standard Version unless noted otherwise.

Gospels, they will discover ways in which they should be like Jesus."[21] Rather than shy away from the concept of imitation, a better approach might be to work through how one imitates Christ. This can be quite difficult considering that Jesus was divine and performed deeds impossible to mimic. As the next section of the paper will reveal, theologians have written on imitation, but very little space has been afforded to how one imitates a divine human.

Familiarity with Literature

The imitation of Christ surprisingly lacks concentrated theological attention from scholars when compared with many other areas of biblical study. Many chapters and articles address the topic, but few books do. Much of the material I examined are these articles and chapters. Although the *imitatio Christi* is scarcely addressed, this does not mean that books do not explore the idea. The few that do so, offer important insights.

The classic treatment is *The Imitation of Christ* by Thomas á Kempis.[22] Rather than providing a full biblical defense or development of imitation, *The Imitation of Christ* rests on the assumption that Christ ought to be emulated. Kempis discloses what this entails through devotional ideas focused on capturing the attitude and mindset of Christ. It challenges the reader's spiritual character, but affords little theological development.

Edouard Cothenet edited *Imitating Christ*.[23] This volume aptly illustrates the need for clarity in understanding imitation. His own contribution in chapter one, "Sacred Scripture,"[24] tackles how Scripture develops the *imitatio Christi*. Despite Cothenet's clear

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[21] Jimmy Agan, "Toward a Hermeneutic of Imitation: The Imitation of Christ in the Didascalia Apostolorum," *Presbyterion* 37, no. 1 (2011): 31.

[22] Thomas à Kempis and William C. Creasy, *The Imitation of Christ*, 2nd ed. (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 2007).

[23] Edouard Cothenet, ed., *Imitating Christ*, Religious Experience Series. 5 (St. Meinrad, IN: Abbey Press, 1974).

[24] Edouard Cothenet, "Sacred Scripture," in Couthenet, *Imitating Christ*, 1–36.

exposition, the remaining authors fail to reach a consensus on how one imitates Christ. Pierre Adnès believes that the Eucharist and the observance of the liturgical calendar captures the essence. [25] Aimé Solignac disagrees. She believes that the nexus of emulation lies in mimicking Christ's love.[26] There is a discrepancy between the opinions of the contributors, which points to the lack of clarity on the topic.

Two recent books develop a biblical theology of the imitation of Christ. Jason Hood's *Imitating God in Christ: Recapturing a Biblical Pattern* is the most recent work, was published in 2013.[27] Starting with the category of the image of God, Hood moves from creation to consummation while highlighting God's intention for humanity to imitate him. The idea develops from "the imitation of God to the imitation of Jesus to the imitation of the saints."[28] Hood distinguishes himself with his emphasis on the relationship between the imago Dei and the *imitatio Christi*. [29]

Fifty years before Hood, E. J. Tinsley offered the first Protestant, biblical theology of imitation.[30] Like Hood, he traces the theme of imitation from Genesis to Revelation. He convincingly argues that emulation in the Old Testament consisted of following the "ways of God."[31] Unlike Israel, Jesus perfectly followed the ways of God. In so doing, he forged a new way that Christians are to follow. Although not exhaustive, Tinsley and Hood offer helpful biblical theologies of imitation.

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[25] Pierre Adnès, "Theological Reflections," in Couthenet, *Imitating Christ*, 78.

[26] Aimé Solignac, "The Imitation of Christ in Daily Life," in Couthenet, *Imitating Christ*, 85–86.

[27] Hood, *Imitating God in Christ*.

[28] Hood, *Imitating God in Christ*, 14.

[29] Hood frequently cites G. K. Beale, *We Become What We Worship: A Biblical Theology of Idolatry* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2008). Beale argues, "What people revere, they resemble, either for ruin or restoration" (16). This premise influenced Hood.

[30] E. J. Tinsley, *The Imitation of God in Christ: An Essay on the Biblical Basis of Christian Spirituality* (London: SCM Press, 1960).

[31] Tinsley, *The Imitation of God in Christ*, 35.

A significant portion of the literature addressing imitation falls under the discipline of ethics. One such work is John Burridge's *Imitating Jesus: An Inclusive Approach to New Testament Ethics*.[32] Burridge's concern lies in developing an ethic from imitating Christ. Therefore, he devotes little space to the Old Testament. He offers a New Testament theology of the *imitatio Christi* because he believes that any New Testament ethic must start with the life and teaching of Jesus.[33] He summarizes the imitation of Christ as a commitment to emulating his mercy and love. As a result, a New Testament ethic should endorse love and mercy to all people, especially to sinners.[34] An obvious gap is his gloss over patterns of Christ which contradict his conclusion.

Like Burridge, William Spohn develops a Christian ethic from the imitation of Christ in *Go and Do Likewise: Jesus and Ethics*.[35] He constructs his theory of emulation from Jesus' command in Luke 10:37 to "go and do likewise." "Doing likewise" summarizes the heart of imitation. This is accomplished through analogical imagination.[36] Analogical imagination is a form of spiritual reading that extracts the moral principle of Jesus' actions and places it in contemporary situations. The resulting ethic resembles contemporary virtue ethics.

Spohn argues that a New Testament ethic can be developed by imitating Christ simply because Jesus rose from the dead. He is alive. This same reality drives the argument of Luke Timothy Johnson's *Living Jesus: Learning the Heart of the Gospel*.[37]

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[32] Richard A. Burridge, *Imitating Jesus: An Inclusive Approach to New Testament Ethics* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007).

[33] Burridge most notably writes this work as a corrective to Richard B. Hays, *The Moral Vision of the New Testament: Community, Cross, New Creation: A Contemporary Introduction to New Testament Ethics* (San Francisco: Harper, 1996). See Hays's response: Hays, *The Moral Vision of the New Testament*, 31.

[34] Burridge, *Imitating Jesus*, 78.

[35] William C. Spohn, *Go and Do Likewise: Jesus and Ethics* (New York: Continuum, 1999).

[36] Spohn, *Go and Do Likewise*, 50.

[37] Luke Timothy Johnson, *Living Jesus: Learning the Heart of the Gospel* (San Francisco:

He believes gospel studies have become bogged down in the pursuit of the historical Jesus. Jesus lives; therefore, interaction with the Gospels must be driven by a relationship with this living Jesus. Reading Scripture must embrace Christ through faith. Rather than a historical reading, a spiritual reading grasps the role of imitation intended by the Gospel writers. He concludes that the "*character* of the human person Jesus . . . remains normative for believers."[38] Johnson appears less concerned with defining the *imitatio Christi* as he is with defending its priority. Therefore, he does not offer the reader much material with respect to methodology.

F. Scott Spencer takes a different approach in *What Did Jesus Do? Gospel Profiles of Jesus' Personal Conduct*.[39] As put forth in the three previously mentioned books, Spencer believes a Christian ethic can be formed through the *imitatio Christi*. Unlike the other works, he offers very little explanation of how one imitates Christ.[40] His concern lands on what Jesus did, not on what Jesus would do.[41] Each section of the book analyzes Jesus' actions in different spheres of living (e.g. family, finances, sex, etc.). He seems to believe that studying Christ's actions should be sufficient guidance to contemporary ethical situations.

Many articles in *Patterns of Discipleship in the New Testament* contribute to the discussion.[42] Unlike other books on imitation, this work is driven by the topic of

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Harper, 1999).

[38] Johnson, *Living Jesus*, 199.

[39] Spencer, *What Did Jesus Do? Gospel Profiles of Jesus' Personal Conduct* (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 2003).

[40] Spencer writes, "I offer no easy formulas for making all or most of Jesus' personal actions immediately 'relevant' to contemporary living, but I enter a plea that anything worthy of being called Christian ethics must wrestle long and hard with the full force of Jesus' activity in the gospels until it hits us, shapes us, changes us for the better—even if we walk thereafter, as we will inevitably will, with a marked limp," Spencer, *What Did Jesus Do?*, 258.

[41] This was the focus of James Stalker, *Imago Christi: The Example of Jesus Christ*, 17th ed. (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1904).

[42] Richard N. Longenecker, *Patterns of Discipleship in the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996).

discipleship, not ethics.[43] Particularly helpful chapters are "Imitate Me, Just as I Imitate Christ: Discipleship in the Corinthian Correspondence" by Linda L. Belleville; "The Imitation of Christ: Discipleship in Philippians" by Gerald F. Hawthorne; and "Becoming Like God through Christ: Discipleship in Romans" by L. Ann Jervis. Each of these articles interacts with key New Testament passages that address the *imitatio Christi*. As a result, each chapter offers a wealth of information concerning the imitation of Christ.

Lastly, Jimmy Agan's *The Imitation of Christ in the Gospel of Luke* assumes that the imitation of Christ is biblical, and therefore, devotes little time to its defense.[44] Rather, Agan provides a commentary on Luke with the goal of helping the reader interpret the Gospel through the lens of imitation. His approach is driven by the themes within the Gospel itself. Unlike other books on the topic, this one develops a hermeneutical approach that drives application. The hermeneutic lies in four directions: "passion for God's glory," "passion for the good of other people," "willing self-denial," and "patient endurance of hardship."[45] These directions provide the parameter of interpreting the Gospel with the intent of imitation.

Void in the Literature

Very few of the above resources address what ought to be imitated from Jesus' life. Determining what to imitate requires a clear methodology or hermeneutic.[46] This

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[43] That true discipleship largely results in imitation has been defended by James Samra. See James G. Samra, "A Biblical View of Discipleship," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 160, no. 638 (2003): 219–34. Johnson draws a similar conclusion to Samra. He observes, "It is entirely appropriate for Christians to pay attention to those humans in whom divine transformation is most visibly present. In the lives of such saints we learn Jesus. We recognize as saints in the first place because they 'show us the Christ': we can see in the pattern of their behavior and in their character the Spirit of Jesus embodied and active in the world." Johnson, *Living Jesus*, 49.

[44] Jimmy Agan, *The Imitation of Christ in the Gospel of Luke: Growing in Christlike Love for God and Neighbor* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R Publishers, 2014).

[45] Agan, *The Imitation of Christ in the Gospel of Luke*, 50.

[46] Michael Allen notes that "imitating him is necessarily a hermeneutical enterprise." Michael Allen, "Imitating Jesus," *Modern Reformation* 18, no. 2 (2009): 29.

matter needs greater attention, especially since scholars like McGrath are skeptical of its validity. They express concern that the *imitatio Christi* focuses on an external copying of Christ's actions.[47] If imitation does not lie in an external copying, then in what does it lie?

Jimmy Agan saw the need to answer that question. In his article, "Toward a Hermeneutic of Imitation,"[48] Agan looked to early Christians for their answer to that question. Specifically, he analyzed the *Didascalia Apostolorum* and its approach to the imitation of Christ. Through his analysis of this work, he provided insight on how the writers of *Didascalia Apostolorum* understood imitation. This article was helpful in opening a window into how the early church formulated an *imitatio Christi*, but did not address how similar applications could be made today.

Agan's greatest contribution to the discussion comes in his work focused on the imitation of Christ in the gospel of Luke. In the work, he develops a hermeneutic of imitation based on themes unique to Luke's gospel.[49] After establishing a hermeneutical grid from these themes, he traces how Luke develops imitation. This provides the reader with direction on how to develop imitation from the gospel of Luke. Agan's contribution is invaluable and paves the way for similar approaches to be taken in the other gospels. He lets the themes of the gospel determine what can be imitated of Christ, but this approach limits imitation. Interestingly, the New Testament writers outside the gospels interact with the same material and draw other applications of the *imitatio Christi*.[50] This means that more than the themes of the Gospel determine the parameters for imitation.

Michael Allen took a broader approach than Agan. He believes that imitating

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[47] McGrath, "In What Way?," 297.

[48] Agan, "Toward a Hermeneutic of Imitation."

[49] Agan, *The Imitation of Christ in the Gospel of Luke*, 43–47.

[50] Most notable is Paul's use of the incarnation in Phil 2:5-11 and Peter's use of the atonement in 1 Pet 2:18-25.

Christ takes place through "ethical triangulation."[51] He takes his cue from Paul's statement in 1 Corinthians 11:1, which states, "Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ." Through imitation of the disciples, one learns imitation of Christ. So, the call of the New Testament is not to imitating Christ but imitating His disciples. The benefits of this is that it upholds the distinctive features of Christ's life. Unlike Christ, humanity is neither perfect or divine. Still, having argued for ethical triangulation, Allen then concludes that "we should follow and even imitate Jesus, the true and perfect human."[52] This conclusion can only make sense if his assertion of "imitating Jesus" is understood as imitating his disciples.

Other approaches abound. Spencer concludes that imitation lies in Jesus' clash with the social conventions of the day.[53] Michael Griffiths looks at the imitation of Christ as following the patterns of Christ—what he labels the "colours of his life."[54] The abundance of conclusions can be overwhelming. This situation left Marguerite Shuster concluding, "We seek to find ways to achieve our own ends and use Scripture as a means to those ends, a sort of bag of tools to help us justify going this way or that way."[55]

The difficulty in determining valid applications of the *imitatio Christi* is understandable. Although Christ took on humanity in its fullness, he still was different from us in his divinity. How can one imitate a man who was also God?

This predicament has led to a few different proposals, two of which are worth noting. Daniel Doriani concluded that imitating Christ was only possible through the

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[51] Allen, "Imitating Jesus," 29.

[52] Allen, "Imitating Jesus." 30.

[53] Spencer, *What Did Jesus Do?*, 252.

[54] Michael Griffith, *The Example of Jesus*, Jesus Library (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1985), 85.

[55] Marguerite Shuster, "The Use and Misuse of the Idea of the Imitation of Christ," *Ex Auditu* 14 (January 1998), 76.

imitation of what Christ did in his humanity.[56] Although reasonable, this proposal

encounters two difficulties. First, trying to distinguish which acts of Christ correspond to

his humanity and which to his deity is not easily discernible. One might be tempted to

point to his miraculous deeds, but the writer of Acts records many miraculous deeds of

the early church. Luke seems to present the early church as imitating Christ almost

through reenactment.[57] Second, many feats of Christ's life that the writings outside the

Gospels point to for imitation are impossible to reenact. Take Paul's use of the

incarnation in Philippians 2. What Paul calls the readers to imitate is illustrated by the

incarnation. No human being apart from Christ had any influence or say on their entrance

into humanity as Christ did. What Paul calls the Philippian believers to imitate was not

limited by what Christ could do in his humanity, but was illustrated when he took on

humanity.

The other approach comes from William Spohn.[58] He sought to connect

ancient Scripture and contemporary ethics. Within that task, he recognized the centrality

of Jesus' life for a biblical ethic. Therefore, he was forced to wrestle through how one can

make appropriate conclusions of imitation. His solution was a method he labeled

"analogical imagination."[59] "Analogical imagination" searches the narrative for moral

principles, extracts them, and then implements those moral principles into one's

contemporary narrative.[60]

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[56] Daniel M. Doriani, *Putting the Truth to Work: The Theory and Practice of Biblical Application* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R Publishers, 2001), 206.

[57] Longenecker develops this connection in Richard N. Longenecker, "Discipleship in Luke-Acts," in *Patterns of Discipleship in the New Testament*, ed. Richard N. Longenecker (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 50–76.

[58] Spohn, *Go and Do Likewise*.

[59] Richard Hays concludes similarly in his *Moral vision for the New Testament*. Unlike Spohn, he starts with Paul rather than Jesus. For a helpful analysis and critique of both approaches, see Bonnie. Howe, *Because You Bear This Name: Conceptual Metaphor and the Moral Meaning of 1 Peter*, Biblical Interpretation Series 81 (Boston: Brill, 2006), 109–61.

[60] Spohn, *Go and Do Likewise*, 50. This method led him to similar conclusions as that of Luke Timothy Johnson. Johnson limits imitation to Christ's character, freeing the application of the *imitatio*

Spohn's proposal is insightful. He guards against oversimplifying the *imitatio Christi* while offering contemporary application, and he navigates the complexity of imitating a man who was also divine. Yet, I wonder if his solution is sufficient. Shuster's complaint that scholars use their exegetical bag of tools to make any application in imitation could be directed at applications of "analogical imagination." Spohn's own conclusion that imitation lies in Jesus' rebellion against social conventions of the day points to the difficulty in creating clear parameters for imitation from analogical imagination. What the study of the *imitatio Christi* needs is a clear, biblically driven method of interpretation.

Thesis

Here is where the New Testament writings outside of the Gospels come into play. These writings interact with the Jesus story for the purpose of imitation. As such, they provide an insight into how these stories, now contained in the canonical gospels, can be read for the purpose of imitation. [61] By looking at their use of the example of Christ, an interpretive framework emerges that shapes how one might draw valid conclusions concerning the *imitatio Christi*. In this thesis, I am arguing that the New Testament writings outside of the gospels, as represented by Paul, Peter, John, and the writer of Hebrews[62] provide an interpretive framework within which the reader can draw proper conclusions for imitation from the unique life of Christ.

Christi from Jesus' historical existence. Johnson, *Living Jesus*, 46–47.

[61] I recognize that many of the gospels were not penned by the time some of the non-gospel writings were written. The writers were interacting with the Jesus tradition that would eventually be written down in the canonical gospels. As such, how they used the example of Christ provides a framework for how we may draw valid interpretations of the *imitatio Christi* from the same story, now contained within the four gospels.

[62] Due to the space allocated to this thesis, the theme cannot be comprehensively developed. Therefore, these authors are chosen as representative of how the non-gospel, New Testament writings developed the *imitatio Christi*.

CHAPTER 2

HAVE THIS MIND AMONG YOURSELVES
PAULINE *IMITATIO CHRISTI*

Any development of the *imitatio Christi* outside of the gospels must start with

Paul. More than any other author in the New Testament, Paul implicitly and explicitly

references the imitation of Christ.[1] He calls the Corinthians to "be imitators of me, as I

am of Christ" (1 Cor 11:1), the Philippians to "have the same mindset as Christ Jesus"[2]

(Phil 2:5), and the Ephesians to "be imitators of God, as beloved children" (Eph 5:1).

Further, Paul commends the Thessalonians for their becoming "imitators of us and of the

Lord" (1 Thess 1:6). Outside of these explicit references to the *imitatio Christi*, he

continually offers Christ's example in support of his ethical injunctions.[3] Paul's emphasis

on imitation and use of Jesus' example indicate that the *imitatio Christi* was vital to his

understanding of Christian ethics.[4]

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[1] Paul's dominant use of the theme spurred on Spohn to argue that "the imitation of Christ is the ethical subtext" of all of Paul's exhortations. Spohn, *Go and Do Likewise*, 146. That observation seems to read the concept of imitation too much into Paul's ethics. Rather, the more balanced approach of Richard Hays makes the best sense of the data. Hays notes, "The twin themes of conformity to Christ's death and the imitation of Christ are foundational elements of Paul's vision of the moral life." Hays, *The Moral Vision of the New Testament*, 31.

[2] NIV. I quote the NIV because I believe it better translates the passage.

[3] Rom 15:3, 7; 1 Cor 12:12; 2 Cor 8:9; 10:1; 13:4; Eph 4:32; 5:2, 25-29; Col 3:13; 1 Tim 6:13-14; 2 Tim 1:13.

[4] Why Paul emphasized imitation is a different discussion. Elizabeth Castelli believes that Paul's emphasis on imitation was a power move by which Paul meant to maintain control over his followers. Elizabeth A. Castelli, *Imitating Paul: A Discourse of Power*, Literary Currents in Biblical Interpretation (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1991). For a clear and convincing rebuttal, see Michael J. Gorman, *Cruciformity: Paul's Narrative Spirituality of the Cross* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001), 293–97. Paul's use of imitation fits comfortably within a Greco-Roman understanding of virtue ethics. Therefore, his emphasis on it should not be surprising. For an informative work discussing the Greco-Roman context of Paul's use of imitation, see Willis Peter De Boer, *The Imitation of Paul: An Exegetical Study* (Kampen, Netherlands: J.H. Kok, 1962).

Since imitation played a large part in Paul's development of Christian living, we are able to see how he dealt with seemingly impossible deeds to imitate. No other passage illustrates this more clearly in Paul's writings than his development of the incarnation in Philippians 2:5-11. Although Paul does not use words normally associated with imitation, what he has to say develops the *imitatio Christi*.[5] His development of the theme becomes even more relevant in light of the impossibility of being able to mimic the incarnation. This passage presents a perfect case study for how imitation was possible for a deed that was impossible.

A Grid for Imitation

I want to start off by explaining the grid that can be derived from Philippians 2:5-11 in order to provide a compass for each of the passages addressed in this thesis. As mentioned earlier, others have offered grids for interpretation. But the grid I am proposing is derived from the biblical text, not imposed on it. Looking at what Paul does in Philippians 2:5-11, a grid emerges that helps extract what can be imitated for Christ. This grid can also be applied to other passages throughout the non-Gospel writings that speak to imitation.

In a sense, the New Testament writers use a grid similar to extract imitative application from unrepeatable actions. Three components are at play in these texts: a mindset/attitude (*M/A*),[6] a pattern of behavior, and an illustrative action. Within this grid

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[5] The word usually associated with imitation is μιμητής. Paul uses this word in Ephesians 5:2, 1 Corinthians 11:1, and 1 Thessalonians 1:6. BDAG defines μιμητής as "imitate, emulate, follow, use as a model." William F. Arndt et al., *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature: A Translation and Adaptation of the Fourth Revised and Augmented Edition of Walter Bauer′s Griechisch-Deutsches Wörterbuch Zu Den Schriften Des Neuen Testaments Und Der Übrigen Urchristlichen Literatur*, 2nd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979), 521. Not all scholars agree that μιμητής in the New Testament carries the idea of imitation. Michaelis argues that with this word's use throughout the New Testament "there is thus no thought of an imitation, whether outward or inward, of the earthly life of Jesus in either individual features or total impress." Wilhem Michaelis, "μιμέομαι, κτλ." in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. Gerhard Kittel and Gerhard Friedrich, trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley 10 vols., 4:659-674 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 672). Despite Michaelis' assertion, μιμητής seems best translated as "imitate."

[6] I will refer to the mindset/attitude as the *M/A* throughout the remainder of the paper.

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the *M/A* refers to a way of thinking or underlying affection that is being endorsed in the passage. This then leads to a pattern of behavior exemplified in Christ.[7] Both the *M/A* and pattern of behavior are intended for imitation. What is not intended for imitation is the third component: the illustrative action. The illustrative action is the action of Christ specifically cited in the text. Within the text itself, the author may use the illustrative action to convey more truth than simply illustration. Within the purpose of imitation, the illustrative action functions as the concrete expression that occurred in Christ's life of what the reader is being called to imitate.[8] As will be seen through the rest of this thesis, when this grid is overlaid on top of the passage, it illuminates how the authors pulled imitation from deeds which cannot be reenacted. Table 1 illustrates this grid.

Table 1. A hermeneutical grid for discerning imitation

Intended for imitation		Not intended for imitation
M/A The type of thinking or underlying affection	*Pattern of behavior* The pattern of behavior that flows from the *M/A*	*Illustrative Action* The concrete expression of the pattern of behavior

Philippians 2:5-11

To show how this grid fits the New Testament writers, I want to start by looking at Philippians 2:5-11. In this passage, all the elements of the grid from Table 1

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[7] Johnson points to the importance of looking for the pattern of Christ's life for imitation. He notes, "It is the *pattern* of Jesus' story that the Spirit can reshape, again and again, in countless lives; the *image* of Jesus can be formed in all humans with that freedom that comes from the Lord who is Spirit. This does not make the humanity of Jesus less but more significant, of the *way* Jesus was human—the way he responded to God in faithful obedience and gave his life in service to other humans—is the pattern for all authentic humanity renewed by the Spirt of God" (emphasis original). Johnson, *Living Jesus*, 111–12.

[8] As will be seen, such is the case in Philippians 2:5-11. Details of Jesus' incarnation and future exaltation included in these verses are beyond the purview of illustration. The verses convey truths unnecessary for the underlying illustrative purpose, but the inclusion of these details do not override the illustrative purpose.

are evident. They are evident, only if Paul is teaching the *imitatio Christi*. Not all scholars

agree with that notion, especially the conclusion reached by Gerald Hawthorne. He says,

"Phil 2:5-11, thus, is the strongest possible appeal of the apostle to his readers to shape

their lives as Christ (i.e., those 'in Christ Jesus') according to the pattern left behind for

them by Christ Jesus Himself."[9]

Historically, Hawthorne's conclusion lines up with the text's reception

history.[10] But this conclusion has been largely debated since Ernst Käsemann's article,

"Critical Analysis of Philippians 2:5-11."[11] Käsemann challenged the view that this

passage used Christ as an example. He argued that Paul is focusing on Christ's

accomplishment, not his example. The whole drama of 2:6-11 explains why we can be

considered "in Christ Jesus" (v. 5). Ralph Martin picked up where Käsemann left off to

become the primary scholarly critic of imitation in Philippians 2:5-11.[12] The focus, in his

opinion, is Christ's Lordship, not his example.

Since the grid for imitation being argued for in this thesis is built from this

passage, I need to take some space to answer the objections against understanding this

passage as teaching the *imitatio Christi*.[13] To provide a comprehensive exegesis surpasses

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[9] Gerald F. Hawthorne, "The Imitation of Christ: Discipleship in Philippians," in *Patterns of Discipleship in the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 167.

[10] For the reception history of the passage, see Markus N. A. Bockmuehl, "A Commentator's Approach to the 'Effective History' of Philippians," *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 18, no. 60 (April 1996): 75–83.

[11] Ernst Käsemann, "Critical Analysis of Philippians 2:5-11," *Journal for Theology and the Church* 5 (1968): 45–88. Käsemann built off Ernst Lohmeyer's proposal that Philippians 2:6-11 consisted of a pre-Pauline psalm that Paul had incorporated into the Philippian letter. Ernst Lohmeyer, *Kyrios Jesus: Eine Untersuchung Zur Phil. 2,5-11*, Sitzungsberichte Der Heidelberger Akademie Der Wissenschaften, Philosophisch-Historische Klasse, Jahrgang 1927/28; 4. Abhandlung (Heidelberg, Germany: C. Winter, 1928).

[12] Ralph P. Martin, *A Hymn of Christ: Philippians 2:5-11 in Recent Interpretation & in the Setting of Early Christian Worship*, 1st ed. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1997).

