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NEW TESTAMENT PERSECUTION AND THE INCEPTION OF
DIOKOLOGY THROUGH THE APPLICATION OF
THE REGNAL RIGHTEOUSNESS DYNAMIC

A Dissertation

Presented to

the Faculty of

The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Philosophy

by

Gregory Charles Cochran

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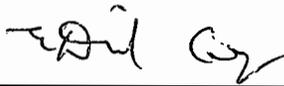
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NEW TESTAMENT PERSECUTION AND THE INCEPTION OF
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THE REGNAL RIGHTEOUSNESS DYNAMIC

Gregory Charles Cochran

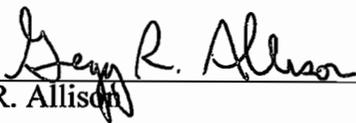
Read and Approved by:



E. David Cook (Chairperson)



Mark A. Seifrid



Gregg R. Allison

Date

4-2-10

To my beloved bride,
and to
the bride of Christ

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

<i>Int</i>	<i>Interpretation</i>
<i>JQR</i>	<i>Jewish Quarterly Review</i>
<i>JSNT</i>	<i>Journal for the Study of the New Testament</i>
JSNTSup	Journal for the Study of the New Testament Supplement Series
LNTS	Library of New Testament Studies
NICNT	New International Commentary on the New Testament
<i>NIDNTT</i>	<i>New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology</i>
NIGTC	New International Greek Testament Commentary
<i>NovT</i>	<i>Novum Testamentum</i>
NTS	New Testament Studies
<i>WTJ</i>	<i>Westminster Theological Journal</i>

PREFACE

Though this research project bears my name, the project is, in a very real sense, a collaborative effort between me and the many kind folks who participated with me. Above all, I must commend my wife, Vickie, without whose assistance and unceasing encouragement I could never have come this far in research and writing. Her faithfulness has proved invaluable.

Beyond my wife, I owe deep gratitude to my supervising professor, Dr. E. David Cook, whose wisdom and grace have been a wellspring of encouragement to me throughout the process. Dr. Cook has consistently spurred the vitality and joy necessary for such a labor as dissertation writing. I thank also my review committee, particularly Dr. Mark Seifrid, whose corrections have proved invaluable. I appreciate Dr. Chris Morgan for serving as a reader.

I also must recognize the great contribution of our family—our five children, who have suffered patiently without complaint as their father has often had to engage his mind with academic pursuits. I am thankful for a Christian mother who encourages godly living. Other family members such as my brother and two sisters have been encouraging in their own ways to help the project come to completion. I shall be forever thankful for the continued discipline instilled in me by my earthly father who has now been with our heavenly Father for more than a decade.

The Church of Christ at Cedar Grove is particularly noteworthy in this process. They have individually and collectively supported this project from the beginning both officially and unofficially. Cedar Grove Baptist Church has provided prayer support without fail. So many saints have offered prayers for me, my wife, our family, and my work that I will never be able to repay them for their efforts, nor would they accept such

payment, having freely offered their love by faith in Jesus Christ. I do thank these dear souls humbly and with all sincerity. The bride of Christ is glorious indeed when she is laboring with patient love. Cedar Grove Baptist Church, the elders, deacons, staff, and laymen have proven to be laborers in patient love for their pastor. Daniel, Brenda, Don, and Joe are to be particularly commended for often picking up balls that I fumbled because of juggling the demands of a pastorate and the Ph.D.

Above all, I and those mentioned here agree that the work is intended to glorify the Lord Jesus Christ through the building up of his saints in love. If, in that sense, any good comes from this research project, then we may all join together in glorifying the Lord Jesus Christ and exalting him in worship. *Soli Deo Gloria.*

Gregory C. Cochran

Shepherdsville, Kentucky

March 2010

CHAPTER 1
PERSECUTION PROLEGOMENA FOR THE
INCEPTION OF DIKOLOGY

According to the end of Matthew's gospel, Christ left his disciples with a mandate to make disciples of all nations. If one interprets this Great Commission passage of Matthew in light of what has gone before in that gospel (in 4:23; 9:35; and 24:4), then he may well conclude that the disciple-making process is fueled by Christian proclamation. The proclamation of the gospel is "to be done in no minor way but *to all the nations.*"¹ This preaching the gospel to all nations in order to make disciples of them is, in fact, the drive of many Christian evangelistic organizations, including the International Congress for World Evangelization, a gathering of Christians from more than 150 nations. This congress, more commonly called the Lausanne Congress, places the Great Commission passage at the beginning of its original covenant under the first heading, "The Purposes of God."² The Lausanne Congress also recognizes that the task of preaching the gospel to all nations in an effort to make disciples of them is no simple task. Not all nations are amenable to the spread of the good news.³

The Christian drive for proclamation to all nations contrasted with the resistance of those nations has led the Lausanne Congress to call for a more thorough study of Christian persecution. So, for instance, Section 1.1 of the 2004 occasional paper

¹Leon Morris, *The Gospel According to Matthew*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1992), 602.

²Lausanne Covenant, sec. 1[on-line]; accessed 3 February 2009; available from <http://www.lausanne.org/lausanne-1974/lausanne-covenant.html>; Internet.

³Patrick Johnstone, *Operation World* (Waynesboro, GA: Paternoster Lifestyle, 2001).

on persecution lists issues which have been raised repeatedly since the first meeting of Lausanne in 1974, yet still remain to be dealt with more extensively.⁴ The first issue mentioned in the bulleted list of the occasional paper is “the relationship between human suffering in general, suffering *for Christ’s sake*, and Christ’s own suffering.”⁵ The Lausanne Congress has recognized the need for distinguishing what it means to suffer *for Christ’s sake* (that is, to suffer *persecution*, cf. Matt 5:10-12) from what it means to suffer on account of oppression or other frailties of the human condition. The Lausanne occasional paper on persecution concludes Section 4 with this call for theological research in the area of persecution: “There is clearly a need for deeper theological reflection on the issues pertaining to suffering, persecution, martyrdom, religious freedom and human rights, and an appropriate Christian response.”⁶

Purpose

Christian persecution, then, is the subject of this research project. In sympathy with the call from the Lausanne Conference occasional paper cited above, this research project concerns itself with a functional definition of *persecution*, a definition which will be derived from the Bible, be consistent within the New Testament, be able to interact with and withstand critiques from other theological literature, and, finally, will be able to function pragmatically with regard to instances of persecution and expectations of persecution. This research seeks to answer (at least partially) Lausanne’s call for categories related to the study of persecution in an effort to gain deeper theological

⁴Patrick Sookhdeo, “The Persecuted Church” (paper prepared for the Lausanne Committee for World Evangelism, Pattaya, Thailand, October 2004), no. 32 [on-line]; accessed 23 February 2009; available from http://www.lausanne.org/documents/2004forum/LOP32_IG3.pdf; Internet.

⁵Lausanne Covenant, “The Lausanne Movement’s Statements on Persecution,” sec. 1.1.

⁶Lausanne Covenant, “Questions and Issues for Reflection,” sec. 4.

understanding. Even more directly, this research project seeks to engage conversations in academic research related to the dynamic interplay at work in Christian persecution.

This research project shall be quite limited in its scope. There are many significant aspects of persecution studies which this research will not particularly address. This project is not an effort to establish a biblical theology of persecution.⁷ Because of this, very little engagement will take place with the significant sections of the Old Testament which deal with persecution (Gen 4; Isa, Jer, Dan, Ezek), although mention will be made of such sections from time to time. This research project also does not claim to present a New Testament theology of persecution *per se*, although significant sections of the research cover the gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke, along with the Pauline writings. Noticeably absent (and necessary for a New Testament theology) is a thorough consideration of the Johannine and Petrine literature. Even though this particular research does not attempt a New Testament theology, it should enable or at least encourage such a theological attempt by providing a definitional framework for the study of Christian persecution. The point of this research is simply to offer a biblical, theological definition of *persecution* which explains why Christians ought to experience it. If anything, then, the research is ethical in nature, explaining the *ought* of Christian persecution.

The bulk of the research will be devoted to a consideration of what is being called the *regnal righteousness dynamic* of Christian persecution according to the Scriptures. The terms *regnal* and *righteousness* might be considered redundant in a sense, but their overlap in meaning is intentional here for the sake of emphasis. The *righteousness* being spoken of is the righteousness of God revealed in Jesus Christ. As

⁷Examples of such attempts include, Josef Ton, *Suffering, Martyrdom, and Rewards in Heaven* (Wheaton: The Romanian Missionary Society, 1997; reprint, 2000); and Glenn Penner, *In the Shadow of the Cross: A Biblical Theology of Persecution and Discipleship* (Bartlesville, OK: Living Sacrifice Books, 2004). Penner passed away in January 2010.

chapter 2 will explore, the righteousness of God is on display in the work and triumph of Jesus Christ. In Matthew in particular, Jesus is viewed both as king and as the display of the righteousness of God. Obviously, when one speaks of the righteousness of God, he also speaks of the authority of God. The Christian, biblical view of God is, by nature, the view of sovereign authority. Thus, placing *regnal* in front of *righteousness* would almost seem redundant, but there is a reason for adding this term in front of *righteousness*. The term *regnal* has to do with a particular era or time of reign of a certain sovereign. The in-breaking of the Kingdom of God is parallel to the incarnation and ascension of Jesus Christ. By the end of Matthew's gospel, Jesus claims to hold sovereign authority over heaven and earth. Such claims of authority are not lost on the powers of this present age. These claims comprehend both the notion of kingship and righteousness, in that Christ is viewed as enacting—or implementing⁸—God's righteousness in heaven and on earth so the prayers of the disciples might be answered accordingly (Matt 6:10; Luke 11:2). There is no attempt here to isolate the kingship authority of Christ from righteousness. To the contrary, the point is to recognize that righteousness is not unrelated to God's rule. Necessarily, then, much discussion will need to take place concerning the clash of authorities extant in the display of the righteousness of God through the followers of Jesus Christ. Adding *regnal* to the term *righteousness* takes serious note of this reality and guides the discussion of the dynamic in play regarding persecution. In short, placing *regnal* in front of righteousness recognizes that “the language of ‘righteousness’ appears with remarkable frequency in association with the vocabulary of ‘ruling and judging’.”⁹ The righteousness of God in Christ will clash with unrighteousness and rebel powers.

⁸Peter Stuhlmacher, *A Challenge to the New Perspective: Revisiting Paul's Doctrine of Justification* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2001), 73. Chapter 2 offers a thorough discussion.

⁹Mark Seifrid, *Christ Our Righteousness: Paul's Theology of Justification*, *New Studies in Biblical Theology* 9, ed. D. A. Carson (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000), 40. Seifrid makes this point in relation to the Old Testament. In Chapter 2, we will examine this phenomenon in Matthew.

Although many scholars debate the manner that this concept of *righteousness* is employed in Matthew's gospel, chapter 2 will argue that the concept is not wholly dissimilar to a Pauline concept of righteousness and is certainly significant for understanding persecution. By *righteousness*, then, this definition means that "Christ's fulfilling of all righteousness—his obedience to the Father's will and command. . . , his sacrificial death, and his resurrection that vindicates the cross and ushers in a new eschatological era—becomes ours by faith in union with him. It is on that basis that a believer is 'reckoned righteous.'"¹⁰ Those who act by faith in union with Christ will become targets of persecution *on account of righteousness* (Matt 5:10-12). Obviously, much more must be said concerning *righteousness* in Matthew. The point here is to say that often, or perhaps always, when Christian persecution arises on account of *righteousness*, there will be a concomitant clash of authority taking place as well. The authority may be the authority of one person, of a government, of a political action group, or even of a family or community, but the authority will be provoked by the presence of Christ in the lives of those united to Him. So, placing the term *regnal* in front of *righteousness* adds an emphasis on the victory of the resurrection and the present and abiding claims to kingship authority from Jesus Christ. In other words, the followers of Christ are righteous in their union to Him, and they are thus aligned to his present claims of authority. Their faith in Him signals both that they recognize His authority and manifest His righteousness in matters of judgment concerning both salvation and condemnation. No assertion is being made here that the followers of Christ are themselves adept at obeying Christ. Rather, they are brought into the righteousness of God by Christ. As the Israelites were delivered freely from the Egyptians by a display of the righteousness of God and brought into the wilderness to learn the way of living as the

¹⁰Brian J. Vickers, "The Imputation of Christ's Righteousness: A Study of Key Pauline Texts," (Ph.D. diss., Southern Baptist Theological Seminary 2003), 249.

people of God, so, too, the followers of Christ are freely brought in to the deliverance of salvation through Christ's work for them, and they are taught the way of righteousness. This righteousness then becomes that for which the disciples hunger and thirst precisely because they have been given a taste for it through faith in Christ. The righteousness is not theirs which they seek. Instead, it is the righteousness of God in the kingdom unfolding. They have been given the kingdom and taught by Christ to pursue its full riches. The righteousness is related to Christ, who is pictured as king. Again, much more shall be said in chapter 2, but suffice it to say here that righteousness and authority are at the heart of occasions of Christian persecution. The subject of this research is to examine and explain biblically, theologically, and pragmatically this dynamic interplay of persecution.

Method

Diokological Perspective

Before explaining methodologically the biblical, theological, and pragmatic course of this research, I must make an important note concerning the overall perspective of this project because it differs intentionally from the martyrological outlook which has prevailed academically on the topic of persecution.¹¹ On the theme of *persecution*, the questions have tended to focus on martyrdom, that is, whether the person in question died as a martyr. In this research, the questions are framed in a way that they are asked and answered with an affinity to *persecution*, representing an intentional shift of emphasis away from the more common academic emphasis upon *martyrdom*. The significance of this distinction should become more clear as the case of Dietrich Bonhoeffer is considered more closely in chapter 5. For now, it is sufficient to note that martyrology

¹¹W. H. C. Frend, *Martyrdom and Persecution in the Early Church: A Study of a Conflict from the Maccabees to Donatus* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1965) is a good example of the martyrological perspective applied to the study of persecution.

asks a different set of questions than does the study of persecution, which study will be termed *diokology*, adapted from the prominent Greek verb for persecution, διωκω.

Questions of martyrology arise and are the basis of exploration in works such as J. S. Pobee's *Persecution and Martyrdom in the Theology of Paul*.¹² Pobee seems to assume—and it is not necessarily the case that this is so—but he seems to assume that the contextual community determines the confines of theology, rather than assuming that theology fundamentally determines the shape of the community. As a result, the greater portion of *Persecution and Martyrdom* is spent unpacking the contextual community out of which Pobee supposes Christianity developed, namely, a Judaism shaped by the inter-Testament period of the Maccabees.¹³

Like Pobee, perhaps the majority of those writing in the area of martyrology are writing in a related manner, asking the question of how (contextually) the Christian *martyrology* developed. So, for instance, W. H. C. Frend argues in *Martyrdom and Persecution: A Study of Conflict from the Maccabees to Donatus*¹⁴ that the early Christians developed their theology of martyrdom by, literally, adopting the concepts borrowed from Judaism. Similarly, Droge and Tabor argue for contextual development in relation to the Roman concept of “Noble Death.”¹⁵ Seely, likewise, argues along the line of martyrological development in the Noble Death tradition.¹⁶

¹²John S. Pobee, *Persecution and Martyrdom in the Theology of Paul*, JSNT Supplement Series 6 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1985).

¹³John Piper, *The Future of Justification: A Response to N. T. Wright* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2007), 34-37 offers three reasonable cautions of such reconstructions of first century contexts.

¹⁴Frend, *Martyrdom and Persecution*.

¹⁵A. J. Droge and J. D. Tabor, *A Noble Death: Suicide and Martyrdom among Christians and Jews in Antiquity* (San Francisco: Harper San Francisco, 1992).

¹⁶D. Seeley, *The Noble Death: Graeco-Roman Martyrology and Paul's Concept of Salvation* JSNTSup 28 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1990).

Against these developmental, contextual approaches, one might read G. W. Bowersock's *Martyrdom and Rome*, in which he argues that Christian martyrdom developed as "something new" out of the context of an urbanized Roman culture. As Bowersock says, "Martyrdom, as we understand it, was conceived and devised in response to complex social, religious, and political pressures, and the date and the circumstances of its making are still the subject of lively debate."¹⁷ The debate over the development of Christian martyrology is still lively indeed. Against simplistic versions of one-to-one developmental connections between Judaism or Maccabean heroes or Roman noble deaths and Christian martyrdom, Paul Middleton argues, first, for a kind of "all of the above" approach, stating that the early Christians did inherit Judaism's outlook on suffering and death, along with a necessary contrast to and simultaneous accommodation of certain elements in Roman culture.¹⁸ Yet, Middleton further maintains that a certain amount of development is to be expected from the context, but he demonstrates as well that Christian martyrdom is, in fact, *Christian*—unique in its own sense. So, Middleton resets the question from asking about which stream it was that gave birth to Christian martyrdom to asking, instead, about what unique contribution Christian martyrdom offers to all the different streams out of which it arose. At the conclusion of the matter, Middleton ends with his own reaffirmation of a kind of developmental contextualism, saying, "Martyrology, as with all Christian theology, developed within a constellation of cross-cultural ideas. Some it adopted or absorbed, whilst other ideas were actively opposed."¹⁹

¹⁷G. W. Bowersock, *Martyrdom and Rome* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 5.

¹⁸Paul Middleton, *Radical Martyrdom and Cosmic Conflict in Early Christianity*, LNTS 307 (New York: T. and T. Clark, 2006).

¹⁹Middleton, *Radical Martyrdom*, 127.

In contrast to these approaches to questions related to persecution, diokology asks present tense questions—“Is this experience persecution?”—rather than past tense questions—“Did he die as a martyr?” or, “Did the Christian Church adopt the Roman hero view of martyrdom?” Though the latter questions are significant for Christian theology and ethics, as one may well see in following the debate concerning whether Dietrich Bonhoeffer may rightly be called a martyr²⁰—still, there are significant questions which are better answered in the diokological sense than in the martyrological sense. Suffering persecution is often a present tense reality for those preaching the gospel to the nations. Indeed, in Craig Slane’s book *Bonhoeffer as Martyr*, Christians are urged into action as a direct result of understanding martyrdom. It may be a weakness of that book, however, that martyrdom is used as the interpretive grid for ethical action, considering one is typically not appraised as martyr until after the fact of his death. The concern, as Lausanne points out, is what it means to suffer *for Christ’s sake*, rather than what it means to die as a martyr.