[13] Those fundamentally opposed to the *imitatio Christi* will find reason to dismiss imitation in every passage being addressed. Since this passage in particular is laying the framework for the rest of the thesis, a defense of imitation from the passage is due.

the scope of this paper,[14] but certain features are selected as proving that Paul never intended an imitative application in Philippians 2:5-11. These features are the form of verses 6-11, the exegesis of verse 5, and the relationship of verses 9-11 to verses 5-8.[15] In the following few paragraphs, I will briefly address the problems offered by those opposed to imitation from this passage and provide responses.

Johannes Weiss first discovered an underlying poetic structure within these verses.[16] Since then, the majority of scholars have followed suit. [17] The significance behind the form for our discussion came with Lohmeyer. He saw this poetic structure as an indication of a pre-Pauline hymn. [18] Why does this matter? For that answer, Gordon Fee summarizes the significance: "It implies, and this is sometimes vigorously defended, that the real concern of the exegesis is the meaning of the 'hymn' on its own, apart from its present context."[19] Therefore, the meaning of the hymn outside of the Philippian

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[14] Almost every word and phrase within the passage is debated. Richard Melick highlights a few of the interpretive issues: "The thrust of the passage is clear, but scholars have debated almost every aspect of these verses. They have debated the form of the text. . . . They have debated the function of the text in the context of the epistle. . . . Once questions of form and function are answered, there are questions about the details of exegesis. Almost every word of the text has been debated." Richard R. Melick, *Philippians, Colossians, Philemon: An Exegetical and Theological Exposition of Holy Scripture* (Nashville: B&H Publishing Group, 1991), 78. In light of the so many debated issues, Markus Bockmuehl concluded, "Perhaps no other Pauline pericope has been the subject of such sustained critical attention over the past thirty years of New Testament study; the bibliography of scholarly books and articles amounts to several hundred entries." Bockmuehl, "A Commentator's Approach to the 'Effective History' of Philippians," 75.

[15] Other interpretive challenges of the text concern the nature of the *kenosis*, whether or not this passage teaches the pre-existence of Christ, and the meanings of μορφή (vv. 6, 7), ἀπαγμός (v. 6), ὁμοίωμα (v. 7), and σχῆμα (v. 8).

[16] Peter Thomas O'Brien, *The Epistle to the Philippians: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, The New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991), 189.

[17] Gordon Fee comments, "The almost universal judgment of scholarship is that in Phil 2:6-11 we are dealing with an early hymn about Christ." Gordon D. Fee, "Philippians 2:5-11: Hymn or Exalted Pauline Prose?" *Bulletin for Biblical Research* 2 (January 1992): 31. For a helpful summary of the various proposals on the hymn's structure and reception history, see Mark I. Wegener, "Philippians 2:6-11--Paul's (Revised) Hymn to Jesus," *Currents in Theology and Mission* 25, no. 6 (December 1998): 507–17.

[18] Lohmeyer, *Kyrios Jesus: Eine Untersuchung Zur Phil. 2,5-11*. Currently, Ralph Martin offers the most comprehensive defense of this position. Martin, *A Hymn of Christ*.

[19] Fee, "Philippians 2," 34. Discerning a hymnic structure in the passage does not automatically lead to this conclusion. Moisés Silva is an example of a scholar who argues for a hymnic structure, but does not automatically conclude it is pre-Pauline. Moisés Silva, *Philippians*, 2nd ed., Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2005), 93.

context overrides Paul's use of the hymn.[20] The exegesis of the passage then submits to the meaning of the hymn, apart from the context. The meaning of the hymn has nothing to do with imitation.

To interpret the text in this fashion abandons sound exegesis. Whatever the original meaning of the hymn might be, [21] what matters is Paul's use of the hymn. Paul appropriated the hymn into Philippians 2 to further his argument in that passage.[22] Therefore, the meaning that matters is the meaning as the text currently stands. His appropriation came as a call for imitation.

How one understands verse 5 ultimately determines whether or not Paul had the *Imitatio Christi* in view. Regardless of one's conclusion, agreement lies in

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[20] Most scholars assume that this is a hymn, but it is worth noting that no consensus has been reached concerning the strophe layout. O'Brien notes, "In spite of the considerable amount of scholarly work carried out, no consensus has been reached about the exact structure of these verses." O'Brien, *The Epistle to the Philippians*, 191. The two most frequently cited views in recent times show the disparity. Ralph Martin argues for six strophes, each consisting of two lines. Martin, *A Hymn of Christ*, 36–38. Morna Hooker argues for a chiastic structure of four strophes. Morna D. Hooker, *From Adam to Christ: Essays on Paul* (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 88–100. Recently, Martin and Nash have penned a convincing essay defending the notion that Phil 2:6-11 is indeed a hymn. Their defense is not based on the poetic structure of the passage, but on the thematic parallels to ancient *hymnos*. They argue their case heavily on the elements that ancient rhetoricians deem necessary to comprise a *hymnos*. They conclude that ancient rhetoricians would have considered this a hymn by their own understanding of the term. Therefore, for Martin and Nash, the structure has little to do with determining whether or not this is a hymn. See Michael W. Martin and Bryan A. Nash, "Philippians 2:6-11 as Subversive Hymnos: A Study in the Light of Ancient Rhetorical Theory," *The Journal of Theological Studies* 66, no. 1 (April 2015): 90–138.

[21] For Martin, this step frees up the passage from its many exegetical difficulties. He concludes, "Once the hymn's significance in its original form is detached from the use Paul makes of it, we are relieved of these irritating difficulties of interpretation." Martin, *A Hymn of Christ*, 289.

[22] This is not to say that the original context of an appropriated text does not have any bearing on the interpretation. Richard Hays has shown the influence of the original context of appropriated texts. Richard B. Hays, *Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1989); *Reading Backwards: Figural Christology and the Fourfold Gospel Witness* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2014). In Philippians 2, we don't have access to the original context. Therefore, as Besevi and Chapa note, "unless something new comes to light and gives stronger support to one of the previous hypotheses, one should accept the limitations imposed by the text and accept it as it is." Claudio Basevi and Juan Chapa, "Philippians 2:6-11: The Rhetorical Function of a Pauline 'Hymn,'" in *Rhetoric and the New Testament*, ed. Stanley E. Porter and Thomas H. Olbricht (Sheffield, UK: Sheffield Academic Press, 1993), 343. Silva agrees. Despite believing a hymn exists here, he argues that this idea should not shape the exegesis of the passage. He notes, "Whether or not Paul composed these words originally, he certainly used them to support the argument of verses 1-4, and it is primarily in that light that the words must be exegeted. Much of the present exegetical confusion, in fact, may be blamed on the tendency to overemphasize the pre-Pauline setting of our passage, and thus to wrest it from the only context in which it has come down to us." Silva, *Philippians*, 93.

recognizing the verse's position as a bridge between verses 2-4 and 6-11.[23] Those

opposed to imitation fit its interpretation in light of the hymn's independent meaning in

verses 6-11. Therefore, verse 5 reinforces the mindset that they are able to have because

of who they are in Christ, not a call to imitate Christ.

This understanding of verse 5 has two exegetical problems. First, the referent

for τοῦτο points to what Paul has previously said, not to what he will say.[24] τοῦτο points

backwards to the exhortations in verses 3-4 to "count others more significant than

yourselves," and to "look . . . to the interest of others." [25] Therefore, τοῦτο "stands for

τοῦτο τὸ φρόνημα, 'this frame of mind' that Paul just described, and it serves as the

subject of the imperative φρονείσθω."[26] τοῦτο references what the Philippian believers are

called to do, not what they already possess in Christ.[27]

Second, the verb needing to be supplied in the phrase ὅ καὶ ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ

favors an imitative understanding over a non-imitative. Most scholars supply some verb

in this verbless clause.[28] By far, knowing which verb to insert is the most difficult

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[23] O'Brien writes, "v. 5 is an important transitional piece linking the exhortations to the hymn." O'Brien, *The Epistle to the Philippians*, 205.

[24] If τοῦτο points forward, it must be referencing the phrase ὅ καὶ ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ. This phrase is undefined, forcing Martin to introduce a new subject into the text. He believes that the referent "may refer to the response of the 'obedience of faith'. . . by which believers come to be 'in Christ.'" Martin, *A Hymn of Christ*, lxxi.

[25] Gordon D. Fee, *Paul's Letter to the Philippians*, New International Commentary on the New Testament, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 199; Gerald F. Hawthorne, *Philippians*, Word Biblical Commentary. vol. 43 (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1983), 80.

[26] Hawthorne, *Philippians*, 80. He substitutes φρονεῖτε with the inferior reading φρονείσθω.

[27] This use of τοῦτο fits well within its use in the letter. Similar uses of τοῦτό appear in 1:6 (πεποιθὼς αὐτὸ τοῦτο); 1:7 (τοῦτο φρονεῖν); 1:9 (τοῦτο προσεύχομαι); 1:19 (οἶδα γὰρ ὅτι τοῦτο); 1:22 (τοῦτό μοι καρπὸς); 1:25 (τοῦτο πεποιθὼς); 3:7 (ταῦτα ἥγημαι); 3:15 (τοῦτο φρονῶμεν and τοῦτο ὁ θεὸς ὑμῖν ἀποκαλύψει); 4:8 (ταῦτα λογίζεσθε) and 4:9 (ταῦτα πράσσετε). Of all these uses, only 1:6, 9, and 19 point forward. In both 1:6 and 1:9, τοῦτο is followed by a noun clause that explains it. The same could be argued here, but seems unlikely since a new topic is introduced in 1:6 and 1:9. 2:5 differs. Paul is not introducing a new topic. See Fee, *Paul's Letter to the Philippians*, 199.

[28] Martin notes, "All translations of 2:5 have to make sense of the elliptical Greek that Paul writes. In leaving us with a verb-less second part of the verse, literally 'which also . . . in Christ Jesus,' he has set the translator a conundrum, since some complementary expression has to be added to fill the gap." Martin, *A Hymn of Christ*, xlviii. O'Brien is the exception, arguing that "No verb needs to be supplied in v. 5b, while the καί ('also') is given its full force, which is to bring out the parallel between ἐν ὑμῖν and ἐν

exegetical issue in the text. Those against imitation argue that Paul either intended

φρονεῖτε[29] or ἐστίν.[30] In this case, the ellipsis is maintained, resulting in ὅ functioning as

the object of the verb. The point then is that the Philippian believers are to think the way

that one in Christ would think.

The other non-imitative understanding supplies ἐστίν. This forces ὅ to be the

subject, pointing back to the called-upon thinking of the previous verse. The present tense

implies that the readers already possess this type of thinking because they are in Christ.

Both views place the emphasis on one's position of being in Christ, even though each

view gets there differently.[31]

I believe the intended verb is ἦν.[32] The thinking on Paul's mind in this verse is

Christ's thinking. The imperfect ἦν anticipates the illustration of this thinking in verses 6-

11. Paul is concerned with the thinking Christ displayed, not the thinking that a believer

has because he is in Christ.[33] With ἦν as the verb, ὅ functions as the subject, referencing

back to τοῦτο. This results in τοῦτο becoming the key to understanding this clause. As I

argued earlier, τοῦτο refers to the mindset that Paul implores of the readers. It was this

mindset that was ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ.[34] This is a call to imitate Christ, resulting in the

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Χριστῷ." O'Brien, *The Epistle to the Philippians*, 205.

[29] Silva, *Philippians*, 96.

[30] James Thompson and Bruce W. Longenecker, *Philippians and Philemon* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2016), 70.

[31] Thompson writes, "The focus is not on imitating Christ but on recognizing that the people in Christ have a mind that is rooted in the poetic narrative that follows." Thompson and Longenecker, *Philippians and Philemon*, 70.

[32] Fee, *Paul's Letter to the Philippians*, 200. He acknowledges that ἐστίν could work in his understanding of the passage but prefers the imperfect. Like him, I believe the imperfect captures the heart of what Paul is doing.

[33] O'Brien comes to the same conclusion, but believes no verb needs to be supplied. O'Brien, *The Epistle to the Philippians*, 205.

[34] The "in Christ" language is prominent in Philippians: ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ (1:26; 4:7, 19, 21), ἐν Χριστῷ (2:1; 3:3, 14), ἐν κυρίῳ (2:24, 29; 3:1; 4:1, 2, 4), ἐν κυρίῳ Ἰησοῦ (2:19), and ἐν αὐτῷ (3:9). A quick survey of these passages indicates that Paul understood the whole nature of the Christian life as "in Christ." Therefore, it is not surprising that one who is in Christ would live like Christ, by having the same type of

illustration of that mindset in verses 6-11. The simplicity of supplying ἤν makes it the most appealing option. Paul calls his readers to be unified in their thinking—a thinking best displayed by the one they are called to follow.

The last argument against imitation concerns the relationship of verses 9-11 to Paul's argument.[35] Ralph Martin's words are representative of this view when he writes, "The last thing Paul needed to do, then, was to appeal to some hedonistic ethic that promises a future glory if only the Philippians would take the road of humility."[36] But does Paul's call to the believers in Philippi to emulate Christ through verses 6-8 get negated by verses 9-11? I do not believe so. Christ did not force God to exalt him by his humble obedience, neither does the believer. Throughout the Scripture, there is a pattern of God's rewarding of the humble.[37]

Those opposed to imitation in 2:5-11 fail to distinguish what is clearly imitable in the verses from what is simply narrated. The rejection of imitation results in a

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thinking that Christ had.

[35] Another feature that Fee finds as significant is the meaning of the phrase ἐν ὑμῖν. He argues, "Just as v. 4 particularizes ('each' is responsible to apply the imperatives in the context of 'one another'), so here, each is to have this mindset *in you*, but it must also be evident *among you*." Fee, *Paul's Letter to the Philippians*, 200. The benefit for seeing imitation in the passage is that the phrase ὅ καὶ ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ would be parallel, placing the emphasis on the thinking that was in Christ Jesus. Although appealing, the individualizing of the preposition is forced to ignore the normal use of ἐν ὑμῖν. Thielman points out that "the words 'in you' (*en hymin*) are a common idiom in Greek for 'among yourselves.'" Frank Thielman, *Philippians: From Biblical Text--to Contemporary Life*, NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995), 115. Unless compelling reasons should force a different conclusion, the normal use of the idiom should be upheld.

[36] Martin, *A Hymn of Christ*, xxxvii. He earlier had made the statement, "The theological and logical impasse is worsened if we are inclined to see verses 9-11 as proclaiming a heavenly accolade granted to the Kyrios which is *also* applicable to Christians and so made part of Paul's admonition to the Philippians." Martin, *A Hymn of Christ*, xiv–xv.

[37] Psa 89:15-17; Prov 29:23; Matt 18:4; 23:12; Luke 1:52; 14:11; 18:14; Rom 8:17; James 1:9; 4:6; 1 Pet 5:5-6. Fowl's exegesis of Phil 2:9-11 proves that these verses are not necessarily opposed to the imitative purpose of the hymn. See Stephen E. Fowl, *Philippians*, Two Horizons New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005), 101. This viewpoint fits with Paul's anticipation of a believer's future exaltation in 3:20-21. O'Brien reads 3:20-21 in light of Morna Hooker's concept of interchange. Morna D Hooker, "Interchange in Christ," *The Journal of Theological Studies* 22, no. 2 (October 1971): 349–61. O'Brien says, "Jesus humbled himself under God's mighty hand, and the Father has now highly exalted him. The Philippians are to be conformed to Christ's likeness in humility, and they will be exalted when he transforms them into his own likeness." O'Brien, *The Epistle to the Philippians*, 253.

reworking of the exegesis to land in a position opposite the main meaning of the text.[38]
Paul is calling these readers to the very thinking that Christ had.

Applying the Grid to Philippians 2:5-11

Since Paul intended the Philippian believers to follow Christ's example in 2:5-11, the question that needs to be addressed now is whether the proposed grid can provide insight into the focus of imitation. How is Paul calling these believers to imitate Christ? This is important, especially since Paul is calling imitation to Christ's incarnation.[39] But how? How are we able to imitate the incarnation?

Surveying the scholarly landscape reveals a consistent trend concerning Paul's focus of imitation. This passage addresses an attitude,[40] the virtue of humility,[41]a "downward mobility,"[42] a "moral reasoning,"[43] an "attitude of mind,"[44]

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[38]William DeBoer's observation is helpful. He says, "It is interesting to note that the extant commentaries from church fathers to whom Greek was still a living language find no difficulty reading the verses as pointing to Christ being an example." De Boer, *The Imitation of Paul*, 61. Chrysostom says of the passage: Οὐδὲν γὰρ οὕτω τὴν μεγάλην καὶ φιλόσοφον ψυχὴν διανίστησι πρὸς τὴν τῶν ἀγαθῶν ἐργασίαν, ὡς τὸ μαθεῖν, ὅτι τῷ θεῷ κατὰ τοῦτο ὁμοιοῦται. John Chrysostom, *Homilies on Philippians*, trans. by Pauline Allen, Writings from the Greco-Roman World, vol. 36 (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2013), 112. Hereafter all citations will be given as Clement, *Homilies on Philippians*, (Allen, 112). Clement also understood the passage this way. He says concerning the passage, "For Christ is of those who are humble-minded, not of those who exalt themselves over the flock . . . humble-minded, as the Holy Spirit spake concerning Him. You see, beloved, what is the example which is given to us, for if the Lord was thus dumb-minded, what shall we do who, through him, have come under the yoke of His grace." Quoted in Martin, *A Hymn of Christ*, 69.

[39] The impossibility of exact imitation to the incarnation and exaltation in the passage drives someone like Martin to reject the notion altogether. See Martin, *A Hymn of Christ*, xxxv–xxxix.

[40] Homer A. Kent Jr., *Philippians*, The Expositor's Bible Commentary, vol. 11 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1978), 123; William S. Kurz, "Kenotic Imitation of Paul and of Christ in Philippians 2 and 3," in *Discipleship in the New Testament*, ed. Fernando F. Segovia (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985), 105.

[41] De Boer, *The Imitation of Paul*, 207; Wayne A Meeks, "The Man from Heaven in Paul's Letter to the Philippians," in *The Future of Early Christianity*, ed. Birger A. Pearson (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1991), 335; Gorman, *Cruciformity*, 330; Fee, *Paul's Letter to the Philippians*, 199; O'Brien, *The Epistle to the Philippians*, 252.

[42] Susan Eastman, "Imitating Christ Imitating Us: Paul's Educational Project in Philippians," in *The Word Leaps the Gap*, ed. J. Ross Wagner, C. Kevin Rowe, and A. Katherine Grieb (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008), 436. This downward mobility combines the inward mentality with a literal physical descent on the part of Christ.

[43] Thompson and Longenecker, *Philippians and Philemon*, 63.

[44] G. Walter Hansen, *The Letter to the Philippians*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary

and a mindset.[45] Even without a grid, there seems to be a consistent understanding that Paul's focus here lies less on the act of the incarnation and more on the mindset behind the incarnation. If we work through the text in light of the grid, Paul's focus on imitation becomes even sharper, clarifying what he expected for imitation and what he used for illustration. To this grid, I now turn to show how Paul understood that we can imitate Christ in his incarnation.

The *M/A*

The mindset in Philippians 2:5-11 takes its cue within the context of the whole book.[46] Central to the book is the idea of gospel partnership. Paul begins the letter in 1:5, noting κοινωνίᾳ ὑμῶν εἰς τὸ εὐαγγέλιον and closes the letter mentioning their partnership once again in 4:4 (συγκοινωνούς).[47] Partnership plays this role because the advancement of the gospel was threatened. This was the very reason Paul was willing to remain in this life rather than depart to be with the Lord (1:25). His presence was necessary for their

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(Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009), 118–19.

[45] Ben III Witherington, *Paul's Letter to the Philippians: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2011), 137–39; Hawthorne, "The Imitation of Christ," 166.

[46] Stephen Fowl's structuring of the letter has strongly impacted my thinking in this regard. He believes that this passage is the pinnacle of Paul's point in the letter. He calls 2:5-11 the "climax of the argument of the epistle. . . . The arguments both preceding and following draw their force from this passage." Fowl, *Philippians*, 89. I find his reasoning compelling, drawing a similar but slightly nuanced conclusion.

[47] κοινωνίᾳ (partnership) means more than comradery and fellowship. The word included the idea of financial partnership. Chrysostom understood Paul's partnership with the Philippians this way. Commenting on 1:5, he said, οὗτοι δὲ καὶ ἀπόντες ἐκεινώνουν . . . καὶ κατὰ δύναμιν ὑπηρετούμενοι, καὶ οὐδὲν ὅλως ἐλλιμπάνοντες. Later, he adds, Οἶον, ἔρριψέ τις πολλὰ χρήματα διὰ τὸν θεὸν, διαπαντὸς ἀνάκειται τῷ θεῷ. Chrysostom, *Homilies on Philippians*, (Allen, 20). Julien Ogereau has provided substantial evidence that κοινωνίᾳ must be understood in financial terms. Julien M. Ogereau, *Paul's Koinonia with the Philippians: A Socio-Historical Investigation of a Pauline Economic Partnership*, Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen Zum Neuen Testament. 2. Reihe 377 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2014). He argues that Paul's use of the word in Philippians coincides with the Roman concept of *societas* (256-259). Ogereau's contribution is invaluable, but he seems to take his conclusions a bit too far. He sees the partnership exclusively in financial terms. This seems too restrictive in light of 2:1, 3:10, and 4:14. Therefore, Ben Witherington's summarization best captures how Paul understood his partnership with the Philippians. He observes, "The Philippians have always been active partners and participants in the business of spreading the gospel since their conversion. The scope of this partnership involved not merely sending funds when needed for the helper Epaphroditus, but also prayer, suffering for the gospel just as Paul has suffered, and defending their faith." Witherington, *Paul's Letter to the Philippians*, 57.

continued "progress and joy in the faith" (εἰς τὴν ὑμῶν προκοπὴν καὶ χαρὰν τῆς πίστεως).
He was needed for their continued "participation in that progress."[48] It is this progress
that sandwiches our section under discussion (1:25-26; 2:19).

Due to the threat of their progress, Paul shifts his focus in 1:27 to exhortation,
calling the readers to live "worthy of the gospel of Christ (ἀξίως τοῦ εὐαγγελίου τοῦ
Χριστοῦ). To do this required unity.[49] The unity he desired focused on a unity of thinking.
The combination of ἑνὶ πνεύματι and μιᾷ ψυχῇ in 1:27, τὸ αὐτὸ and τὴν αὐτὴν in 2:2, and
τὸ ἕν in 2:2; with ψυχῇ in 1:27, and φρονῆτε, σύμψυχοι, and φρονοῦντες in 2:2 tie the twin
themes of unity and thinking together.[50]

The need for unified thinking and its effect on the advancement of the gospel
falls together with his exhortation in 4:2 to Euodia and Syntyche. Both women were
partners for the gospel. Both women played a role in the advancement of the gospel, and
therefore, both women need to "agree in the Lord" (4:2). This agreement needed to take
place in the way that they thought (τὸ αὐτὸ φρονεῖν). The situation of these two women
illustrate the problem Paul is addressing in 2:2-4. [51] The advancement of the gospel was
threatened by a lack of unified thinking among partners in the gospel.

It is this unified thinking that drives Paul's use of mimesis in 2:5-11.[52] He

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[48] "This progress" refers to the advancement of the gospel. See Silva, *Philippians*, 75.

[49] The clauses στήκετε ἐν ἑνὶ πνεύματι and μιᾷ ψυχῇ συναλθοῦντες τῇ πίστει τοῦ εὐαγγελίου point to the necessity of unity. They follow the ὅτι in order to flesh out how one lives worthy of the gospel of Christ.

[50] Witherington helpfully summarizes, "He is talking about his audience being of one mind, as we would say, having the same Christian spirit, and helping each other struggle together as their faith is tested." Witherington, *Paul's Letter to the Philippians*, 103.

[51] David Garland believes that the lexical connections between these verses create a literary unit at 1:27-4:3. David E. Garland, "The Composition and Unity of Philippians: Some Neglected Literary Factors," *Novum Testamentum* 27, no. 2 (1985): 159–62. Although I do not agree with this breakdown, the lexical connections he argues for cannot be ignored. Still, some commentators like Peter O'Brien think a connection between 2:2-4 and 4:3 is a stretch. O'Brien, *The Epistle to the Philippians*, 479. But others like Silva see that the problem between these two ladies had ramifications for the whole church. See Silva, *Philippians*, 192. This fact is further enhanced when Paul's emphasis on the advancement of the gospel among his partners is considered.

[52] The γάρ makes this connection clear. It should be noted that a textual variant occurs here. The UBS omits the γάρ and provides a B rating. Kurt Aland, *The Greek-English New Testament: UBS Fifth

desired unified thinking in verse 2 (τὸ αὐτὸ φρονεῖτε, σύμψυχοι, and τὸ ἓν φρονοῦντες).

This is why he commands them to think a certain way in verse 5 (φρονεῖτε).[53] Necessary

for unified thinking was an attitude of humility (τῇ ταπεινοφροσύνῃ in 2:3). Therefore, the

unified mindset that Paul called for, he clarifies with the command "in humility count

others more significant than yourselves."[54] ταπεινοφροσύνη is the mindset—the desired

unified thinking that invokes the example of Christ. According to verse 8, he "humbled

himself" (ἐταπείνωσεν ἑαυτόν). What Christ did, reflected an inward mentality of

humility. Therefore, the Philippians were to follow in like manner. They were to be

humble like Christ.

The Pattern of Behavior

This underlying *M/A* of humility led to a pattern of behavior.[55] The humility of

Christ moved him not to count "equality with God a thing to be grasped" (v. 6). The word

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Revised Edition and New International Version (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2015), 653. The B rating differs from the third edition's C rating which was based on the following reasoning: "A majority of the Committee was persuaded that, if γάρ were present originally, no good reason can be found for its deletion, whereas the anacoluthon involved in τοῦτο standing alone seems to cry out for a connective, whether γάρ or οὖν or καί (each of which is found in a variety of witnesses)." Bruce M. Metzger and United Bible Societies., *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament: A Companion Volume to the United Bible Societies' Greek New Testament (Third Edition)* (London: United Bible Societies, 1971), 613. This decision seems surprising since the early 𝔓[42] witness includes it. Silva's following observation is noteworthy: "If anything, an *inferential* conjunction would be natural; not surprisingly, the improved reading οὖν (therefore) is found in a few medieval manuscripts. Inasmuch as the Majority text is characterized by grammatically smooth readings, how then does one explain this γάρ here? It must be original, as seems confirmed by the additional support it receives from the weighty combination of 𝔓[42] and the 'Western' text." Silva, *Philippians*, 112. Silva's reasoning plus the inclusion in P[42] seem to point to the inclusion of γάρ. Regardless, the omission of γάρ does not remove the contextual connections, but its inclusion further supports those connections.

[53] Paul's use of φρονέω is disproportionately frequent in Philippians as compared to his other letters. See Jeffrey T. Reed, *A Discourse Analysis of Philippians: Method and Rhetoric in the Debate over Literary Integrity*, Journal for the Study of the New Testament. Supplement Series. 136 (Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997), 306. This further supports the idea that one of Paul's main concerns in the letter is unified thinking for the advancement of the gospel.

[54] Τη ταπεινοφροσύνῃ describes the manner of the action. William C. Varner, *Philippians: A Handbook on the Greek Text* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2016), 39.

[55] I am borrowing the language of "pattern" from Larry Hurtado. Larry W Hurtado, "Jesus as Lordly Example in Phil 2:5-11," in *From Jesus to Paul: Studies in Honor of Francis Wright Beare* (Waterloo, Ontario: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1984), 120. John Webster proposes a similar idea but refers to it as a "direction" rather than a "pattern." John B. Webster, "Christology, Imitability and Ethics," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 39, no. 3 (1986): 320.

for count in verse 6, ἡγήσατο, is the same word he used in his exhortation to the Philippians in verse 3. They are to count (ἡγούμενοι) "others more significant" than themselves. Only with a mindset of humility could one willingly give up their rights. Paul desired this mindset from them, but that was not all. He desired a pattern of behavior that would flow from humility. This behavior was to count others more significant than oneself. Christ, in his incarnation, epitomized the very behavior to which Paul was calling the Philippians. Therefore, Paul highlights this behavior as a model for the believer to emulate.

Considering others more significant than oneself was not the only pattern of behavior that Paul highlights in the life of Christ. He also points to Christ's obedience to the Father. He speaks of Christ in verse 8 as "becoming obedient to the point of death" (γενόμενος ὑπήκοος μέχρι θανάτου). Through humble obedience, he obeyed the Father, even to the point of death.[56] Christ was completely committed to obey the Father despite the outcome of this obedience. Paul upholds Christ's pattern of behavior not only as commendable, but also as worthy of emulation.[57] Humility would lead to considering others as more significant than oneself and to obedience to the Father. The *M/A* leads to a *pattern* of behavior.

The Illustrative Action

Equipped with the right *M/A*, Jesus developed a pattern of behavior. This

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[56] The participle γενόμενος describes the manner by which he humbled himself. The expression of that humbling comes through his obedience. John Reumann, *Philippians: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, Anchor Yale Bible, vol. 33B. (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2008), 352.

[57] Such use of imitation fits within a Greco-Roman understanding of virtue formation. DeBoer argues that this Greco-Roman background influenced Paul and would have created a shared understanding between Paul and his readers. He defines the Greco-Roman use as "the bringing of something to expression, representation, or portrayal. . . .The factor of likeness, similarity, resemblance is of course basic to imitation. But the process of imitation need not be a dull uncreative repetition of something or someone else. Imitation may also include the creative activity of bringing this, ideas, and persons to expression. Imitation was not only a necessary and natural activity for human beings, but for the Greeks it was also a most worthwhile one. They stimulated and encouraged it." De Boer, *The Imitation of Paul*, 8.

pattern of behavior then led to specific actions. Paul highlights these actions in verses 6-8. Christ became a man (vv. 6-7), and he willingly died (v. 8). These actions are not the call for imitation; they are illustrative of what is being called on for imitation.[58] No other person can lay aside his privileged status with the Father in heaven to take on the form of a servant through an incarnation. No other person can die on behalf of others to secure the saving benefits of redemption on their behalf. The actions simply illustrate what can be imitated from Christ. Christ's incarnation and atoning death illustrate how Jesus manifested the underlying mindset of humility and patterns of behavior of self-sacrifice and obedience to the Father.

Paul did not expect the believers to imitate these specific actions, but the underlying *M/A* and the pattern of behavior.[59] The distinctions between *M/A*, pattern of behavior, and illustrative action become important when faced with trying to discern what should be imitated and what should be understood as illustrated. These categories

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[58] Gorman sees within Philippians 2 a narrative pattern that believers participate in when they experience the grace of Christ. He observes, "His basic conviction can be summarized as follows: to the extent that people (himself included) share in the death of Jesus, so they will also share in his life. Christ's narrative pattern of reversal, from humiliation and death to resurrection and exaltation, is also theirs." Gorman, *Cruciformity*, 319.

[59] That Paul intended the Philippians to imitate these features becomes even clearer when the rest of Philippians is taken into consideration. Paul called the Philippians to join in imitating him and his companions (3:17). This call enforces the call to imitate Christ because as Gerald Hawthorne notes, "The strangeness of this sudden shift from the supreme model to the lesser examples, however, disappears when one realizes . . . he knew that they had been continually patterning their lives after Christ, the example par excellence." Hawthorne, "The Imitation of Christ," 177. Like Christ, Paul laid aside his interests for the interests of the Father and the benefit of others (1:15-18). O'Brien writes, "The advance of the gospel (προκοπὴ τοῦ εὐαγγελίου, 1.12) was enormously important to Paul. He subordinated his own personal interests to the wider concerns of the gospel and read his own personal inconveniences, sufferings, and imprisonment in the light of its progress." Peter T. O'Brien, "The Gospel and Godly Models in Philippians," in *Worship, Theology, and Ministry in the Earch Church: Essays in Honor of Ralph P. Martin*, ed. Michael J. Wilkins and Terence Paige, Journal for the Study of the New Testament 87 (Sheffield, England: JSOT Press, 1992), 273–74. In chapter 3, Paul's description of his own actions parallels those of Christ. Paul counted "everything as loss" (3:8) as Christ "did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped" (2:6). Like Christ, he laid aside his benefits (3:8-11). For a fuller development of the connections between chapters 2 and 3, see Kurz, "Kenotic Imitation of Paul and of Christ in Philippians 2 and 3," 273–74. Worth noting is the balanced approach of Dodd. Brian J. Dodd, "The Story of Christ and the Imitation of Paul in Philippians 2-3," in *Where Christology Began: Essays on Philippians 2*, ed. Ralph P. Martin and Brian J. Dodd (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1998).
This same pattern is recorded of Paul's companions, Epaphroditus and Timothy. Epaphroditus laid aside his comfort and health for the advancement of the gospel (2:30), echoing Christ's pattern of behavior (2:8). Both he and Christ were obedient unto death (μέχρι θανάτου in 2:8 parallels 2:30). Timothy, like Jesus, was willing to lay aside his own interests for the sake of the well-being of others (2:20-22).

can guide the reader through making proper applications from imitation, especially in relationship to the areas of Christ's life that are humanly impossible to imitate.[60] Putting it all together, Table 2. applies this grid to Philippians 2:6-11.

Table 2. The hermeneutical grid for discerning imitation on Philippians 2:6-11

Intended for imitation		Not intended for imitation
M/A • Humility ἐταπείνωσεν (v. 8)	*Pattern of behavior* • Counting others more significant οὐχ . . . ἡγήσατο (v. 6) • Obedience ὑπήκοος (v. 8)	*Illustrative Action* • Incarnation ἑαυτὸν ἐκένωσεν μορφὴν δούλου λαβών (v. 7) • Redemption Θανάτου δὲ σταυροῦ (v. 8) • Exaltation ὁ θεὸς αὐτὸν ὑπερύψωσεν καὶ ἐχαρίσατο αὐτῷ τὸ ὄνομα τὸ ὑπὲρ πᾶν ὄνομα (v. 9)

Paul's focus of imitation in Philippians 2:5-11 becomes clearer when analyzed through the lens of this grid. He zeroes in on the *M/A* and pattern of behavior. This is where imitation lies. The specific applications of these characteristics were revealed in the life of Christ through the incarnation, the redemptive death, and the resulting exaltation. He was not calling the readers to follow the specific applications; rather as

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[60] Many of Paul's calls to the *imitatio Christi* focus on the death of Christ (Rom 15:3; 2 Cor 8:9; 13:4; Eph 5:2, 25). Fowl observed, "The examination of the specific passages in which Paul uses the language of imitation has shown that the language of imitation is closely associated with the cross." Stephen E. Fowl, "Imitation of Paul/Of Christ," in *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters*, ed. Gerald F. Hawthorne, Martin P. Ralph, and Daniel G. Reid (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1992), 431. His death was both redemptive and unrepeatable, forcing the reader to conclude that the focus of imitation must lie somewhere else than in the action.

they applied themselves to the *M/A* and pattern of behavior, a new set of illustrative

actions would result.

2 Corinthians 8:9

The proposed grid from Philippians 2 works in other examples of Pauline

imitatio Christi. The rest of this chapter will be focused on applying this grid to other

Pauline passages. The first passage will be 2 Corinthians 8:9. Like Philippians 2, the

hermeneutical grid provides insights into how Paul understood and intended the example

of Christ to be imitated by the Corinthians.[61]

The context for the appeal to imitation concerns the collection for the saints in

Jerusalem.[62] Paul is encouraging the Corinthian believers to participate in the collection,

appealing to them rather than commanding them (8:8).[63] His appeal to them is that they

might "excel in this act of grace also" (verse 7). "This act of grace" refers back to the act

of giving performed by the Macedonians in verse 3.[64] It is this act that Paul desires the

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[61] Michael Gorman highlights the similarities between Philippians 2 and 2 Corinthians 8. He notes that in both passages, there is a "although x, not y, but z" pattern. See Michael J. Gorman, *Apostle of the Crucified Lord: A Theological Introduction to Paul and His Letters* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004), 372–73.

[62] Why Paul started this relief fund is a matter of significant debate. David Downs offers a helpful survey of the issues and provides his own interpretation. David J. Downs, *The Offering of the Gentiles: Paul's Collection for Jerusalem in Its Chronological, Cultural, and Cultic Contexts*, Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen Zum Neuen Testament. 2. Reihe 248 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008). Dieter Georgi also offers a thorough exposition of the collection. See Dieter. Georgi, *Remembering the Poor: The History of Paul's Collection for Jerusalem* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1992).

[63] Guthrie Paul switches from a tone of command "because he wants them to give voluntarily, as an expression of God's grace at work among them." George H. Guthrie, *2 Corinthians*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2015), 404. Joubert disagrees. He sees this as a rhetorical function on the part of Paul to bridge "the hierarchal and ideological distance between himself and his audience." Stephan Joubert, "Behind the Mask of Rhetoric: 2 Corinthians 8 and the Intra-Textual Relation Between Paul and the Corinthians," *Neotestamentica* 26, no. 1 (1992): 105. Although Joubert makes some helpful observations about Paul's rhetoric, I find Guthrie's reasoning more compelling.

[64] Paul speaks of this act as grace since it is rooted in the work of God in the lives of the Macedonians. In the context, the "term χάρις connotes a variety of things: it refers, as in v 6, to the collection for Jerusalem, but it also implies that the collection, if successfully completed, would be evidence of the abundance of grace among the Corinthians—'grace' both in the theological sense of 8:1 and in the general attitudinal sense of 'graciousness.'" Hans Dieter Betz, *2 Corinthians 8 and 9: A Commentary on Two Administrative Letters of the Apostle Paul* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985), 58.

Corinthians to participate in.

The appeal to the *imitatio Christi* fits well within his argumentation. Paul had already appealed to the example of the Macedonians in verses 1-4, but now in verse 9, he appeals to the ultimate example as motivation for their giving: the example of Christ.[65] As Lim notes, "In retelling the story of Jesus, Paul is attempting to inculcate in the Corinthians the kind of behaviour that he wishes them to emulate. Jesus himself is the model for generous giving."[66] He serves as "the standard of all Christian giving,"[67] brought into the text in order to motivate the Corinthian believers to greater strides of giving.[68] Through the combined examples of the Macedonians and the life of Christ, the Corinthians should have a renewed sense of urgency in giving to the Jerusalem cause.

Applying the Grid to 2 Corinthians 8:9

2 Corinthians 8:9 resembles Philippians 2 in multiple ways.[69] Just like in Philippians 2, Paul points to an action of Christ that poses a problem for imitation. The action lies in the following clause: ὅτι δ' ὑμᾶς ἐπτώχευσεν πλούσιος ὤν. The full discussion concerning Paul's meaning in this clause falls under the section devoted to the illustrative action of the passage, but wherever one lands on the intended meaning of the

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[65] As is the case with Philippians 2, not all scholars find Paul's example here as being an appeal to imitation. Georgi argues, "It would be a mistake to consider this formula a model for a devout life—an example for ascetics to follow by means of economic or other material sacrifice. Even in this context, where the model is specifically applied to the congregation of Corinth, this is certainly not the implication. The Corinthians are not urged 'to do as Christ did.'" Georgi, *Remembering the Poor*, 83.

[66] Kar Yong Lim, "Generosity from Pauline Perspective: Insights from Paul's Letters to the Corinthians," *Evangelical Review of Theology* 37, no. 1 (January 2013): 27.

[67] Frank G. Carver, *NBBC, 2 Corinthians: A Commentary in the Wesleyan Tradition.* (Kansas City, MO: The Foundry Publishing, 2009), 248.

[68] Collins notes, "Paul does not write as he does in 8:9 in order to develop a Christology; rather, he uses a Christology to motivate the Corinthians." Raymond F. Collins, *Second Corinthians*, Paideia Commentaries on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2013), 177.

[69] For a helpful overview of the similarities between the two passages, see Frank J. Matera, *II Corinthians: A Commentary*, New Testament Library (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2003), 190–91.

phrase, an impossible action to be mimicked is being brought forward for imitation. Specifically, Paul draws the Corinthians' attention to Christ's becoming poor. He points to this action as something they were to emulate in some form or fashion. In what way? How were the Corinthians to emulate Christ in 2 Corinthians 8:9? The answer surfaces with the overlaying of the hermeneutical grid on the text.

The *M/A*

Ultimately, Paul points to a *M/A* for imitation—not the specific action of Christ. This passage differs from Philippians 2 in that Paul does not explicitly mention the underlying *M/A*. The *M/A*, rather, can be extracted from Paul's argument in the context. Just before Paul points to the life of Christ, he wrote in verse 8, τὸ τῆς ὑμετέρας ἀγάπης γνήσιον δοκιμάζων. This phrase points to the underlying *M/A* Paul was seeking from the Corinthians. That Paul's ultimate goal was a contribution from the Corinthians cannot be denied, but if they were to willingly do so, it would flow from a genuine love.[70] Love drives behavior. In this case, it drives contributing to the collection.[71]

Paul earlier argues that the Macedonian churches did just this.[72] He speaks of their giving as occurring ἐν πολλῇ δοκιμῇ θλίψεως ἡ περισσεία τῆς χαρᾶς αὐτῶν (v. 2), and μετὰ πολλῆς παρακλήσεως δεόμενοι ἡμῶν (v. 4). To give despite such dire circumstances can only be understood through the lens of love.[73] Their love compelled them to

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[70] Joubert notes, "In verse 8b he namely mentions that he is busy testing a crucial aspect of his 'children's' Christian behaviour, to wit, their love. This remark brings the integrity of the readers to play as the onus is now placed on them to manifest their love for God and their fellow Christians in a concrete manner." Joubert, "Behind the Mask of Rhetoric," 107.

[71] Mark A. Seifrid, *The Second Letter to the Corinthians*, Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2014), 329.

[72] Paul's use of the *imitatio Christi* in verse 9 correlates to his use of the Macedonian example. Therefore, what is said of one could be said of the other. Both examples are intended for Corinthian emulation.

[73] Although Paul never explicitly uses ἀγάπη with reference to the Macedonians, that Paul encourages love from the Corinthians supports the notion that this underlying mindset drove the Macedonian giving.

contribute to the cause despite their difficult situation. Therefore, when Paul introduces the example of Christ in verse 9, he has already appealed to the Corinthians to be driven by love. Love acts. No greater example can be looked at than in the life of Christ. Earlier in 5:14, Paul highlighted God's love.[74] This underlying *M/A* drove him to die for all (v. 14). So is the case here. The example of Christ that Paul points to in 8:9 is an example of love in action.

The Pattern of Behavior

The underlying *M/A* receives little direct attention from Paul in verse 9. It's inclusion in the previous verse helps establish that he was concerned for the Corinthians' attitude. The main emphasis of Paul's use of the *imitatio Christi* in verse 9 concerns the pattern of behavior. He points to Christ's pattern of behavior to induce a similar pattern of behavior from the Corinthians.

Paul's development of the pattern of behavior throughout the passage relates to his use of the word χάρις in the broader pericope. The chapter opens with the statement, γνωρίζομεν δὲ ὑμῖν, ἀδελφοί, τὴν χάριν τοῦ θεοῦ (v.1). This section is driven by a desire to reveal God's grace. What Paul intends to make known by τὴν χάριν τοῦ θεοῦ becomes clearer in the subsequent verses. God's grace does lie in the realm of the abstract but becomes manifested by the pattern of behavior among those who have been given that grace. This is his point in highlighting the Macedonian churches. God's grace was made known through their act of grace. He notes in verse 4 that μετὰ πολλῆς παρακλήσεως δεόμενοι ἡμῶν τὴν χάριν. The use of χάριν in verse 4 ties together God's grace and the resulting grace of his people.[75] The Macedonian contribution was an enactment of grace

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[74] The genitive phrase ἡ ἀγάπη τοῦ Χριστοῦ is best understood as subjective: Christ's love for us. The explanation that Paul gives in the rest of verses 14 and 15 favors this interpretation. For further development, see Ralph P. Martin, *2 Corinthians* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2014), 128.

[75] Martin, *2 Corinthians*, 254.

to the Jerusalem believers. This gift of grace is described as an overflowing of generosity (v. 2) and giving beyond their means despite their poverty (v. 3). This was their pattern of behavior that Paul highlights: a heart of self-denial, driven by grace.

This pattern of self-denial, driven by grace is the same point that Paul highlights with the example of Jesus Christ. In 9:1, he wanted to make known the grace of God. He elaborates on that grace through the example of the Macedonians in verses 1-5. Now, in verse 9, he reiterates his desire to make known God's grace: γινώσκετε γὰρ τὴν χάριν τοῦ κυρίου. The switch from τοῦ θεοῦ to τοῦ κυρίου moves the focus on to Christ. Like he did with the example of the Macedonians, Paul points to the example of Christ to make known grace. Jesus embodied grace. In his grace, he gave himself.[76] He had a pattern of behavior which is best described as giving of himself.

He gave himself for the benefit of others. This is the pattern of behavior that Paul provides in his use of the *imitatio Christi* in 2 Corinthians 8:9. Lim concludes, "The 'self-towering other-regard' paradigm reflected in 2 Corinthians 8:9, as suggested by Horrell, is paradigmatically demonstrated in the central story of Jesus himself, whose self-lowering takes the movement from one extreme to another: from being rich to being poor."[77] It is this grace-driven, self-giving pattern of behavior that the Corinthians are to emulate.

The Illustrative Action

Like with Philippians 2, Paul points to an illustrative action from the life of Christ. This action flows from the attitude of love and the resulting pattern of behavior. Once again, the illustrative action cannot be completely copied. Therefore, this action is

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[76] Jennings points out that "in 2 Cor. 8:9, χάρις refers to the character of Christ in his benefaction." Mark A Jennings, "Patronage and Rebuke in Paul's Persuasion in 2 Corinthians 8-9," *Journal of Greco-Roman Christianity and Judaism* 6 (2009): 117.

[77] Kar Yong Lim, "Generosity from Pauline Perspective," 27. In this citation, Yim makes reference to David G. Horrell, *Solidarity and Difference: A Contemporary Reading of Paul's Ethics*, T & T Clark Cornerstones, 2nd ed. (London: Bloomsbury T & T Clark, 2016).

not the focus of imitation, but merely illustrates what can be imitated. Paul summarized

the action with the clause ὅτι δι' ὑμᾶς ἐπτώχευσεν πλούσιος ὤν, ἵνα ὑμεῖς τῇ ἐκείνου

πτωχείᾳ πλουτήσητε. Because Christ loved others and because he gave of himself, he

became poor so that the Corinthians might become rich.

What does Paul mean by the phrase δι' ὑμᾶς ἐπτώχευσεν πλούσιος ὤν? Many

scholars reach a similar conclusion to Frank Matera. He observed, "In saying that Christ

became poor, Paul implies a prior condition of 'being rich' that most exegetes interpret in

light of the incarnation: the preexistent Son of God who took on the poverty of

humankind. Thus the best commentary on this verse is Phil 2:5-11."[78] That Paul had the

incarnation in mind with this phrase seems difficult to deny,[79] but should this phrase be

limited only to Christ's incarnation? That view seems too narrow. Seifrid aptly points

out, "In his metaphor of poverty, Paul makes no distinction between incarnation and

cross."[80] Therefore, his becoming poor refers to both the incarnation and crucifixion. In

his incarnation and subsequent crucifixion, Christ gave of himself for the benefit of

others. It was through these actions that the Corinthians became rich. This action of

Christ is unique, unable to be copied exactly.[81] That the Corinthians could not do exactly

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[78] Matera, *II Corinthians*, 191. Betz draws a similar conclusion. Betz, *2 Corinthians 8 and 9*, 62. Belleville follows suit, basing her argument on the tense of the verb. She notes, "The aorist is most likely ingressive: Christ 'entered into a state of' poverty. Paul undoubtedly has the incarnation in mind, when Christ gave up the 'riches' of heavenly existence to assume an earthly state called 'poverty.'" Linda L. Belleville, *2 Corinthians* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1996), 216.

[79] The strongest voice of opposition to this interpretation is James Dunn. See James D. G. Dunn, *The Theology of Paul the Apostle* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 290–92.

[80] Seifrid, *The Second Letter to the Corinthians*, 330. He further clarifies, "He is speaking of the communication of salvation and thus surely has the cross in view. His language furthermore presupposes that an exchange has taken place between Christ and the Corinthians. It is *their* poverty into which Christ has entered, and *his* riches that have been given to them. Christ's poverty is thus to be understood as including the whole of human life under sin, death, and condemnation that he has taken on himself. Not merely the cross but also the incarnation lies within Paul's metaphor."Seifrid, 330. See also David E. Garland, *2 Corinthians* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1999), 377; Murray J. Harris, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005), 579–80; Guthrie, *2 Corinthians*, 406.

[81] Trying to understand the correlation Paul is drawing between Christ's actions and Paul's exhortation to the Corinthians has caused Barclay to offer a helpful insight into the interpretation of the passage. He takes the participle phrase πλούσιος ὤν as causative rather than concessive. In doing so, he finds that the correlation between Christ's actions and the Corinthians' response is not an emptying, but a

what Christ did, did not keep Paul from pointing to the *imitatio Christi* in Christ's becoming poor. The Corinthians were to follow suit. Table 3 puts all the parts together, providing the hermeneutical grid of imitation for 2 Corinthians 8:9.

Table 3. The hermeneutical grid for discerning imitation on 2 Corinthians 8:9

Intended for imitation		Not intended for imitation

M/A
• Love
  τῆς ἀγάπης (v. 8)
	Pattern of behavior
	• Give beyond means
	  παρὰ δύναμιν,
	  αὐθαίρετοι
	  (v. 3)
	
	• Act of grace
	  ταύτῃ τῇ χάριτι
	  (v. 7)
		Illustrative Action
		• He became poor
		  ἐπτώχευσεν (v. 8)

With the hermeneutical grid of imitation overlaid on 2 Corinthians 8:1-9, Paul's point of the *imitatio Christi* becomes clear. The Corinthians were to imitate the attitude of love of both the Macedonian churches and Christ. This love worked itself out into a pattern of behavior in which they would deny themselves, and give of themselves, to the Jerusalem saints. Their pattern of behavior would clearly manifest itself through a contribution to the collection. Betz summarizes, "The Jerusalem collection presented the

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willingness to give from an abundance. He notes, "On analogy with this closely parallel passage, 2 Cor 8.9 could be read to mean that (paradoxically) it was precisely because of his wealth, and as an expression of it, that Christ made himself poor. Here, then, 'wealth' means not what Christ possessed, but, with a different and paradoxical sense, *the 'wealth' of his generosity*." John M. G. Barclay, "Because He Was Rich He Became Poor: Translation, Exegesis, and Hermeneutics in 2 Cor 8.9," in *Theologizing in the Corithian Conflict: Studies in the Exegesis and Theology of 2 Corinthians*, ed. Reimund Bieringer et al., Biblical Tools and Studies 16 (Leuven, Belgium: Peeters Publishers, 2013), 340. As he aptly notes, "Paul is less interested here in what Christ gave up than in what he gave out." Barclay, 341. Carver seems to have a similar approach but doesn't play out the implications as clearly as Barclay. See Carver, *NBBC, 2 Corinthians*, 250.

perfect opportunity to respond appropriately to the example of Christ."[82] As they thought like Christ and patterned their behavior after Christ, they would give to the struggling believers in Jerusalem.

Ephesians 5:1-2

Ephesians 5:1 is the only place within the whole of the Pauline corpus where he specifically exhorts his readers to imitate God. He writes, γίνεσθε οὖν μιμηταὶ τοῦ θεοῦ. This call to the imitation of God falls within the *imitatio Christi* since Paul quickly moves on to the example of Jesus in verse 2: καθὼς καὶ ὁ Χριστὸς ἠγάπησεν ἡμᾶς. Paul connects the imitation of God with the imitation of Christ.[83] The adverbial conjunction καθὼς makes a comparison between the love of Christ and the type of love that the Ephesians were to exhibit.[84] In the imitation of Christ's love, the Ephesians would fulfill the call to imitate God. But what does it mean to imitate Christ's love? Once again, the hermeneutical grid of imitation can be used both to sharpen the focus of imitation and make sense of imitating an impossible deed.

Applying the Grid to Ephesians 5:1-2

The call to imitation in Ephesians 5:1-2 acts as a hinge between two sections. The preceding section starts in 4:25 with a series of commands.[85] The final command for forgiveness in verse 32 immediately informs the reader of Paul's use of imitation. God's

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[82] Betz, *2 Corinthians 8 and 9*, 61.

[83] Stanley's words are helpful here. He writes, "It is ultimately the imitation of the Father, revealed to men through the imitation of Jesus Christ in his work of redemption." David Michael Stanley, "Become Imitators of Me: The Pauline Conception of Apostolic Tradition," *Biblica* 40, no. 3 (1959): 877.

[84] Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 644.