Slane’s work on the witness of Dietrich Bonhoeffer serves as a good illustration of the distinction being pressed here between diokology and martyrology. Slane’s approach is clearly martyrological, as his book title implies. He argues against the backdrop of the *Imitatio Christi* that Bonhoeffer’s death conforms to the basic pattern of Christ’s death in that it served the greater cause of social justice. Like Christ, Bonhoeffer died so that others might live. Slane argues further that contemporary Christian witness demands the same sort of *Imitatio Christi* pattern of dying as a witness for social justice. However, Bonhoeffer’s case provides the martyrologist with ample ambiguity to strain even the most complex systems of classification. So, Bonhoeffer presses to the fore the problem of how to demarcate Christian martyrs from political

²⁰Craig J. Slane, *Bonhoeffer as Martyr: Social Responsibility and Modern Christian Commitment* (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2004).

martyrs in light of the political and social struggles of the twentieth century. As James and Marti Hefley admit, “The line is hard to draw here.”²¹

Unlike Slane’s work, the thesis proposed in this project does not require the further development of martyrology; rather, it reframes questions in terms of diokology. Instead of asking whether Bonhoeffer was a martyr, the question changes to whether Bonhoeffer was persecuted *for Christ’s sake*. This is a significant shift of emphasis, for example, when one considers that Christ promised (in Matt 5:10-12) the blessing of the kingdom for those who are persecuted on account of Him, not those who have died in likeness to him. In their experience of suffering persecution, the disciples of Jesus are said to be blessed and told to rejoice in response to their present suffering of persecution. Likewise, Peter gives explicit instructions (1 Pet 4:12-19) concerning how the disciples of Christ are to seek the purity of their persecution without an intermingling of unrighteousness. These two instances (Matt 5 and 1 Pet 4) at least hint that the early Christians were as concerned with how to suffer through persecution rightly as they were concerned about how to reflect the broad pattern of martyrdom found in the form of the *Imitatio Christi*.

Indeed, church history demonstrates that beyond their martyrological concerns Christians had built into their later discipleship practices the diokological idea of persecution being a part of Christian living as opposed to simply having martyrdom being a part of Christian dying. In Chapter 37 of *The Octavius* of Minucius Felix, the reader is assured that “unjust persecutions endured for Christ’s name are sights worthy of God.”²² Though Slane and the early church both utilize the interpretive grid of martyrology, the early church, at the same time, established the necessity of speaking practically in terms

²¹James and Marti Hefley, *By Their Blood: Christian Martyrs of the Twentieth Century* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1996), 10.

²²Minucius Felix, *The Octavius*, trans. Robert Ernest Wallis, ch. 37, Christian Classics Ethereal Library, 2005 [on-line]; accessed 23 February 2009; available from <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/anf04.iv.iii.xxxvii.html>; Internet.

better characterized by diokology. Thus, in accordance with the diokological instructions prevalent in the New Testament, the thesis here developed maintains emphasis on *persecution* as opposed to *martyrdom*, though the former may certainly lead to the latter in many cases, and the latter must always be preceded by the former. This project does not explicitly call for a reorientation of academic study under the rubric of diokology as opposed to martyrology, although there will always be more instances of the former than the latter. However, this thesis will provide a diokological reorientation of many questions typically answered under the auspices of martyrology. This thesis, then, should prove valuable to academic research related to persecution, since it will codify and maintain nomenclature from a perspective of distinct contrast with martyrology.

Biblical Definition

From the perspective of diokology, then, this research will proceed biblically to formulate and test a definition of Christian persecution from Matt 5:10-12. On the knowledge that Scripture speaks extensively about persecution and under the assumption that the New Testament, particularly, is normative for Christian practice, this research will begin in chapter two with the construction of a functional, New Testament definition of the primary term related to this project: *persecution*. Concerning the matter of persecution, the definition will be formulated through an interaction with and analysis of current critical scholarship related to persecution. Critical scholars have been debating the nature of persecution in Q. Ann Jervis's article provides an entry point into the debate related to persecution in both Matthew and Luke.²³ The question in debate concerns whether the early Christians identified their persecution in prophetic terms or in terms related to Christ's kingly dominion. In arguing for the latter position, Jervis argues that the portrait painted of Jesus by the gospel writers is one of kingship. She says,

²³L. Ann Jervis, "Suffering for the Reign of God: The Persecution of Disciples in Q," *Novum Testamentum* 44 (2002): 313.

“Jesus’ distinguishing characteristic is that he is intimately connected to the reign of God. Rather than his identity being tied to the prophets of the past, it is linked to God’s current work of bringing in God’s reign.”²⁴ The regnal nature of Jervis’s position is plain. From her article, then, it is possible to clarify and defend a Matthean definition of *persecution* which identifies persecution primarily with the kingship of Jesus Christ. Again, it is prudent to recall that this research is not separating kingship from righteousness. The point here in relation to persecution is to show that kingship/righteousness provide the framework for understanding persecution, not relation to prophetic office. The tendency to relate persecution to prophetic office recurs often, as will be seen in chapter 3 when other New Testament works are considered outside of Matthew. *Kingship* will be used rather than *kingdom* in an effort to clarify that the matter at hand is sovereignty as opposed to spatial dominion. To put the matter another way, the kingship of Christ is everything that Satan offered in the temptation (Matt 4:8-9, “all the kingdoms of the world and their glory”) and more (Matt 28:18, “all authority in heaven and on earth”). This definition will be derived in chapter 2 from both the structure and content of Matthew 5:10-12, and the definition will assert that Christian persecution is by nature regnal, that is, identified with the rule of Christ which manifests the righteousness of God. Biblically, then, the definition derived from Matthew 5:10-12 will establish what is the regnal dynamic of Christian persecution.

Chapter 2 focuses both on the structure and the content of Matthew 5:10-12 in relation to the Sermon on the Mount in particular. From a structural perspective, several questions must be answered, such as why the Beatitudes are arranged as they are and whether the Sermon on the Mount supports a metadiscursive theme. Even if the Sermon on the Mount supports a metadiscursive theme, the further question lingers concerning

²⁴Jervis is speaking more broadly of all the Q logia, not simply that about which we are speaking here in Matthew. See Jervis, “Suffering for the Reign of God,” 329.

whether persecution, kingship, or righteousness might serve as such a theme. To explore these questions on metadiscursive themes, chapter 2 engages the work of the Eastern Orthodox skeptic Andrej Kodjak.²⁵ Indeed, one of the primary veins of exploration in chapter 2 is to determine the role of kingship and persecution in the Sermon on the Mount and, thus, in Matthew 5:10-12. The conclusion of this engagement with Kodjak leads directly to a closer consideration of the kingship authority of Christ.

Asking and answering the question of kingship in the Sermon on the Mount leads naturally to an interaction with Warren Carter, who has argued extensively for a kind of regnal conflict between Jesus and the Roman authorities.²⁶ Carter will force the exploration of the chapter to determine the character of the interaction between Jesus, his followers, and the Roman government. Sharp attention will be given to the kingship of Jesus. Beyond kingship, the issue of righteousness, too, will become significant. To help clarify the nature of righteousness in Matthew, chapter 2 will interact with the work of Benno Przybylski.²⁷ Other writings, such as Mark Seifrid's *Christ Our Righteousness*,²⁸ will be considered in this context as well—not so much because these writings focus attention on righteousness in Matthew—rather, because these writings provide a framework for considering whether the righteousness of Matthew is consistent, complementary, or contradictory to righteousness in the Pauline literature. This consideration of righteousness and its relation to Matthew is important considering that

²⁵Andrej Kodjak, *A Structural Analysis of the Sermon on the Mount*, Religion and Reason (Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter, 1986), 44-45, 66-69.

²⁶Warren Carter, "Matthean Christology in Roman Imperial Key: Matthew 1:1," in *The Gospel of Matthew in its Roman Imperial Context*, ed. John Riches and David Sim, JSNTSup 276 (London: T. & T. Clark, 2005), 143-65.

²⁷Benno Przybylski, *Righteousness in Matthew and His World of Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980).

²⁸Mark A. Seifrid, *Christ Our Righteousness: Paul's Theology of Justification*, New Studies in Biblical Theology (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000).

righteousness is such a significant aspect of the definition of persecution derived from the Sermon on the Mount. Ultimately, the purpose of chapter 2 is to establish a definition of persecution from Matthew 5:10-12 and will conclude when that task is complete.

Biblical Defense of Definition

Not all who have considered the topic of persecution have concluded that the regnal righteousness dynamic best defines it. In chapter 3, several alternate biblical definitions will be considered. Specifically, the regnal dynamic must be defended against those who would argue that persecution in the New Testament is a construct of the particular community in response to the first century (or even later) context. Marcus,²⁹ Hooker,³⁰ and other Markan scholars will guide the conversation through a consideration of the regnal righteousness framework of persecution as it relates to the gospel of Mark and the consideration of whether the Markan audience were suffering persecution. Scholars have been quite interested in speculating on the nature of the community to which the gospel of Mark was written and whether or not that community was suffering persecution. Questions pertaining to these Markan studies must be answered with regard to whether the regnal righteousness dynamic is a viable alternative for explaining Markan peculiarities such as those found in Mark 10:30. In addition to the questions pertaining to a Markan persecution context, other questions such as what Craig Hovey means when he says, “Every church is meant to be a martyr-church despite the fact that not every Christian’s witness will be a martyr-witness.”³¹ Instead of focusing his attention so much on the context of the community receiving Mark’s gospel, Hovey considers how the

²⁹Joel Marcus, *Mark 1-8: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, Anchor Bible (New York: Doubleday, 2000), 28-39.

³⁰Morna D. Hooker, *A Commentary on the Gospel According to St. Mark*, Black’s New Testament Commentaries (A. and C. Black: London, 1991), 243.

³¹Craig Hovey, *To Share in the Body: A Theology of Martyrdom for Today’s Church* (Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2008).

church today should read this gospel in relation to persecution. Sam Wells states that Hovey's work is "to make God's people a disciplined and responsive community whose witness constitutes a rival claim to truth that unsettles the forces that this book describes as 'instrumentalism' and the 'world.'"³² Even though Hovey relies largely on a martyrological outlook, he is diligent to press the church into understanding persecution in a manner similar to that proposed by the regnal dynamic. The quote from Wells makes this point plain in that the witness of the church is itself a rival claim to truth which unsettles other authorities. Further work in chapter 3 will seek to clarify the limits of agreement between Hovey's martyr-church and the regnal righteousness dynamic established in this research. One should note, however, that even in Hovey's work, which is built upon the gospel of Mark, there is a focus primarily on audience response. Most scholars have debated the composition of the original audience while Hovey's attention is turned toward the reception by the contemporary audience.

In addition to Markan studies, chapter 3 will also juxtapose the regnal righteousness dynamic with studies related to persecution in Luke-Acts. Scott Cunningham has produced the most notable work in Lukan studies related to persecution.³³ Though Cunningham posits a six-part exposition of persecution from the Lukan corpus, he trends toward a prophet-identification explanation of persecution in Luke-Acts. So, again, the notion of prophetic identification must be considered in relation to the regnal righteousness dynamic to determine whether the regnal righteousness dynamic remains consistent with the writings of Luke. Each of Cunningham's six points will need to be explored both to clarify what is being taught in

³²Sam Wells, foreword to Craig Hovey, *To Share in the Body: A Theology of Martyrdom for Today's Church* (Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2008).

³³Scott Cunningham, *'Through Many Tribulations': The Theology of Persecution in Luke-Acts*, JSNTSup 142 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1997).

Luke-Acts concerning persecution and to understand further the implications of the regnal righteousness dynamic.

Finally, chapter 3 will explore the Pauline literature related to persecution. J. S. Pobee's work has already been referenced in this introduction, but it is worth mentioning again since it will be the primary work of interaction related to persecution in Pauline studies. Pobee does not frame persecution within a righteousness framework at all. Instead, he views the persecution prevalent in Pauline literature as derivative of a Maccabean mindset in the Judaism of the first century. Beyond the immediate question posed by Pobee on the matter of Maccabean influence is the larger question which continuously surfaces in persecution studies, namely, the question of developmental influence on Christian theological concepts such as *persecution*. Developmental constructs are continuously interjected into diokological studies. Not only Pobee but also Slane and others make development a key feature of their understanding of persecution in the New Testament. If the regnal righteousness dynamic is accurate, then it will be able to withstand the challenges brought forth by Hovey, Cunningham, Pobee, and others related to the New Testament teachings on persecution.

Theological Interaction

Once the regnal righteousness dynamic of persecution is demonstrated not to contradict other biblical instruction in diokology, the next step is to consider how such a diokological framework interacts with contemporary theological literature. After all, the call from Lausanne was toward deeper theological reflection, not just a biblical definition. So, chapter 4 takes up the theological challenge in three distinct parts. First, the regnal righteousness definition of persecution confronts the original problems posed by the Lausanne Conference. Lausanne is asking for theologians to provide definitions adequate to distinguish between persecution and oppression, between issues of persecution and church and state, or between persecution and political intolerance. Does

the regnal righteousness dynamic answer Lausanne's concern satisfactorily? Can the regnal righteousness dynamic serve the needs of those persecuted in the task of carrying out the Great Commission?

Beyond being able to answer the questions posed by the Lausanne Conference, the regnal righteousness dynamic must also be able to answer theological concerns posed by other writers in diokology. Specifically, two writers are featured in chapter 4: Glenn Penner and Josef Ton. Glenn Penner, the former leader of Voice of the Martyrs in Canada, has written a biblical theology of persecution.³⁴ In his work, Penner seeks to relate persecution to discipleship from the perspective of biblical theology. Penner recognizes the relationship between persecution and righteousness, although it is not altogether clear that he views the relationship between the two in precisely the same manner being argued here. To clarify the distinctions being offered between Penner and this research, chapter 4 will pay close attention to the distinction Penner makes between God's will and Man's will. In other words, chapter 4 will need to clarify in relation to Penner whether righteousness is a theological or anthropological construct.

Josef Ton's diokology is radically distinct from Penner and from nearly everyone else writing in the field.³⁵ For Ton, persecution is a kind of testing which will result in heavenly rewards for the martyr. God shapes His people and prepares them for future reign in the kingdom through their persecution on earth. Superficially, Ton's approach appears to be purgative or disciplinary, which has persecution serving instrumentally to rid the saint of his dross while purifying him for the purpose of ruling. In truth, Ton is after something more than purification. He is seeking through his diokological study to establish a theology of rewards as much as a theology of martyrdom or persecution. Such a desire from Ton leads the conversation directly back to a

³⁴Penner, *In the Shadow of the Cross*.

³⁵Ton, *Suffering, Martyrdom, and Rewards in Heaven*.

consideration of the relationship of righteousness to persecution because Ton recognizes that the subject of rewards necessarily brings to the surface the great need to clarify how rewards relate to justification. So, because justification will be a key element of the discussion with Ton, the concept of righteousness will once again rise to the fore, making the regnal righteousness dynamic of persecution all the more clear in its application to extant theological literature.

Pragmatic Application

After the original definition of persecution is fully understood in the framework of regnal righteousness, demonstrated to be conversant with the biblical literature, and capable of interacting with—even complementing and challenging—the diokological literature, there still remains one other aspect of investigation regarding the regnal righteousness dynamic: the pragmatic test. How does the regnal righteousness dynamic *work*, in practical terms? To answer this question, chapter 5 will seek to apply the regnal righteousness dynamic to the notoriously difficult test case of Dietrich Bonhoeffer. For definitions to be significant, they must work in difficult cases. Few would argue that the case of Dietrich Bonhoeffer is anything but difficult. Yet, Dietrich Bonhoeffer was not the only Christian who waged a kind of war against the Nazi machine in Hitler's Germany. Other Christians took up the fight in different ways. Thus, chapter 5 is a test case for the pragmatic value of our definition as the case of Dietrich Bonhoeffer will be compared and contrasted with the case of Paul Schneider, the first of the Christian martyrs in Nazi Germany. The diokological perspective of the regnal righteousness dynamic will be employed in relation to these not-so-distant historical figures to determine whether Lausanne's plea is answered (at least partially) by the regnal righteousness dynamic.

CHAPTER 2

THE REGNAL CHARACTER OF MATTHEAN PERSECUTION

Persecution, though a prevalent theme throughout the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament,¹ is not in any proportional sense a dominant theme in contemporary New Testament or theological studies.² Nevertheless, some studies have been done on the theme of persecution. The purpose of this present chapter is to engage the conclusions of such studies related to the persecution theme as it is found in Matthew generally and the Sermon on the Mount particularly. Specifically, the claim being explored in this chapter is whether the Sermon on the Mount demonstrates that persecution should be expected by those whose fealty identifies them with Christ. The exploration seeks to discover whether the persecution presented in the gospel of Matthew is *regnal* in nature, which is to say, whether the persecution is provoked by the righteousness of God being put on display in Christ and His representatives, the kingdom people—to establish whether those who abide in the righteousness of Christ are the ones promised the blessings of the kingdom along with the persecutions they are expected to suffer. If the thesis appears viable, then a further exploration in the form of juxtaposition can be undertaken with respect to the gospel of Mark, thereby asserting the viability of

¹Scott Cunningham, for example, argues that only 6 of the 52 chapters in the Luke-Acts corpus fail to make a contribution to the discussion of persecution. See Scott Cunningham, *Through Many Tribulations: The Theology of Persecution in Luke-Acts* JSNTSup 142 (Sheffield: Sheffield Press, 1997), 13. Further examples are readily available in my bibliography.

²As an example, a recent database survey (April 15, 2006) at a theological library yielded 4,466 entries with the term *psychology* in the title, while only yielding 118 titles with the term *persecution* in the title. *Socialism*, *Bultmann*, and *Q* were each found in more title entries than *persecution* (162, 120, and 193 respectively).

the regnal framework as an interpretive guide for the synoptic gospels. Of course, further study would be needed in relation to the Luke-Acts corpus and the writings of Paul. Such studies will be undertaken in the following chapter. If the thesis remains viable, then the conversation may well move toward considering the viability of a New Testament theology of persecution, though the point of this project is more modest. Specifically, this chapter will focus on regnal righteousness in Matthew 5:10-12 as a framework for understanding persecution and will seek to construct a functional definition of Christian persecution.

Preliminary Considerations of Matthew 5:10-12

The regnal character of persecution can be investigated from Matthew 5:10-12.³ Matthew 5:10-12 has been chosen as the primitive focal passage of study because of its position in the Gospel of Matthew; its role in the Sermon on the Mount; and its affinity with Luke, which, on the assumptions of Q, would indicate its presence in that source as well. There is no argument here concerning sources because the interest of this present research is Matthew in its final form. As Leon Morris notes, “It is more important to understand what the words mean in their new situation than to engage in scholarly niceties about how they came to be there.”⁴ Likewise, Jervis approaches the question of persecution in Q by first stating that “questions of stratigraphy will not come into play in this investigation, since my concern is with Q in its final form.”⁵ In the same way in this present paper, “questions of stratigraphy” will not come into play because the

³In the Greek, the last 2 Beatitudes read, μακάριοι οἱ δεδιωγμένοι ἕνεκεν δικαιοσύνης, ὅτι αὐτῶν ἐστὶν ἡ βασιλεία τῶν οὐρανῶν. μακάριοι ἐστε ὅταν ὀνειδίωσιν ὑμᾶς καὶ διώξωσιν καὶ εἴπωσιν πᾶν πονηρὸν καθ’ ὑμῶν ψευδόμενοι ἕνεκεν ἐμοῦ.