[85] This section draws its force off of Paul's exposition of the new man in 4:20-24. The διό in v. 25 indicates that what follows builds off of what he had just said. For a clear explanation of relationship between the sections, see Frank. Thielman, *Ephesians*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2010), 320. The new creation is the power that makes obedience to the commands possible.

forgiveness in Christ ought to motivate the readers to act in like manner. He writes, καθὼς καὶ ὁ θεὸς ἐν Χριστῷ ἐχαρίσατο ὑμῖν.[86] But it is not only what precedes that shapes the use of imitation, but also what follows. Paul moves from forgiveness to love, sandwiching the call to imitation in between. Andrew Lincoln notes this in his commentary, writing, "The idea of imitation of God in 5:1 is defined both by what precedes (God's activity in forgiveness) and by what follows (his love, essential characteristic of his activity in Christ)."[87]

This sandwiching function of 5:1-2 helps clarify how one imitates God by loving like Christ. One imitates God through forgiveness, but the imitation of God is not limited solely to that. The imitation of Christ's love is also an act of imitation of God.[88] As the grid will point out, both features play into Paul's development of the *imitatio Christi* in Ephesians.

The *M/A*

An attitude of love permeates Paul's development of imitation in the passage. Thielman calls love the "summarizing quality" of all that Paul has said since 4:25.[89] Love provides the basis for the series of commands that start in 4:25. The type of love focuses on love towards the brethren. This is clear through the commands: they are centered on relationships within the community.[90] In the immediate context of the *imitatio Christi*, the

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[86] It is worth noting that both here and 5:2 have textual variants in which the person of the pronoun is changed from second to first and first to second. In 4:32, the pronoun is changed from ὑμῖν to ἡμᾶς, and in 5:2 the ἡμᾶς is changed to ὑμᾶς. Neither meaning effects the use of imitation in this passage and is therefore a minor issue concerning the topic of this paper.

[87] Andrew T. Lincoln, *Ephesians*, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word Books, 1990), 311.

[88] The parallelism between both Greek lines should not be missed. Of God, Paul says, καθὼς καὶ ὁ θεὸς ἐν Χριστῷ ἐχαρίσατο ὑμῖν; of Christ, he notes, καθὼς καὶ ὁ Χριστὸς ἠγάπησεν ἡμᾶς.

[89] Thielman, *Ephesians*, 321.

[90] The exception to that statement might be the command in 4:30: καὶ μὴ λυπεῖτε τὸ πνεῦμα τὸ ἅγιον τοῦ θεοῦ. Such would be the case if the statement is analyzed apart from its context. Within the context, this command seems to be linked with the previous commands. Lincoln notes, "It is not a question of some offense aimed directly at the Spirit but rather that believers by committing the sort of sins that have

attitude of love takes center stage. Paul points to Christ's love: καθὼς καὶ ὁ Χριστὸς ἠγάπησεν. Christ's actions towards the Ephesian believers were driven by love. It is due to his love that he was moved to action. Such is the call of the *imitatio Christ*. A pattern of behavior would be sure to follow an attitude of love.

The Pattern of Behavior

This pattern of behavior for the *imitatio Christi* centers on two areas. The first area immediately precedes the call for imitation. Paul commands the readers in 4:32: γίνεσθε . . .χαριζόμενοι ἑαυτοῖς. Love reveals itself through gracious forgiveness of others.[91] A believer who imitates Jesus' attitude of love will imitate the Father's pattern of forgiveness. This fits believers who Paul calls τέκνα ἀγαπητὰ in 5:1. Like their Father, believers will live in a pattern of forgiveness towards others. This pattern flows from love. The second area follows Paul's call for imitation. In 5:2, Paul commands καὶ περιπατεῖτε ἐν ἀγάπῃ. Imitation of God follows a pattern of walking in love.[92] Naturally, if one has the attitude of love, she will progress in a lifestyle characteristic of that love.

Both patterns of behavior are presented as flowing from an attitude of love. Love produces forgiveness. The Father demonstrated this in his forgiveness of his children in Christ. Furthermore, if they are grounded in an attitude of love, they will live their lives in accordance with that love. What this looked like for Christ is provided with an illustrative action, to which we now turn.

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been mentioned in the earlier sentences, sins which disrupt the communal life, are thereby disrupting and opposing the work of the Spirit in building up the Church." Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 307.

[91] Hoehner writes, "They are to become imitators of God who in 4:32 dealt graciously in Christ by likewise acting graciously." Harold W. Hoehner, *Ephesians: An Exegetical Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2002), 644.

[92] Markus Barth likens Paul's call for imitation of God in this passage with the Old Testament phrase "following after" God. See Markus Barth, *Ephesians 4-6*, Anchor Bible, vol. 34-34A (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1974), 556.

The Illustrative Action

The illustrative action of Christ's love comes in the clause ὁ Χριστὸς . . . παρέδωκεν ἑαυτὸν ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν. The aorist verb παρέδωκεν points to a specific action in Christ's life, seeming best explained as a reference to the cross of Christ.[93] This assertion is affirmed with Paul's description of the giving over as προσφορὰν καὶ θυσίαν τῷ θεῷ εἰς ὀσμὴν εὐδίας. In his giving, Christ was sacrificing to God—language reminiscent of the Old Testament sacrificial system.[94] Christ gave in that he went to the cross on behalf of us (ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν). His attitude of love resulted in a pattern of walking love; as he walked in love, he willingly gave of himself for others through his sacrificial death. Therefore, placing Paul's use of imitation in Ephesians 5:1-2 within the hermeneutical grid is illustrated in Table 4.

Table 4. The hermeneutical grid for discerning imitation on Ephesians 5:2

Intended for imitation		Not intended for imitation
M/A • Love ὁ Χριστὸς ἠγάπησεν (5:2)	*Pattern of behavior* • Forgiveness χαριζόμενοι ἑαυτοῖς, καθὼς καὶ ὁ θεὸς ἐν Χριστῷ ἐχαρίσατο ἡμῖν (4:32) • Walk in love περιπατεῖτε ἐν ἀγαπη (5:2)	*Illustrative Action* • He gave himself παρέδωκεν ἑαυτὸν ἑαυτὸν ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν (5:2)

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[93] Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 647.

[94] Thielman notes, "The curious phrase 'for a fragrant aroma' was an OT idiom for God's acceptance of a sacrifice because of the sincerity and wholeheartedness of the worshiper." Thielman, *Ephesians*, 322.

The attitude of love drove the pattern of behaviors—consisting of walking in love and forgiving others. In the example of Christ, this led him to give himself for others. In the case of the readers, Paul expects them to flesh out the *M/A* and patterns of behavior. Within the context, he provides exactly what he had in mind. This nebulous designation received clarification earlier in the context. As was earlier argued, the call for imitation sums up the previous commands starting in 4:25. If the Ephesians were imitating Christ, they would be speaking truth (v. 25), being angry and not sinning (v. 26), no longer stealing (v. 28), speaking graciously (v. 29), being kind (v. 32), and forgiving (v. 32). All these clarify the nature of imitating the love of Christ.[95]

1 Corinthians 11:1

The last Pauline text on which I will overlay the hermeneutical grid for imitation is 1 Corinthians 11:1. In this passage, Paul commands, "Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ." This passage differs from the previous three in that there is no specific call to the *imitatio Christi*. Paul does not even offer the example of Christ to follow; rather, his command μιμηταί μου γίνεσθε focuses in on the apostle Paul, not the Lord. This does not mean that the *imitatio Christi* plays no part in Paul's thought, for the phrase that immediately follows—καθὼς κἀγὼ Χριστοῦ—indicates that in the rough imitation of Paul would come the imitation of Christ.[96] The Corinthians were to imitate Paul, who in turn was imitating Christ. Therefore, the call to imitate Paul was a call to imitate Christ. This brings Fee to conclude, "The emphasis here is certainly on the example of Christ."[97]

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[95] Most commentators make this connection. Hoehner notes, "to be an imitator of God is to walk in love." Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 646. Best believes that forgiveness and love are the primary emphasis of imitation in the passage. Ernest Best, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Ephesians*, International Critical Commentary on the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments (Edinburgh, Scotland: T & T Clark, 1998), 467. See also Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 310–12.

[96] This verse drives Michael Allen to conclude that true imitation of Christ takes place through ethical triangulation: imitation of others, not necessarily Christ. See Allen, "Imitating Jesus."

[97] Gordon D. Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987), 540.

When Paul's call to imitation is established within its context, the focus of imitation emerges. This becomes clearer when the passage is filtered through the hermeneutical grid of imitation.

Applying the Grid to 1 Corinthians 11:1

1 Corinthians 11:1 concludes a lengthy argument beginning back in 8:1.[98] In this verse, Paul switches his attention from questions of marriage to the subject of meat offered to idols,[99] of which 11:1 serves as his final instruction in that matter. [100] Therefore, to discover the intended focus of imitation, we must look back to his instruction in chapters 8-10. If the hermeneutical grid is placed on the instructions found in those chapters, then once again, Paul's call for imitation can be clarified.

The *M/A*

All of Paul's argument in chapters 8-10 boil down to his desire for the Corinthians to adopt a certain *M/A* related to the eating of idol meat.[101] The practice had created division within the church. Some "through former association with idols, eat food as really offered to an idol, and their conscience, being weak, is defiled" (8:7). Others

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Ciampa goes even further, arguing "that Paul had Christ's example in mind may have been telegraphed by his reference in v. 33 to 'the good of many' since Isaiah 53:11-12 LXX describes the suffering servant as the righteous one 'who serves many well' and 'who bore the sins of many.'" Roy E. Ciampa, *The First Letter to the Corinthians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010), 498.

[98] Gorman, *Cruciformity*, 59.

[99] περὶ δὲ at the beginning of verse 1 signifies this switch. This phrase appears five other times in the letter: 7:1, 25; 12:1; 16:1, 12. Each of those occurrences signal a movement of thought within Paul's argumentation. His use of this does not necessarily signal a section change each time, as is the case in 16:12. But the use of περὶ δὲ here clearly signals a change. For a defense of why 16:12 is an exception to the rule, see Andrew David Naselli, "The Structure and Theological Message of 1 Corinthians," *Presbyterion* 44, no. 1 (2018): 102.

[100] Johnson writes, "Commentators generally agree that this concluding section refers back to the whole of chapters 8-10 on the question of Christian behavior and idol food." Alan F. Johnson, *1 Corinthians*, IVP New Testament Commentary Series, vol. 7 (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2004), 176–77.

[101] Fee observes, "Typically for him his first concern is with the *attitude* that lay behind their behavior and argument. The abuse of others in the name of 'knowledge' indicates a total misunderstanding of the nature of Christian ethics." Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 399. Emphasis original.

understood that an "idol has no real existence" (8:4), and through that knowledge indulge in meat offered to idols. In the process of doing so, these knowledgeable believers were wounding the conscience of the weaker brethren (8:12). The practice comes under scrutiny, but the main focus of Paul's argument concerns the underlying attitude of the knowledgeable Christians.[102]

The mindset Paul sought from the Corinthian believers is summed up by his statement in 10:24: μηδεὶς τὸ ἑαθτοῦ ζητείτω ἀλλὰ τὸ τοῦ ἑτέρου. Despite whatever knowledge they had, these believers were to be seeking the good of others, not their own good. Furnish summarizes Paul's focus as a "concern to 'please' or 'do good' to all men."[103] This was Paul's personal mode of operation. He sought the good of all people. In 9:19-23, he explains how this mindset fleshed itself out in his ministry. Because he was driven by the good for others, he made himself "a servant to all" that he might "win more of them" (9:19). The good of others is their share in the blessings of the Gospel (9:23).

The Corinthians were to follow suit. Rather than be driven by their own desires, informed by their superior knowledge, they needed to prioritize the good of others. This mindset was to transcend beyond Christian relationships, apparent within Paul's instruction to refuse known idol meat. He tells them to refrain "for the sake of the one who informed" them (10:28). Again, the focus lies on the good of others.

When Paul finally gets to the call of imitation, he has already built the case for

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[102] This is not to say that there are not other issues that Paul is addressing in these chapters. Fee convincingly points to four issues. Fee, *Corinthians*, 394–401. Despite addressing these four issues, the main concern lies on the underlying mindset.

[103] Victor Paul Furnish, *Theology and Ethics in Paul*, The New Testament Library (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2009), 220. He believes Paul's call for imitation in 11:1 directly refers to 10:24. One could argue that the *M/A* Paul is seeking is that of love. In 8:1, he contrasts knowledge with love, and further speaks of loving God in v. 3. Thompson believes this. He notes, Paul is calling for loving behavior, having defined what love is. The call for imitation in 10:33-11:1 indicates that Paul has exemplified loving behavior. Love means not seeking one's own (10:24)." James W. Thompson, *Moral Formation According to Paul: The Context and Coherence of Pauline Ethics* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2011), 164. In a sense, it can be conceded that love drives the whole passage but love quickly exits the passage. Paul's main emphasis within the passage lies in a mindset of seeking the good of others.

adopting a similar mindset to his own. Immediately preceding the call, he sums up this mentality in 10:33. His goal is "to please everyone in everything . . . that they may be saved" (10:33). Paul's call to imitation must have included an underlying desire to do good to others.

The Pattern of Behavior

As was the case in the other *imitatio Christi* passages, so it is here: the *M/A* leads to a pattern of behavior. In 2 Corinthians 8-10, the mindset of seeking to do good to others moves one to sacrifice his own rights. Scholars label this pattern of behavior as not pleasing self,[104] as setting aside one's rights,[105] or as a pattern of self-emptying.[106] Paul points to his own life as an example. He sacrificed his own rights in pursuit of doing good to others.

This pattern of behavior is put on display immediately preceding the call to imitation. In 10:33, he points to himself as an example of the principles. He notes, "Just as I try to please everyone in everything I do, not seeking my own advantage." The participle ζητῶν is subordinate to the main verb ἀρέσκω, functioning as a participle of manner.[107] Therefore, the way in which Paul sought to please everyone was by not seeking his own interests. The *M/A* the Corinthians were to imitate led to a pattern of behavior that they were to follow.

Through imitation of Paul, the Corinthians would develop a similar pattern of behavior. This would flesh itself out in the idol meat controversy. Rather than fight for

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[104] Andrew D. Clarke, *Serve the Community of the Church: Christians as Leaders and Ministers* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 226–27.

[105] Linda L. Belleville, "'Imitate Me, Just as I Imitate Christ': Discipleship in the Corinthian Correspondance," in *Patterns of Discipleship in the New Testament*, ed. Richard N. Longenecker (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 126; Ciampa, *The First Letter to the Corinthians*, 498; David E. Garland, *1 Corinthians* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2003), 502; Gorman, *Cruciformity*, 185–86.

[106] Richard B. Hays, *First Corinthians* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1997), 179.

[107] Timothy A. Brookins and Bruce W. Longenecker, *1 Corinthians: A Handbook on the Greek Text* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2016), 26.

one's right to eat meat, the Corinthians were to seek the well-being of others through the relinquishment of this right. Paul indicates his own willingness to live in such a fashion. He points out in 8:13, "Therefore, if food makes my brother stumble, I will never eat meat, lest I make my brother stumble." Through the imitation of his example, the Corinthians would be patterning their lives in a manner which seeks the good of others. Garland sums up the situation well, when he writes, "By relinquishing their so-called rights to act on their so-called knowledge, they follow the example of Paul and the greater example of Christ."[108]

The Illustrative Action

The underlying mindset of seeking the good of others (ζητείτω . . . τὸ τοῦ ἑτέρου; 10:24) should naturally lead to a pattern of behavior of self-sacrifice (ζητῶν . . . σύμφορον . . . τὸ τῶν πολλῶν; 10:33). Following the pattern of the other imitation passages, we should expect a concrete example, illustrating how the *M/A* and pattern of behavior were put into action. Paul does this in 9:4-12. Through a series of questions, he reveals his refusal of certain rights: marriage (v. 5) and compensation (vv. 4, 6-11). Paul would have demanded these rights, but chose to sacrifice them for the benefit of others. He concludes in verse 12, "Nevertheless, we have not made use of this right, but we endure anything, rather than put an obstacle in the way of the gospel of Christ." The best scenario for others was an unimpeded gospel.

The reason Paul puts himself on display in chapter 9 was not to have the Corinthians emulate his actions identically. He was not expecting them to forego the same rights of compensation and marriage as he had; rather, he offers these illustrative actions as proof of how the *M/A* and pattern of behavior had worked itself with respect to Paul's ministry. Paul encouraged imitation of the *M/A* and pattern of behavior so that the

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[108] Garland, *1 Corinthians*, 502.

Corinthians would make a similar conclusion concerning idol meat. He explicitly

illustrated his own application with his words in 8:13. Naturally, if they imitate him, the

Corinthians would follow suit. Therefore, applying the grid to the use of imitation in 1

Corinthians 11:1 is seen in Table 5.

Table 5. The hermeneutical grid for imitation on 1 Corinthians 11:1

Intended for imitation		Not intended for imitation
M/A • Good of others μηδεὶς τὸ ἑαθτοῦ ζητείτω ἀλλὰ τὸ τοῦ ἑτέρου (10:24)	*Pattern of behavior* • Self-sacrifice κἀγὼ πάντα πᾶσιν ἀρέσκω μὴ ζητῶν τὸ ἐμαυτοῦ σύμφορον (10:33)	*Illustrative Action* • Sacrificing marriage μὴ οὐκ ἔχομεν ἔχομεν ἐξουσίαν ἀδελφὴν γυναῖκα (9:5) • Sacrificing compensation μὴ οὐκ ἔχομεν ἔχομεν ἐξουσίαν φαγεῖν καὶ πεῖν (9:4)

Paul's call to the Corinthians for imitation of himself parallels a similar pattern

of other *imitatio Christi* passages already discussed. Unlike the other passages, no appeal

to the imitation of Christ is made for the readers. Rather, the imitation lands on Paul, yet

his appeal to their imitation of him rests on his imitation of Christ. The two are

connected. Through the direct imitation of Paul, the Corinthians will imitate Christ

indirectly.[109]

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[109] Linda Belleville puts the pieces together in the following way: "All this suggests that conformity to the example of Christ is to be found in setting aside personal rights and privileges for the good of others. . . . Servanthood, then, was something that Jesus exemplified, something that Paul, in turn, modeled, and something that we, as well, are called to emulate." Belleville, "'Imitate Me, Just as I Imitate

The appearance of Christ in the passage is not random.[110] Throughout the passage, Christ has been on Paul's mind. His own example of seeking the good of others through self-sacrifice flowed from his imitation of Christ. That much is clear. What remains unclear is the illustrative action Christ committed. What did Christ do to illustrate a pattern of behavior of self-sacrifice? Given the centrality of the cross in 1 Corinthians,[111] it would not be a stretch to think that Christ's death was the underlying action of Christ that Paul imitated.[112] Through his death, Jesus sought the good of others. It was an action of self-sacrifice. This was Paul's call to the Corinthians for imitation.

Conclusion

Paul offers a robust picture of the *imitatio Christi* in his writings. He expected his readers to imitate Christ, not in his actions, but in his underlying *M/A* and resulting pattern of behavior. The actions of Christ illustrated the way in which the *M/A* and pattern of behavior worked itself out in the life of Christ. Therefore, much of what Paul points to in his development of the *imitatio Christi* are actions unique to Christ. Particularly, the incarnation (Phil 2:5; 2 Cor 8:9) and the death of Christ (Eph 5:2; 2 Cor 8:9; 1 Cor 11:1) lie at the forefront of Paul's understanding of imitation. Paul points to these actions as the prime example for the believer to follow.

Christ': Discipleship in the Corinthian Correspondence," 126.

[110] Richard Hays finds the mention of Christ random. He observes, "Paul concludes the section, leaving the word 'Christ' hanging in the air, without explanation or elaboration. Perhaps he trusted the Corinthians, having already heard what he had to say in 1:18–2:5 about Jesus Christ crucified, could work out the implications of this for their own lives." Hays, *First Corinthians*, 179.

[111] The death of Christ is central to the theology of 1 Corinthians. Paul specifically refers to Christ's death in 1:17, 18, 23; 2:2, 8; 5:7; 10:16; 11:26; 15:3, 12, 21.

[112] Ciampa believes that the exaction of Christ Paul imitated is found within the passage itself. He writes, "Paul referred to the example of Christ that he has in mind in 8:11, where he pointed out that Christ died for the weak, and the reference to Christ's blood and body in 10:16 points in the same direction." Ciampa, *The First Letter to the Corinthians*, 498.

CHAPTER 3

FOLLOW IN HIS STEPS:
PETRINE AND JOHANNINE *IMITATIO CHRISTI*

In their respective letters, both Peter and John use similar language in their development of the *imitatio Christi*. Peter points to Christ's suffering as an example "so that you might follow in his steps" (1 Pet 2:20). John argues that "whoever says he abides in him [Christ] ought to walk in the same way in which he walked" (1 John 2:6). For both authors, imitation lies in following that path that Jesus forged. Although their language for the *imitatio Christi* may be different from Paul's, their call for imitation follows a similar pattern. Like Paul, Peter and John are able to point to actions of Christ seemingly impossible to replicate. Nevertheless, they call for imitation from those actions. They reach similar points of emphasis as that of Paul. When the hermeneutical grid is placed on the passages, the seemingly impossible action to imitate becomes imitable.

1 Peter 2:21

In the first half of this chapter, I will explore Peter's use of the *imitatio Christi*, and then turn to the Johannine *imitatio Christi* in the second half. Peter had a clear place for imitation in the Christian life. So much so, Julian Love believes that Peter understood the whole Christian life as living in imitation,[1] and Robert Tinsley believes that 1 Peter provides the clearest development of the *imitatio Christi* in the New Testament.[2]

The Fact of Imitation

They may overstate the case, but the place of the *imitatio Christi* within 1 Peter lines up with Peter's purpose for writing the letter. Peter makes his purpose known in his conclusion. He explains in 5:12, "I have written briefly to you, exhorting and declaring

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[1] Love is clear to keep grace at the forefront, arguing that imitation of Christ in 1 Peter is "more than an ethic, and the writer never develops a code of practice divorced from religious incentive." Julian P. Love, "First Epistle of Peter," *Interpretation* 8, no. 1 (January 1954): 74.

[2] Tinsley notes, "If I had to choose a single book from the New Testament to illustrate the Christian conception of the imitation of God, none could be better than the First Epistle of St Peter." Tinsley, *The Imitation of God in Christ*, 166.

that this is the true grace of God. Stand firm in it."[3] All that Peter wrote relates to God's grace, but the letter is not limited to a mere exposition of grace. He exhorts the readers to action: εἰς ἥν στῆτε. The readers are to stand firm in that grace. This purpose statement shapes the practical nature of the book.[4] He weaves theology and application throughout the letter by explanation and exhortation.[5]

1 Peter resembles Greco-Roman paraenetic literature.[6] Since one feature of paranaetic literature is imitation, we should not be surprised at Peter's incorporation of the *imitatio Christi*. Within paraenetic literature, the use of imitation provides "*embodied* exhortations," allowing the reader to personalize the instructions and apply them in daily life.[7] Peter follows course. In the letter, he points to the exemplary life of Christ.[8] Christ epitomized what it means to stand and live in the grace of God. The readers were to

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[3] Scholars generally agree that 5:12 holds the key to the purpose of the book. Jobes' conclusion regarding the purpose summarizes well the purpose. She writes that the purpose of 1 Peter is "to teach and thereby strengthen his readers in the Christian faith." Karen H. Jobes, *1 Peter* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2005), 42. See also Thomas R. Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, The New American Commentary, vol. 37 (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2003), 45; Duane Frederick. Watson, *First and Second Peter* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2012), 9; Paul J. Achtemeier, "Newborn Babes and Living Stones: Literal and Figurative in 1 Peter," in *To Touch the Text: Biblical and Related Studies in Honor of Joseph A. Fitzmyer*, ed. Maurya P. Horgan and Paul J. Kobelski (New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 1989), 235.

[4] See J. N. D. Kelly, *The Epistles of Peter and of Jude*, Black's New Testament Commentary (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1999), 25.

[5] In 5:12, Peter wrote that he also had declared to them the grace of God. Elliot points to the "interrelation of the indicative and imperative" in the letter. John H. Elliott, "Backward and Forward 'In His Steps': Following Jesus from Rome to Raymond to Beyond. The Tradition, Redaction, and Reception of 1 Peter 2:18-25," in *Discipleship in the New Testament*, ed. Fernando F. Segovia (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985), 202. Throughout the book, he not only is exhorting the readers to act a certain way, but he is also proclaiming to them the great truths of grace (1:2-5, 10-12, 18-21, 23-25; 2:5-10, 24; 3:18-20; 5:10).

[6] J. de Waal Dryden offers the best defense of understanding 1 Peter as paraenetic literature, similar to the paraenetic Greco-Roman literature of the time. J. de Waal Dryden, *Theology and Ethics in 1 Peter: Paraenetic Strategies for Christian Character Formation*, Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen Zum Neuen Testament, 2. Reihe, 209 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2006). See especially pages 37-53 for his defense. Whether or not 1 Peter should be understood *definitively* as a paraenetic letter lies beyond the scope of this paper. That there are similarities are pretty hard to deny. Dryden believes there are three similarities. He finds an overlap between 1 Peter and Greco-Roman literature in the following ways: "(1) moral instructions, (2) an emphasis on conversion, and (3) pragmatically shaped worldview." Dryden, *Theology and Ethics in 1 Peter*, 43.

[7] Dryden, *Theology and Ethics in 1 Peter*, 30. Emphasis original.

[8] 1 Peter 2:21-25; 3:18; 4:1, 13. His call for imitation is not limited solely to Christ. In 3:5-6, he urges wives to follow the example of their matriarch Sarah.

follow suit.

The most explicit example of Peter's use of the *imitatio Christi* is found in 2:19-25. In verse 21, he declares that Christ suffered ὑμῖν ὑπολιμπάνων ὑπογραμμὸν ἵνα ἐπακολουθήσητε τοῖς ἴχνεσιν αὐτοῦ.[9] Both clauses—ὑμῖν ὑπολιμπάνων ὑπογραμμὸν and ἵνα ἐπακολουθήσητε τοῖς ἴχνεσιν αὐτοῦ—succinctly point to the *imitatio Christi*. Yet, just as was the case in Philippians 2, some scholars resist the notion that Peter is calling for imitation here. Paul Achtemeir and D. Edmond Hiebert argue that the emphasis within the passage is on following Christ, not imitating him.[10] This may sound like splitting hairs, but the passage itself points to imitation, not a mere following.

With the two clauses ὑμῖν ὑπολιμπάνων ὑπογραμμὸν and ἐπακολουθήσητε τοῖς ἴχνεσιν αὐτοῦ, Peter clearly intended that the readers not only look to follow the example of Christ, but to imitate him. In the first clause, ὑπολιμπάνων is subordinate to the verb ἔπαθεν.[11] This participle could either be understood as a telic or resultant participle.[12] Either way, the point remains: Christ's suffering purposely left an example to be

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[9] Some manuscripts have ἡμῖν instead of ὑμῖν. The reading chosen here follows the UBS text.

[10] Achtemeier prefers to limit Peter's notion to "following" rather than imitation. Paul J. Achtemeier and Eldon Jay Epp, *1 Peter: A Commentary on First Peter*, Hermeneia: A Critical and Historical Commentary on the Bible (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1996), 199. Hiebert sees Christ as the guide. He argues that the emphasis should be that Christ is followed, not imitated. D. Edmond Hiebert, "Following Christ's Example: An Exposition of I Peter 2:21-25," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 139, no. 553 (January 1, 1982): 34. In the end, what both commentators say of the passage sounds very similar to the idea of imitation assumed in this paper.

[11] There is a variant reading here: ἀπέθανεν. This should be disregarded for the reasons Thomas Schreiner provides. He observes, "Both the internal (the theme of suffering in 1 Peter) and external evidence (𝔓72, A, B, L, 33, 81, 614, 1739, and others) support the term ἔπαθεν." Thomas R. Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2003), 142.

[12] Daniel Wallace points out that there can be significant semantic overlap between the two. He writes, "Many result participles describe the result of an action *that was also intended*. The difference between the two, therefore, is primarily one of emphasis." Daniel B. Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics: An Exegetical Syntax of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 637. Achtemeier calls it an "adverbial participle of attendant circumstance, here displaying the result of the action." Achtemeier and Epp, *1 Peter*, 199.

imitated.[13] Peter saw ethical implications in the suffering of Christ.[14] What Christ left through his death, Peter labels ὑπογραμμὸν. This word points to the *imitatio Christi*. BDAG defines this word as a "'model, pattern' to be copied in writing or drawing . . . model of behavior, example."[15] In non-biblical literature, "ὑπογράφοντες γραμμὰς τῇ γραφίδι, is used for the drawing of lines by the elementary teacher in order to guide the children who are learning to write."[16] As a teacher left a pattern for the student upon which to trace, so has Christ done for those who are his disciples. He forged a path of suffering that they must trace upon if they are to follow him.

Despite Peter's reference to Christ's sufferings as a ὑπογραμμὸν, Schrenk still doesn't believe Peter has imitation in mind. He asserts, "They are told that Christ in His suffering has left footprints which we must take as models or examples in the way that the scholar follows the guiding lines of his teacher. This does not mean that there is to be a copying or *imitatio* of Christ."[17] This assertion seems difficult to maintain in light of the four other places where this word is found in early religious literature. This word is found

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[13] This does not strip the suffering of Christ from its redemptive purpose. The two concepts are not mutually exclusive. ὑπὲρ ὑμῖν, which immediately follows ἔπαθεν, points to the redemptive purpose in Christ's suffering. His obedience to the Father in his suffering had both a redemptive and ethical implication. Furthermore, in verse 24, the redemptive purpose is clearly indicated with the clause ὅς τὰς ἁμαρτίας ἡμῶν αὐτὸς ἀνήνεγκεν.

[14] The suffering is centered on the trial and crucifixion of Christ. The context favors this interpretation. In v. 24, Peter points to the atonement provided by Christ's death on a tree, and his use of Isaiah 53 in vv. 22-23 focuses in on the trial of Christ. Grudem disagrees with this conclusion. He believes Peter chose *suffered* instead of *died* "in order to focus on Christ's life of sufferings." Wayne A. Grudem, *The First Epistle of Peter: An Introduction and Commentary*, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries 17 (Leicester, England: InterVarsity Press, 1988), 128. See also Duane Frederick Watson and Terrance Callan, *First and Second Peter*, Paideia Commentaries on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2012), 69. I remain unconvinced. I concur with Dryden's conclusion: "At this point, we are forced to acknowledge Χριστὸς ἔπαθεν as a reference to the whole of Christ's passion, that is to his sufferings *and* his death, seen as a unit." Dryden, *Theology and Ethics in 1 Peter*, 181. See also Brazen's defense in Ivan T Blazen, "Suffering and Cessation from Sin According to 1 Peter 4:1," *Andrews University Seminary Studies* 21, no. 1 (1983): 28–30.

[15] Arndt et al., *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 1036.

[16] Gottlob Schrenk, "Ὑπογραμμός," in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. Gerhard Kittel, trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006), 772. See M. Eugene. Boring, *1 Peter*, Abingdon New Testament Commentaries (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1999), 121.

[17] Schrenk, "Ὑπογραμμός," 773.

in 2 Maccabees 2:28; 1 Clement 16:17, 33:8, and Polycarp's Letter to the Philippians 8:2. Of the four other uses, only 2 Maccabees does not use the word in a way similar to 1 Peter.[18] The early church understood ὑπογραμμὸν to refer to imitation; I do not see why we should understand it differently.

Secondly, the purpose clause ἵνα ἐπακολουθήσητε τοῖς ἴχνεσιν αὐτοῦ further points to Peter's intention of imitation. The ἵνα could be connected back to the verb ἔπαθεν but is best taken as connected to the participle ὑπολιμπάνων. Therefore, Peter is providing the reason that Jesus left this pattern: for the believer to follow.[19] This following is walking in the steps of Christ—imagery for imitation. Peter desired that the readers would imitate their Savior in the way that they suffered.

The Intended Audience

Before analyzing the text in light of the hermeneutical grid, it is worth exploring the intended audience. Is Peter's instructions in 2:21 addressed to all believers or is this instruction limited to the slaves he addressed in verse 18?

I believe that Paul's call for imitation in 2:21 is intended for all believers, not

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[18] 2 Maccabees 2:28 says, τὸ μὲ διακριβοῦν περὶ ἑκάστων τῷ συγγαφεῖ παραχωρήσαντες, τὸ δὲ ἐπιπορεύεσθαι τοῖς ὑπογραμμοῖς τῆς ἐπιτομῆς διαπονοῦτες. The author seems to be using ὑπογραμμὸν to refer to the "rules" within writing a history without providing all the details. In Clement's two uses, he understands ὑπογραμμὸν as a pattern left by Christ for believers to imitate. 1 Clement 16:17 says, τίς ὁ ὑπογραμμὸς ὁ δεδομένος. Within the letter's context, this is a reference to the pattern of Christ's humility. Clement believed Christians were to emulate this humility, evidenced by the question he asks: οὕτως ἐταπεινοφρόσθνησεν, τί ποιήσωμεν ἡμεῖς οἱ ὑπό τὸν ζυγὸν τῆς χάριτος αὐτοῦ δι᾽αὐτοῦ ἐλθόντες; Michael W. Holmes, *The Apostolic Fathers: Greek Texts and English Translations* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007), 69. In 16:33, Clement uses ὑπογραμμὸν the following clause: ἔχοντες οὖν τοῦτον τὸν ὑπογραμμὸν. Holmes, *The Apostolic Fathers*, 89. The participle ἔχοντες is subordinate to the clause ἀόκνως προσέλθωμεν τῷ θελήματι αὐτοῦ. Again, ὑπογραμμὸν is being used of Christ as a call for believers to emulate.
In Polycarp's single use of ὑπογραμμὸν is in his *Letter to the Philippians*. He uses it at the end of verse 2 as he concludes his thoughts from what came before. He wrote, τοῦτον γὰρ ἡμῖν τὸν ὑπογραμμὸν ἔθηκε δι᾽ἑαυτοῦ, καὶ τοῦτο ἐπιστεύσαμεν. Holmes, *The Apostolic Fathers*, 291. Here, ὑπογραμμὸν refers to the patient endurance of Christ from verse 1. Polycarp pointed to Christ's life not only to exemplify his actions, but to call the audience to imitation. In the beginning of verse 2, he wrote, μιμηταὶ οὖν γενώμεθα τῆς ὑπομονῆς αὐτοῦ. He expected imitation from the example of Christ's humility.

[19] Hiebert believes Peter's use of ἐπακολουθήσητε points away from imitation, but a general following. He observes, "A similar point is made by the second image: Whoever follows the 'footprint' (ἴχνεσιν) of another does not emulate a partner, but sets out in the direction indicated, indeed journeyed, by the one followed. Like the first image this one is from a Hellenistic context: The moral-religious direction that one takes was often portrayed as a journey down a path." Hiebert, "Following Christ's Example," 34.

just slaves. This verse falls within the unit addressed to slaves in verses 18-25, which itself falls within the larger context of 2:11-3:12—Peter's version of the *haustafel*.[20] Within his adaption of the *haustafel*, he addresses the congregation's responsibility towards government (2:11-17), the slave's responsibility towards masters (2:18-25), the wife's responsibility towards her husband (3:1-6), the husband's responsibility towards his wife (3:7), and the congregation's responsibility towards its own members (3:8-12).[21]

My conclusion that Peter's instructions in 2:18-25 is intended for the whole congregation and not just the "slaves" relates to his labeling of as οἱ οἰκέται instead of οἱ δοῦλοι. The other *haustafel* in the New Testament use οἱ δοῦλοι (Eph 6:5; Col 3:22; Tit 2:9).[22] Peter's differentiation could be due to the readers' urban setting,[23] but more seems

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[20] Although I do not agree with all of Lohse's conclusions, I do believe that he adequately exposes the independent nature of this section within the epistle. See Eduard Lohse, "Parenesis and Kerygma in 1 Peter," in *Perspectives on First Peter*, ed. Charles H. Talbert (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1986), 43. The purpose and role of the *haustafel* within 1 Peter is somewhat debated. Balch argues that "one primary purpose of proper household behavior was to reduce the social-political tension between society and churches." David L. Balch, *Let Wives Be Submissive: The Domestic Code in 1 Peter*, Society of Biblical Literature Monograph Series, 26 (Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1981), 81. In his mind, the *haustafel* fits within Peter's strategy for these believers to acculturate themselves within the larger Greco-Roman society. Campbell disagrees. He believes that the overlap between Peter's instruction and the *haustafel* in Greco-Roman culture was not meant for acculturation, but simply overlapped because the Greco-Roman morality fit within a Christian parameter. He notes, "Not all of his ethical instruction does harmonize with values of society," pointing to 1 Pet 2:14-16, 18; 4:3-4 as examples. Barth L. Campbell, *Honor, Shame, and the Rhetoric of 1 Peter* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1998), 125. The reason for Peter's inclusion of the *haustafel* fits Elliott's conclusion. He observes, "In Greco-Roman society as well as in the history of Israel, the household of family was viewed as the fundamental form and model of other types of social, political, and religious organization. It is with reference to the house of Abraham, of Jacob, of Israel, of David, and of the new household of Jesus (Mark 3:21-35 par.) that the history of salvation has been written." John H. Elliott, *Conflict, Community, and Honor: 1 Peter in Social-Scientific Perspective* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2007), 46. Peter is focused on their conduct, thus, it would be natural for him to address the household conduct of his people—something expected even within the Greco-Roman culture at large.

[21] Notably absent is any address to the masters—a feature common in Greco-Roman literature (cf. Eph 6:9; Col 4:1). Schutter attributes this absence as suggesting that the recipients of the letter were too poor to own their own slaves. See William L. Schutter, *Hermeneutic and Composition in I Peter* (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1989), 11. We cannot be sure of this conclusion.

[22] Also, noticeably distinct is the place of priority given to slaves. Elliott points out, "In contrast to other New Testament domestic codes where an exhortation of slaves (and masters) *follows* that of husbands/wives and parents/children (Col. 3:18-4:1; Eph. 5:22-6:9; 1 Tim. 2:8-6:2; Titus 2:1-10), thereby reflecting the inferior rank of slaves on the social ladder, here slaves are addressed first and are given striking pride of place." Elliott, "Backward and Forward 'In His Steps': Following Jesus from Rome to Raymond to Beyond. The Tradition, Redaction, and Reception of 1 Peter 2:18-25," 187.

[23] Schutter, *Hermeneutic and Composition in I Peter*, 11.

to be at play. οἱ οἰκέται is more limited than οἱ δοῦλοι. It refers to a "household" or "domestic" slave.[24] This focus on "household" or "domestic" falls within Peter's understanding of the body of Christ. He uses familial language for the church throughout the letter. He invokes obedience of the readers as children (1:14), implores them to fear because God is their father (1:17), and requires brotherly love among them (1:22; 3:8). Twice, Peter refers to believers as a brotherhood (ἀδελφότης, 2:9; 5:9),[25] and labels the church τοῦ οἴκου τοῦ θεοῦ in 4:17.[26] Boring ties together the significance of Peter's use of οἱ οἰκέται here with his household metaphor for the church by noting, "The particular social class instructed here is addressed as 'household slaves' (*oiketai*) in part because *Haustafel* tradition is here directly used, but also because of the overarching metaphor of the church as a household of faith."[27] Therefore, his focus on οἱ οἰκέται stretches beyond the household slave to the whole church.

This assertion is even more valid in light of the social situation of the audience. Many scholars try to pinpoint the specific social context of the audience, usually focused on the scope of persecution.[28] Regardless of the type of persecution, how Peter speaks of

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[24] Steven Richard Bechtler, *Following in His Steps: Suffering, Community, and Christology in 1 Peter*, Dissertation Series Society of Biblical Literature 162 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1998), 153.

[25] Peter is the only New Testament writer to refer to the church in this fashion.

[26] All these allusions and the reference to the household of God drives Elliott to conclude that a household is the "primary ecclesial metaphor of the letter." Elliott, "Backward and Forward 'In His Steps': Following Jesus from Rome to Raymond to Beyond. The Tradition, Redaction, and Reception of 1 Peter 2:18-25," 188. Other metaphors for the church in the letter are priesthood (2:5, 9), chosen race (2:9), a people (2:9-10), and the flock (5:2). Although Peter plays on these metaphors a few different ways in the letter, less allusions to them occur compared with the imagery of a household.

[27] M. Eugene Boring, *1 Peter* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1999), 117.

[28] The time period associated with the persecution has been a debated topic throughout church history. How one understands the type of persecution determines their understanding of the social situation. For a helpful summary of the history of scholarship concerning the type of persecution in 1 Peter, see Travis B. Williams, *Persecution in 1 Peter: Differentiating and Contextualizing Early Christian Suffering*, Supplements to Novum Testamentum, vol. 145 (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 4–11. It is probably wise to heed the warning of Joel Green: "Such specificity actually introduces more problems than it solves, since this would require Peter to have addressed for his audience in Asia Minor a situation in which he himself (and not they) would have been embroiled." Joel B. Green, *1 Peter*, The Two Horizons New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007), 8. What can be ascertained from the book concerning the believers is that they were facing persecution that was fiery (4:12) and due to their commitment to righteousness (3:14). The absence of any reference to physical abuse is noteworthy. Peter speaks of their persecution as verbal abuse (3:9, 16; 4:14) and social isolation (4:4, 16). As Richard observes, the focus is

the audience supports the concept that οἱ οἰκέται serves to address the whole audience. Right at the beginning of the book, he refers to the readers as ἐκλεκτοῖς παρεπιδήμοις (1:1), describing their whole life as τὸν τῆς παροικίας ὑμῶν χρόνον (1:17). This sense of exile is reinforced by referring to them as παροίκους in 2:11 (combined with παρεπιδήμους). However one understands those terms specifically, it is clear that Peter addressed these believers as if they were on a lower social scale, facing shame for their commitment to Christ.[29] This status is shared by οἱ οἰκέται.[30] Further, his failure to address the masters seems to leave open the idea that they represent the situation of the church as a whole.[31]

Lastly, the general nature of Peter's instruction to the οἱ οἰκέται hints that Peter had more in mind than the οἱ οἰκέται. His instruction here parallels his instruction to the readers in other sections of the letter.[32] Submission to authority in 2:18 parallels 2:13; enduring unjust suffering parallels 3:13-17; not repaying evil for evil parallels 3:9; and entrusting oneself to God parallels 4:19 and 5:7. This does not mean that οἱ οἰκέται in the

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on "Christian suffering . . . as a result of hostility, harassment, and social, unofficial ostracism on the part of the general populace." Earl Richard and Charles H. Talbert, "The Functional Christology of First Peter," in *Perspectives on First Peter* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1986), 127. Elliott agrees. He points out, "the Greek terms denoting this abuse are those typically employed to describe the process of verbal attack, ridicule, and public shaming; see for instance, Plutarch's treatise, 'How to Profit by One's Enemies' (*De Capienda ex inimicis utilitate, Moralia* 86B-92F) and Josephus's recounting of pagan attacks on Judeans (*Against Apion*)." Elliott, *Conflict, Community, and Honor*, 65. Such language denies the ability to specify the social situation of the readers.

[29] See Bechtler, *Following in His Steps*, 124–34. He convincingly argues that the main focus of the book premises on the oriental sense of shame and honor. This idea could also be alluded to in his final words in 5:13. He situates the readers in Babylon. Schreiner's conclusion that "the reference to Babylon in 5:13 is almost surely a reference to Rome" is valid. Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, 2003, 37. Peter is playing on the exile motif and the representation of Babylon as that which is opposed to God (Isa 13-14; 46-47; Jer 50-51).

[30] It is worth noting that he refers to the readers as δοῦλοι τοῦ θεοῦ in 2:16.

[31] For further support and argumentation in favor of this view, see Boring, *1 Peter*, 1999, 117; Bechtler *Following in His Steps*, 153–65; Elliott, "Backward and Forward 'In His Steps': Following Jesus from Rome to Raymond to Beyond. The Tradition, Redaction, and Reception of 1 Peter 2:18-25," 188; Lauri Thurén, *Argument and Theology in 1 Peter: The Origins of Christian Paraenesis*, Journal for the Study of the New Testament Supplement Series, 114 (Sheffield, UK: JSOT Press, 1995), 140–42.

[32] Achtemeier was particularly helpful in making me aware of this fact. Achtemeier and Epp, *1 Peter*, 192.

audience are not being addressed, but that in his addressing them, he is addressing the whole audience.[33] His call for imitation in 2:21 is a call to all his readers.

Applying the Grid to 1 Peter 2:21

1 Peter 2:21 provides the most explicit statement of imitation within the letter. Christ's suffering forged a path in which his followers would walk. The two phrases ὑμῖν ὑπολιμπάνων ὑπογραμμὸν and ἵνα ἐπακολουθήσητε τοῖς ἴχεσιν αὐτοῦ in verse 21 bring this out. This call for imitation comes within the context of the readers' suffering.[34] They were suffering injustice, needing the motivation and direction on how to live correctly in the midst of this suffering.

The act of Christ that Peter highlights is an act impossible to replicate. The passion takes center focus in Peter's call for imitation.[35] He writes in verse 24, ὅς τὰς ἁμαρτιάς ἡμῶν αὐτὸς ἀνήνεγκεν ἐν τῷ σώματι αὐτοῦ ἐπὶ τὸ ξύλον. Christ's death was unlike any other in that it atoned for sin. Yet this specific act is not what he expects his

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[33] Even those who limit verses 18-20 to οἱ οἰκέται see a transition to the whole audience in verse 21. Grudem, *The First Epistle of Peter*, 128; J. Ramsey Michaels, *1 Peter*, Word Biblical Commentary (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1988), 255. His use εἰς τοῦτο ἐκλήθητε in 2:21 parallels 3:9, where he is addressing the whole audience. Furthermore, γὰρ in verse 21 highlights this transition for those scholars as well. This point makes me think that οἱ οἰκέται functions on two levels. On one level, this address is to those within the audience who functioned in that capacity. The lack of address to masters probably was due the fact that the audience was on a lower social scale. On another level, they do have a symbolic function to help shape the *M/A* of the whole audience, not just the subset of οἱ οἰκέται in their midst.

[34] Peter speaks of this suffering as something that the readers were called to: εἰς τοῦτο γὰρ ἐκλήθητε (v. 21). τοῦτο points backward. Dryden, *Theology and Ethics in 1 Peter*, 170. Scholars offer opinions as to what τοῦτο is specifically referencing. Dubis believes it to be the three previous verbs as the end of verse 20. Dubis, *1 Peter*, 76. Goppelt and Hiebert believe it is suffering while doing good. Leonhard Goppelt, *A Commentary on I Peter*, ed. Ferdinand Hahn, trans. John E. Alsup (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993), 201; Hiebert, "Following Christ's Example," 33. Selwyn believes it references "patient endurance when suffering unjustly." Edward Gordon Selwyn, *The First Epistle of St. Peter*, 2nd ed. (London: Macmillan, 1947), 178.

[35] That Peter is focused on Christ's sufferings in the passion and not from the whole life of Christ, is evident by his use of Isaiah 53 in the context. Achtemeier detects that Peter has structured verses 22-24 in the from the order of Isaiah. He observes, "What is striking is the fact that the order in 1 Peter follows roughly the order of the passion of Jesus, with vv. 22-23 reflecting the trial, and v. 24 the crucifixion." Paul J. Achtemeier, "Suffering Servant and Suffering Christ in 1 Peter," in *The Future of Christology: Essays in Honor of Leander E. Keck*, ed. Leander E. Keck, Abraham J. Malherbe, and Wayne A. Meeks (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1993), 180.

readers to imitate.[36] He focuses on the *M/A* Christ had in the face of great suffering and the pattern of behavior that arose from his *M/A*.

The *M/A*

The *M/A* Peter focuses on is found in the clause παρεδίδου δὲ τῷ κρίνοντι δικαίως in verse 24. The readers are being called on to imitate the attitude of Jesus' faith in the midst of suffering. The active participle παρεδίδου highlights this attitude of faith.[37] While Jesus was in the midst of great suffering, he entrusted himself to the Father. He did not waver in his belief in the Father's sovereign plan and care for him.[38] He knew that the Father was not only in control, but that he was the ultimate judge. This explains why Peter refers to the Father in the terms τῷ κρίνοντι δικαίως. Since Jesus trusted the justice of the Father, he could respond to his suffering in the ways that Peter described.

That Peter had this attitude of faith in mind for the readers becomes evident later in the book. In the midst of instructing them again on how to handle unjust suffering, he highlights the necessity of this same attitude. He says in 4:19, ὥστε καὶ οἱ πάσχοντες κατὰ τὸ θέλημα τοῦ θεοῦ πιστῷ κτίστῃ παρατιθέσθωσαν τὰς ψυχὰς αὐτῶν.[39] Although he uses a different word for entrust (παρατιθέσθωσαν instead of παρεδίδου), he is calling for the same type of attitude. In the midst of suffering, to follow the steps left by the Lord in his suffering requires a attitude of faith—entrusting oneself to the care of

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[36] Dryden concludes, "Thus, the author focuses our attention on those character traits of the exemplar he wishes to inculcate in his readers. He does this by citing specific deeds that reveal the inner dispositions of the exemplars; it is this virtuous character that is to be imitated, not (necessarily) the specific deed." Dryden, *Theology and Ethics in 1 Peter*, 170.

[37] Hiebert points out that the active voice of the verb "indicates that this was the deliberate, volitional response of Jesus." Hiebert, "Following Christ's Example," 38.

[38] Grudem argues that what Jesus entrusted to the Father was more than himself. "He entrusted not only himself but also the wrongdoers, and his followers, and indeed the entire situation 'to the one who judges justly.'" Grudem, *The First Epistle of Peter*, 130.

[39] In the former passage, he emphasizes the faithful justice of God, but Peter's emphasis of the Father's character in this passage concerns his faithfulness. This is seen through the description πιστῷ κτίστῃ.

the Father.

The Pattern of Behavior

The pattern of behavior of Christ that Peter highlights spans verses 22-23 through the appropriation of the Suffering Servant in Isaiah 53.[40] The summary of this behavior lies in the clause ὅς ἁμαρτίαν οὐκ ἐποίησεν (v. 22).[41] In the midst of great suffering, Jesus offers an example for the believers to follow through his refrain from sinning. The specific refraining from sin that Peter had in mind comes in the three clauses that follow: εὑρέθη δόλος ἐν τῷ στόματι αὐτοῦ (v. 22), ὅς λοιδορούμενος οὐκ ἀντελοιδόρει (v. 23), and πάσχων οὐκ ἠπείλει (v. 23).[42] All three of these clauses speak to sins of the tongue. Christ abstained from sin by refusing to speak ill of those who caused his suffering.[43] This refusal to speak ill withstood the reviling and suffering that he experienced.[44]

The call for the recipients is to follow Christ's example in his pattern of

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[40] Whereas Isaiah 53 spans over the whole life of the suffering servant, Peter applies the concepts specifically to Jesus' passion experience.

[41] Peter chose ἁμαρτία instead of ἀνομία from Isaiah 53. The difference is insignificant in light of the Isaiah 53's use of ἁμαρτία throughout the passage (vv. 4-6; 10-12). Craig A. Evans, "Isaiah 53 in the Letters of Peter, Paul, Hebrews, and John," in *The Gospel According to Isaiah 53: Encountering the Suffering Servant in Jewish and Christian Theology*, ed. Darrell L. Bock and Mitch Glaser (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 2012), 158.

[42] Thurén, *Argument and Theology in 1 Peter*, 143. Why these particular patterns of behavior receive attention from Peter lies in the influence of Isaiah 53 on this thinking. Campbell reveals this influence in both 1 Peter (2:21-25; 3:18) and the recorded speeches of Peter in Acts (3:13, 26; 4:27, 30). Campbell, *Honor, Shame, and the Rhetoric of 1 Peter*, 142. In 1 Peter 2:21-25, Peter quotes and alludes to Isaiah 53 six different times. Schutter, *Hermeneutic and Composition in 1 Peter*, 38. Thus, the pattern of behavior paralleled the pattern of behavior of the suffering servant.

[43] Dubis nicely articulates Peter's point by observing that "Jesus did not engage in tit-for-tat vengeance." Dubis, *1 Peter*, 78.

[44] Michaels shows how radically different this behavior was compared to contemporary examples. He notes, "Threats were common in the martyrdom of antiquity, both in early Judaism and in early Christianity. These were not just tormentor's threats against the martyrs but also counter threats by the martyrs themselves against those who made them suffer. For example, seven Jews being tortured to death by the Greek tyrant Antiochus IV ('Epiphanes') said: 'You seek to terrify us with your threat of death by torture. . . . But you, because of your foul murder, will suffer at the hand of divine justice the everlasting torment by fire you deserve' (4 Maccabees 9:5-9)." J. Ramsey Michaels, "Going to Heaven with Jesus: From 1 Peter to Pilgrim's Progress," in *Patterns of Discipleship in the New Testament*, ed. Richard N. Longenecker (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 256.

behavior. Because he entrusted himself to God, Jesus could refuse the temptation to respond in like manner to the ones who were causing him to suffer. That Peter intended the audience to extract this from the call for imitation can be seen in his further development of these same ideas later in the book. In 3:9-10, Peter commands them μὴ ἀποδιδόντες κακὸν ἀντὶ κακοῦ ἤ λοιδορίαν ἀντὶ λοιδορίας (v. 9) and παυσάτω τὴν γλῶσσαν ἀπὸ κακοῦ καὶ χείλη τοῦ μὴ λαλῆσαι δόλον (v. 10).[45] As he develops his thought further in verses 13-18, it is clear that these verses are meant to be understood in a context of unjust suffering—the same context for the *imitatio Christi* in 2:21.[46] In the face of unjust suffering, believers are to follow the example left by Christ. This example was a pattern of sinless behavior in the face of opposition. There was no retaliation on the part of Christ; he kept his tongue from evil.