⁴Leon Morris, *The Gospel According to Matthew*, Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1992), 17. Morris is speaking here in the context of a writer appropriating sources to produce his own end product.

⁵L. Ann Jervis, “Suffering for the Reign of God: The Persecution of Disciples in Q,” *Novum Testamentum* 44 (2002): 313.

concern is for the nature of persecution as presented in the Sermon on the Mount as it is presently known.

For one wishing to study the theme of persecution in the New Testament, the Gospel of Matthew appears to be a logical place to start. “The Gospel of Matthew stands at the beginning of the New Testament canon and occupies a primary place in it,”⁶ even if it is not actually the first gospel to appear chronologically. The Gospel of Matthew has been considered a part of the New Testament canon since the time of the earliest compilations of New Testament writings. Matthew is quoted in the *Didache* (perhaps in 8:2). Matthew is also quoted early in *Ignatius of Antioch, To the Smyrnaeans* 1.1. Certainly, by the second century publication of Tatian’s *Diatessaron*, the four gospels, including Matthew, were well known to the church. Because Matthew has been placed first in the New Testament canon, the reader who wishes to study the New Testament teaching on persecution will, in all likelihood, meet the subject first in Matthew 5:10-12.⁷

Beyond the fact that Matthew 5:10-12 is (canonically speaking) the first direct New Testament reference to persecution is the syntactically significant fact that this pericope is a strategically placed transition from the Beatitudes to the larger body of the Sermon on the Mount, thus making its interpretation key for understanding the larger flow of the Sermon on the Mount. The importance for Christians to understand the Sermon on the Mount has been demonstrated by numerous Christians from Augustine and Aquinas to Bonhoeffer and the Mennonites of more recent times.⁸ Perhaps Bauman’s line is somewhat hyperbolic when he states flatly that “the Sermon on the

⁶Rudolf Schnackenburg, *The Gospel of Matthew*, trans. Robert Barr (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2002), 1.

⁷This statement recognizes the possibility (but not necessity) of classifying earlier events such as Herod’s decree in 2:16ff. as persecution; yet, persecution is first addressed didactically in 5:10-12.

⁸Ulrich Luz, *Matthew 1-7: A Continental Commentary* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1985), 218-23, offers history of the Sermon on the Mount.

Mount is the most important and most controversial biblical text,⁹ but the line is not completely without warrant for the Sermon on the Mount has, without doubt, served as both an inspirational and essential ethical guide for Christian living since its first century inception.¹⁰

Formally, the 5:10-12 pericope, because verse 11 begins μακάριοί, appears to contain a ninth Beatitude.¹¹ Because of the change from third person plural to the second plural form ἐστε, this ninth Beatitude is shifting the conversation to direct address by the speaker, turning the conversation from general realities to specific application toward the *you all* who are being addressed. Kodjak demonstrates that this ninth Beatitude serves a metadiscursive function, summarizing the entire text of the first eight Beatitudes and identifying the speaker (Christ) with the kingdom of heaven.¹² As the argument goes, the first eight Beatitudes are framed in verses three and ten by ὅτι αὐτῶν ἐστὶν ἡ βασιλεία τῶν οὐρανῶν, which is the promise that the kingdom of heaven belongs (present tense) to such as the *poor* (v. 3) and the *persecuted* (v. 10), thereby connecting the kingdom of heaven with the poor and persecuted. Surely, a righteous kingdom with a righteous king would be one in which the poor and persecuted find justice and mercy (Ps 143:1-3).

The fact that the first and eighth Beatitudes begin and end in this way is, temporally speaking, somewhat perplexing, considering that Beatitudes two through

⁹Bauman, Clarence, "Introduction," in *The Sermon on the Mount: The Modern Quest for Its Meaning*, ed. Clarence Bauman (Macon: Mercer University Press, 1985), 3.

¹⁰Glenn Stassen and David Gushee, *Kingdom Ethics: Following Jesus in Contemporary Context* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2003), make this argument the foundation of their ethics text and seek to utilize the Sermon on the Mount as the center of Christian ethics.

¹¹Warren S. Kissinger, *The Sermon on the Mount: A History of Interpretation and Bibliography* (Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow Press and American Theological Library Association, 1975), 242-75, with an extensive bibliography on the Beatitudes, including numerous titles referring to the number of Beatitudes. The trend, according to Kissinger, tends toward nine Beatitudes rather than eight.

¹²Andrej Kodjak, *A Structural Analysis of the Sermon on the Mount* Religion and Reason (Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter, 1986), 44-45, 66-69.

seven end with future tense promises. Yet, the fact that each of the Beatitudes begins with the anaphoric μακαριοι, translated in the present tense as “Blessed are,” indicates that the temporal nature of the Beatitudes is a ubiquitous present—even though the majority of the Beatitudes extend their blessings into the future. Christ appears in the Sermon on the Mount to be offering His people a kingdom which is not merely a future kingdom, but a kingdom which is in some sense presently accessible to them. To sum it up differently, Kodjak explains, “It is not so much the question of what comes first and what comes later, but rather what is the nature of things that coexist in time. In the Beatitudes, the heavenly kingdom coexists and overlaps with the empirical existence, and the transition from one to another appears to be the main point of the text.”¹³ This consideration of the coexistence of the earthly powers and the heavenly kingdom, as we shall see, is not unrelated to our consideration of persecution.

Beyond both its position in the canon and its function in the Sermon on the Mount, Matthew 5:10-12 is also an important passage to study in relation to persecution because of its significance in the academic literature related to the debate between whether the persecution portrayed there is primarily regnal or prophetic. This debate has occurred within source critics related to studies in Q. The debate centers upon the identification of the persecuted, either as regnally related or prophetically aligned. Thus, the question being pursued is whether the persecution appears related primarily to the kingship authority of Christ or to an organic identification of the persecuted with the prophets. Not all scholars agree. This chapter of research will explore the question in debate more thoroughly below. For now, attention will be focused more narrowly on an exposition of Matthew 5:10-12 as it relates to the themes of persecution, kingship,

¹³Ibid., 46. Further interaction below will test and adapt Kodjak’s thesis in relation to the regnal character of Christian persecution.

authority, and righteousness—in other words, as it relates to regnal righteousness in the persecution dynamic.

Structural Considerations of Matthew 5:10-12

The skeptic Andrej Kodjak, a scholar of Russian literature and semiotics, published a thorough analysis of the structure of the Sermon on the Mount, in which he argues that the Beatitudes are framed by the concluding concept of persecution found in Matthew 5:10-12.¹⁴ Essentially, Kodjak subdivided the Beatitudes into two columns, defined simply as the “left part” and “right part” of these statements of blessing. The second, fourth, and sixth Beatitudes (mourners, hungry/thirsty, and the pure in heart) fit into the right part of his chart on the interrelation of the two parts of the Beatitudes.¹⁵ According to Kodjak, these three Beatitudes characterize an internal predominance (primarily inward qualities), as opposed to the external predominance (primarily outward qualities) of Beatitudes three, five, and seven (meek, merciful, and peacemakers). The first and eighth Beatitudes in this structure serve as the rails between which the other six Beatitudes operate. In this way, the concluding passage, Matthew 5:10-12, links with the first Beatitude and serves as a metadiscursive for the beatitudinal pericope, particularly linking the kingdom of Heaven in the first Beatitude with the persecution of the eighth Beatitude and thus coloring both the Beatitudes and the Sermon on the Mount with these two themes. Verse 11 serves as the hinge which opens the door to the rest of the Sermon. If Kodjak is correct in his demonstration that Matthew 5:10-12 serves a metadiscursive function and that the framework of the Beatitudes prepares the way for the remainder of the Sermon to speak concerning the coexistence of both kingdom and kingdom people, then the gate is opened for understanding the themes kingdom and

¹⁴Ibid.

¹⁵See Kodjak, *A Structural Analysis*, 68, Chart 6.

persecution, which may then shed further light on other pericopes throughout the Sermon. More germane to this study, however, is the potential of this pericope and these themes to abide as enduring tools for developing a theological framework for persecution studies.

Metadiscursive Themes

Before demonstrating this potential of the kingdom-persecution theme in the service of either persecution studies or the interpretation of the Sermon on the Mount, there must come first the admission that there is no unanimity in defining such an interpretive theme in the Sermon on the Mount. Indeed, studies of the Sermon on the Mount have produced no small number of interpretive themes. Anyone wishing to add another such theme would need at least an entire dissertation in order to establish his case, given the fact that everyone from Tolstoy to Gandhi has proffered such potentially illuminating, interpretive themes for this Sermon.¹⁶ Nevertheless, it is at least possible and perhaps plausible to suggest that a study of persecution in the Sermon on the Mount has something to offer which has been neglected by contemporary biblical studies. Admittedly, it would be well beyond the scope of this research to argue for persecution to serve as the sole interpretive guide throughout the Sermon. No such claim is being made here. However, one may still benefit from an understanding of persecution related to kingship authority as the thought develops throughout both the Sermon and the gospel itself, even to the very end. In fact, the theme of persecution appears to be derivative of the larger, gospel themes of kingship (Matt 1:1 and 28:18-20) and righteousness (3:15 and 21:32). This structural analysis ought to make clear the nature of the relationship between these themes.

The presence of the two themes of regnal righteousness and persecution in the functionary role of metadiscursive in Matthew 5:10-12 makes it possible to understand

¹⁶See Clarence Bauman, *Sermon on the Mount: The Quest for Its Meaning* (Macon: Mercer University Press, 1985).

the Sermon (as Welch¹⁷ and others¹⁸ have pointed out) as catechetical instruction for its hearers, which would help them to stand firm in the face of certain persecution. Kodjak's point is that the Beatitudes portray the reality that kingdom people coexist as earthly people for now. The Beatitudes speak both of present realities and future conditions applied to the very same people. These kingdom people are not the same as all people on earth, though they do inhabit the earthly, empirical realm. They are as Moses (Heb 11:26-28), seeing by faith what others could not see. The people of the beatitudinal blessings have a feature about them which leads to the discussion of persecution in Matthew 5:10-12. Specifically, they have been embraced by and therefore become representatives of Him who is speaking in the Sermon on the Mount. And the one who speaks, speaks in regnal tones. He speaks of righteousness. He speaks of a kingdom, and He appears to speak with the authority of a king.

Again, the invocation of Kodjak's structural analysis is not meant, in any way, to suggest that Kodjak is arguing exclusively for the hermeneutical power of persecution to guide the interpretation either of the Beatitudes or the Sermon on the Mount. While it is true that Kodjak would agree "the Beatitudes concerns the retaliation of society against those who react negatively to its values,"¹⁹ it is not the case that Kodjak views persecution itself as a paradigmatic guide for the Sermon on the Mount. For Kodjak, the text of the Sermon is more fundamental than the themes of kingdom and persecution. According to Kodjak, "The human qualities from poverty in spirit to purity in heart,

¹⁷John W. Welch, "Temple Themes and Ethical Formation in the Sermon on the Mount," *Studies in Christian Ethics* 22 (2009): 151-63. See especially the discussion on p. 162. Welch quotes Kodjak here in relation to the catechetical function of the Sermon. Neither Welch, Kodjak, or the others quoted in the passage specifically tie the catechism specifically or exclusively to persecution. Also, this reference is not an endorsement of the idea that catechetical instruction necessarily implies a later redaction by the early churches.

¹⁸David P. Scaer, *Discourses in Matthew: Jesus Teaches the Church* (St. Louis: Concordia, 2004).

¹⁹Kodjak, *A Structural Analysis*, 69.

peacemaking, or acceptance of persecution for Christ's sake, have a common denominator, or invariant, of an intrinsic nature, namely, the renunciation of the anxiety of death and of the preoccupation with the struggle for survival."²⁰ The structure of the Sermon—in his view—calls for a response to the intrinsic anxiety of the human condition. Yet, Kodjak's invocation of this particular invariant imparts a potentially troubling *post facto* implication for his analysis of persecution in the Sermon. If the Sermon on the Mount were catechetical and the hearers of it were being asked to engage in actions which might provoke persecution, then it would seem that such a call to action might mitigate against Kodjak's anxiety of death thesis by demonstrating that the hearers were struggling not against the anxiety of death but *for* a heavenly kingdom—something beyond mere existence; indeed, the kingdom life to which they had been called may well have come with an implicit threat to their earthly survival—a condition which would exacerbate rather than ameliorate the anxiety of death.

In response, Kodjak could see this development as the very point of the Sermon—to provide such people with a remedy for their angst in view of the fact that their life actions might further threaten their survival. Or, framed differently, he might conclude that such an idea as a heavenly kingdom is, more or less, a fabrication of the very anxiety of death that it seeks to remedy. In truth, however, Kodjak does not approach the Sermon as a fabrication and tends to deride those interpretations which do. Instead, Kodjak argues from a more nuanced stance which involves a holistic approach toward the structure of the Sermon on the Mount. The structure of the Sermon *in toto* reveals the key to his explanation as to how the Sermon works to free the audience or reader from the anxiety of death. In his own words, Kodjak says, “The four-step progression modeled on the paradigmatic and syntagmatic axes indicates that personal

²⁰Ibid., 79. A consideration of the anxiety of death as it relates to persecution and the New Testament follows later in this research and so is not dealt with here.

cognition of the binary model of the kingdom of heaven versus the temporal state, the first to be aspired to and the second to be rejected, places a person in an irreversible process of fundamental transformation. It can be distorted only by hypocrisy.”²¹ And hypocrisy is precisely what Kodjak charges modern interpreters with committing in their interpretations of the Sermon on the Mount, insisting that their interpretations have sought to retreat (as does the world) into the bigness of affluence and pleasure as the unavoidable remedy for the anxiety of death. He says of modern interpreters, “Their demand for security imposes on them another, erroneous code of perception and subverts their scholarly effort.”²²

For him, the Sermon calls for active participation in the kingdom mindset, which originates with the binary code (kingdom of Christ versus empirical living) of the Beatitudes and includes both the acceptance of this model for kingdom living and the rejection of the struggle for security as a remedy for the anxiety of death. Without this clear structure in place—without this binary code, as he calls it—the entire Sermon on the Mount inevitably must appear completely absurd.²³ In this reckoning, one cannot even ask how to apply the Sermon on the Mount, for to ask such a question is itself a capitulation to the temporal values of security against the anxiety of death. One has no temporally secure perspective from which to ask such questions. Rather, he must act out of the structural reality of the binary code inherent in the Sermon on the Mount, which calls for transformation via acceptance of the death-free life of the kingdom and a simultaneous rejection of the death-subjugated life of temporal existence. In this way, the *via media* between life and death is enacted in response to and participation with the

²¹Ibid., 206.

²²Ibid., 22.

²³Ibid., 207.

Sermon on the Mount. Indeed, this approach explains why Kodjak can speak of the implementation of the Sermon rather than an interpretation of it.

Kodjak realizes the aforementioned tension arising from enacting such a death-free living, namely, the inherent confrontation with those adhering to the temporal values of a death-subjugated world. He demonstrates structurally how the Sermon handles such tension by including texts which offer assurances and condolences to the audience as they individually embark on their implementation of the Sermon. Texts such as 6:33 and 7:7 serve these empathetic purposes. These assurances are not meant to be rationalized; rather, they are effective through participation, even as the Sermon itself proves to be. For Kodjak, this utilization of such a framework is as basic to his pre-understanding of human existence as the concept of *ego* was to Freud²⁴ or as *the will* was to Nietzsche.²⁵

Kodjak asserts that he proffers no particular *weltanschauung*; yet, he himself was obviously conditioned by the carnage and angst of a war-ridden, nuclear twentieth century. As he says, “The existence of a human being under the shadow of a nuclear war offers even the average person a magnificent opportunity to discover that the allegedly momentary phenomenon of death is always with us and is able to dominate the existence of an individual or an entire society.”²⁶ It is not clear how Kodjak frees himself from the constraints of such angst in order to provide such a thorough analysis of the Sermon on the Mount, although he claims a partial disengagement from his own culture which, he says, was facilitated by his participation in the Eastern Orthodox Christian tradition.²⁷

²⁴Sigmund Freud, *The Ego and the Id*, The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, ed. James Strachey (New York: W. W. Norton, 1990).

²⁵Friedrich Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil: Prelude to a Philosophy of the Future*, trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Vintage Books, 1989), 21.

²⁶*Ibid.*, 3.

²⁷See Kodjak’s full discussion of the “Author’s point of view and method,” *A Structural Analysis*, 24-34, especially 31.

From his position of partial disengagement, Kodjak maintains that the challenge of humankind is not so much how to resist death “but rather how to equate and identify human existence with life and in this way to triumph over the anxiety and the might of death, that is, over the all-permeating notion of human mortality.”²⁸ With such angst abounding in the human condition, the natural tendency, according to Kodjak, is to focus on death, yielding to its anxiety either in formulating resistance to it or in succumbing to despair. The challenge he seeks to assert is the challenge of defying death’s grip and somehow living a victory over it. The means by which he seeks this victory is a *via media* between the antipodes of life and death.

To state the matter more precisely, Kodjak views the way of Christ offered in the Sermon on the Mount as the way of action toward immortality. Kodjak sees the concept of immortality as paradoxical. As he says concerning the audience of the Sermon on the Mount, “Christ’s audience was exposed to the most fundamental paradox—God’s demand that His chosen people, being mortal, act like immortals, ignoring the perils of temporal existence.”²⁹ Hence, between life and death, there exists the time for active living in the empirical world. The Christ of the Sermon on the Mount, according to Kodjak, is calling his audience to live actively as though they are immortal.

One troubling aspect of Kodjak’s approach to the Sermon on the Mount is that it appears to be rather fideistic. Unless one ascribes to the existential crisis as he envisions it and accordingly views the sermon as a call to action against it, he is falling prey to the trap of modern interpretations, succumbing to an ease of comfort and security. In other words, his claim of illumination through partial disengagement is dubious. Even granting Kodjak the point that the twentieth century was one facing serious existential crises still does not necessitate the wholesale adoption of an anthropology which may be

²⁸Kodjak, *A Structural Analysis*, 12.