The Illustrative Action

Like the other uses of the *imitatio Christi* that were looked at in Paul's writings, the illustrative action that Peter focuses in on was an unrepeatable act of Christ. The suffering of Christ in view was his trial and crucifixion. In verse 24, Peter writes, ὅς τὰς ἁμαρτίας ἡμῶν αὐτὸς ἀνήνεγκεν ἐν τῷ σώματι αὐτοῦ ἐπὶ τὸ ξύλον.[47] The uniqueness of this act comes in what it accomplished. It had a redemptive effect in the bearing of sins. But this redemptive aspect of Christ's death did not keep Peter from using it as an

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[45] Verses 10-12 are a quote from Psalm 34:12-16. Peter's point in the quotation is that those who will experience the good life of salvation will be those who refuse to use their tongues for the cause of evil. Schreiner says, "They are to refrain from speaking evil and from guile so that they will obtain the eschatological reward, eternal life itself." Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, 167.

[46] It is worth noting that in 3:18, Peter again points to the suffering of Christ in the cross. Unlike 2:21, the cross takes center stage not for imitation but for encouragement. Schreiner captures the point of Peter bringing Christ into the picture in this text with his observation, "The emphasis on Christ's victory reminds believers that the troubles of the present time are temporary, that victory is sure because Christ has triumphed over evil powers. The theme of the text therefore is not the imitation of Christ, contrary to some scholars, but his victory over evil." Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, 180.

[47] Wayne Grudem points out that "*Tree* could also be translated 'cross', since the word is not *dendron*, 'tree', but *xylon*, 'wood, object made of wood'." Grudem, *The First Epistle of Peter*, 131. Peter's choice of this word could be an allusion to Deuteronomy 21:22-23. For a development of that connection, see Evans, "Isaiah 53 in the Letters of Peter, Paul, Hebrews, and John," 158.

example for the believers to follow.[48] He is not calling the readers to use their suffering as a means of bearing others' sins. Rather, his focus is on the *M/A* and pattern of behavior that Christ maintained. His suffering was unique in its accomplishment; their suffering would be unique as well. But what they were to maintain was the same attitude of faith in God, resulting in a lack of retaliation. Therefore, Table 6 illustrates Peter's use of the *imitatio Christi* in 1 Peter 2:21.

Peter expected the readers to follow the footsteps of Christ in their suffering. Jesus paved the way before them by facing unjust suffering in his trial and crucifixion. The path he forged was trust of the Father and commitment to avoid sin—specifically the sin of retaliation. When reviled, he did not respond with reviling or any form verbal assault.

Table 6. The hermeneutical grid for imitation on 1 Peter 2:21

Intended for imitation		Not intended for imitation
M/A	*Pattern of behavior*	*Illustrative Action*
• Faith in God παρεδίδου δὲ τῷ κρίνοντι δικαίως (2:23)	• No sin by refraining from retaliation with the tongue	• Death on the cross ὅς τὰς ἁμαρτίας ἡμῶν αὐτὸς ἀνήνεγκεν ἐν τῷ

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[48] Here, Peter's use of the death of Christ is informative to the discussion of the legitimacy of the *imitatio Christi* in the first place. He manages to maintain the unique redemptive qualities of Jesus' death while pointing to the death as illustrative. He does not see a dichotomy between the two. Dryden captures the interplay between the redemptive and moral qualities of the atonement that are at play in this passage. He writes, "The implications drawn from Christ's vicarious work as savior are *moral*. This opens up the path for Christ as example. The focus here is not on freedom from the *penalty* of sin (although that is assumed; see 1:18-19), but freedom from the ongoing *power* of sin." Dryden, *Theology and Ethics in 1 Peter*, 188.

	ὅς ἁμαρτία οὐκ ἐποίησεν (2:22)	σώματι αὐτοῦ ἐπὶ τὸ ξύλον (2:24)
	εὑρέθη δόλος ἐν τῷ στόματι αὐτοῦ (2:22)	
	ὅς λοιδορούμενος οὐκ ἀντελοιδόρει (2:23)	
	πάσχων οὐκ ἠπείλει (2:23)	

Despite calling his readers to imitate Christ, Peter recognized that certain aspects of Christ's suffering and death could not be imitated. His focus lay beyond the outward action and on the inward character; he expected that they would follow a similar attitude of trust. From that trust, they would then follow similar patterns of behavior of Christ. In this way, once again, the proposed grid provides parameters for discerning what should and should not be imitated from the life of Christ.

1 John 2:6

The way that John frames the *imitatio Christi* in 1 John resembles Peter's framing of the idea. Peter speaks of Jesus leaving footprints to be traced; John speaks of walking in the way that Jesus walked. Despite this semantic overlap, their development of imitation differs significantly. When Peter calls for imitation, he clearly delineates in the passage what he expected his readers to imitate—immediately referring to the death of Christ as an imitative example. This is not the case with John. John makes the statement in 2:6, ὁ λέγων ἐν αὐτῷ μένειν ὀφείλει καθὼς ἐκεῖνος περιεπάτησεν καὶ αὐτὸς

περιπατεῖν, [49] yet fails to clearly explain what he means by walking as Christ walked.[50] One is forced to look within the rest of the epistle for direction.

Although John fails to mention explicitly the *imitatio Christi* outside of 2:6, the idea of imitation shows up repeatedly in the book. Christ is the supreme model for much of his ethical exhortations. He points to Christ through his use of the two comparative adverbs ὡς (1:7), καθώς (3:3, 7), and his use of the obligatory verb ὀφελέω (3:16; 4:11).[51] When these words are used with Christ in contexts of exhortation, imitation is intended. Understanding these uses narrows down John's understanding of

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[49] The connection John makes between imitation and abiding in Christ works against those who find little place for the *imitatio Christi* in the Christian life. John explicitly connects the positional with the practical in this verse: if a person genuinely remains in Christ, he will walk like Christ. This connection could be even more explicit depending on how one understands the connection between verses 5-6. The last phrase in verse 5, ἐν τούτῳ γινώσκομεν ὅτι ἐν αὐτῷ ἐσμεν, could be taken as either anaphoric or cataphoric. If taken as anaphoric, then verse 5b forms an *inclusio* with verse 3a around the theme of assurance: καὶ ἐν τούτῳ γινώσκομεν ὅτι ἐγνώκαμεν αὐτόν (v. 3) and ἐν τούτῳ γινώσκομεν ὅτι ἐν αὐτῷ ἐσμεν (v. 5). Many commentators believe this is the best way to understand the phrase. See Robert W. Yarbrough, *1-3 John*, Baker Exegetical Commenatry (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008), 86; Martin M. Culy, *1, 2, 3 John: A Handbook on the Greek Text* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2004), 29; Judith Lieu, *I, II, III John* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2008), 72. If this phrase is taken as cataphoric, then John is giving a second reason that these believers can have assurance. For a defense of this view, see Gary M. Burge, *The Letters of John* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 99; Thomas Floyd Johnson, *1, 2, and 3 John* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1993), 41; Colin G. Kruse, *The Letters of John* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 81; Rudolf Schnackenburg, *The Johannine Epistles: Introduction and Commentary*, trans. Reginald Fuller and Ilse Fuller (New York: Crossroad, 1992), 89. A cataphoric use of the phrase would intensify the role of imitation within the believer's life since his very assurance of abiding in Christ would be linked to his commitment to the imitation of Christ. Jobes offers a balancing perspective on John's purpose behind the clause in 5b: "While the reference primarily points backward, it also forms a transition to the thought that follows." Karen H. Jobes, *1, 2, & 3 John,* Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament, ed. Clinton E. Arnold (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2014), 87. Either interpretation supports the notion that John deemed the *imitatio Christi* a necessary component in a believer's assurance. The connection between abiding in Christ and the imitation of Christ leads Tinsley to summarize John's development of imitation as "the test for authentic Christian character of any spirituality." Tinsley, *The Imitation of God in Christ*, 133. Findlay concurs. He highlights the importance of the *imitatio Christi* in John's theology with the statement, "It is impossible for a sane and sincere mind to accept the doctrine of Jesus without the responsibility of following the *walk* of Jesus." George G. Findlay, *Studies in John's Epistles: Fellowship in the Life Eternal* (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 1989), 165.

[50] This lack of direction prompts van der Watt to ask, "What exactly typifies the 'walking around' (περιπατέω) of Jesus which believers are obliged to follow? The ample reference in 1 John that conveys the message, with the assumption that the readers knew his message, create the impression of a traditions of knowledge within which this community functioned. Somehow people should know what Jesus did and how he behaved." Jan G. van der Watt, "On Ethics in 1 John," in *Communities in Dispute: Current Scholarship on the Johannine Epistles*, ed. R. Alan Culpepper and Paul N. Anderson (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2014), 211. Even though that statement seems to offer no explanation of John's use of imitation, she does develop some content to the *imitatio Christi* that I have found both compelling and extremely helpful in my research.

[51] van der Watt pointed me to this connection. See van der Watt, "On Ethics in 1 John," 210. His article has been influential in my understanding of the *imitatio Christi* within the letter.

walking as Jesus walked.

Applying the Grid on 1 John 2:6

In order to understand how John conceived of the *imitatio Christi* in 2:6, we are forced to look elsewhere in the letter for other ways in which he points to the example of Jesus for ethical behavior. As was previously mentioned, his use of ὡς, καθώς, and ὀφελέω provide some direction on John's use of the example of Christ. All the uses of the example of Jesus throughout the letter fall into at least one of the categories of the proposed grid for imitation. Within the letter, John argues that the believers are to be righteous as both God and Jesus are righteous (2:29; 3:7), be pure as Jesus is pure (3:3), love like God and Jesus loved (4:11), and die as Jesus died (3:16). Each of these exhortations to the *imitatio Christi* find a welcomed place within the grid for imitation.

The *M/A*

The *M/A* John focused on in his development of the *imitatio Christi* was love.[52] Love is a major theme within the book of 1 John, appearing thirty-five times within its pages.[53] The greatest concentrations of the theme come in the middle of the book (chapters 3 and 4). In 3:16, John argues that through the love of Christ, we come to know love: ἐν τούτῳ ἐγνώκαμεν τὴν ἀγάπην, ὅτι ἐκεῖνος ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν τὴν ψυχὴν αὐτοῦ ἔθηκεν. It was through the example of Christ's love that he gave himself for his people. His attitude of love led to the subsequent action of self-sacrifice. John will point to a similar pattern in

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[52] So Schnackenburg, *The Johannine Epistles*, 99; Rudolf Bultmann, *The Johannine Epistles* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1973), 26; Johnson, *1, 2, and 3 John*, 42; Jobes, *1, 2, & 3 John*, 88; van der Watt, "On Ethics in 1 John," 217. Most of these commentators limit the reference to imitation in 2:6 to love. Yarbrough does not. He believes that the reference to imitation refers to "'living the whole life' *coram deo*, as in God's presence as Jesus did." Yarbrough, *1-3 John*, 88. Living this way would include love, but also more expansive ethical actions. Wescott takes the idea of imitation further to include "the pattern of Christ, as set before us in the New Testament . . . a pattern of humiliation, suffering, sacrifice." Brooke Foss Westcott, *The Epistles of St. John: The Greek Text with Notes and Essays* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1950), 51. I believe the proposed grid takes all of these thoughts into consideration.

[53] 2:5, 15; 3:1, 10, 11, 14, 16, 17, 18, 23; 4:7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21; 5:2, 3.

the life of the believer in the verses that follow. But the focus of imitation lies first in an attitude of love.

That John expected the readers to imitate this attitude becomes explicit throughout the letter. In 2:10, he writes, ὁ ἀγαπῶν τὸν ἀδελφὸν αὐτοῦ ἐν φωτὶ μένει καὶ σκάνδαλον ἐν αὐτῷ οὐκ ἔστιν.[54] Love for others characterizes those who have been brought into the light (2:9-10), who love God (3:11; 4:20; 5:2), and who have passed from death into life (3:14). He expected the readers to love one another, connecting love with obedience to the command of God (3:11, 23; 4:7, 11, 21). If the readers truly love one another, then God's love abides in them (4:12). Jesus loved; therefore, his followers were to love. Yarbrough sees John's call for imitation in 2:6 as John tapping "into a trajectory extending directly back to Jesus's 'ought' (ὀφείλετε, *opheilete*) in John 13:14 ('now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet')."[55] Jesus taught his disciples that they ought to love in the way he did; therefore, John expects the same of his readers.

The Pattern of Behavior

John not only expected his readers to follow the steps of Christ in his attitude of love, but also specific patterns of behavior that he sketches throughout the book. In the immediate context of 2:6, John points out in 2:3 that one's assurance of being his child is linked to keeping the commandments (ἐὰν τὰς ἐντολὰς αὐτοῦ τηρῶμεν). This is a theme that John further repeats in 2:4; 3:22, 24; 4:21; 5:2, 3. John attributes the pattern of keeping the commandments to an attitude of love: αὕτη γάρ ἐστιν ἡ ἀγάπη τοῦ θεοῦ, ἵνα

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[54] Although John is not commanding anything of the readers in the verse, it is clear that he intended his audience would follow Christ's example in their commitment to love others. Earlier in verse 8, he notes πάλιν ἐντολὴν καινὴν γράφω ὑμῖν. This commandment has clear connections with John 13:34-35—connections Köstenberger calls "unmistakable." Andreas J. Köstenberger, *A Theology of John's Gospel and Letters* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2009), 266. This new commandment in John 13:34 is a command to love as now put on display by Jesus Christ. See Herman N. Ridderbos, *The Gospel of John: A Theological Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 475–77.

[55] Yarbrough, *1-3 John*, 89.

τὰς ἐντολὰς αὐτοῦ τηρῶμεν (5:3). Here, the genitive phrase ἡ ἀγάπη τοῦ θεοῦ is objective, implying that God is the object of the person's love.[56] It is an attitude of love for God that drives one to the pattern of behavior which keeps God's commandments.[57] Such a pattern falls within the parameters of the *imitatio Christi* in John's thinking. It is this very pattern of behavior that John recorded of Jesus.[58] He was a commandment keeper. Naturally, if one were to walk as Christ walked, he would keep the commandments.

A similar expression that John points to for keeping the commandment is practicing righteousness. In 3:7, John writes, ὁ ποιῶν τὴν δικαιοσύνην δίκαιός ἐστιν καθὼς ἐκεῖνος δίκαιός ἐστίν. He makes a comparison between the one who is righteous and Christ who is righteous. The characteristic that makes one righteous is that of doing or practicing righteousness. In his practice of righteousness, he is like Christ who also is righteous.[59] It seems that the pattern of behavior of doing righteousness follows the pattern of behavior of Christ.

Another pattern of behavior lying behind John's use of the *imitatio Christi* can be found in 3:16. When John pointed to the love of Christ in 3:16, he elucidates that love with the clause ὅτι ἐκεῖνος ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν τὴν ψυχὴν αὐτοῦ ἔθηκεν. This clause best fits under the heading of the illustrative action, but John uses the very same language to describe

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[56] Yarbrough, *1-3 John*, 273.

[57] Lieu connects the keeping of the commands in 2:3-5 as a reference to "ultimately *the* command to love one another." Judith Lieu, *The Theology of the Johannine Epistles* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 55.

[58] Jesus declared in John 15:10, ἐὰν τὰς ἐντολάς μου τηρήσητε, μενεῖτε ἐν τῇ ἀγάπῃ μου, καθὼς ἐγὼ τὰς ἐντολὰς τοῦ πατρός μου τετήρηκα καὶ μένω αὐτοῦ ἐν τῇ ἀγάπῃ. At this point, it is worth noting that there is considerable debate concerning whether or not the readers of the Johannine Epistles had access to John's Gospel. That John intended "commandment keeping" as part of the *imitatio Christi* in the verse seems valid from the context, regardless of their access to his gospel. His call for imitation follows on the heels of calling them to keep the commandments. Although I do not agree with all his conclusions, I found Culpepper's article a helpful overview of the debate concerning the order of the gospel and the letter. R. Alan Culpepper, "The Relationship between the Gospel and 1 John," in *Communities in Dispute: Current Scholarship on the Johannine Epistles*, ed. R. Alan Culpepper and Paul N. Anderson (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2014), 95–120.

[59] The way that John words this phrase avoids any notion of merit. Hiebert observes, "The practice of righteousness does not make the individual righteous but does reveal his inner nature." D. Edmond Hiebert, *The Epistles of John* (Greenville, SC: Bob Jones University Press, 1991), 145.

the pattern of behavior he expects from the reader: καὶ ἡμεῖς ὀφείλομεν ὑπὲρ τῶν ἀδελφῶν τὰς ψυχὰς θεῖναι. That John intended this to encompass more than one's willingness to die on behalf of others becomes evident in verse 17. The "giving" of one's life for others comes in the form of being willing to give one's earthly goods to a brother in need.[60] Therefore, the pattern of behavior that John seems to be focusing on is self-sacrifice. Love drives self-sacrifice, which then results in action.

The Illustrative Action

John has one action in the life of Christ that takes center stage in the *imitatio Christi*: his sacrificial death. Watt succinctly puts it: "Getting to know the nature of God's love was facilitated by Jesus—through his concrete act of laying down his life for our sake."[61] The death of Christ lies behind John's development of propitiation (2:2; 4:9-10) and sanctification (3:5).[62] The most explicit reference to Christ's death in the context of the *imitatio Christi* comes in 3:16. There, the death of Christ becomes the action implied in John's development of the *imitatio Christi*. He laid down his life us, therefore the believers are to be willing to do the same.

That John did not intend the believers in 3:16 to follow the example of Christ's death in exact mimicry is clear as John continues in 3:17.[63] John uses parallel language between Christ's actions and the call for the reader in verse 16,[64] yet the way in which

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[60] van der Watt was helpful in making this connection for me. van der Watt, "On Ethics in 1 John," 218.

[61] van der Watt, "On Ethics in 1 John," 218.

[62] 3:5 falls right after a comparison statement that John makes between the believer and Jesus in 3:3: καὶ πᾶς ὁ ἔχων τὴν ἐλπίδα ταύτην ἐπ᾿αὐτῷ ἁγνίζει ἑαυτόν, καθὼς ἐκεῖνος ἁγνός ἐστιν. The believer purifies himself just as Jesus is pure. Christ came to make this possible through the removal of sins. This removal of sins clearly relates to the propitiation mentioned in 2:2 and 4:10 and must refer to his death. See Yarbrough, *1-3 John*, 185–86.

[63] John used the death of Christ for the purpose of imitation, but still understood the uniqueness of that death. He attributes propitiation to Christ's death (2:2; 4:10), yet still sees imitation implications flowing from the death of Christ. There was no problem for John to take something that was perfectly unique to Christ and use it for ethical calls among his readers.

[64] Of Christ he says, ἐκεῖνος ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν τὴν ψυχὴν αὐτοῦ ἔθηκεν; of the reader he says, ἡμεῖς . . .

John expected the reader to fulfill this is far from a call for a substitutionary death. The way in which John expected his readers to lay their lives down for their brothers was through the sacrificial giving of one's goods for the sake of a needy brother. He expected that they would imitate their savior, but the illustrative action he expected of them was far different in expression than that of Christ's.[65] By using the death of Christ for imitation in this way, he follows along the same type of path that both Paul and Peter did when it comes to imitation. He focuses more on the underlying *M/A* and subsequent pattern of behavior. Table 7 plots John's use of the *imitatio Christi* in 1 John.

Although John's explicit reference of the *imitatio Christi* in 2:6 does not provide any specific direction, his focus of imitation becomes clear when the rest of his letter is taken into consideration. To imitate Jesus was to imitate his attitude of love and patterns of behavior consisting of keeping the commandments, doing righteousness, and sacrificing oneself. In his death on the cross, Christ perfectly displayed both the *M/A* and the pattern of behavior. This was to be imitated by his followers.

Table 7. The hermeneutical grid for imitation on 1 John 2:6

ὑπὲρ τῶν ἀδελφῶν τὰς ψυχὰς θεῖναι.

[65] I appreciated the way that van der Watt summarized John's point. He wrote, "In the case of Jesus, laying down his life refers to his death on the cross (see also John 10:11, 15, 17-18; 13:37, 38; 15:38), but what does that imply for his followers? In 3:17 this explanation follows: 'But if anyone has the world's goods (τὸν βίον τοῦ κόσμου) and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against him, how does God's love abide in him?' This rhetorical question emphasizes the positive side: Love for God implies that you should lay down your life for your brother, which is concretized by helping him compassionately when he is in need." van der Watt, "On Ethics in 1 John," 218.

Intended for imitation		Not intended for imitation
M/A	*Pattern of behavior*	*Illustrative Action*
• Love ἐν τούτῳ ἐγνώκαμεν τὴν ἀγάπην (3:16)	• Keeping commandments ἐὰν τὰς ἐντολὰς αὐτοῦ τηρῶμεν (2:3) • Doing righteousness ὁ ποιῶν τὴν δικαιοσύνην δίκαιός ἐστιν καθὼς ἐκεῖνος δίκαιός ἐστίν (3:7) • Self-sacrifice ἡμεῖς . . . ὑπὲρ τῶν ἀδελφῶν τὰς ψυχὰς θεῖναι (3:16)	• Death ἐκεῖνος ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν τὴν ψυχὴν αὐτοῦ ἔθηκεν (3:16)

Conclusion

Peter and John pointed to the *imitatio Christi* as following along the footsteps and way that Jesus paved. Both believed the cross to be the definitive act that needed to be imitated from their followers. How they applied that act for imitation is where they differed. Peter understood that behind the crucifixion was an attitude of trust towards the Father as he experienced unjust suffering. Therefore, because he trusted the Father, he was able to abstain from sin in the midst of suffering. He did not use his lips to attack those who persecuted him. This mindset of trust and subsequent pattern of behavior of not using the unjust suffering as an excuse for sin is how Peter expected his followers to imitate Christ.

John, on the other hand, saw the cross as an expression of love that the readers were to follow. Christ's love for his children drove him to the cross in an act of self-

sacrifice for them. His love for the Father subsequently moved him to the cross in his commitment to righteousness. He stayed committed to the mission that the Father had given to him. Therefore, if the readers were to follow the example of Christ as displayed in his death, they would also love others and God. This love for God would result in keeping the commandments and committing to righteousness. This love for others would result in self-sacrifice for others, explicit in their willingness to give of their goods to help a brother in need. Both readers saw Christ's suffering and death as an act worthy of imitation.

CHAPTER 4

FACE THE SHAME:
HEBREWS *IMITATIO CHRISTI*

Jesus Christ is the nexus of the Epistle of Hebrews. The whole book centers on

his supremacy.[1] With Jesus front and center within the letter, it would not be surprising

for the author to develop the *imitatio Christi*—especially within the paraenetic sections of

the letter. This is exactly the situation within the book of Hebrews. Although paraenetic

material is found throughout the book, the pinnacle exhortations lie toward the end of the

letter: 10:29-13:25.[2] He encourages the readers to "consider Jesus" (κατανοήσατε . . .

Ἰησοῦν) in both the work that he accomplished (3:1ff.) and in his example he left of

faithful living (12:3). His work and example place him at the center of true Christianity.

The specific development of the *imitatio Christi* in Hebrews takes place in two

passages: 12:1-3 and 13:12-13. Both passages emphasize Jesus' faith. Through athletic

imagery in 12:1, he calls on the readers to run their race of faith with endurance

(δι᾽ὑπομονῆς τρέχωμεν τὸν προκείμενον ἡμῖν ἀγῶνα). In the midst of this race of

endurance, they are to ἀφορῶντες εἰς τὸν τῆς πίστεως ἀρχηγὸν καὶ τελειωτὴν Ἰησοῦν

(12:2). They fix their eyes on Jesus because he is the supreme example of faithful

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[1] "The general theme of Hebrews is not in dispute: the unqualified supremacy of God's Son, Jesus Christ, a supremacy that brooks no challenge, whether from angelic or human beings." D. A. Carson, Douglas J. Moo, and Leon Morris, *An Introduction to the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992), 391. κρείττων appears eleven times in the book (1:4; 6:9; 7:7, 22; 8:6; 9:23; 10:34; 11:16, 35, 40; 12:24), supporting the main argument of the author that Jesus is superior all else.

[2] A quick overview of the author's use of imperative verbs reveals this to be the case. In 1:1-10:28, there are four imperatives: 3:1, 12, 13; 7:4. In 10:29-13:25, there are twenty-two imperatives: 10:32, 12:3, 5 (2x), 12 (2x), 13, 14, 25; 13:1, 2, 3, 7 (2x), 9, 16, 17 (2x), 18, 22, 23, 24. Four other imperatives are found in 1:6, 13; 8:5, 11, but these imperatives are quotations from the Old Testament, not directed at the audience.

endurance. Similarly, in 13:12-13, Jesus is once again presented as the prime example of faithfulness worthy of emulation. He went outside the camp; therefore, the readers are to follow: ἐξερχώμεθα πρὸς αὐτὸν ἔξω τῆς παρεμβολῆς (13:13). In both passages, the author upholds Christ's faith as worthy of emulation.[3]

The reason that the emphasis of the *imitatio Christi* in both passages falls on Christ's faithfulness, relates to the situation of the readers. Determining the exact nature of that situation has proven to be difficult. Who the readers were, what their situation was, and who the author was are all difficult questions that has consumed commentators' speculation for centuries.[4] The solution to those question are limited to any clues within the text.[5] Therefore, assessing the readers' situation can only be determined by hints within the text. Most scholars recognize the place that 10:32-36 plays in enlightening

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[3] Here, I depart from Tinsley's assessment of the imitation of Christ in the book of Hebrews. He believes that the *imitatio Christi* in the book of Hebrews centers on what he calls "liturgical mysticism." Tinsley, *The Imitation of God in Christ*, 168. In his assessment, "The life of the Christian as *imitatio Christi* is grounded for the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews, in the liturgy. Here the basic motions of the *mimesis* of Christ are gone through in significant fashion, because there in the Spirit is at work making subject and object truly μέτεχοι." Tinsley, 170. Liturgy is found within the contexts of the writer's call to imitation, but that does not seem to be his main focus. Rather, as this chapter will bring out, the main focus lies on the example of Christ's faithfulness and endurance in the midst of great suffering and shame.