²⁹*Ibid.*, 29.

foreign to the text of the Sermon on the Mount. So, if one were to agree with Kodjak on the nature of the existential crisis, he may still choose rather to confront that crisis within the framework and categories of the Sermon on the Mount itself. Kodjak could still apply the Sermon on the Mount to the existential crisis as he sees it; only, he might do that better by framing his progression in categories inherent to the Sermon on the Mount. Because Kodjak focuses so narrowly on the structure of the Sermon that he neglects to some extent its substance, his categories are not typically found in the Sermon itself. So, for instance, rather than arguing as he does for a starting point of the realization of the domination of the anxiety of death over human existence, he could simply speak of the reality of opposition powers or forces—a kingdom other than the kingdom of heaven. Additionally, death—the primary catalyst for action in Kodjak’s anthropology—is never mentioned in the Sermon on the Mount. It may be the case that death itself is not the most basic source of existential crisis in the human psyche. The Sermon on the Mount speaks more plainly about a divine-eschatological judgment which, on the normal reckoning of Christian eschatology, follows after death, death then proving not to be that which is most foreboding, or at least divine judgment might be the mitigating factor which makes death so foreboding. This emphasis on judgment would include the impending death of Christ as well, assuming that the cup of Matthew 20:22-23 and Matthew 26:39 refers to the cup of God’s wrath which brings death. The Sermon on the Mount speaks of mourners to be sure (5:4) and of an inheritance (5:5), but it does so from the perspective of a heavenly kingdom which has apparently been inaugurated by the Christ speaking in the Sermon. Thus, one finds in the Sermon the language of kingship (regal language); the language of judgment, hell, and evil; and the language of a heavenly Father and the heavenly king displaying the righteousness of God and instructing the followers of Christ about it.³⁰ Clearly, the Sermon distinguishes between

³⁰Five of the seven uses of δικαιοσύνη in Matthew occur in the Sermon on the Mount: 5:6,

those who receive heavenly blessings and those who will never enter the kingdom. Undoubtedly, any notion of blessing or reward sounds a discordant note to Kodjak's existential ears because of his aversion to security in a death-subjugated temporality. Nevertheless, the Christ of the Sermon offers more than condolence and affirmation. He offers a kingdom and a kingdom reward in heaven according to the faith of those who believe Him.³¹ Indeed, one might even question why the condolence and affirmation passages Kodjak affirms are not themselves a capitulation to the temporal values of security in the face of anxiety.

Regardless, Kodjak's structural analysis need not necessarily contradict the thesis being explored here concerning the regnal character of Christian persecution as presented in the Sermon on the Mount. Indeed, the four-step progression he proposes in his analysis of the Beatitudes tends to affirm the presence of the regnal dynamic of the persecution spoken of in Matthew 5:10-12, and his progression may—with considerable adjustments—aid in establishing the presence and function of two key persecution themes (regnal authority and righteousness). Kodjak's first step in the progression is a realization of the domination of the anxiety of death over human existence. His second step is to see the blessed ones as those who refuse to yield to the domination of the anxiety of death over human existence. Kodjak's third step in the progression is the hostile reaction of society against those who are blessed; and the fourth step in the progression is the benevolent reaction of God toward the blessed ones. Kodjak's four step progression (with necessary alterations) provides a framework from the structure of the Sermon on the Mount for understanding persecution.

5:10, 5:20, 6:1, and 6:33.

³¹Beyond the blessings of the Beatitudes, examples of rewarded faith include 8:10; 9:2; 9:28-29; 15:28; 21:21-22.

Critique of Kodjak's Metadiscursive Theme

First, we may explore Kodjak's initial assumption concerning the realization of the domination of the anxiety of death over human existence. One may well wonder where this realization arises in the structure of the Sermon on the Mount, which is, of course, the work Kodjak's research has set out to accomplish. The reality is that such a framework does not arise from the text of the Sermon on the Mount but is, instead, placed over the text by the interpreter himself. Kodjak brings this realization to the text. He admits as much in the first chapter in which he spells out his own subjective, existential presuppositions, which include both an optimism for life—in the sense that something indefatigable persists existentially in the struggle for survival—and an unyielding awareness of the “intensity of the anxiety of death.”³² Kodjak seeks to be fair to other readers by letting them know this is *his* worldview, *his* reading of the Sermon on the Mount, *his* examination of the texts, and *his* conclusions.³³ His view of the texts is not the view adopted in this research, though his progression is helpful.

Kodjak demonstrates from the structure of the sermon as a whole that kingdom authority and its concomitant clash between kingdom people and the world outside of them are integral concepts within the Sermon on the Mount. His binary code, which he asserts is essential for understanding the Beatitudes rightly, distinguishes a clear line between those who are allied with the kingship of Christ and those who are not. For Kodjak, this alliance is an alliance of action: either acting on the anxiety of death impulse or acting on the kingship imperative to live in immortality. For the Sermon on the Mount, the impulse is not to be one of living in immortality, but, rather, one of seeking the kingdom and righteousness (6:33). The Sermon on the Mount does indeed expect its

³²Kodjak, *A Structural Analysis*, 3.

³³See Kodjak, *A Structural Analysis*, 1-2, emphasis mine, though the thoughts themselves are Kodjak's as referenced.

hearers to be doers: “Everyone who hears these words of mine and does not do them will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand . . . and great was the fall of it,” (7:26-27). But the Sermon on the Mount does not expect its hearers to earn life—or simply to practice life—by enacting immortality as Kodjak supposes. Instead, they are called to hunger and thirst for a righteousness (5:6) which has already been fulfilled in their teacher, the king (3:15). So, they are pursuing a new kingdom life which has been granted to them by the king. They are to learn the ways of the kingdom from their teacher, the king. This learning from the king explains why the kingdom people are called to seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness (6:33). The king came in the way of righteousness (3:3, 3:15, 21:32). Their learning the way of righteousness from the king also explains how the king Himself and righteousness are equated in 5:10-12, as will be explained below.

Kodjak points out that the teaching of Christ in the Sermon on the Mount is a gauntlet which calls for allegiance to either one way or the other. Yet, the Sermon does not make it clear, as Kodjak asserts, that the two ways are either the death-free life of living in immortality or the death-subjugated life of succumbing to security. The two ways of Matthew 5:10-12 are, rather, the two ways of either those persecuting or those being persecuted *on account of* Christ. Much more will be said concerning the content of these verses in the following section where a substantive analysis of Matthew 5:10-12 occurs. Suffice it to say here that the significant division is between those who are persecuting and those who are being persecuted because of Christ (ἐνεκεν ἐμοῦ). It would seem, then, that structurally the Sermon does affirm a dividing line between two ways of living. Kodjak’s structural analysis traces such a dividing line throughout the Sermon and emphasizes the incompatibility extant between the two groups. However, strictly speaking, the Sermon on the Mount brands these two groups as those who represent the righteousness of Christ and those who do not (5:11; 7:23; 7:24-27). Contra

Kodjak, the distinction is not one of action so much as it is one of affiliation with Christ. If Kodjak were to reset his binary code to the more modest attempt to say simply that the structure of the Sermon calls for faith in Christ rather than opposition to him, then he would be more in harmony with both the Sermon on the Mount and with what is being called here the regnal dynamic of Christian persecution: One is either aligned with Christ and the kingdom or he is opposed to such authority and thereby seeks to malign it. Still, Kodjak is correct to assert that there exist two antithetical, competing authorities calling for personal allegiance, and the two are in conflict, as Kodjak notes in the second step of his four-step progression. Kodjak also appears to understand that the Sermon is a call to action and that such action may seem peculiar to the greater population.

After establishing the presence of competing kingdom systems in the Sermon on the Mount, Kodjak proceeds to the second step of his progression, which is that the blessed ones are those who refuse to yield to the domination of the anxiety of death over human existence. Again, with the revision that the blessed ones be viewed not as those who refuse to yield to the anxiety of death but, rather, those who are persecuted on account of Christ (5:11), this conclusion from Kodjak might also be made consonant with the tenets of the regnal dynamic of persecution, as the blessed ones would refuse the dominion system antithetical to Christ's kingly dominion. It should be noted here that no claim is being made that the blessed ones of the kingdom are those only who maintain strict allegiance to Christ. The truth of the matter is that Christ's institution of the Lord's Supper (26:28) and His guidance in the Lord's Prayer (6:12-13) both argue that neither He nor the gospel writer thought the followers would be impeccably obedient. The followers have a security in their relationship not through their obedience but by promise, as in 28:20, "I am with you always, even to the end of the age."

In one way, framing the matter in terms of the regnal persecution dynamic better incorporates Kodjak's own call to action. Kodjak focuses on the concrete action

implicit in the rejection of the death-subjugation system. Yet, his second step in the progression factors only one side of the equation, the negative side. By his own accounting, the default status of human anthropology is subjection to the dominion of anxiety of death, thus requiring the rejection which is called for in step two of his progression. However, his overall system calls for more than mere rejection. Rejection is simply the negative of the equation. Those who reject the dominion system must also embrace its alternative, according to Kodjak. Yet, his second step calls “blessed” those who merely reject. The regnal dynamic might serve as a corrective here by demonstrating that those who embrace the kingly dominion of Christ necessarily reject the dominion system of the world. In light of 4:18-22, we might even prefer to say that Christ calls the kingdom people out of the world and into relationship to Himself.

At this point, we reach a delimiter of potential agreement with Kodjak because of his insistence on action. To push the dichotomy of dominions any further without an explanation of the nature of those dominions would be to go too far with Kodjak and not far enough with the Sermon on the Mount and the gospel of Matthew. For Kodjak, the impetus for action resides wholly with the audience, but what of the Jesus who speaks? How is it that he is able to grant seemingly unconditional kingdom blessings to those persecuted on account of him? It appears, then, that more must be said about the nature of Christ’s kingship and how His representatives are brought into such a kingship relation to him. So, the second step of the progression pictured structurally in the Beatitudes and the Sermon on the Mount is better viewed as acknowledging that the blessed are those who reject the worldly dominion system by their identification with the kingly dominion of Christ. Though re-framed somewhat from Kodjak’s original formulation, this equation better incorporates the positive impact for a call to action which Kodjak has sought all along, while, at the same time, utilizing categories more familiar to the Sermon on the Mount. The call is not so much a call of rejection but a call to faith, to believe: A call,

first, to repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand (4:17) and then a call to hunger and thirst for His righteousness (5:6), followed by a call to see His kingdom come (6:10).

The third step in Kodjak's progression is that those who are blessed—that is, those who reject one dominion system for Christ—will become rewarded with the hostile reactions from those still retained by the default dominion system. Obviously, Kodjak has the clash of hostilities as being between those who yield to death-free life against the majority of people who naturally maintain a status quo search for bigness, affluence, and pleasure, thus protecting the charade of security against death. The concept *naturally* is significant, as Kodjak points out, because it *appears* that living a death-subjugated life is *natural*; yet, the speaker (Christ) is calling for an unapologetic embrace of his death-free living as that which truly comports to the *natural* human condition. Again, without embracing the anthropology of Kodjak, we are able to see that the Christ of the Sermon is calling for transformation and a new vision of life which is distinct from what otherwise would have been called the *natural* life. The new way of life, paradoxically, proves to be that which actually is human life. Even if there is disagreement with Kodjak concerning the ontological character of anthropology, the dynamic of step three still displays characteristics consistent with the regnal persecution dynamic in the sense that adherence to the life to which the speaker calls the audience is itself enough to manifest the status of the individual who heeds the call, thus possibly making him a target for hostilities against himself. With Kodjak, there is agreement as to the “general resistance of humanity to viewing its world and its existence in eschatological twilight” in the manner proclaimed by Christ in the Sermon, thereby displaying why it is that “the teaching of the Speaker, as He conveys, has to face hardship and persecution which only a few may accept.”³⁴ Although we agree there is a general resistance of humanity to the teaching of Jesus, we would also insist that it is a much more hostile resistance than Kodjak suspects. So

³⁴Ibid., 204.

hostile is the resistance that it insists upon executing as a criminal the king of heaven and earth. While we agree that the teaching of the speaker faces persecution, we might still wish to insist as Matthew does (5:11) that the persecution is against Christ Himself, not merely against His teaching.

Finally, Kodjak avers that the last phase of progression is that the blessed ones receive a benevolent response from God. The formulation of the last step in the progression appears to be consistent both with the formulation of the regnal dynamic of persecution being examined in this study and with the substance of the Sermon on the Mount. However, Kodjak's formulation of this last step of the progression is somewhat in tension with his own insistence upon what he terms *self-contraction*. For Kodjak, self-contraction is defined by sharing, "For sharing in its full meaning stands for selfless giving without any material, social, or psychological compensation which would turn sharing into trading. In our practical world sharing equals self-contraction."³⁵ To break the boundaries of the death-subjugated life, one must share without any reward according to Kodjak. Sharing is embedded somewhere deep in human ontology so that its invincible capacity sparks awareness within human beings of the reality of immortality. Kodjak is clear to maintain, however, that the sharing must take place with no practical benefit, with no "personal expansion." Herein lies the tension for it seems in the Sermon on the Mount there is a great deal of emphasis on reward. Indeed, a kingdom of personal expansion is promised, which leads to the question of whether the concept of rewards necessarily represents a capitulation to the anxiety of death. For Kodjak, this appears to be the case, but liberation theologians would emphatically disagree. Lillian, for instance, boldly proclaims, "New life in Christ is not a layaway plan, a treat to be enjoyed later, after all the bills are paid off. We receive new life in Christ on credit, through a debt we

³⁵Ibid., 13.

can never pay. We get it now. Through sanctification we are changed, right here in the eschatological meantime.”³⁶ A similar sentiment is what is in view in Neville Alexander’s comment, “I became a radical socialist because I was a radical and very sincere Christian.”³⁷ In other words, these theologians understand the Beatitudes and the Sermon on the Mount to be calling for tangible action which effects temporal rewards in the eschatological meantime. Where Kodjak views the rewards of the Beatitudes and the Sermon on the Mount as condolences, liberation theologians tend to view them more as promises acting as incentives for action in the immediate context. While Kodjak, too, engages the Sermon as a call to action, he remains suspicious of receiving the kinds of tangible results sought by liberationists. Perhaps somewhere between Kodjak’s suspicion and the liberationists’ utilization of rewards is Hauerwas’s recognition that the rewards—present throughout the Beatitudes and the Sermon—are neither condolences nor guarantees, but, rather, they are gifts. Hauerwas says, “[The fact] that each of the Beatitudes is accompanied by a ‘reward’ does not mean that a disciple might, for example, try to be poor in spirit in order to inherit the kingdom of heaven Such an understanding of the Beatitudes would betray that they are gifts.”³⁸ Viewing the blessings and rewards as gifts bestowed from heaven has the impact of diminishing the commercial concept of wage and earner and avoiding the misapplication inherent in viewing rewards as guarantees for calls to action. Bottger sums up the nature of the rewards nicely in his article on the use of μισθος: “Payment is made . . . purely on the

³⁶Lillian Daniel, “Caution: Contents May Be Hot,” *The Christian Century*, 16 January 2002, 15.

³⁷Quoted in Charles Villa-Vicencio, *The Spirit of Freedom* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), 8.

³⁸Stanley Hauerwas, *Matthew*, Brazos Theological Commentary on the Bible (Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2006), 65.

grounds of freedom and generosity; all thought of balancing effort and reward is eliminated.”³⁹

Josef Ton, of course, has spent a great deal of energy exploring the concept of rewards particularly as they relate to persecution, and he concludes from the Sermon on the Mount that “there would be rewards for a service rendered properly to God: for the giving of alms in secret, for praying in secret, and for fasting in secret: ‘your Father who sees in secret will repay you’ (Matt. 6:6).”⁴⁰ Though Ton emphasizes the prevalence of rewards in the Sermon on the Mount, he wrestles to establish just the right balance of reward and merit. Leon Morris, meanwhile, echoes Bottger: “We should bear in mind the nature of the reward. To respond to love is to obtain a wonderful reward even if the reward cannot be quantified in any way nor regarded as merited. But it is very real.”⁴¹ Beyond Morris and Bottger is the additional fact of the nature of God’s giving Christ in the first place (as in 1:21). Everything Christ speaks to His followers is personal expansion. While there is substantial agreement with Kodjak’s conclusion to his progression—that the blessed ones receive a benevolent response from God—there is no understanding of how such rewards remain consistent with Kodjak’s demand for self-contraction. It is certain that he does not intend the rewards in the same sense as Morris. So, with Stassen and Gushee, we affirm that the Beatitudes promise the ultimate blessing for the kingdom followers of Christ: the blessing of the presence of God Himself.⁴² The kingdom is offered as a gift, and the presence of the king is its highest reward.

³⁹P.C. Bottger, “Μισθος,” in *NIDNTT*, ed. Colin Brown (Grand Rapids, Zondervan, 1986), 3:141.

⁴⁰Josef Ton, *Suffering, Martyrdom, and Rewards in Heaven* (Wheaton: Reprint Romanian Missionary Society, 2000), 75. Ton’s view of rewards with regard to persecution will be considered more thoroughly in chapter 4.

⁴¹Morris, *The Gospel According to Matthew*, 138-39.

⁴²Stassen and Gushee, *Kingdom Ethics*, 37-51.

Alteration and Redeployment of Metadiscursive Theme

Structurally speaking, the Sermon on the Mount—at least Kodjak’s analysis of it—affirms key ideas significant for establishing the regnal character of Christian persecution, particularly with regard to kingship and righteousness. Kodjak, unfortunately, does not unite regnal authority with righteousness. Nonetheless, Kodjak’s binary code (kingdom living versus empirical living) is clearly a significant aspect of the Beatitudes for him and can serve—with the revisions noted—as a framework for the remainder of the Sermon. Utilizing the revised parameters, Kodjak’s further syntagmatic analysis is able to maintain a four-part progression to demonstrate from the structure of the Sermon on the Mount, (1) the presence of a prevailing dominion over humankind, (2) the presence of tension between those under the general human dominion and those who participate in the kingdom Christ proclaims, (3) the presence of hostilities perpetrated against those who make up the kingdom of God at the hands of those under the general dominion system, and (4) the presence of God who acts with benevolence toward those who are identified in this conflict as the people of the kingdom of God.⁴³ The shorter summary of this progression is to say Christ proclaims a kingdom with authority over all others. Those who believe and, thus, are identified with him will suffer at the hands of those obedient to alternate authorities (or those maintaining another righteousness). Indeed, Kodjak’s structural analysis demonstrates the significance of dominion. Clearly in view in this summary is the regnal authority of Jesus Christ and the identification of his people with him.

Ironically, even though Kodjak makes plain the distinction between the kingdoms (what he calls dominion systems), he tends to downplay the kingship role of Christ. As has been shown, Kodjak views the role of Christ as the Speaker, and the role

⁴³Matthew 5:43-48 is worth mentioning here in that God is also shown as bestowing gifts on all humankind, even those not of the kingdom.

is significant in his view because Christ is the one who calls his audience to live out immortality. Christ is pictured by Kodjak as a radical figure with a radical call to transformation. Nonetheless, the kingship function of Christ is diminished by the fact that Kodjak considers immortality an inherent aspect of human ontology. One sees this in Kodjak's conclusion that the Speaker [Christ] is an observer of the human predicament and thus able to offer an explanation of it which stimulates the audience realize an obvious point about themselves they have been missing all along. As Kodjak explains, the Speaker's viewpoint "is similar to the position of a Western traveler in a Southern country, who notices that the natives wear few clothes, while the natives perceive no such lack."⁴⁴ Obviously, a culturally savvy traveler is not the equivalent of a universal king enacting the righteousness of God. Christ appears to be speaking about more than simply "things they should have known." He speaks of rewards from heaven and a final judgment day in which the only hope is to know Him—or, actually, to be known by Him (7:23). It would seem most helpful, then, to emphasize the role Christ actually serves in the Sermon on the Mount, namely, the role of righteous-king.

Development of Kingship Authority Theme

Furthermore, it turns out, the audience is not called to immortality or to live; rather, the audience is called to believe Christ—to have a knowledge of him (and to be known by him, 7:22-23). They are called to learn from Him and to obey Him, that is, to have faith in Him that He is leading them in the way of the kingdom. So, the Sermon does not appear to teach that one is able to escape the anxiety of death by living in immortality. Rather, according to the language of the sermon, the only means of escaping divine judgment in that day is by being known by the King. Only when one sees the significance of the kingship of Christ does the real paradox of the Sermon on the

⁴⁴Kodjak, *A Structural Analysis*, 210.

Mount shine forth. The real paradox is not that one ought to live in immortality in the face of foreboding mortality; rather, the real paradox is that this seemingly insignificant fellow teaches as one who has universal authority as the king of heaven (7:28-29).

That Christ possesses such kingship authority is not a thought originating with his oratory in the Beatitudes. From the very first verse of the gospel of Matthew, Jesus is referred to in royal—even regnal—tones.⁴⁵ In speaking of the Christ, Matthew employs language not only of the anointed Messiah-Deliverer, but also as the Son of David (Βίβλος γενέσεως Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ υἱοῦ Δαυὶδ υἱοῦ Ἀβραάμ). As the Son of David (and the Son of Abraham), Jesus is pictured as the covenant king of the tribe of Judah (cf. Gen 49:10; 2 Sam 7). As Legg points out, Matthew is tracing Christ’s “legal, and royal, descent, thus establishing Jesus’ claim to David’s throne as his heir, the Messiah.”⁴⁶

Warren Carter has focused a great deal of attention on this first verse of Matthew’s gospel as it relates to regnal righteousness.⁴⁷ Although he does not specifically utilize the term *regnal righteousness*, he fleshes out plainly the *regnal* aspect of the concept. The concept of *regnal righteousness*, as was mentioned in chapter 1, emphasizes two key notions: that Jesus speaks with ruling authority in the kingdom of heaven and that the righteousness in view is his. While Carter (like Kodjak) does not focus specifically on the righteousness aspect of Christ’s kingship, he does emphasize the kingship (regnal) character of Christ throughout Matthew’s gospel. Carter focuses sharply on each of the five separate “markers” related to the Messiah found in verse 1 of

⁴⁵“Regnal tones” here means in terms of a regnal name given to a king, similar to language related to regnal years, by which monarchies are typically listed in a given nation. The adoption of A.D. *anno domini* would be a contemporary example of regnal language related to Jesus Christ.

⁴⁶John Legg, *The King and His Kingdom: The Gospel of Matthew Simply Explained*, Welwyn Commentary Series (Webster, NY: Evangelical Press USA, 2004), 18.

⁴⁷Warren Carter, “Matthean Christology in Roman Imperial Key: Matthew 1:1,” in *The Gospel of Matthew in its Roman Imperial Context*, ed. John Riches and David Sim, JSNTSup 276 (London: T. & T. Clark, 2005), 143-65.

Matthew: (1) the book of the origins; (2) Jesus; (3) Christ; (4) son of David; and (5) son of Abraham. For Carter, each of these markers is significant in its contextual relation to the imperial authority of Rome. Carter's argument is that the Christological claims of Matthew 1:1 "intersect with the gospel's (frequently neglected) Roman imperial context to present Jesus as the agent of God's saving purposes, who contests and relativizes Rome's claim to sovereignty and divine agency and who offers a vision for a different social experience that enacts God's purposes."⁴⁸ Carter clearly notes the reality of the reign of God and the kingship of Christ. Where Kodjak views the dominion of the anxiety of death as the authority in tension with the kingdom of Christ, Carter views Roman imperialism as that authority in tension with those under the kingly dominion of Christ. Beyond redaction studies and what he refers to as a titular approach, Carter seeks to establish the five titles of Christ in their contextual relations to God, the world, and the human condition.⁴⁹ In each of the five markers, Carter finds evidence of the regnal authority of Christ in Matthew's presentation and draws conclusions of how such authority provokes tension with Roman imperialism.

First, with the term βιβλος γενεσεος, Carter finds Matthew making a bold assertion, tying Jesus to God's original purposes in creation. He writes, "The evoked Genesis creation narrative makes present God's claim over the world as its creator, suggesting (as the subsequent narrative will confirm, e.g., 4:17) that God is, in association with Jesus, reasserting his claim and purposes."⁵⁰ Of course, the phrase alone does not necessarily imply any relation to the biblical account of origins. In fact, the origin in view here is *ιησου χριστου*. Granted, the mention of Abraham in verse one does

⁴⁸Ibid., 143.

⁴⁹Carter seeks to extend here the methodology of Leander Keck, for which see, Leander Keck, "Toward the Renewal of New Testament Christology," *NTS* 32 (1986): 362-77, esp. 368-75.

⁵⁰Carter, "Matthean Christology," 154.

tie the phrase somewhat to the book of Genesis. And, there are LXX parallels in Genesis 2:4 and 5:1. Nonetheless, Matthew immediately mentions David, too, suggesting that perhaps creation is not the beginning in view as much as redemption. Indeed, many commentators see in this syntagma only “a loose association to the Old Testament, in which one must not seek a deeper theological meaning.”⁵¹ Of course, the on-going debate concerning the entire phrase is not one of origins but one of whether the phrase serves as a header for the whole gospel or just a part of the gospel. Viewing this syntagma in relation to creation may be an inference more than an implication, in other words. For Carter, with an affinity to reader-response hermeneutics, accommodating such an inference is an essential part of the work of biblical studies; hence, his argument presupposes a certain degree and kind of contextual audience interplay. If one accepts Carter’s assumptions concerning both the reader and context for which Matthew was written, then it is plausible to understand the βιβλος γενεσεος to refer to Jesus in terms of sovereignty and creation, particularly a new creation inaugurated in Christ. Otherwise, the connection is not so obvious. However, Davies and Allison set forth a three-part argument to which the conclusion is to translate the first phrase as, “Book of the new genesis wrought by Jesus Christ.”⁵² So, even without concurring with Carter’s method and conclusion, one may conclude that it is possible to understand references to Christ’s regnal authority even from the very first phrase found in Matthew’s gospel. There is no doubt about the universal kingship of Christ in Matthew. The point here is to say it may be an overreach for Carter to assert simply from βιβλος γενεσεος that the kingship is also a new creation.

⁵¹Ulrich Luz, *Matthew 1-7: A Continental Commentary* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992), 104.

⁵²W. D. Davies and Dale C. Allison, *Matthew: A Shorter Commentary Based on the Three-Volume International Critical Commentary* (London: T. & T. Clark International, 2004), 1.

Second, Carter asserts the significance of the use of Ἰησοῦ. He argues that Matthew's use of the name *Jesus* in this first verse is an act evoking the memory of Joshua, one of the giants of Israel's traditions. Of course, *Jesus* originates in Greek as the equivalent of the Hebrew *Joshua*, and Joshua, the successor to Moses, was responsible for leading the battle into Canaan and delivering it for the chosen people of God. In this same way, the Jesus mentioned in verse 1, will, as it is said in 1:21, deliver his people from their sins. Granted, the deliverance of Joshua is categorically different from the deliverance provided by Jesus according to Matthew. For one thing, Jesus did not himself resort to violence, though he suffered it.⁵³ Nevertheless, like Joshua, Jesus is delivering His people into the promised reward of the kingdom of God. So, the reference is close enough that a biblically literate audience would easily make the connection, thus providing an overall framework for the reader which enables him to identify Jesus as a deliverer from God. Certainly, Carter's connection here is not an ironclad one; nonetheless, it demonstrates, again, at least a possibility of identifying regnal themes in relation to Christ from the first verse of Matthew forward. Carter views the name and its connection to Joshua as beginning "the process of framing the sort of salvation Jesus will effect, the deliverance of this world from Rome's sinful control and the establishment of God's empire (*basileia*) over all."⁵⁴ Although scholars commenting on this verse tend to see Ἰησοῦ as a name to be conjoined with the titular modifier Χριστου, Carter is able to see allusions to the regnal authority of Christ in the mention of his name by Matthew in his first verse.

⁵³Carter points out in his larger work that violence and military action are not part of Jesus' deliverance. See Carter, *Matthew and the Margins: A Sociopolitical and Religious Reading* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2000), 150-57. This deliverance function of Christ will come into play later in the conversation on righteousness.

⁵⁴Carter, "Matthean Christology," 157.

Third, the term Χριστου translates the Hebrew term for Messiah and carries with it significant implications related to this Jesus being an “anointed” one for divine service. Interestingly, because of the plethora of interpretive traditions in relation to messianic expectations of the first century AD, Carter is less ambitious in his assertions of regnal claims for the term Χριστου than one might expect. Still, Carter understands the term Χριστου to imply sociopolitical transformation with the dawning of a new era, thereby threatening those like the Romans who were holding temporal power. For Carter, the term signals the end of the status quo and “the establishment of God’s very different world.”⁵⁵ Christ would have a significant (regal) role in this very different world according to Carter.

Fourth, Carter establishes the claim that υἱου Δαυιδ would be heard in the Roman context as a claim to affiliation with divine rule or authority. Specifically, Carter points to the study of coins found in Syria which claims that Vespasian continued in the rule of the divinized Augustus, although it must be mentioned that Vespasian is never referred to as *Augusti filius*, which would be a Latin equivalent to the phrase in question in the Greek of verse 1. Other emperors were linked to their predecessors through the utilization of the familial Latin term.⁵⁶ Clearly, υἱου Δαυιδ affiliates Jesus with David, connecting Jesus with the premier king of Israel’s history. Carter notes, “Evoking such traditions begins to define Jesus as a Davidic king who represents and enacts God’s rule and just purposes.”⁵⁷ Carter, perhaps on his strongest ground yet, points out that claims to such regal heritage can only clash with the claims of the Roman emperors, who

⁵⁵Ibid.

⁵⁶See Carter, “Matthean Christology,” 159, along with references in nn. 62 and 63, some of which refer to coinage in the British Museum, which is accessible on-line http://www.britishmuseum.org/research/research_projects/roman_provincial_coinage.aspx; accessed 30 July 2009.

⁵⁷Carter, “Matthean Christology,” 160.

assumed themselves to be sovereign—even over the Jews. Carter points out further that tension arises not just with the status of the sovereign but also with the ruling cities: Rome and Jerusalem. Though Rome prevailed in the days of Jesus’ arrival on earth, the older Jewish traditions claimed a victory would come for Jerusalem, insisting there would be a king from Judah eternally. With regard to David, Luz agrees that the phrase denotes “royal blood.”⁵⁸ Davies and Allison concur with Carter that the “Jewish expectation was that the messianic king would be a son of David.”⁵⁹ The ὕιου Δαυιδ of verse 1 clearly harkens back both to the king and the covenant of 2 Samuel 7, indicating that a regnal lineage is fulfilled in this Jesus. “‘Son of David’ represents Jesus as the king of Israel, the rightful heir to the Davidic promises.”⁶⁰

Finally, the ὕιου Αβρααμ syntagma reflects a relationship to the covenant promises God made to Abraham, particularly that he would be the father of many nations and that in him all nations would be blessed. It is the blessings of the covenant which Carter sees as particularly provocative in a Roman context, for Rome—in the name of her gods—sought to establish and maintain a measure of peace and blessedness in her own right. Alternate divine claims to the blessed life would necessarily, in his estimation, prove to be provocative if not threatening. For Carter, “The eschatological scenarios of Jesus’s blessings provide a cosmic framework in which Rome’s demise is certain.”⁶¹ His conclusion from verse 1 of the gospel is this: “In the gospel’s opening verse, the Jewish traditions of promises to Abraham as well as traditions and aspirations associated with David, the Christ, Jesus/Joshua, and (new) creation evoked in relation to Jesus collide

⁵⁸Luz, *Matthew 1-7*, 104.

⁵⁹Davies and Allison, *Matthew: A Shorter Commentary*, 2.

⁶⁰*Ibid.*, 3.

⁶¹Carter, “Matthean Christology,” 164.

with and contest Roman imperial claims.”⁶² While Carter may overstate the case of imperial clash with Rome, stretching the connections, say, between the name *Ιησου* and its implications for a Roman context, he nonetheless illustrates the viability of a cognizance of Christ’s regnal authority on display from the opening verse of Matthew’s gospel, and, like Kodjak, he acknowledges the tension between competing authorities. One may argue, for instance, against the manner in which Carter presents his Christology (in discussing the *Χριστου* theme) as primarily a challenge to Rome, presenting Christ as a kind of heavenly Caesar come to earth, arguing instead that the *Χριστου* theme may view Christ as a new Israel, rather than a new Caesar, thus offering a better explanation of the type of deliverance from sin which is declared in Matthew 1:21.⁶³ Clearly, not all will be comfortable with Carter’s conclusions or his method, but his observations on authority and conflict help illumine the persecution dynamic.

There are questions raised however by Carter’s methodology. Carter begins his interpretation of the gospel with contextual factors driving his inquisition, or, to put the matter more precisely, he begins his investigation through his own restructuring of the background of the gospel. Though Carter speaks of context, he means by it a full acceptance of his own reconstruction of the origin of the gospel. So, the question he is answering in relation to Matthew 1:1 is, “In such a context, how might an audience hear the gospel’s opening verse?”⁶⁴ The question of concern in this present study is, of course, a different question altogether. Rather than asking how a certain audience may have heard the first verse, this study is asking how the text of this gospel speaks of Jesus, persecution, and righteousness. What does verse 1 say about Jesus’ authority in relation

⁶²Ibid., 165.

⁶³For a critique of Carter along these lines, see Benny C. Aker, “A Review of Warren Carter’s *Matthew and Empire: Initial Explorations*” [online]; accessed 28 June 2009; available from http://agts.edu/faculty/faculty_publications/book_reviews/aker_carter.pdf; Internet.

⁶⁴Carter, “Matthean Christology,” 151.

to what is on display in the Sermon on the Mount? While not denying (in a limited sense) the validity of the question Carter is asking, I am concerned that such questioning as a hermeneutical method may be a dubious for at least two reasons.

First, the context of Matthew's audience is not established. Granted, there is a growing consensus that the place of Matthew's gospel was Antioch of Syria. However, the consensus in the early church was that the gospel was written in a Palestinian context. The gospel itself does not say. Thus, arguments in favor of one location over another are just that—arguments in favor. There is no definitive, final word on the subject. And even the best arguments are made with certain presuppositions in place. So, for instance, a good portion of the structure of the arguments in favor of Antioch of Syria rests on the foundation of Markan priority and a late first century dating for the gospel.⁶⁵ What if, as Robinson has asserted, the gospel were written prior to AD 70?⁶⁶ Or, what if one were to “cautiously, yet with some confidence, assign a date of AD 55?”⁶⁷ Such shifts of date might reflect a significant alteration in the political context, as one might easily imagine a much different outlook toward Rome in AD 75, as opposed to the outlook in AD 55, particularly if the audience were comprised of a significant portion of Jews. Of course, the former date, as well as its concomitant political animosities, is precisely what Carter has in mind to prove from the text of Matthew. Here is exactly the point of concern: the method requires a preconceived conclusion which drives Carter to return to the text to “look for” evidences to support the conclusion. This approach only works, it seems, if the conception of an Antiochene context proves accurate, but it may not. The original audience—hence the context (or place) of authorship—is not definitively disclosed.

⁶⁵See Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 1:139-40.

⁶⁶John A. T. Robinson, *Redating the New Testament* (Westminster: John Knox Press, 1976), 13-30.

⁶⁷Jeffrey A. Gibbs, *Matthew 1:1-11:1*, Concordia Commentary (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2006), 66.

Second, the response of Roman imperialism to this gospel is largely unknown. In the gospel, there exists the unlikely reaction of the centurion at the Crucifixion—typically regarded as an instance of conversion. Carter asserts that the soldier’s confession serves as a “proleptic judgment on the Roman Empire.”⁶⁸ It would, of course, be difficult—if not impossible—to establish the validity of such a premise. Typically, though, commentaries on Matthew 27:54 sound more like Gundry’s conclusions. Gundry contrasts the statement from the soldier in Matthew with the statement found in Mark and argues that Matthew has altered its language in order “to lay as much emphasis as possible on Jesus’ deity.”⁶⁹ Gundry and Carter, obviously, have two very different conclusions regarding the same text, based on certain assumptions of the text.

Again, much might be said concerning Carter’s methodological practice. Needless to say, not all will agree either with his affinity with reader-response hermeneutics or his theological commitment to Postmodernism. The point of engaging his work in this section has not been to affirm or endorse it as much as it has been to demonstrate the modest point that it is not impossible to view the Christ preaching in Matthew 5:10-12 as teaching with regnal authority concerning righteousness and persecution. And, it is not impossible—even as Kodjak assumed—that the greater society may retaliate against those who adhere to the teaching authority of Jesus. The structure of Matthew 5:10-12 argues in favor of viewing Christ as possessing a kind of authority which confronts the world about him. This confrontation will be visible in people whose fealty identifies them with the regnal Christ.

⁶⁸David C. Sim, “Conclusions,” in *The Gospel of Matthew in its Roman Imperial Context*, ed. John Riches and David C. Sim, JSNTSup 276 (London: T & T Clark International, 2005), 168.

⁶⁹Robert H. Gundry, *Matthew: A Commentary on His Literary and Theological Art* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing, 1982), 578. Gundry makes certain assumptions concerning the formulation of Matthew’s text that are not being endorsed here. The inclusion of this quote serves only to establish an example that is not uncommon in the commentaries.

By the time the reader reaches Matthew 5:10-12, quite a picture has been painted of the regnal authority of Christ. This Son of David is to be called Immanuel, which is “God with us,” according to 1:23, where Matthew again is connecting the heavenly kingdom with earthly men. When the magi from the East hear about it, they come to Jerusalem with the question, “Where is He who has been born *King of the Jews?*” This King of the Jews turns out to be the ruler from Bethlehem spoken of by the prophet Micah (cf. Matt 2:6). The titular king Herod, of course, is pictured in Matthew’s gospel as responding to the birth of this so-called child king by ordering His destruction. It is no small threat for one king to have in his kingdom another called king. Under the threat of death, the child who would be king is ushered into Egypt for safety until the death of Herod.⁷⁰ Then, at the end of chapter two, the child who would be king returns safely. Chapter 3 records John the Baptist preaching repentance at the arrival of the kingdom of heaven, hinting that the king himself is close at hand and far greater than he. Indeed, John preaches from Isaiah that the time had come to *Ἐτοιμάσατε τὴν ὁδὸν κυρίου*. Significantly, John then baptizes the king *πληρῶσαι πᾶσαν δικαιοσύνην* (3:15).⁷¹ The reader will find out in Matthew 21:32 that the *way* of the preaching and work of John the Baptist was, in fact, the *way* of righteousness (*ἐν ὁδῷ δικαιοσύνης*). And the king himself, in Matthew 4:17, is portrayed as preaching, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.” Jesus, the preaching king in chapter 4, chooses disciples for himself (presumably against Jewish cultural norms which would have expected the disciples to choose their teacher).⁷² Christ then demonstrates his authority over diseases, pains,

⁷⁰Luz, *Matthew 1-7*, 152-55, offers an excursus in table form which suggests a thematic background of “the persecuted and rescued royal child” for Matt 1:18-2:23.