[4] When it comes to the situation of the readers, usually the emphasis lands on determining whether or not the audience was Jewish Christians, gentile Christians, or a mix of both. From there, scholars then move on to determining who the author is and the provenance of the writing. These questions are important to be answered, but the matter that effects this paper the most is the social situation of the readers and why this situation resulted in the writer's employment of the *imitatio Christi* in the first place. For a helpful survey of scholarly answers to those questions, see Gareth Lee Cockerill, *The Epistle to the Hebrews* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2012), 2–37; Matthew J. Marohl, *Faithfulness and the Purpose of Hebrews: A Social Identity Approach* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2008), 5–36.

[5] I believe DeSilva's observation is important when working through the situation of the readers. He notes, "With the scarce data within Hebrews, and the impossibility of settling for certain the question of destination and date, however, all such reconstructions must remain highly tentative and sound interpretations cannot depend upon the details of such reconstructions." David Arthur DeSilva, *Despising Shame: Honor, Discourse and, Community Maintenance in the Epistle to the Hebrews* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1995), 156. This is not to say that the background information does not play a role in interpretation within the letter. It must, but too much speculation beyond what the text provides can lead to a skewing of interpretation. I believe that Marohl's premise falls into this problem. He believes that the interpretation of the book depends on the author's rhetorical approach. Rather than look at traditional methods for determining the readers' situation, he seeks to find hints within the rhetoric of the letter. This leads him to conclude that the book is shaped around an "us vs. them" approach. The whole book is then interpreted in light of that insight. Although he offers some valuable insights into the book, I find that this narrow focus can skew certain passages' meaning to fit that premise. See Marohl, *Faithfulness and the Purpose of Hebrews*, 110–24.

their situation.[6] Apparently, the readers had faced difficulty (πολλὴν ἄθλησιν ὑπεμείνατε παθημάτων, 10:32; τοῦτο μὲν ὀνειδισμοῖς τε καὶ θλίψεσιν θεατριζόμενοι, 10:33), yet continued to remain faithful to the Lord. During this difficult time, they showed compassion for their imprisoned brethren by visiting them (10:34). The difficulty did not deter them from practicing their faith. But the prospect of more pressure might do so.

More difficulty had seemingly ensued subsequently, requiring further encouragement to persevere. Therefore, the writer reminds them in 10:36, ὑπομονῆς γὰρ ἔχετε χρείαν. Putting these two verses together (along with other insights throughout the book), scholars generally agree that the readers find themselves once again facing external pressure from the surrounding culture.[7] This external pressure has now created within the readers a "fatigue of faith"[8] resulting in "a waning commitment to the community's confessed faith."[9] Therefore, the writer is prompted to press the readers on to "maturity in the faith."[10]

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[6] Croy believes this passage to be the key to the socio background of the letter. N. Clayton Croy, *Endurance in Suffering: Hebrews 12:1-13 in Its Rhetorical, Religious, and Philosophical Context* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 162. Witherington combines this passage with 13:7 to locate the recipients in Rome under Neronian persecution. Ben Witherington III, *Letters and Homilies for Jewish Christians: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary on Hebrews, James and Jude* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2007), 28. His insights are helpful, but I find such specificity difficult to ascertain in light of the letter's scant information.

[7] Koester's overview of this matter is helpful. He divides their experience into three phases: conversion, commitment despite hostility, and malaise in the face of persecution. This last phrase, he believes, prompted the writing of the letter. He describes this phase as "a lower level of conflict in which non-Christians continued to verbally harass Christians. Some from the community were in prison, and others felt the effects of being marginalized in society. Although some continued to show faith and compassion, others experienced a malaise that was evident in tendencies to neglect the faith and community gatherings." Craig R. Koester, ed., *Hebrews* (New York: Doubleday, 2001), 65.

[8] Thomas G Long, "What Cloud? What Witnesses?: A Preacher's Exegesis of Hebrews 12:1-2," *Word & World* 28, no. 4 (2008): 351.

[9] Harold W. Attridge, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, ed. Helmut Koester (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1989), 13.

[10] David Lewis Allen, *Hebrews* (Nashville: B & H Publishing Group, 2010), 82. This is not say that the only reason for the writing of the book was this situation. Ellingworth is right in his assessment that three specific dangers has prompted the letter: passive dangers—a drifting away, active dangers—rebellion against God, and external dangers—persecution. Paul Ellingworth, *The Epistle to the Hebrews: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993), 78–80. But these dangers could all have encouraged the writer to stir faith within the readers.

This background situates the author's use of the *imitatio Christi*. He motivates the readers to endurance through his development of Christology in light of Old Testament theology early on in the letter.[11] In the latter section of the letter, he encourages endurance through exhortation. This is the place where he utilizes the *imitatio Christi* directly. In his two clear uses of the *imitatio Christi*, the writer has now shifted his focus. Christ becomes the exemplary model of faithfulness in the face of suffering for the readers to follow.[12]

Like the uses of the *imitatio Christi* in the other sections already discussed, the specific situation inviting imitation in the life of Christ is unique. The readers are called on to imitate Christ in the unrepeatable action of his crucifixion. Despite being unrepeatable, the writer believed that imitation was still possible. This is the value of the grid for imitation. Placing the grid upon both 12:1-3 and 13:12-13 will help determine the writer's intended use of imitation in both passages.

Hebrews 12:1-3

In Hebrews 12:1-3, the writer finds in the life of Christ the perfect example of faithfulness for the readers to follow. Two phrases in 12:1-3 focus attention on his example: the participle phrase ἀφορῶντες . . . Ἰησοῦν in verse 2 and the imperative clause ἀναλογίσασθε γὰρ τὸν τοιαύτην in verse 3. These statements draw attention to Christ's exemplary life of faith. That the writer of Hebrews expected imitation of Christ from the readers in this passage is evident from its surrounding context.

Hebrews 12:1-3 builds upon the writer's argument that stretches back to the beginning of chapter eleven. Both grammar and flow of thought support making the

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[11] See Cockerill, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 63–72. Even within his development of Christology, the author is quick to point to the example of Christ. He is our example in his faithfulness (3:6), in his resistance to temptation (4:15), and in his obedience (5:8).

[12] The writer of Hebrews' use of model examples is not limited only to Christ as chapter 11 makes evident. Furthermore, he encourages imitation of their leaders' faithful living in 13:7 (μιμεῖσθε τὴν πίστιν).

connection, something that the unfortunate chapter division can hide. Grammatically, the connection is rooted in the first word in 12:1: τοιγαροῦν. This strong inferential conjunction, found only here and in 1 Thessalonians 4:8, links this paragraph with the previous paragraph.[13]

Thematically, the connection between chapter eleven and the beginning of twelve falls on the writer's development of the theme of faith. Hebrews 11:1 establishes this theme with the definition of faith. After defining faith, from 11:2 to the end of the chapter, the writer then provides example after example of the faithful—ones who lived out the trust in God that he is seeking from the readers.[14] When chapter 12 comes along, he then brings his development of faith to the pinnacle example: Jesus Christ. Christ provides the clearest and prime example of the faith. Scholars refer to Christ's example in this section as "the climactic exemplum,"[15] "the climax to his presentation of the great heroes of faith,"[16] and the "supreme example."[17] The earlier models of faith pale in comparison to the faith of Christ. Therefore, the writer appeals to the *imitatio Christi*.

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[13] Allen, *Hebrews*, 571. Witherington notes, "The use of *toigaroun* ('consequently') in Hebrews 12:1 shows that what follows is based on what has come before in Hebrews 11 and that these verses should never have been separated by a chapter division." Witherington, *Letters and Homilies for Jewish Christians*, 325.

[14] The relationship between the faith of those mentioned in chapter 11 and the example of Christ in chapter 12 is understood one of two ways. In one view, the writer may be pointing to the faith of the believers in chapter 11 to show the inadequacy of faith before the New Covenant. Yes, they had faith, but their faith was incomplete. Therefore, Christ is brought to the scene in chapter 12 to provide the way in which the readers are to exercise faith. In this viewpoint, the examples in chapter 11 point to inadequacy of faith. Allen makes this case: "We are not to model our lives after the heroes of faith in Hebrews 11, but after Jesus who is the 'author' and 'perfecter' of faith." Allen, *Hebrews*, 574. In the other view, the author uses the examples in chapter 11 as models for the readers to follow. They demonstrated the very faith of 11:1, but the ultimate example of faith is found in the person of Jesus Christ. All are examples of faith with Christ being the supreme model. For a helpful overview of the role of chapter 11 in the argument of the book, see Christopher A. Richardson, *Pioneer and Perfecter of Faith: Jesus' Faith as the Climax of Israel's History in the Epistle to the Hebrews* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2012), 109–224. It should be noted that in both views, the role of Christ remains the same: he is the exemplar of true faith.

[15] Ben Witherington III., "The Conquest of Faith and the Climax of History (Hebrews 12:1-4, 18-29)," in *The Epistle to the Hebrews and Christian Theology*, ed. Richard Bauckham et al. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009), 433.

[16] David Peterson, *Hebrews and Perfection: An Examination of the Concept of Perfection in the Epistle to the Hebrews* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 168.

[17] Allen, *Hebrews*, 576.

Hebrews 12:1-3 aptly demonstrates how the New Testament developed the concept of the *imitatio Christi*.

Applying the Grid on Hebrews 12:1-3

Hebrews 12:1-3 fits within the broader pericope of 12:1-13.[18] The main theme within this paragraph is "endurance in suffering."[19] Three major themes are tied together by the author: suffering, faith, and endurance. It is at the beginning of his development of those themes that the author uses the example of Christ. In doing so, he sets the stage for what he expects from his readers: to imitate Christ. The specific focus of his use of the *imitatio Christi* needs clarification. This is where the grid for imitation can help. As in the other examples of imitation, the *imitatio Christi* in Hebrews 12:1-3 becomes clear as a development of the *M/A*, the patterns of behavior, and the illustrative action are thought through.

The *M/A*

The main emphasis from the author's use of the *imitatio Christi* in Hebrews 12:1-3 is on Jesus' mindset of faith. Like the previous examples of faith in chapter eleven, Jesus is brought into the discussion to motivate the readers to replicate his faith. The emphasis on this faith lies not on his set of beliefs (his objective faith), but on his faithfulness and commitment to God (his subjective faith).[20] Interestingly, after surveying

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[18] Although this paragraph is connected with the previous paragraph, a significant change in tone has taken place beginning in chapter 12. As Allen notes, "Hebrews 12 is marked immediately by a shift in genre from expository to hortatory, and a corresponding shift in mood from the indicative to the imperative." Allen, *Hebrews*, 569.

[19] Croy, *Endurance in Suffering*, 166.

[20] The subject of the faith of Jesus Christ has become a highly debated topic in recent years. Most of the subject centers on the interpretation of πίστεως Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ in Paul's writings and is not relevant to this discussion. Wherever one lands on whether or not πίστεως Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ functions in an objective or subjective sense, it is difficult to deny that the writer of Hebrews develops the faithfulness of Christ. Todd Still overstates his case a bit, but he does point to the development of faith in Hebrews when he writes, "Lexicographical similarities notwithstanding, the author of Hebrews is the only New Testament writer who *explicitly* explores and expounds upon the faith(fulness) of Christ in any degree of detail." Todd D. Still, "Christos as Pistos: The Faith(Fulness) of Jesus in the Epistle to the Hebrews," in *A Cloud of Witnesses: The Theology of Hebrews in Its Ancient Contexts*, ed. Richard Bauckham et al. (London: T & T

all of the scriptural focus on Christ's faith throughout the New Testament, R. Michael Allen concludes, "The Christ's faith functions in two ways: as vicarious ground for human justification and as model for analogical imitation by those who are united to Christ."[21] It is this latter focus of Christ's faith that takes center stage for the writer of Hebrews.

When the writer encourages the readers to fix their focus on Jesus in 12:2, it is the faith of Jesus that he has in mind. He writes, ἀφορῶντες εἰς τὸν τῆς πίστεως ἀρχηγὸν καὶ τελειωτὴν Ἰησοῦν. The active participle ἀφορῶντες affixes the gaze of the readers in their race of faith on Jesus. He wants his readers to stay focused on Jesus.[22] Part of this focus on the faith of Jesus. There are a few reasons for this assertion. First, the description the writer gives of Jesus emphasizes the faith of Jesus. The author refers to Jesus as τὸν τῆς πίστεως ἀρχηγὸν καὶ τελειωτὴν—the genitive τῆς πίστεως modifying both ἀρχηγὸν and τελειωτὴν. ἀρχηγὸν could be understood two different ways. If the focus of faith is the author and readers' faith, then ἀρχηγὸν means "leader;" if it is the faith of Jesus, then ἀρχηγὸν means "founder."[23] Many scholars adopt an either/or approach.[24] After significant research, both within the book of Hebrews itself and the use of ἀρχηγὸς within Greco-Roman culture, Richardson has convincingly argued that the either/or approach is unsatisfactory. He is worth quoting at length here:

Clark, 2008), 48.

[21] R. Michael Allen, *The Christ's Faith: A Dogmatic Account* (London: T & T Clark, 2009), 199.

[22] This imagery is borrowed from the athletic competition of the times. The runners in the Greco-Roman culture would keep their eyes focused on the ones seated in a place of honor. Koester observes, "Athletes would look down the track to the one who was seated in a place of honor. . . . In an ordinary stadium an honored guest would sit on a platform at the edge of the track, about midway along its course." Koester, *Hebrews*, 523, 536.

[23] Richardson, *Pioneer and Perfecter of Faith*, 96.

[24] For the former, see Ellingworth, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 640. For the latter, see David Arthur DeSilva, *Perseverance in Gratitude: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary on the Epistle "to the Hebrews"* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 432.

Integrating the data fully leads to the conclusion that ἀρχηγὸς has both meanings in Hebrews. Interpreting ἀρχηγὸς in this manner is compatible with classical and biblical sources, making *pioneer* a suitable translation for 2.10 and 12.2. As the pioneer of salvation (2.10), Jesus inaugurated the salvation of God's people and is leading many to their eschatological glory. As the pioneer of faith (12.2), he is the exemplary leader/model of steadfast confidence, who also elicits the faith that is required of his people. If an emphasis is meant for 12.2, then the athletic imagery would support Jesus' leadership in the race of faith, but this does not exclude his further work of originating πίστις in others. To confine ἀρχηγὸς to the first description would weaken the author's intended use of the term, yet the immediate context no doubt underscores the exemplary character of Jesus' faith that was embodied and disclosed to Israel.[25]

The writer of Hebrews refers to Jesus as ἀρχηγὸς not only to point to Christ as the author, but also as the model of faith. His faith made our faith possible and modelled the type of faith we are called to have.

Second, that the both/and approach is the intended use of ἀρχηγὸς becomes clear through the clause that immediately follows in 12:2b: ὅς ἀντὶ τῆς προκειμένης αὐτῷ χαρᾶς ὑπέμεινεν σταυρὸν. This relative clause is epexegetical, further explaining how Jesus was pioneer and perfecter of faith.[26] He endured the cross—a description of his faith put into action. He revealed his faith through his endurance. Therefore, the author zeroes in on Christ as the ideal model of faith.

The third and final reason that the author is focused on the faith of Jesus in the passage is the weight of the context. I won't repeat how this text fits within the pericope, but the fact that this model of faith culminates a series of illustrations of faith should tip the scales in favor of Christ's faith, not the reader's or author's faith, being the focus of the author here. The author is less concerned with the content of faith as he is with the exercise of faith.[27] He desires that the readers would develop a similar mindset to Christ:

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[25] Richardson, *Pioneer and Perfecter of Faith*, 99. He finds further support for his conclusion with τελειωτὴν. He detected that this hapax legomenon is found in a text by Dionysius with some thematic parallels and transfers the use into Hebrews. He concludes, "If this concept is transferred to Hebrews and the virtue of faith, then the most intuitive conclusion to make is that Heb. 12.2 refers to an attitude of faith that is exercised by Jesus and God's people in the same way that the virtue of endurance applies to both in 12.2-3." Richardson, *Pioneer and Perfecter of Faith*, 100.

[26] Richardson, *Pioneer and Perfecter of Faith*, 101.

[27] Attridge writes, "Thus the 'faith' (πίστεως) that Christ inaugurates and brings to perfect expression is not the content of Christian belief, but the fidelity and trust that he himself exhibited in a fully

a mindset of trust in God.

This mindset of faith is not the only *M/A* that the writer of Hebrews calls on for imitation. Another *M/A* necessary for the believers to develop in their struggle from outside pressure is to despise the shame that accompanies the Christian faith. The writer points to Christ's despising the shame he experienced while he endured the cross in 12:2. This "despising the shame" is seen in the aorist participle clause αἰσχύνης καταφρονήσα. This clause describes the mindset that Christ had while he endured the cross—one of faith and despising the shame.

What does it mean that Jesus despised the shame? καταφρονήσα "shows a negative value judgment upon something."[28] Christ did not place value on the shame that he experienced. This αἰσχύνης is not referencing the actual act of crucifixion, but the judgment of society upon the one who is crucified.[29] Therefore, to be able to despise the shame associated with the act of crucifixion, Jesus had to possess "a rejection of regard for one's reputation, and would include a corresponding negative counter-evaluation of those who would seek to judge one's actions as disgraceful."[30] Jesus modeled the necessary "reversal of perception"[31] that the readers were to adopt. Like Christ, they were to experience suffering that would result in the dishonor of the society around them. Their mindset towards that dishonor would greatly affect their ability to remain faithful

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adequate way and that his followers are called upon to share." Attridge, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 356. This assertion does not play down the redemptive role of Christ's faith. Most scholars seem to recognize that. Thus, Koester sees within this passage a presentation of Jesus as both the "source" of faith and the "model" of faith. Koester, *Hebrews*, 523. See also Victor Rhee, "Chiasm and the Concept of Faith in Hebrews 12:1-29," *The Westminster Theological Journal* 63, no. 2 (2001): 275; Richardson, *Pioneer and Perfecter of Faith*, 105.

[28] Koester, *Hebrews*, 524.

[29] DeSilva offers the fullest explanation of this phrase by situating it within its Greco-Roman context. He points to the parallel text in an oration by Dio (*or. 7.139*), concluding that "'Despising shame' is very much synonymous, then, with 'despising opinion' (καταφρονεῖν δόξης), a phrase that appears far more frequently in literature." He also points out that Origen, Gregory of Nyssa, and Chrysostom all understood the phrase in similar ways. DeSilva, *Perseverance in Gratitude*, 435.

[30] DeSilva, *Despising Shame*, 172.

[31] Luke Timothy Johnson, *Hebrews* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2006), 317.

and endure through the suffering and disgrace. Jesus had offered a model of the mindset they were to follow: faithfulness to God and an attitude of despising the shame that came with commitment to God.

The Pattern of Behavior

Jesus' faithfulness to the Father led him to certain patterns of behavior—patterns that the author brings to the forefront for imitation. Although the situation among the readers is different from Christ's situation, the overlap of experience makes this call very effective. In his development of the *imitatio Christi*, the writer points to a pattern of behavior that is necessary if the readers are to follow Christ's example in the face of external pressure. He reveals Jesus' continued endurance in the face of external pressure and his willingness to despise the shame from that pressure as models for the readers to follow.

The writer looks at the endurance of Jesus as a pattern of behavior worthy of emulation.[32] The relative clause in 12:2b captures this focus on endurance: ὅς ἀντὶ τῆς προκειμένης αὐτῷ χαρᾶς ὑπέμεινεν σταυρὸν.[33] This clause is subordinate to 12:2a, a participial clause focused on the faith of Christ.[34] As the pioneer and perfecter of faith, Jesus endured the cross. The reference to Christ enduring the cross is unique in the New Testament, meant to draw a parallel between the reader's experience and that of Christ.[35]

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[32] The theme of endurance is the theme of pericope. Allen notes, "The repetition of 'endurance' in each of the first three verses marks the theme of the section through v. 17. The author sets the stage for this section with his statement in 10:36 that the readers need endurance. The main point of 12:1-3 is the command to 'run with perseverance,' considering the suffering of Jesus himself who endured the cross and completed the work of atonement." Allen, *Hebrews*, 569–70. Rhee's chiastic structuring of the text puts 12:2b at the center of the chiasm. Rhee, "Chiasm and the Concept of Faith in Hebrews 12," 270–71. For a different chiastic structuring of the text, see David Alan Black, "A Note on the Structure of Hebrews 12:1-2," *Biblica* 68, no. 4 (1987): 543–51.

[33] The first part of this clause is debated, specifically the intended meaning of the ἀντὶ.

[34] It is due to the relationship between these two clauses that Thompson concludes: "Faith is inseparable from endurance." James Thompson, *Hebrews* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008), 249.

[35] Croy notes, "The choice of this word is quite deliberate inasmuch as it serves the hortatory purpose of the author. The verb and its related noun occur four times in the passage (vss. 1, 2, 3, 7). It unifies the thought by connecting the endurance enjoined on the Christian community to the endurance

Speaking of Christ's "enduring" the cross, the author emphasizes the prolonged endurance of Christ.[36] This same willingness to prolonged endurance is the pattern of behavior that the writer expects of the readers. He calls them to this endurance in his command in verse 1: δι᾽ὑπομονῆς τρέχωμεν τὸν προκείμενον ἡμῖν ἀγῶνα. Like Christ, they are to run the race with endurance. He did as he suffered on the cross; and in doing so, he left an example for the readers to follow.

The Illustrative Action

Hebrews 12:3 follows similar developments of the *imitatio Christi* in that the cross becomes the main illustrative action being referenced. The endurance that the writer refers to was not endurance in general, but in relation to the cross: ὑπέμεινεν σταυρὸν (v. 12). This is the only place where the cross is plainly referenced in the book of Hebrews.[37] Therefore, the fact that it is mentioned in a context of imitation points once again to the reality that the New Testament writers believed that in the unique death of Christ lay material that could be legitimately imitated by his followers. The writer of Hebrews did not find this redemptive act as only soteriological but also ethical. Table 8 overlays the hermeneutical grid for imitation on Hebrews 12:1-3.

In Hebrews 12:1-3, the author develops the *imitatio Christi* through the lens of Jesus' faith and endurance. He suffered on the cross. Despite the shame that accompanied this event, he did not deter from embracing the suffering in faith and enduring in the process to the praise of the Father. Similarly, the readers are to follow his example. As they experience suffering for their commitment to Christ, they need to entrust themselves

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exemplified by Jesus." Croy, *Endurance in Suffering*, 186.

[36] Richardson, *Pioneer and Perfecter of Faith*, 102.

[37] Allen, *Hebrews*, 575. In 6:6, the writer speaks of crucifying Jesus again: ἀνασταυροῦντας πάλιν, but this is not a reference to the past death of Christ. That the writer of Hebrews had the cross of Christ in mind throughout the book is evident in the sacrificial language and references to the suffering and death of Christ. See 1:3; 2:9-11, 14, 17; 5:7-9; 7:25-27; 9:11-16, 23-28; 10:11-14; 12:24; 13:12, 20.

to God. Furthermore, like Christ, they are to despise the shame that naturally comes from the surrounding culture. In doing so, they will have the motivation and proper mindset to endure the suffering.

Table 8. The hermeneutical grid for imitation on Hebrews 12:1-3

Intended for imitation		Not intended for imitation
M/A • Faith ἀφορῶντες εἰς τὸν τῆς πίστεως ἀρχηγὸν καὶ τελειωτὴν Ἰησοῦν (12:2) • Despising Shame αἰσχύνης καταφρονήσα (12:3)	*Pattern of behavior* • Endurance ὑπέμεινεν σταυρὸν (12:3)	*Illustrative Action* • Cross ὑπέμεινεν σταυρὸν (12:3)

Hebrews 13:12-13

In Hebrews 13:12-13, the writer again points to the life of Christ as an example for the readers to emulate.[38] The author notes that Ἰησοῦς . . . ἔξω τῆς πύλης ἔπαθεν (v. 12). This suffering was done in order to sanctify his people (ἵνα ἁγιάσῃ διὰ τοῦ ἰδίου αἵματος τὸν λαόν).[39] Then in verse 13, the writer makes a connection between believers

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[38] I'm assuming that chapter 13 comes from the same hand as the previous 12 chapters. Scholars debate this, but I think Lane's conclusion settles the case when he says, "It is unnecessary to call into question the authenticity of chap. 13 in light of the very evident links between this material and the preceding chapters, both in content and thrust. Attention has been called to the character of the vocabulary, to lines of argumentation, to the sustained appeal to the texts from the Pentateuch and the Psalms, to the recurrence of key concepts, and to considerations of structure, all of which tend to exhibit the basic homogeneity of chap. 13 with the rest of the document." William L. Lane, *Hebrews 9-13*, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word Books, 1991), 496.

[39] Here, the writer is building on imagery he developed in 9:1-14. In 9:1-14, a comparison was drawn between the work of the Levitical priesthood and the work of Jesus. Like the high priest, Jesus

and Jesus. He says, τοίνυν ἐξερχώμεθα πρὸς αὐτὸν ἔξω τῆς παρεμβολῆς τὸν ὀνειδισμὸν αὐτοῦ φέροντες. The particle τοίνυν makes this connection explicit, being best understood as "making a point of comparison between the situation of the humiliated Christ and the situation which the writer exhorts his readers to accept."[40] This comparison is intended for the purpose of imitation; the readers are meant to imitate Christ. Their actions should be modeled after his actions. He went out of the gate; therefore, they are to go outside the camp.

Applying the Grid on Hebrews 13:12-13

What the author intended the readers to imitate and what exactly the author means by that assertion needs further clarification. In the immediate context of 13:10-14, he addresses the believer's relationship to the surrounding society.[41] Similarly to 12:1-3, the author is helping the readers navigate their lives in a society hostile to their faith. As mentioned earlier, the readers are facing external pressure because of their commitment to Christ. The author again uses the example of Christ. Their commitment to Christ and the onslaught of hostility are not mutually exclusive but in line with the very experience of Jesus. Therefore, the author pursues a certain response from them to the external pressure. Despite the external pressure, Christ exited the gate. Therefore, those who follow Christ should be compelled to leave the camp. What does this mean? How exactly does one imitate Christ in this fashion? Once again, the grid for imitation remains essential for making this determination.