⁷¹The relation between the king and righteousness will be developed further later in this chapter.

⁷²See Robert Gundry, *Matthew: A Commentary on His Handbook for a Mixed Church Under Persecution*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994), 62.

demoniacs, and paralytics through his miraculous healings, all the while preaching “the gospel of the kingdom” (4:23). Thus, by the time the reader gets to chapter 5 of Matthew, he is, to say the least, not completely unaware of the kingship authority claimed for and by Jesus—an authority further reaffirmed by the response to the Sermon on the Mount, that is, by the astonishment of the original crowds who were amazed not on account of his ethical demands or his divine wisdom but because of his teaching as one having authority (7:29). Whether one agrees that persecution is a traceable theme throughout the Sermon on the Mount, certainly, he can see that authority—regal authority—is on display in an astounding way.

Kingship Authority Conclusion from Structural Analysis

In short, the structural analysis provided by Kodjak, along with revisions noted and with the recognition that regal authority is possessed by the Christ of Matthew’s gospel from the first verse onward, leads roughly to the same conclusion Davies and Allison reach at the end of their analysis of Matthew 4:

Before Jesus utters his commands, the reader has been informed—by OT prophecy, by John the Baptist, by God, and by the devil—who he is: the Messiah, the Son of David, the Son of God This Jesus, therefore, by virtue of his identity, must speak with authority and make sovereign demands. The obligation to obey the commands of Mt 5-7 is grounded in Christology, in the person of Jesus. Matthew sets up his gospel so that one may first recognize Jesus’ unique status and then heed his commandments.⁷³

To reinforce the point concerning the structure of Matthew’s gospel, Davies and Allison sketch the typological parallelism between Matthew and Exodus, showing that the gospel mirrors a slaughter of infants, a return of a hero, a passage through water, a wilderness temptation, and a mountain of lawgiving. So close is the parallel in structure that it prepares the reader of the gospel to hear a revelation on the mountain from one who speaks with authority which is no less than that of God Himself who once thundered from

⁷³Davies and Allison, *Matthew: A Shorter Commentary*, 64.

Mt. Sinai. So, the reader can clearly see that Christ is present manifesting the authority and righteousness of God, thereby establishing the command of 6:33 to seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness.

The authority of Jesus is on display leading up to the Sermon on the Mount, and it is certainly not diminished in the least throughout the Sermon. After preaching in chapter 4 concerning the dawning of the kingdom, Christ in the Sermon on the Mount teaches about the way of righteousness which characterizes the kingdom. Christ exercises authority on the matters of kingdom and righteousness. Scholars such as Guelich⁷⁴ and Hamm⁷⁵ agree that the structure of the Beatitudes—with its connection between the first and the eighth—argues for the two interpretive themes of authority and righteousness. Even Green, though somewhat disenchanted with Kodjak's method for studying the Sermon on the Mount, finally agrees with Kodjak's structural analysis, basically offering the same framework for interpreting the first eight Beatitudes.⁷⁶ The authority with which Jesus is pictured by Matthew in these Beatitudes and throughout the Sermon on the Mount is regnal authority, exercising kingdom authority through his instruction in such a noteworthy way that by the time the sermon is finished the final editorial note rings clearly true: "The result was . . . the multitudes were amazed at his teaching; for He was teaching them *as having authority*" (7:28-29). There is no cause to wonder that the crowds were so amazed when one looks at the audacious statements made by the Christ. Christ, the royal child and preacher-king, promises his followers that he is the fulfillment of the Law and the Prophets (5:17). He gives a strict ultimatum

⁷⁴Robert A. Guelich, *Sermon on the Mount: A Foundation for Understanding* (Waco: Word, 1982), 93.

⁷⁵Dennis Hamm, *The Beatitudes in Context: What Luke and Matthew Meant*, *Zacchaeus Studies: New Testament* (Wilmington, DE: Michael Glazier, 1990), 106.

⁷⁶H. Benedict Green, *Matthew, Poet of the Beatitudes*, *JSNTSup 203* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 2001), 255. See footnote 9.

which must be met for those in the kingdom of heaven (5:20). He clarifies Law and tradition in the so-called “antitheses” (5:21-48), appealing to an authority greater than that known in the Pharisaic tradition, namely, His own. This appeal to His own authority is demonstrated in the repeated contrast (Ἠκούσατε οὐκ ἐγὼ δὲ λέγω). Davies seeks greater clarity on this point, suggesting that the antitheses be referred to as *exegesis* rather than *antitheses*, but he warns that their significance of the sayings must not be depressed.⁷⁷ The significance which must not be depressed is that the antitheses indicate the authority with which Christ spoke (so Davies notes) much in the manner of the ἀμην sayings.

Clearly, the regnal theme pervades the Sermon on the Mount. Kodjak views the regnal theme—in relation to persecution—as a controlling theme throughout the Sermon on the Mount, thus affirming the earlier premises related to the function of the Beatitudes and the placement of their concluding passage, Matthew 5:10-12, as the gateway passage for entry to the remainder of the Sermon. According to Kodjak, the conclusion of the Sermon (7:24-27) brings to full fruition what was begun in the Beatitudes. The metaphor of the two houses of 7:24-27 “offers Christ’s last comment on the poor in spirit, those persecuted for Christ’s sake”⁷⁸ Linking the beginning of the Sermon to its end through a consideration of the persecuted enables at least the consideration that Matthew 5:10-12 affirms the regnal persecution dynamic and provides a measure of continuity throughout the Sermon. In accord with the reaction recorded in 7:29, Jesus teaches with authority throughout the Sermon on the Mount. Jesus encourages those who are poor in spirit by stating that theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Showing kingdom authority, after having preached the kingdom of heaven, Jesus, in the Beatitudes (5:3-12), makes a pronouncement for those to whom the kingdom of heaven

⁷⁷W. D. Davies, *The Setting of the Sermon on the Mount* (Atlanta: Scholars, 1989), 102.

⁷⁸Kodjak, *A Structural Analysis*, 163.

belongs (not to those who must earn it). Guelich says, “The Beatitudes are viewed by Matthew as Jesus’ declaration, an announcement of congratulations, in the sense of Isaiah 61:1 rather than a demand for conduct.”⁷⁹ Guelich, of course, is speaking from the tradition of viewing the Beatitudes as eschatological blessings rather than ethicized entrance requirements.⁸⁰ The fact that the Beatitudes are neither conditional nor imperatival in form argues in Guelich’s favor. Guelich, to be clear, does not argue that the Beatitudes are *merely* eschatological blessings. The Beatitudes are not “just intimations of the future or consolations in relation to it. They see the present in the light of the future.”⁸¹ The beatitudinal blessings are germane for the original audience, and, as will be shown in this present study, they will be for all the disciples of Christ because they are certain, being secured by the one who has authority to promise and to dispense kingdom blessings. The regnal authority of Christ is inescapable in the Sermon on the Mount. The Beatitudes are framed by a kingdom blessing for the poor and persecuted. Then, the Beatitudes open a door on the hinge of verses 11-12 so that the remainder of the Sermon speaks to those who receive the kingdom blessings of the first eight Beatitudes. They will face a world that is sometimes hostile to the teachings of the king. In short, two conclusions are in order from the structural analysis of Matthew 5:10-12. First, as the engagement with Kodjak demonstrated, the Sermon on the Mount manifests the reality of a new kingdom—an alternate kingdom to the order under which the rest of the world lives. Second, as the interaction with Carter displayed, the ruler of this new kingdom is Jesus Christ who represents the sovereign authority of God Himself. This

⁷⁹Guelich, *Sermon on the Mount*, 110.

⁸⁰Robert Stein, *A Basic Guide to Interpreting the Bible*, (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1994), 76-78, offers four reasons the Beatitudes should be interpreted eschatologically rather than ethically, while others like Dibelius, Strecker, and Dupont would argue that Matthew listed the Beatitudes as entrance requirements.

⁸¹See F. Hauck in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, vol. 4, ed. Gerhard Kittel and Gerhard Friedrich (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1981), 369.

kingdom and the authority of Christ, then, must be reflected in our understanding of the persecution spoken of in Matthew 5:10-12.

Substantive Analysis of Matthew 5:10-12

Returning to Matthew 5:10-12, the progression of the passage is two-fold in that kingship is presently at hand with the preaching of this king; yet, the future of those who follow the kingly Christ will likely include persecution. So, the speaker pronouncing the Beatitudes (Christ Himself) is speaking with authority concerning the kingdom of heaven and those who are inhabitants of it. Those who follow the teaching of this one preaching the kingdom may expect a future which includes being persecuted by those not yielding to the authority of Christ, that is, those not concerned with His righteousness. This kingdom focus throughout the Beatitudes, then, is tied also to the persecution being spoken of in verses 10-12. Further investigation may establish the extent to which a relationship exists between the kingdom and those inheriting it, but the plain fact of a relationship between kingdom people and persecution is already visible in Matthew 5:10-12. This fact leads naturally to a further consideration of Kodjak's claim that the passage serves as a metadiscursive for the entire Sermon. If one accepts the authoritative speaking of Christ concerning the kingdom of heaven in the Beatitudes, concluding with the authoritative Christ addressing specific followers in 5:10-12, and if one accepts the notion that the overall conclusion of the Sermon (7:24-27) speaks of the contrasting fates of those who respond positively by faith and negatively by unbelief to the authoritative instruction from this Christ, then it is not so hard to see through the lens of persecution a common thread throughout the Sermon on the Mount.

The point important from the Sermon on the Mount for demonstrating the regnal nature of persecution in Matthew, then, is that the Christ born as a king and portrayed as preaching the kingdom of heaven is pictured throughout the Sermon as one

who considers Himself to display the righteousness of God. Those allied with Him possess the eternal kingdom. Those not so aligned receive condemnation. The righteousness of God is displayed in the words and workings of this Jesus. In Matthew 6, Christ continues speaking on behalf of the kingdom of heaven and promises rewards from the Father in heaven. He teaches the disciples to pray to the Father, “Thy kingdom come” (6:10). They are considered already to be members of the kingdom and children of the Father when they are instructed thus to pray. Christ teaches his followers to avoid anxiety by seeking the kingdom and righteousness (6:33), of which they are already partakers. Matthew 7 includes more allusions to the Law, the Prophets, and the kingdom and concludes with Christ’s teaching the disciples how to make sure they are participating in and manifesting kingdom life even though rain, wind, and floods may come. It is not unreasonable to suppose these meteorological metaphors allude to persecution. If those hearing Christ are citizens of his kingdom, they are the ones building their lives upon the rock which will stand (presumably through persecution).⁸² Following the narrow way prescribed by Christ and building one’s life upon the rock may, in fact, bring the rains and flood of persecution because of Christ (ενεκεν εμοῦ). The translation of ενεκεν εμοῦ, *because of me*, in Matthew 5:11 is demonstrative of the regnal dynamic of persecution in three ways.

First, and most noticeably, the use of the personal pronoun εμοῦ links the persecution of the kingdom people (v. 10) directly to a personal source. The person at root source in the persecution is neither the persecutor nor the one being persecuted. Rather, the root provocateur of persecution is the Christ whose teaching claims the authority of the kingdom of heaven. Blomberg notes, “The only persecution that is

⁸²The perfect passive participle δεδιωγμένοι in v. 10 (*who have been persecuted*) may well be an indication that at the time of Matthew’s writing this persecution was already a reality for some in the community of faith. Of course, the gospel makes plain that Jesus’s own followers were accused of lawbreaking (9:14); were rejected (10:14); and were persecuted (10:16-25).

blessed is that which stems from allegiance to Jesus and living in conformity with his standards.”⁸³ Blomberg is almost correct. The εμοῦ of Matthew 5:11 does not exactly put the matter on allegiance to Christ and conformity to Christ. Instead, it puts Christ Himself in the place of persecution provocateur. The root provocateur of Christian persecution is Christ Himself. Those whose fealty conjoins them to Him may grow to be the flowers cut down by the blade of persecution, but their persecution stems from Him. Otherwise, there may never be a blessing given to a persecuted disciple of Christ, considering that all of the disciples failed in their allegiance at some point, whether it were Peter rebuking the Lord (16:22) or all of the disciples faltering in faith (17:20). The promise of persecution does not rest so much with the certainty of faithful disciples as it rests with the certainty of Christ abiding with His followers (18:20; 25:31-46; 28:20). His presence—regal and righteous—will continue to offend individuals and authorities, thus ensuring the persecution of His followers. Here is seen plainly the weight of the ενεκεν εμοῦ. The personal pronoun in 5:11 guarantees both that there will be persecution and that there will be blessings to Christ’s people. These guarantees are not built upon the faithfulness of the disciples, but on the faithfulness of Christ to them. The disciples will need to continue to learn the way of righteousness (6:33). They will need to continue to seek forgiveness where they have fallen short of faithfulness (6:12, 15). Indeed, they will need to continue the practice of the Lord’s Supper (26:26-30). So, the persecution of the disciples is assured on the personal basis of Jesus Christ Himself.

Second, the fact that the particular person implied in the pronoun is the Christ who teaches with authority links the persecution to that authority with which this Christ teaches. In other words, Christ is not to be considered separately from his authority. The authority with which he speaks is authority bound up with the nature of who he is. The authority possessed by Christ is regal authority. According to Matthew, he is by nature

⁸³Craig Blomberg, *Matthew*, New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman, 1992), 101.

a reigning king. In other words, the “of me” referred to in the genitive preposition *μου* is “of” the Son of David, Immanuel, the King of the Jews—all references of Christ, leading the reader up to Matthew 5:11, references which continue through to the end of the gospel which pictures Christ as having all authority over Heaven and earth. As Jesus is quoted in 28:18, Ἐδόθη μοι πᾶσα ἐξουσία ἐν οὐρανῷ καὶ ἐπὶ [τῆς] γῆς. Such a conclusion to the gospel is significant considering that the first chapter (even the first verse) offered allusions to a coming king. The later chapters pictured Him as being mocked for his claims to kingship (27:27-31; 27:37-44). Now, Matthew affirms that indeed the kingdom is not just one of the Jews or even of the world. All authority in heaven and earth belongs to this Jesus. So, if the persecution which the disciples suffer refers back to the person of Christ, then it refers back to the Christ who is the sovereign king of heaven and earth. The person of Christ presented in Matthew through 5:11 is the royal child, the preaching king, the one who speaks like Moses as a mouthpiece of God. While it is certainly the case that Christ’s original audience may not have understood all the implications of his claims to kingship, it is also true that the original recipients of Matthew’s gospel had the notion of the kingship of Christ spelled out quite plainly for them from the beginning of the gospel to its post-resurrection end. Christ’s abiding authority is plainly central to Matthew’s gospel.

So, third, the phrase *ἐνεκεν μου* indicates that the persecution of the disciples happens *because of* their authoritative teacher and king, Jesus Christ. The improper preposition *ἐνεκεν* is most commonly translated in Matthew as “for the sake of.”⁸⁴ The slightly varying senses in which the preposition is rendered either “for the sake of” or “because of” can be seen in the difference between its usage in verses ten and eleven. In verse ten, those are to be congratulated who have been persecuted *for the sake of*

⁸⁴Matthew uses the improper preposition in 7 verses: Matt 5:10, 5:11, 10:18, 10:39, 16:25, 19:5, 19:29.

righteousness, while in verse eleven those are to be congratulated who are persecuted *because of Christ*. The rendering *for the sake of* in verse ten is the outward expression (the fruit) of pursuing—or putting on display—righteousness through obedience to Christ. It is more occasional than causal. One might understand this as faith in action. Matthew loads the gospel with illustrations of such faith in action.⁸⁵ In verse eleven, the *because of* refers to the origin or the root cause of persecution, which is the authoritative Christ. The distinction in view is necessary to see both sides of the persecution equation. On the one hand, the outlook of pursuing righteousness provides the occasion for drawing attention to the manner in which Christ’s authority is represented in the life and actions of His followers. On the other hand, the persecution that arises against Christ’s followers proves to have its origins of offense in the authoritative Christ Himself. The distinction between the two is helpful, but even more helpful is the relation between the two. The righteousness is tantamount to the person at root in the causal offense of persecution. In addition, as will be shown in chapter 5, such clarifications will prove to be significant determinants of whether a particular instance is classified properly as persecution. From Matthew 5:10-12, we see that the occasion of persecution is precipitated by the righteousness of Christ the king. The persecution has Christ as the root of the animus toward those being persecuted. The righteousness of Christ is on display through the actions of those who by faith have given their allegiance to Him. Having been delivered from their allegiances to other powers, the followers of Christ are now allied with Him. Or, better, the people of the kingdom “are engaged and commanded by Jesus to do what they ought to do. As salt and light they *represent* and *proclaim* the righteousness fulfilled by Jesus . . . , but they do not create it themselves.”⁸⁶ The kingdom is His. The

⁸⁵Matthew 8:10, 13; 9:2, 22, 28-29; 15:28; 17:20; 21:21-22, 32.

⁸⁶Roland Deines, “Not the Law but the Messiah: Law and Righteousness in the Gospel of Matthew—An Ongoing Debate,” in *Built Upon the Rock: Studies in the Gospel of Matthew*, ed. Daniel M. Gurtner and John Nolland (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008), 74.

righteousness is His. In Matthew 5:13-16, the followers are first called light, then commanded to shine. They are not told to shine in order to become light. The disciples are first called to Christ (4:19) then given instructions for obedience. The nature of the obedience demonstrates the righteous authority of Christ, not the authority or righteousness of His followers. In this view of Matthew 5:10-12, persecution exists as a retaliatory action against the Christ of regnal righteousness (ἐνεκεν ἐμοῦ).

Perhaps this chapter and its emphasis on the regnal authority of Christ appears to make too much of Christ's authority and not enough of His righteousness, particularly in light of the emphasis on *righteousness* in 5:10. There is a more thorough discussion of righteousness forthcoming, but the regnal emphasis must not be minimized because it reflects the overall emphasis of Matthew, as has been shown. While righteousness forms a significant framing structure within the gospel (3:15; 21:32), the entire gospel is itself framed by the authority of Christ (1:1; 28:18-20). Structurally, the righteousness which abides in the kingdom abides first in the person of the king. The king/kingdom come first, then the righteousness—though the two are integral and cannot be divided, again explaining 6:33, “Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness” The significance of this ordering of authority can be demonstrated by the manner in which Christians have sought in times past to accommodate to hostile cultures around them by adopting a dualistic interpretation of authority, viewing Christ as the authority over the spiritual realm (worship) and “Caesar” the authority over the temporal (service). Stassen and Gushee chronicle the history of Christianity in this negative regard,⁸⁷ tracing the phenomenon back to Justin Martyr's bifurcated view of Matthew 22:17-21, from which Justin argued before Emperor Antoninus Pius that worship was due to God but service due to Caesar, who was the king and ruler of men.⁸⁸ By now, the preceding engagement

⁸⁷Stassen and Gushee, *Kingdom Ethics*, 127-45.

⁸⁸*Ibid.*, 128.

with Kodjak and Carter should have dispelled any notion of dualism in the matter of being persecuted on account of Christ. The short summary of what has been shown thus far is that regnal authority is the cause of the persecution, while the display of Christ's righteousness provides the occasion for it. The distinction is only being pressed here to understand the persecution dynamic better. Both the righteousness and the authority in consideration belong to Christ, the righteous king, and, thus, are ultimately inseparable. However, it is also important to remember that it is the followers of Christ who are mistreated, flogged, cast out from the synagogues, and persecuted by those hostile to Christ. And so, the persecution comes against those who trust Christ and therefore seek the kingdom and His righteousness. Such seeking displays light, and—to use a Johannine phrase—the darkness hates the light (John 3:19). The presence of Christ abides with His people. Persecution still flares up against Him. Further study of the use of δικαιοσύνη in Matthew may help clarify the significance of *righteousness* for arriving at a better understanding of persecution.

Righteousness Theme in Relation to Kingship Authority

Extensive study concerning *righteousness* in Matthew has been undertaken by Benno Przybylski.⁸⁹ His work has been quite influential in the academic literature concerning righteousness in Matthew. Przybylski argues for a provisional, functional concept of righteousness in the gospel of Matthew. By provisional, he means that “the concept of righteousness is used as a teaching principle leading from the known (contemporary Jewish teaching) to the unknown (the teaching of Jesus).”⁹⁰ By functional, he means that righteousness provides a particular function, namely, bridging a knowledge gap from a Jewish understanding to Jesus's understanding. According to

⁸⁹Benno Przybylski, *Righteousness in Matthew and His World of Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980).

⁹⁰*Ibid.*, 116.

Przybylski, this concept was intended to be discarded once Jesus's fuller instruction was understood by his followers. According to Przybylski, *righteousness* was a borrowed Jewish term which could be employed by Matthew until the fuller realization of discipleship might take root and be employed by Christ's followers. In Przybylski's view, the presentation of righteousness in Matthew is one framed not so much by the literature of the Old Testament—and certainly not by post-Reformation, Pauline interpretations of the term; rather, the framework for righteousness is found in the inter-testamental Dead Sea Scrolls and Tannaitic literature, which reflect significant development from the Old Testament. So, Przybylski argues that there are distinct ways the gospel of Matthew demonstrates this development, a development which ends up leading to what he describes as the provisional function of righteousness in Matthew.

Przybylski argues from the context of the seven occurrences of the noun δικαιοσύνη in the gospel of Matthew that each of these seven occurrences takes place in a polemical context and/or a context in which there are non-disciples; thus, he holds that there is no situation in the seven in which the context is didactic and uniquely comprised of disciples. Of course, five of the seven are in the Sermon on the Mount, and the other two occurrences concern the fulfillment of righteousness in relation to John the Baptist. Przybylski's point in arguing from these contextual clues is to say that they are indicators of the anachronistic nature of δικαιοσύνη, the term being one which Matthew viewed no longer apropos for disciples. In Przybylski's understanding of Matthew, the term *disciple* would become the categorical term by which the faithful would be best defined. According to Przybylski, Matthew (in its final redaction) was, in a sense, phasing out the Jewish concept of *righteousness* and replacing it with the Jesus concept of *disciple*. However, the point must be plainly made that this assertion by Przybylski relies upon a supposed de-emphasizing of the Jewish concept of *righteousness* throughout the gospel

of Matthew.⁹¹ That claim is dubious. While Przybylski notes that Matthew's gospel employs δικαιοσύνη only seven times, thus concluding that Matthew is transitioning away from a Jewish concept to the particularly Christian concept of *disciple*, he downplays the rather significant fact that Matthew's gospel employs the adjectival form δικαίος seventeen times,⁹² which is more often than any other New Testament book, a fact that leads Seebass to conclude to the contrary that the "doctrine of righteousness is central to [Matthew's] message."⁹³ It does not seem appropriate to say there is a de-emphasis of righteousness in Matthew. Instead, one might say there is a re-emphasis" of the subject. Roland Deines makes this assertion and says that this re-emphasis of righteousness hearkens back to the claim that Jesus is coming to save his people from their sins (1:21).⁹⁴ Agreeing with Carter that the name *Jesus* is to be connected to *Joshua*, Deines insists that Matthew is re-emphasizing righteousness in light of the coming of the Messiah: "The name is programmatic, and the question is to be raised: Why do the people of Israel need a 'new' forgiveness for their sins? Is this not right from the beginning of the Gospel at least an indirect hint as to how Matthew understood the Torah and the Messiah's main task?"⁹⁵ According to Deines, Matthew fleshes out the need for forgiveness and demonstrates that the forgiveness is not to come from the Torah but from Christ. Righteousness, then, is central to Matthew's message, as

⁹¹Scaer, *Discourses in Matthew*, 245-63, offers an introductory commentary on each of the occurrences of the noun δικαιοσύνη in Matthew.

⁹²Including Matt 13:17, 13:43, 49; 23:29; 25:37, 46, in which cases those saints displaying righteousness such as that spoken of in 5:10-11 are clearly in view.

⁹³Horst Seebass, δικαιοσύνη, in *NIDNTT*, ed. Colin Brown, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1986), 3:360.

⁹⁴Deines, "Not the Law but the Messiah," 71.

⁹⁵Ibid.

it is to be found not in the Law but in the Messiah. Nevertheless, Przybylski still maintains that righteousness is de-emphasized.

Essentially, Przybylski asserts that the adjectival uses of δίκαιος also are anachronistic, referring only to the faithful of the Old Testament, not to Christians. Przybylski is forced to admit, however, at least in the texts of Matthew 1:19, 5:45, 9:13, and 23:28, that the righteous mentioned may be contemporaneous with Jesus and not references back to the Old Testament era. Of course, John the Baptist, himself a contemporary, is referred to as coming in the way of righteousness (Matt 21:32) and, significantly, is present when all righteousness is fulfilled (3:15). Przybylski acknowledges that the righteousness in relation to the Baptist may refer both to his life and to the content of his proclamation. He denies that such righteousness is related to the gift of God and believes, instead, it must refer to the demand of God upon man.⁹⁶ But Deines' point concerning the Baptist and righteousness should not to be overlooked here.⁹⁷ The way of righteousness is clearly the way of God's righteousness. Christ calls followers into it. Matthew 3:15 is much better understood as the opening part of an *inclusio* with 21:32, thus identifying the first and last uses of the noun δικαιοσύνη in Matthew with John the Baptist.⁹⁸ Significantly, the original occurrence of δικαιοσύνη in Matthew (3:15) takes place for Christ πληρῶσαι πᾶσαν δικαιοσύνην. For Przybylski to be correct, the concept of *fulfillment* would have to be reconciled with de-emphasis. Deines appears on stronger ground asserting that Matthew offers a re-emphasis of righteousness in light of the coming of the Messiah—not a de-emphasis.

⁹⁶Przybylski, *Righteousness in Matthew*, 94-96.

⁹⁷Deines, "Not the Law but the Messiah," 53-84, argues for an *inclusio* utilizing John the Baptist and righteousness in 3:15 and 21:32.

⁹⁸*Ibid.*, 80.

Beyond the counter-questioning of particular texts rises an additional question for Przybylski's thesis. Even assuming his contextual conclusions are accurate dealing with the seven noun forms of δικαιοσύνη, the question remains, Is Przybylski correct in his assertion that the absence of δικαιοσύνη in didactic, disciple-only contexts proves that Matthew's redactor hopes to transition from δικαιοσύνη to *disciple*? Perhaps not. Consider, for instance, the contextual work of Dennis Hamm, who has written specifically on the context of Jesus' offering of the Beatitudes.⁹⁹ According to his analysis of the Beatitudes presented in Matthew and Luke, Hamm concludes that Jesus speaks to the disciples (a group including the inner twelve) in the presence of a larger group gathered around. As he says, "The *immediate* audience is the many followers implied by the word 'disciples,' including the subset of the recently chosen twelve apostles; but Jesus addresses as well the less committed members of this ingathering of the people of Israel, in whose hearing the words are spoken."¹⁰⁰ If Hamm is correct, then more pressure is put on Przybylski's thesis, as the context of the Sermon on the Mount (in which are five of his seven key texts) may, in fact, be one of addressing the disciples didactically, even though other people are included in a larger crowd. Hamm likens the situation to that of Luke 20:45, "And in the hearing of all the people, he said *to his disciples* . . ." (ESV). Even common practice today affirms the reality of such a teaching context. Preachers understand they are addressing Christians and teaching them doctrine, even though—in all likelihood—unbelievers are in the audience as well, thus indicating that a didactic message might also prove to be a polemical one as well.

In addition, the Sermon on the Mount includes five significant references to righteousness by Christ, and Christ is pictured later in the Gospel as judging all humankind (Matt 25) and having all authority in heaven and earth (Matt 28). Given

⁹⁹Hamm, *The Beatitudes in Context*.

¹⁰⁰*Ibid.*, 40, emphasis original.

such contexts, one may see the tendentious nature of Przybylski's thesis. Along this line of inquisition, the reader may notice, too, that Przybylski does not explain the shift from third person to second person in Matthew 5:11. Clearly, in Matthew 5:11, Jesus is not alerting non-disciples to the threat of persecution against them on his account. This warning of 5:11 must be addressed to disciples—disciples to whom he speaks much about righteousness. Both disciples and non-disciples may be addressed in the Sermon on the Mount with regard to righteousness, but the disciples are specifically instructed in how that righteousness relates to their persecution. Would it make sense for Jesus to forewarn them about persecution for the sake of righteousness if righteousness were passing away? The beatitudes assume an enduring significance of righteousness.

Przybylski's thesis appears to be a bit overburdened by its desire to demonstrate dissimilarity with regard to Pauline interpretations of righteousness. In the beginning of his work, Przybylski states, "In comparison to the Pauline literature, the concept of righteousness has an entirely different function in the Gospel of Matthew."¹⁰¹ By the end of his work, Przybylski states that Matthew and Paul agree on the nature of salvation as a gift of God, but he disagrees that the dual nature of righteousness—as gift and demand—is apropos for Matthew in the manner it is found in Paul.¹⁰² Przybylski's basic argument, then, appears to be that righteousness in Matthew remains unrelated to the gift of God in salvation. A strong case can be made against Przybylski's claims. In fact, Roland Deines has made such a case for understanding righteousness as passive in Matthew and not related exclusively to demand.¹⁰³ Essentially, Deines argues, "Starting from verse 5:17, righteousness, which is at the same time demanded and presupposed in

¹⁰¹Przybylski, *Righteousness in Matthew*, 3.

¹⁰²*Ibid.*, 107.

¹⁰³Roland Deines, *Die Gerechtigkeit der Tora im Reich des Messias: Mt 5,13–20 als Schlüsseltext der matthäischen Theologie*, Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament 177 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2004). Deines also publishes in English as referenced above.

verse 20, means a new reality that is possible through Jesus and—because it is available from now on—also necessary for entering the kingdom of God.”¹⁰⁴ While Deines still understands a role for demand, his demand is quite unlike Przybylski’s. Deines is clear to point out that righteousness in Matthew is a gift which circumscribes the demand. As he says, “What is demanded is a different quality of life according to the kingdom of God that is about to appear. It is the eschatological, overflowing rich righteousness that Jesus fulfilled and made available to his disciples that from now on alone opens the way into the kingdom of God.”¹⁰⁵ Otherwise, one might expect the Pharisees to applaud the righteousness of the followers of Christ. The Pharisees, of course, do not applaud the righteousness of Christ or his followers. Instead, they persecute it (5:10; 10:17). Scaer points out that if the disciples are expected to meet certain demands of righteousness quantitatively, then “their new allegiance required stricter moral observance than the Pharisee-dominated synagogues. If they were expected to excel where the Pharisees failed and suffer persecution, shouldn’t their moral adherence engender admiration from the Pharisees?”¹⁰⁶ Deines asserts instead that the notion of Jesus calling for a “better” ethic is to be rejected in favor of “Jesus-righteousness,” a righteousness impossible apart from Jesus Christ.¹⁰⁷

Nevertheless, Przybylski’s assertion is not an unpopular one in studies of Matthew. Allison and Davies draw upon his work in their interpretation of righteousness in Matthew. They find Matthew 5:10 “particularly weighty” in maintaining such a non-Pauline posture with regard to righteousness, saying, “Righteousness cannot, in this verse, have anything to do with divine vindication, nor can it mean justification or be

¹⁰⁴Deines, “Not the Law but the Messiah,” 80.

¹⁰⁵Ibid.

¹⁰⁶Scaer, *Discourses in Matthew*, 250.

¹⁰⁷Deines, “Not the Law but the Messiah,” 80-81.

God's gift. It is, rather, something disciples have, and they are persecuted because of it. Hence, it is recognizable behavior of some sort."¹⁰⁸ Even Donald Hagner, who takes issue with Przybylski on at least three of the seven interpretations of the noun δικαιοσύνη in Matthew, argues for an ethical understanding of righteousness in 5:10, believing that the ethical righteousness of the persecuted is the issue, though he acknowledges that the "righteousness is associated with relationship to Jesus."¹⁰⁹ Against Hagner, what is clear from the study of persecution thus far is that this relationship to Jesus is not a side note to the main issue of ethical righteousness. With Deines, we affirm that Jesus-righteousness is the main issue. Because Jesus-righteousness is the main issue, the persecution of his followers can be called persecution on account of Him. Rather than saying the persecuted disciples are so treated because of their ethical righteousness, Matthew appears to be saying of these disciples that "they *represent* and *proclaim* the righteousness fulfilled by Jesus (5:10; 3:15), but they do not create it themselves."¹¹⁰

Where Przybylski clarifies the distinction between Matthew and Paul in terms of a negation of the gift of God, Allison and Davies remove not just the gift aspect of righteousness but also the demand—God's vindication and justification altogether—insisting that righteousness is an anthropological property. Yet, the reasoning put forward does not appear necessarily to point to their conclusion of such a radical dissimilarity with Pauline interpretations. Granting their premise that the righteousness in view in Matthew 5:10 speaks of recognizable behavior, along with the premise that those who are persecuted are persecuted for such recognizable behavior, does not necessarily lead to the conclusion that—*therefore*—righteousness cannot have anything

¹⁰⁸Davies and Allison, *Commentary on Matthew*, 453.

¹⁰⁹Donald Hagner, "Holiness and Ecclesiology: The Church in Matthew," in *Built Upon the Rock: Studies in the Gospel of Matthew*, ed. Daniel M. Gurtner and John Nolland (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008), 175.

¹¹⁰Deines, "Not the Law but the Messiah," 74, emphasis original.

to do with justification as vindication or gift. Is it not possible that those who believe in the gift of justification—those who have heard the message of God’s salvation—would have actions which follow such beliefs? If so, then the actions are representations of the righteousness behind them, which is Christ’s. Even more, is it possible that the king and His kingdom are not passing away but are actually still present with the kingdom people (Matt 28:20)? If so, then the persecution for the sake of righteousness is persecution on account of Jesus. The conclusion of Allison and Davies is derived from their prior conclusion that righteousness in 5:10 *must be* a reference to a demand for right conduct required by God. However, this conclusion is not warranted if our earlier assessment of the regnal dynamic is taken into account. In the regnal dynamic, the persecution of 5:10 *for righteousness’ sake* is inseparably related to the persecution of 5:11 *on account of* Christ. The question comes back to the relationship between the persecution of 5:10 and that of 5:11. The significance of this relationship to righteousness—very important for understanding persecution—is also not irrelevant in the present debate concerning the Pauline perspective on justification.

Peter Stuhlmacher has recently argued that “the Pauline doctrine of justification is the doctrine about the implementation of God’s righteousness through Christ for the entire creation.”¹¹¹ The hint of regnal overtones is unmistakable in this definition. Indeed, one may recall the thesis of Warren Carter in this regard and realize that the Christ of Matthew is not necessarily all that dissimilar to the Christ of Paul with relation to his divine reign. It would be difficult indeed to miss the regnal character of the Christ in Matthew. With regard to righteousness in the present debate, Stuhlmacher argues that Paul’s interpretation of justification was altered by his Damascus Road encounter with the risen and ruling Christ. Whereas a Jew in Paul’s day might have been

¹¹¹Peter Stuhlmacher, *Revisiting Paul’s Doctrine of Justification: A Challenge to the New Perspective* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2001), 73.

anticipating the promised Messiah to establish an earthly reign, that same Jew would have been challenged by Christ to reconsider what the in-breaking of God's kingdom might mean. Stuhlmacher argues that "since the time of Second Isaiah, the end-time hopes of Israel were concentrated upon the expectation that God would soon do a new thing (cf. Is 43:19; 51:6; 65:17)."¹¹² Paul undoubtedly knew of the Jewish "Zion-Basileia" anticipation, but his understanding of it was altered significantly by his encounter with Christ and his subsequent call to be the apostle to the Gentiles, preaching to them the kingdom of God. Paul's missionary service in the cause of preaching the gospel of the kingdom to the Gentiles is evidence enough for Stuhlmacher that the justification question exists in affinity with the in-breaking of the kingdom. Quoting Kasemann approvingly, Stuhlmacher concludes that "the issue in justification is none other than the kingdom of God that Jesus preached."¹¹³ Again, Stuhlmacher concludes, "For the apostle, the righteousness of God, the Christ of God, the people of God and the kingdom of God all belong inseparably together."¹¹⁴ The commands, corrections, and failings of the disciples, then, would indicate nothing less than the "demands" of kingdom living. These cannot be demands to enter the kingdom, considering that the disciples would never meet them. Such an entrance to the kingdom is a gift, and the disciples are in relation to the Father and the kingdom prior to their receiving the commands. Instead, the commands are instructions for those who are in the kingdom and already wish to please the Lord. While real commands are given in Matthew, they are not given either in the sense of earning righteousness or maintaining it toward justification. Justification is already promised to those who are known by Christ (7:23; 25:34). Obedience to Christ is a sign of their relationship to Christ, but it explains neither

¹¹²Ibid., 45.

¹¹³Ibid., 52.

¹¹⁴Ibid.

the origin nor the outcome of righteousness. Obedience may in fact occasion persecution, but it does not cause it.