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entered the holy of holies to offer a sacrifice. Unlike the high priest, he was the sacrifice, not an animal. In chapter 13, tabernacle language is used, but the emphasis lies on what takes place outside the camp—not in the holy of holies. For further development see Thompson, *Hebrews*, 282.

[40] Ellingworth, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 716.

[41] Koester, *Hebrews*, 575.

The *M/A*

The writer's encouragement to exit the camp is ultimately a call to develop a certain *M/A*. This *M/A* is a willingness to suffer. The author uses Jesus' actual going outside the gate to encourage the readers to follow suit. He exhorts them, ἐξερχώμεθα πρὸς αὐτὸν ἔξω τῆς παρεμβολῆς (v. 12). Like Christ, they are to be willing to follow the steps of Christ. For Christ, that was a departure outside the city. For the readers, that means a departure outside the camp, regardless of the implications. To exit the camp implies that the readers are willing to bear the reproach that consequently will follow. The call is to follow Christ in going outside the camp, but the attitude that makes this possible is a willingness to bear the reproach. This is evident in the participial phrase τὸν ὀνειδισμὸν αὐτοῦ φέροντες (v. 13). Inevitably, going out will result in one being shamed.[42] Allen points out that "the notion of 'bearing' is used figuratively by the author to express enduring any and all hostility for the sake of Jesus."[43] Therefore, following the example of Christ requires a willingness to embrace the shame that comes with going outside the camp.

The Pattern of Behavior

Jesus' willingness to embrace the shame led him to being crucified outside the city. Similarly, if the readers willingly endure the shame, they will come out of the camp: ἐξερχώμεθα πρὸς αὐτὸν ἔξω τῆς παρεμβολῆς (v. 13). What does it mean to come out of the camp? There is a movement of connections the writer makes to get to reach this conclusion. First, there is a connection between the removal of sacrificed animals outside the tabernacle (v. 11) and the sacrifice of Christ outside the gate (v. 12). The connection being made here is summed up in the purpose clause at the end of verse 12: ἵνα ἁγιάσῃ

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[42] Attridge observes, "The character of the realm 'outside' is its shamefulness." Attridge, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 399.

[43] Allen, *Hebrews*, 620.

διὰ τοῦ ἰδίου αἵματος τὸν λαόν. This connection focuses on two ideas. First, Christ's sacrifice corresponds to the sacrifices of the Day of Atonement through its efficacy.[44] As the sacrifice brought a sanctifying effect on the people, so does Christ's sacrifice. Second, the author emphasizes the location of the burned ashes in the tabernacle and the location of Christ's sacrifice. The remains of the sacrifice in the tabernacle were disposed outside the camp; similarly, Christ was disposed of outside the city gate.[45] Whether or not the author intended there be more between the connection of the tabernacle cult and Christ's sacrifice depends on the interpreter's development of the second idea. At a minimum, this idea only focuses on location.

The second connection the author makes is between Christ's going outside the gate and the call for the believer to go outside the camp. Here, Christ's departure outside the city gate provides the basis for his call to go outside the camp. This begs the question of what is meant by Christ's going outside the city, and subsequently what it means for them to follow suit by going outside the camp. Jesus' going outside the city references the crucifixion which took place outside the gate of Jerusalem.[46] The gospel tradition tells of Christ being led out to be crucified near a road (Matt 27:31-32; Mark 15:20; Luke 23:26) close to the city (John 19:20). This straightforward historical explanation seems to make the best sense of the text.[47]

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[44] I think that Koester's argument that the Day of Atonement is the focus of the cultic ritual in the passage is valid. See Koester, *Hebrews*, 576.

[45] Koester notes an important contrast: "The Day of Atonement sacrifice *concluded* with the victims' bodies being taken outside the camp, while Christ's sacrifice *began* with his being taken out of the city." Koester, *Hebrews*, 576.

[46] Most scholars see this connection. "'Outside the city gate' locates the place where Jesus was crucified, namely, outside of Jerusalem." Allen, *Hebrews*, 618. See also Koester, *Hebrews*, 570; Thompson, *Hebrews*, 282; Witherington, *Letters and Homilies for Jewish Christians*, 361.

[47] Some interpreters see Christ's going out of the city as a reference to his entrance into the heavenly realm. Thompson holds this view: "Jesus' suffering 'outside the gate' was also his entrance into the heavenly sanctuary at the exaltation (6:19; 9:12), where he shed his blood . . . the author's metaphorical language indicates that he collapses Good Friday and Easter into one event." Thompson, *Hebrews*, 283. Such an interpretation sees a double reference for city here and seems to assert that the writer of Hebrews depended on Philo's interpretation of Exodus 33:7. Such an interpretation seems unlikely. Stefan Svendsen, who argues for Philo's influence on the author's use of the Old Testament, asserts that Philo's "reading of Exodus 33:7 may loom in the background of Hebrews 13:10-13, but only obliquely or indirectly. It makes

Then, the author turns to the audience and encourages them to follow Christ's example of going outside the city by their going outside the camp. It is at this point where scholars differ on how the readers go outside the camp. Koester lists four possible interpretations of what the camp refers to: "material securities," "the realm of the sacred," "Jewish practices," or "the city."[48] Of those views, the latter two seem to be the prominent views. Holding to the Jewish practices view, Svendsen notes, "I therefore take the camp and the city to be symbols of Judaism, or more accurately, of the zone of Jewish ritual purity."[49] Therefore, Christ's being crucified outside the city was an act in which he was taken outside the place of ritual purity, like the sacrificed animals in the tabernacle. His disciples are to follow his steps, being encouraged to leave the place of ritual purity embedded in the old covenant—Judaism—symbolized as the camp. This departure symbolizes a true following of Christ. This interpretation has the benefit of making a connection between the sacrificed animals, Christ, and the call to leave the camp.[50]

The other main view, which Koester labels as "the city," takes the camp as a reference to the world. The coming out of the camp is a coming out of the world and bearing the shame that is associated with commitment to Christ.[51] Either view has legitimate contextual support, but I find Attridge's conclusion the most compelling. He

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very little sense to identify the camp and the city directly as the realm of the earth and the place outside the camp and the city as heaven." Stefan Nordgaard Svendsen, *Allegory Transformed: The Appropriation of Philonic Hermeneutics in the Letter to the Hebrews* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2009), 241.

[48] Koester, *Hebrews*, 571.

[49] Nordgaard Svendsen, *Allegory Transformed*, 241. Witherington follows a similar line of interpretation. He concludes, "Thus in **Hebrews 13:12** our author draws his conclusions by analogy. The analogy is not perfect, since Christ—unlike the Levitical sacrifice—was not sacrificed within the city walls and then taken out and burned. There is analogous principle though: Jesus was crucified outside the sacred zone, outside the gate of the holy city. If one wants to get the benefit of Christ's death, one must come forth out of Judaism, out of the camp, out of the Levitical system." (emphasis original) Witherington, *Letters and Homilies for Jewish Christians*, 361.

[50] Ellingworth strongly opposes the Jewish practices view. He notes, "To understand this passage as an appeal to abandon Judaism for Christianity is foreign to the whole scope of the author's thought, which moves consistently within the category of God's twofold action on behalf of his one people." Ellingworth, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 716.

[51] See Allen, *Hebrews*, 619–20.

writes, "It is likely that the image of the camp is designed to be evocative rather than definitive. What it suggests is the realm of security and traditional holiness, however that is grounded or understood."[52] In other words, the point remains the same whether the call to the leave the camp consists in Jewish religious practice or world culture. Whatever departure takes place for one to follow Christ's example falls under the author's purview. If they will embrace the *imitatio Christi* being presented, then they will willingly follow Christ outside of the surrounding norms (whether Jewish ritual or pagan culture).

The Illustrative Action

Christ's death on the cross is the illustrative action of the *imitatio Christi* in Hebrews 13:12-13. Two factors in verse 12 make it clear that Jesus' crucifixion is in view. First, the crucifixion of Christ is implied through the phrase διὰ τοῦ ἰδίου αἵματος in verse 12. The writer references Jesus' blood to refer to his death seven other times in the book.[53] That is his intent here. Jesus sanctified his people through his blood—his death. Secondly, every other use of the verb "to suffer" (πασχεῖν) in the book of Hebrews refers to Christ's death.[54] Therefore, this seems to be the best way to understand its use here. Jesus' suffering outside the city (ἔξω τῆς πύλης ἔπαθεν) references his crucifixion outside the city. He willingly embraced the shame that came from being outside the gate—the place of his crucifixion. Therefore, placing the grid on this passage reveals the following interpretative clues in Table 9.

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[52] Attridge, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 399.

[53] 9:12, 14; 10:19, 29; 12:4, 24; 13:20. The other uses of "blood" in the book refer to the animal sacrifices of the old covenant (9:7, 12, 13, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 25; 10:4; 11:28) and the idea of kinship (2:14).

[54] Allen, *Hebrews*, 618. 2:18 seems to expand a bit on the suffering to include aspects of Jesus' life, but the context still suggests that the culmination of the suffering comes in Jesus' death on the cross. See Cockerill, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 152.

Table 9. The hermeneutical grid for imitation on Hebrews 13:12-13

Intended for imitation		Not intended for imitation
M/A • Willingness to bear reproach τὸν ὀνειδισμὸν αὐτοῦ φέροντες (13:13)	*Pattern of behavior* • Go outside the city/camp ἔξω τῆς πύλης (13:12)/ἐξερχώμεθα πρὸς αὐτὸν ἔξω τῆς παρεμβολῆς (13:13)	*Illustrative Action* • Death διὰ τοῦ ἰδίου αἵματος . . . ἔπαθεν (13:12)

In Hebrews 13:12-13, the writer develops the *imitatio Christi* in a similar fashion to 12:1-3. Here, the writer once again focuses on shame. This time, he encourages the readers to endure the shame willingly. This shame will come by following Christ's pattern of behavior. Christ endured the shame through his crucifixion outside of the city. In their imitation of Christ, the readers are to go outside the camp, willingly enduring the shame that comes with that transition. Although the result of this action may differ from what Christ experienced, this does not keep the author from pointing the readers to follow his example. Jesus paved the way that they are to follow.

Conclusion

The writer of Hebrews develops the *imitatio Christi* clearly in two passages: Hebrews 12:1-3 and 13:12-13. Due to the reader's situation, both passages share the similar theme of shame (αἰσχύνης in 12:2 and ὀνειδισμὸν in 13:13). They were facing a choice: would they fully embrace the scorn and shame that comes through full commitment to Christ, or would they shy away from this shame? The author desires their full commitment to Christ. Therefore, in chapter 12, the writer points to Jesus' faith as a model to follow. As the pioneer and perfecter of faith, Jesus endured the suffering of the

cross while despising the shame associated with it. In the same way, the readers are called to faithfulness to Christ, despising the shame that would inevitably come from the culture.

In chapter 13, the author zeroes in on the movement of Christ outside the accepted norms of the culture, resulting in his crucifixion outside the city gate. This shift of Christ becomes the basis of the positioning to which he calls the readers. As Christ went outside the city gate, so the readers are to exit the camp. To go outside the camp, they must willingly endure the shame that will inevitably follow. Christ perfectly displayed the type of life the author seeks from his readers.

CHAPTER 5

THE GRID FOR IMITATION
IN THE CHURCH

Although the New Testament writers did not provide a full explanation to their

approach to the *imitatio Christi*, it is clear that they each handled it in a similar, though

distinct, way. Their focus did not lie in imitating the life of Christ through actual

reenactment of his actions, but on the underlying *M/A* and subsequent patterns of

behavior. Therefore, actions and behaviors limited to the historical aspects of Christ's life

are merely illustrative of underlying ethical principles that inform the *imitatio Christi*.

The question of "What would Jesus do?" lies in the universal principle, not in historical

application of that principle in the life of Christ.

A Summary

Paul's development of the *imitatio Christi* in Philippians 2 started this project.

His development of imitation in that passage is clear. He used three historical and

unrepeatable markers in the life of Christ to provide the basis of his call for imitation: the

incarnation (v. 7), the crucifixion (v. 8), and the exaltation (vv. 9-11). These moments in

Christ's life are not the focus of imitation. When reading for imitation, they are purely

descriptive of the underlying *M/A* of humility (v. 8) and the patterns of behavior of

counting others more significant than one's self (v. 6) and obedience (v. 8).[1] The

contextual data around these verses verify this was Paul's focus for imitation.

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[1] This is not denying the underlying historicity or soteriological significance of what the author might be developing. This is to say that in an imitative reading, the focus lies on illustration, not the theological significance.

This approach of Paul continued through his other developments of the *imitatio Christi*. In 2 Corinthians 8, he desired that the Corinthian church would be fellow contributors to the collection he was sending to the Jerusalem saints. To encourage their involvement, he pointed to the example of Christ's incarnation and crucifixion (v. 8). His purpose in doing so, was not only to remind them of Jesus' redemptive actions on their behalf, but of the fundamental attitude of love (v. 9) and patterns of behavior of giving beyond one's means (v. 3) and the act of grace (v. 7). He wanted them to follow Christ's example through love, self-sacrifice, and grace.

In Ephesians 5:1, Paul commands the readers to "be imitators of God, as beloved children." Imitating God meant that they would imitate Christ, specifically his love (v. 2) which resulted in a pattern of walking in love (v. 2) and of forgiveness (4:32). Christ demonstrated that underlying *M/A* and patterns of behavior through his death on the cross (5:2). In the last Pauline text, Paul does not specifically call the readers to imitate Christ, but rather calls them to imitate himself (1 Cor 11:1). Where the *imitatio Christi* becomes a factor in this call to imitation comes in the last phrase of the verse: "as I am of Christ." Clearly, Paul believed that the call for imitation he is seeking from the Corinthians was based on his own imitation of Christ. Therefore, within the context of Paul's argument a clearer picture of how Paul imitated Christ surfaces. Once again, the three-fold distinction of *M/A*, pattern of behavior, and illustrative action helps extract the *imitatio Christi*. Like Christ, the Corinthians were to seek the good of others (10:24) through a pattern of self-sacrifice (10:33). When it came to the illustrative action, there was no clear action of Christ singled out by Paul, although the illustrative actions of Paul (sacrifice in marriage, 9:4 and sacrifice in compensation, 9:5) seemed to be playing off of Christ's death.

Moving onto Peter's development of the *imitatio Christi* in 1 Peter 2:21, Peter follows the same pattern. Through his unjust suffering, Jesus left the believers an "example, so that [they] might follow in his steps" (v. 21). The steps that Jesus took led

him to the cross (v. 24), but that does not mean that Peter expected a similar outcome from the readers. Rather, they would follow Christ's steps in unjust suffering by having the same mindset of faith that Jesus had (v. 23). He entrusted himself to the Father in his suffering, so should the readers. This underlying mindset of faith resulted in the ability to withstand the temptation to retaliate against the ones causing the suffering. The readers were to follow suit (v. 22). The *imitatio Christi* lies in the *M/A* and subsequent patterns of behavior.

John's development of the imitation of Christ is less clear. The priority of the *imitatio Christi* is apparent in 1 John 2:6. He informs the readers that "whoever says he abides in him ought to walk in the same way in which he walked." He does not explicitly explain what he means by that walk. It is something that requires analyzing the rest of his letter. When John makes comparisons to Christ or exemplifies Christ in the letter, he provides an insight into what he meant by walking in the way of Christ. It becomes clear that the main *M/A* of Christ he seeks the readers to follow is love (3:16). This attitude of love drives obedience (2:3), self-sacrifice (3:16), and righteous living (3:7). The illustrative action that perfectly put on display the *M/A* and patterns of behavior was Christ's crucifixion (3:16).

The writer of Hebrews ended the study with two passages focused on encouraging the readers to endurance in the face of external pressure. Like the other writers of the New Testament, the illustrative action of Christ that the writer points to was his crucifixion (12:3; 13:12). This action illustrated an underlying mindset of faith (12:2), of despising shame (12:3), and of a willingness to bear reproach (13:13). Because Christ possessed these underlying mindsets, he was able to move on to the patterns of behavior of endurance (12:3) and going outside of the city (13:13)—both patterns of behavior that the author encourages from his readers. For the writer of Hebrews, to imitate Christ meant to imitate him in his willingness to face external pressure and remain faithful to the Lord.

Imitation in the Church

The New Testament writers saw the importance of the *imitatio Christi* for the early church. Christ's life had become a model of how those who follow him should live. Therefore, the church today should continue to develop a robust *imitatio Christi* for the purpose of Christian living.[2] As the earlier part of this paper made clear, this endeavor has garnered significant resistance, many times based on the lack of clear boundaries to make proper conclusions of the *imitatio Christi*. The proposed method for interpreting the imitation of Christ provides the necessary framework to draw valid assertions on what is considered legitimate applications of the *imitatio Christi*. This method is good in so much as it provides a framework, but this method needs to be implemented within the church to allow the church to develop a theologically sound and rich concept of imitation. I believe that there are three main areas of ministry within the church where this development of the grid for the imitation should have a large impact: the teaching ministry, leadership development, and the discipleship ministry.

The Teaching Ministry

The teaching ministry provides one of the main avenues for the incorporation of a robust *imitatio Christi* within the church. Within the teaching ministry, I could see two possible ways that the proper applications could be passed on. First, a sturdy theology of imitation must start from the pulpit. Paul reminded the Ephesian elders in Acts 20:27, "I did not shrink from declaring to you the whole counsel of God." This must have included, not only the basics of the gospel message, but also the ethics of Christian living.[3] Paul's statement summarizes the job of the preacher. He is to preach the whole

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[2] Jason Hood observes, "Healthy, robust Christianity does not happen unless imitation has a prominent place in our teaching, preaching, discipleship, counseling, devotion, and self-conception." Hood, *Imitating God in Christ*, 16.

[3] The phrase "whole counsel of God" is πᾶσαν τὴν βουλὴν τοῦ θεοῦ. βουλὴ must imply more than the basics of the gospel message, including God's will for the lives of the Ephesian believers. F. F. Bruce concludes that Paul's point was this: "He had made God's saving plan clear to them, the whole of his will for their lives." F. F. Bruce, *The Book of Acts* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988), 392.

counsel of God, including the ethical implications.[4] Here is where imitation plays a major role.

The preacher is not called to teach the method of imitation from the pulpit, but rather can show the fruits of this method. The fruits should be thoroughly brought to bear in the preaching of gospel narratives. If the preacher is working through a gospel and not asking what in the text can be imitated from Christ, he has failed to adequately exposit the text.[5] It is the preacher's duty to teach his people to look at the gospels in such a way, and preach through the gospels so they can see how proper imitation is achieved.

The fruits of the grid for imitation are not limited solely to the exposition of the gospels. As was evident in this paper, the rest of the New Testament developed *an imitatio Christi* apart from quoting the gospels. The writers of the epistles were able to look at the gospel material and draw valid applications of imitation from the life of Christ, take those applications, and then make them relevant to the audience. They did this to stimulate ethical fruit such as humility, love, the good of others, faith, and a willingness to bear shame. This fruit led to actions: obedience, giving, forgiveness, self-sacrifice, endurance, and acts of grace.

It is clear that the New Testament writers realized that the life of Christ was exemplary. It would only be appropriate if the pulpit followed suit. If any passage of

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[4] Daniel Doriani's thoughts are particularly relevant at this point. He notes, "Bible application promotes a relationship with God and conformity to him. We honor the law because we exalt God, who gave it and reveals himself in it. We honor virtue because virtue is conforming to God's character (not simply because no one can take from us)." Doriani, *Putting the Truth to Work*, 14. Michael Fabarez boldly proclaims, "Biblical preaching always aims to change lives. If this is not the goal of the preacher, then the preacher will miss the very point of his calling." Michael Fabarez, *Preaching That Changes Lives* (Nashville: T. Nelson Publishers, 2002), xii. If the preacher is seeking changed lives, then surely Christ's example must be brought to the forefront. For a helpful discussion on the role of teaching in moral formation within the church, see Gary A. Parrett, *Teaching the Faith, Forming the Faithful: A Biblical Vision for Education in the Church* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2009), 48–76.

[5] Note Pennington's observation: "If the goal of the evangelists is (at least in part) to present Jesus as a model of God-ward virtue, then we should receive them as such, keeping this goal as an important part of what it means to interpret the Gospels and to read them well. . . . Any interpretation of the Gospels that neglects this aspect is missing a major function of the genre." Pennington, *Reading the Gospels Wisely*, 33.

Scripture were being preached and contained any ethical encouragement, it would seem only natural to ask whether the *M/A* or pattern of behavior is ever evident in the gospel record of Christ.[6] If so, the preacher's task is first to take the congregation to that narrative, drawing the principles of imitation from the passage. By doing this, the preacher shapes how his congregation views and understands the *imitatio Christi*. He helps his congregation to not only develop a love for following Christ, but also subtlety teaches them how we are constantly called to look to Christ for guidance in the way that we live. This method would give feet to the concept of imitation.

Failure to point the body of Christ to the *imitatio Christi* from the pulpit could create an anemic understanding of Christlikeness. To argue for Christlikeness as a goal for discipleship, without providing adequate instruction on what that looks like, leaves the body to figure out what exactly that means. But through the constant use of illustration from Christ's life, the preacher creates a picture of conformity to Christ for the congregation. Furthermore, the constant reminder of Christ's example anchors the church with a view focused on Christ.

Second, other teaching avenues outside of the pulpit could provide ample opportunity to teach the grid of imitation being proposed in this thesis. A seminar on how to imitate Christ or a Christian Living Class[7] on the imitation of Christ would be an easy avenue to dig deeper into how the New Testament writers develop the imitation of Christ. If the method helps establish criteria for developing the *imitatio Christi*, then the people of God should be taught the method. Explicit teaching of the method would provide opportunity for further development and applications of imitation by the participants in their own study and would reinforce the applications of imitation being made from the

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[6] Doriani asserts, "Whether explicit (his prayers) or implicit (his fellowship with sinners), Jesus' life generally sets patterns for kingdom life." Doriani, *Putting the Truth to Work*, 206.

[7] This is the name of the Sunday school program at the church where I pastor.

pulpit. Within the teaching ministry in the church, both preaching and teaching imitation are vital for a robust, living theology of imitation in the church.

The Discipleship Ministry

It may seem a stretch to separate teaching and discipleship considering that teaching is a necessary part of discipleship.[8] Yet the nature of discipleship moves beyond the reception of verbal teaching. Discipleship involves moral formation. James Samra's clear definition of discipleship is helpful: "It is best to think of discipleship as the process of becoming like Christ."[9] To become more like Christ requires more than verbal instruction. Application and illustration are necessary. This is why Paul exhorted the Corinthians in 1 Corinthians 11:1, "Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ." Teaching is important. But, imitation of one's life brings the teachings into the realm of implementation.[10]

Developing a flourishing *imitatio Christi* starts within the area of leadership training. John MacArthur pointed out, "Whatever the leaders are, the people become."[11] This explains why the emphasis on leaders of the church throughout the New Testament focuses less on their ability and more on their character.[12] The elders' goal should develop personal virtue formation, focused on learning from the life of Christ. As the elders concentrate on this virtue formation in their personal lives, their example influences the rest of the congregation.

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[8] Jesus linked the two concepts in the great commission of Matthew 28:19-20a: "Go therefore and *make disciples* of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, *teaching* them to observe all that I have commanded you."

[9] Samra, "A Biblical View of Discipleship," 220.

[10] Samra divides imitation into "learning and incarnation." Samra, "A Biblical View of Discipleship," 224.

[11] John MacArthur, *The Master's Plan for the Church* (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2008), 244.

[12] 1 Tim 3:1-13; Titus 1:6-9.

Not only does the elders' example affect the role of the *imitatio Christi* within the church, but also their instruction. The leadership creates the culture within the church, whether purposely or secondarily. Therefore, the priority of teaching a robust *imitatio Christi* to the leadership in the church is vital. How they talk and the way that they describe the Christian life will have great bearing on how the church will perceive the Christian life.

Paul's model of calling others to imitation of himself as he imitates Christ starts within the leadership and moves outward into the congregation. This pattern ought to be the model for all who are discipling others within the church. As one watches another live out the Christian life, they learn what it means to follow Christ and live in imitation of Christ. This incarnation of imitation shows how the patterns of behavior and underlying *M/A* find new illustrative actions in contemporary culture. Every aspect of the ministry of the church should be geared to discipleship, and hence geared to aiding the Christian community in its journey towards the *imitatio Christi*.

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ABSTRACT

A METHOD FOR IMITATION: LEARNING
FROM PAUL, PETER, JOHN, AND THE
WRITER OF HEBREWS

David Jonathan Trepanier, DMin
The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2020
Faculty Supervisor: Dr. Jonathan T. Pennington

This thesis explores how Paul, Peter, John, and the writer of Hebrews use of the imitation of Christ in their respective writings. Despite opposition from some theologians, the *imitatio Christi* is clearly a concern among these writers. The way in which they develop the concept provides insight into how modern developments of imitation can be ascertained. From the analysis of their use, a pattern emerged. Each author took an action of the life of Christ and focused on two areas for application for their readers: the underlying mindset or attitude (*M/A*) and the pattern of behavior. The action, which I label the illustrative action, is not the call for imitation but illustrates the call for imitation: the underlying *M/A* and pattern of behavior.

The majority of the thesis applies this grid of imitation—the *M/A*, pattern of behavior, and illustrative action—on various passages from Paul, Peter, John, and the writer of Hebrews. Each writer, whether focused on the same or differing action, centered on the underlying *M/A* and pattern of behavior. Their method is instructive for modern believers. To be a disciple requires following the example of Christ. Churches must help their people understand the need and method of imitation. Therefore, through the teaching and discipleship ministry of the church, believers must be taught the way to follow Christ.

VITA

David Jonathan Trepanier

EDUCATION
        BA, Northland Baptist Bible College, 2005
        MDiv, The Master's Seminary, 2009

ACADEMIC EMPLOYMENT
        Research Assistant, Northland Baptist Bible College, 2004-2005
        Faculty, Baptist Bible College of the Caribbean, Ribishi, Saint Vincent, 2005-2006
        Bible Department Chair, Santa Clarita Christian School, Canyon Country, California, 2009-2010

MINISTERIAL EMPLOYMENT
        Pastoral Intern, Fellowship Bible Church, Methuen, Massachusetts, 2001
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        Pastoral Intern, Middletown Road Baptist Church, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, 2003
        College Ministry Leader, Santa Clarita Baptist Church, Canyon Country, California, 2007-2009
        Associate Pastor, Santa Clarita Baptist Church, Canyon Country, California, 2009-2010
        Senior Pastor, Gospel Life Church (formerly First Baptist Church), Evans City, Pennsylvania, 2011-