Nexus of Righteousness

Such a brief consideration of the immense debate surrounding the Pauline doctrine of justification is obviously insufficient in terms of moving that particular debate forward. The goal of injecting Stuhlmacher here is not to defend his thesis. Rather, the goal of such inclusion is to say that Stuhlmacher at least demonstrates the viability of viewing righteousness in affinity with the regnal Christ. If righteousness, then, is related to the regnal Christ in Paul, then why would it be out of the question for it to be so related in Matthew? Christ, of course, came preaching the kingdom, too (Matt 4:17). As Carter has shown, there are definite hints of Christ in relation to the kingdom beginning in verse one of the Gospel. In fact, Seifrid—working in this instance from Stuhlmacher—asserts this very proposition. He says, “[Jesus’] announcement of the kingdom of God parallels Paul’s declaration of the revelation of the ‘righteousness of God.’ In fact, the terms criss-cross one another: Paul speaks of the kingdom of God as the presence of righteousness (Rom. 14:17), just as Matthew testifies to Jesus’ witness to the coming ‘righteousness of God’ (Matt. 6:33).”¹¹⁵ Biblically, this nexus would obviate the need to disconnect the Pauline doctrine of Justification from that found in Matthew. From a consideration of the extant biblical data, there appears to be at least similarities between righteousness in Paul and righteousness in Matthew, particularly with reference to the kingdom.

Righteousness and the kingdom go together with Christ and His followers. When the regnal dynamic thus far exposed is allowed to speak with regard to righteousness, then the righteousness of the persecution in Matthew 5:10 can be viewed as directly linked to the persecution on account of Christ in Matthew 5:11. As has been

¹¹⁵Mark Seifrid, *Christ, Our Righteousness: Paul’s Theology of Justification*, New Studies in Biblical Theology (Downers Grove, IL: Apollos Inter-Varsity Press, 2000), 177.

seen already, those acting in allegiance to Christ display the righteousness of the kingship of Christ. In this way, those persecuted are so persecuted either for righteousness' sake or on account of Christ. Utilizing the relationship proffered by Deines, we may say that the manner in which the followers of Christ display this righteousness is both by representing and proclaiming Christ before the world. Their allegiance to Christ is not one of earning or even maintaining righteousness. It is a matter of hungering and thirsting for his righteousness. Such hungering and thirsting, such representing and proclaiming, leads Christ's followers to be persecuted just as he was persecuted (10:16-25)—not so much for their actions as for their identification with Him. In their persecutions on account of Him, the followers of Christ are promised blessings. This dynamic is called here the regnal righteousness dynamic because the righteousness belongs to Christ, and the authority against which the persecutors act is the reigning authority of Christ. From this dynamic, it begins to appear more clearly that persecution is a hostile action—violence or slander—undertaken in retaliation to the revelation of the righteousness of Jesus Christ. Those who “live and walk in the light of the Lord”¹¹⁶ reflect His regnal righteousness and, so, are persecuted on account of Him.

Of course, not all commentators will agree concerning this regnal dynamic serving as a nexus between verses 10 and 11. Robert Gundry states, “We have no reason to distinguish between righteousness as the occasion of persecution and righteousness as the cause of persecution.”¹¹⁷ Yet, the expectation of persecution in verse 10 *ελεκεν δικαιοσυνη*, followed by the expectation in verse 11 that the persecution is *ελεκεν εμου* demands an explanation. Are the two strictly parallel? In what way is Christ parallel to righteousness? What is the relationship dynamic between persecution and righteousness? Is the blessing for kingdom people related to righteousness, to Christ, or to both? The

¹¹⁶ Deines, *Not the Law but the Messiah*, 83, utilizes this description of Christ's followers.

¹¹⁷ Gundry, *Matthew*, 73.

significance of understanding this point can be seen in Boice's comments: "There is no promise of happiness for those who are persecuted for being a nuisance, for Christians who have shown themselves to be objectionable, difficult, foolish, and insulting to their non-Christian friends. This is not the thing about which Christ was speaking."¹¹⁸ To make such a statement, one must have an understanding of what Christ is saying in setting up such a relationship between Himself and righteousness with regard to persecution. Understanding precisely what is meant by the varying uses of *ενεκεν* is important. The blessing and kingdom belong only to those whose persecution is related to Christ or to righteousness. What is the relation between the two?

As we have seen with regard to justification, the answer to the question appears to be that Christ (his righteousness and authority) is the origin of the persecution, while those called by Him (Matt 11:27-30) act in accordance with His authority, thereby displaying union with Him and His kingdom rather than with the dominion of alternate authorities. Such alliance to Christ and His kingdom gives occasion for His followers to be identified with Him, thus leading them to become objects of persecution, while Christ Himself is the target. These objects are the kingdom people to whom belongs the kingdom promise. The regnal character of their persecution is clear. The slander, the hounding, the hostility—all this "persecution" is against those who represent the righteous authority of Christ. They are the privileged ones according to the gospel of Matthew (10:32). The disciples manifest Christ before men, and men will persecute them for it. The two uses of *ενεκεν*, then, rather than contradicting or competing against one another, actually interpret one another. Being brought under the umbrella of righteousness belonging to the authoritative (regnal) Christ, on the one hand, leads to concrete confessions and actions which are manifest openly before the world, and, on the other hand, exposes the followers of Christ to persecution. Luz appears to corroborate

¹¹⁸James Montgomery Boice, *The Sermon on the Mount* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1972), 58.

such an interpretation when he notes that the two uses of the preposition *ενεκεν* in verses 10 and 11 “interpret each other mutually: the confession of Christ manifests itself in deeds.”¹¹⁹ A note of caution is in order here because Matthew 5:10-12 clearly relates the persecution back to the person of Christ, not to those who themselves are being persecuted. Thus, the persecution is not contingent upon the faithfulness of the disciples even to confess and manifest. Disciples will “do” the commands of Christ: “The community of followers of Jesus have the vocation to be instruments of the kingdom of God in the world in association with their Lord and under his leadership (in the post-Easter period that is assumed to be under the guidance and through the power of the Spirit of Jesus).”¹²⁰ Their doing, however, is not the root cause of their persecution. The root cause is Christ Himself.

One might object to the distinction between the occasion and the origin of the persecution in question on the grounds that in the Sermon on the Mount (6:1) Christ specifically warns against practicing *δικαιοσυνη* before men. Certainly, the warning is to be heeded. When understood correctly, the warning supports all that has been said thus far. The warning in Matthew 6:1 is clarified by the phrase, *πρὸς τὸ θεαθῆναι αὐτοῖς*. The danger here is the motive, not necessarily the outward action. Christ warns that the kind of *δικαιοσυνη* which is practiced merely from an anthropological outlook is the *δικαιοσυνη* of hypocrites, sounding trumpets to be noticed by others, rather than the *δικαιοσυνη* which belongs to the authoritative king of heaven in Matthew 5:20. Thus, Matthew 6:33 records Christ instructing his followers to seek first¹²¹ the kingdom of

¹¹⁹Luz, *Matthew 1-7*, 242.

¹²⁰G. R. Beasley-Murray, “Matthew 6:33: The Kingdom of God and the Ethics of Jesus,” in *Neues Testament und Ethik*, ed., Rudolf Schnackenburg (Freiburger: Herder, 1989), 96.

¹²¹Morris, *The Gospel According to Matthew*, 161, notes the *first* (*πρῶτον*) in view here is first in importance, not time.

Heaven and the righteousness accompanying it.¹²² In other words, the point of righteousness is that it belongs to the regnal Christ and is manifested in word and deed by the followers of Christ, as in Matthew 5:10-11.

Morris captures the sense of the δικαιοσύνη in question in 6:1, as he says the word “refers to any good deed that a person may do as part of his service of God The believer must always keep in mind that the act is righteous only if it is what it purports to be—the service of God.”¹²³ By *service*, Morris has in mind the same basic idea as Beasley-Murray, who equates service with ministry to both physical and spiritual needs.¹²⁴ Such service must be in Christ’s name or for Christ’s sake. The δικαιοσύνη in view, then, as was the case with Matthew 5:10, is righteousness that belongs to the kingdom of Heaven, according to the will of the regnal king. Little wonder, then, that those who practice and thus are persecuted for righteousness in Matthew 5:10 are promised that they have the kingdom of Heaven. The δικαιοσύνη of Matthew 5:10, like the δικαιοσύνη of 6:1, is a δικαιοσύνη which pursues the kingdom of God first and His δικαιοσύνη which accompanies it. Its origin and goal is not separated from Christ. On the basis of this righteousness, Jesus will administer the justice of the kingdom (Matt 7:21-23; 25:31ff.). In other words, the δικαιοσύνη in view in Matthew 5:10 is the same δικαιοσύνη in view throughout the Sermon on the Mount. It is the δικαιοσύνη of God at work in the kingdom of God which is gifted to the people of God seeking to serve the commands of the regnal Christ because they believe that it is Christ who is accomplishing the kingdom purposes of God, including that which Jesus taught them to pray for in Matthew 6:10, “Let your kingdom come, your will be done, as it is in heaven so also on

¹²²Matthew 6:33 has textual variants which omit reference to God and potentially alter the use of the pronoun. Clearly, the kingdom and the righteousness still refer to God, whether the gospel originally stated it pronominally or not.

¹²³Morris, *The Gospel According to Matthew*, 136.

¹²⁴Beasley-Murray, “Matthew 6:33,” 96.

the earth.” When Przybylski and others¹²⁵ insist that the righteousness of the Sermon on the Mount is ethical, that is, actively received, they deny the very sense of the word *righteousness*. For instance, France argues that the righteousness of 5:6 refers to “those who are eager themselves to live as God requires.”¹²⁶ If living as God requires is the view of Matthew 5:6, then when should the followers of Christ expect their satisfaction? They certainly never achieved such a required standard by the end of the gospel (26:35). Righteousness appears to be much better explained in Matthew by relating it to Jesus Christ and the in-breaking of the kingdom of heaven rather than to moral conduct. Matthew 5:20 is exceedingly important in this regard (and for understanding persecution). The righteousness that enters the kingdom is not simply a quantitatively superior (or ethically supreme) righteousness. It is righteousness of a different kind altogether from Pharisaical righteousness. Otherwise, “If ‘the blessed’ are persecuted for their righteousness (5:10), then quite logically the Pharisees, or at least those who strictly adhere to the rules of moral conduct, also would qualify for persecution.”¹²⁷ Instead, the Pharisees are pictured as persecutors instead of persecuted. The persecuted will be those who because of Christ have an appetite and thirst for the righteousness of God. When one believes what Christ has taught in the Sermon on the Mount and so acts in the outworking of such faith, then that one is manifesting the reality of alliance with Christ, serving Him and saying—through actions—that the regnal claims of Christ are true. Here in this regnal dynamic is the display of righteousness which makes one a target of persecution. The targets of persecution are targets ultimately because they represent the righteousness of Christ. Christ Himself is the provocateur, though the objects will be

¹²⁵R. T. France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007), 167.

¹²⁶*Ibid.*

¹²⁷Scaer, *Discourses in Matthew*, 252.

those whose fealty aligns them with him. Their actions in obedience to the regnal Christ become a threat to other dominions and powers aligned against the regnal Christ. Hence, their actions provide occasions upon which persecutions tend to ignite.

Defense of Regnal Righteousness Theme

Again, not all scholars agree that this regnal framework is what is being taught in Matthew. Some scholars—in light of Matthew 5:12 [cf. QL 6:23]—argue that the persecution is not regnal in nature. Instead, they build on the statement, “for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you,” maintaining that the persecution is related primarily to identification with the prophets. The argument is maintained that the Old Testament framework of Israelite rebellion and prophetic rejection is still being played out in the saga of first-century persecution. Following the categories of critical scholarship in Old Testament studies, the framework in view is not precisely Old Testament, but Deuteronomistic. As Kloppenborg says, “In Deuteronomistic theology the prophets are represented primarily as preachers of repentance and, generally speaking, as rejected preachers.”¹²⁸ Thus, this view seeks to show that “the Q community responded to the onset of persecution by interpreting it in accordance with Israel’s rejected prophets”¹²⁹ in the Deuteronomistic theological perspective. On these grounds, then, the statement of identification with the prophets as found in Matthew 5:12 would be expected, and persecution would thus be explained as a continuation of Israel’s rejection of the prophets. In response, Jervis rightly notes that for the case to hold that persecution is paradigmatic of Israel and the prophets, then three conditions must obtain: (1) Jesus’ followers should be described as prophets; (2) Jesus’ followers should call Israel to

¹²⁸J. S. Kloppenborg Verbin, *Excavating Q: The History and Setting of the Sayings Gospel* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2000), 121.

¹²⁹This quote is taken from Jervis, “Suffering for the Reign of God, 315. Jervis is presenting the position of Arland Jacobson, “The Literary Unity of Q,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 101(1982): 388.

repent; and (3) the rejection of the call to repent should be the reason for the persecution.

After a full consideration of these conditions, Jervis finds they do not obtain. First, as for whether the sayings indicate that the followers of Christ are to be considered prophets, Jervis notes that most often the word *prophet* does not refer to a follower of Christ; that, when it does, it does not indicate that the followers of Christ are themselves to be considered prophets in the Old Testament sense of the word; and, finally, that the prophets are distinguished from the followers of Christ in several Q sayings (Q 10:24; 11:47; and 16:16 for example). However, one must admit that Matthew 5:12 (cf. Q 6:23) could be taken to refer to the followers of Christ as prophets. The original οὕτω γὰρ ἐδίωξαν τοὺς προφῆτα τοὺς πρὸς ὑμῶν may be read appositively, “For thus they persecuted the prophets, *the ones before you*,” although the text does not mandate such a reading. The text may just as well be translated, as the NASB translates it, “the prophets who were before you,” a more generic, chronological reading. Either way, the text could, in fact, be saying that in the instance of persecution the followers of Christ are acknowledged to be in some way akin to the prophets. Yet, as Jervis notes, “It is unclear . . . whether this logion means that Jesus’ hearers, when persecuted, are themselves prophets, or that in being rejected they share a fate similar to that of the faithful ones before them, namely, the prophets. If Q 6:23 is read as comparing but not equating Jesus’ followers with the prophets its value as evidence for a Deuteronomistic interpretation of persecution is somewhat limited.”¹³⁰

Significantly, the followers of Christ are never said to be in the line of the prophets in the Sermon on the Mount. Christ’s followers are referred to as οἱ μαθηταὶ αὐτοῦ (5:1); as τὸ ἄλλας τῆς γῆς (5:13); and as τὸ φῶς τοῦ κόσμου (5:14), but never are they called *prophets*. The possibility remains that the followers of Christ are perhaps being equated with the prophets without actually being called prophets. In the broader

¹³⁰Jervis, “Suffering for the Reign of God,” 318.

context of Matthew's Gospel, the same truth holds, although 23:34-35 (Q11:49-51) appears more supportive of the idea that the prophetic line is continued in the people who follow Christ. Jervis says in comments on Q11:49-51 that this passage is "particularly supportive of the view that Q represents Jesus' followers as prophets."¹³¹ Yet, if Matthew 23:34-35 is read with the results of this study of 5:10-12 already in view, then the outstanding feature of the passage is not the on-going nature of the office of prophet, but the on-going persecution of righteousness, whether it be the persecution of Abel, Zechariah, the prophets of old, or the present followers of Christ. The line of continuity is drawn from one generation of the righteous to the next—not from one line of prophets to another. The inclusion of Abel in the list is clearly an indication that prophets as such are not as important to the author as is the righteousness they represent. Abel is not known as a prophet but as the first righteous man killed (the first *martyr* for righteousness' sake). If the question is whether *prophet* is the characteristic identification of the followers of Christ in relation to persecution in the Sermon on the Mount, then the answer appears to be, "No, they are not." The better case to make is that the followers of Christ are identified with His righteousness and thus are persecuted, not that they are identified with the prophets and so persecuted.

Indeed, in the Sermon on the Mount, the persecution of righteousness in view is not persecution based on the identification of the prophets. Rather, as Matthew 5:10-12 makes plain, the persecution of righteousness is identified specifically with Christ, who is not pictured *primarily* as a prophet but, rather, as a king who teaches with authority. Indeed, Christ is pictured as one with authority over men and their diseases (8:5-13); over humankind and the forgiveness of sins (9:1-7); over his disciples and the demons (10:1). In short, Christ has all authority over heaven and earth (28:18). Christ is surely referred to as a prophet throughout the gospel of Matthew (13:53-58; 14:5; 16:14;

¹³¹Ibid.

21:11; 21:46).¹³² Nevertheless, as Repschinski has said, “The confession of Peter (16:16) makes it clear that the crowd’s appraisal of Jesus as prophet is inadequate.”¹³³ Though one may rightly argue in a minimalist sense that Christ is pictured as a prophet throughout Matthew, he would have to agree that Christ is also pictured as something more than a prophet. As Matthew 12:45 says, “something greater than Jonah is here.” Even if Jesus were pictured as being a prophet like the prophet Jonah, still, his status is viewed as surpassing Jonah in its greatness. Matthew’s gospel is clear on this point. The birth of this one who is greater than Jonah happened ἵνα πληρωθῆ the prophecy of Isaiah according to Matthew 1:22-23; the fleeing with this child to Egypt also *fulfilled* what had been spoken by Hosea according to Matthew 2:15; the slaughter of the innocent children in 2:16-18 *fulfilled* what was spoken by Jeremiah; this child’s growing up in Nazareth *fulfilled* what had been spoken by prophets, according to 2:23.¹³⁴ This one greater than the prophet Jonah *fulfilled* the prophets (cf. 5:17). Jesus fulfilled the prophets and the Law in the righteousness of God.

In what sense is Jesus greater than Jonah? Is it merely his birth and upbringing, or is there something more essential in the gospel’s presentation of the messiah? Gundry has pointed out that the “greater” in view here refers neither to the kingdom (βασιλεία which is feminine) nor particularly to personal distinctions between Jesus and Jonah.¹³⁵ Rather, the distinction is a qualitative one, as indicated by the neuter

¹³²Davies and Allison, *Commentary on Matthew*, 460, argue that Jesus is pictured in Matthew as the true prophet. One could add countless references to Christ as prophet, priest, and king. The point here is that Matthew does not prove Christ primarily as prophet. Persecution is related to Christ, not Christ as prophet.

¹³³Boris Repschinski, *The Controversy Stories in the Gospel of Matthew: Their Redaction, Form and Relevance for the Relationship Between the Matthean Community and Formative Judaism* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 2000), 151.

¹³⁴There is no certain Old Testament reference to this prophecy, although some have suggested a reference to the Hebrew *nezer*, thus indicating a reference to Isa 11:1.

¹³⁵Gundry, *Matthew*, 246.

πλείον in verse 12:41. Gundry argues that the qualitative difference is one which allows for an emphasis on the condemnation due this generation when they are called to account at the judgment for their persecution of the righteous, particularly Christ Himself.

Collectively, the fact that Jesus is greater than the temple in 12:6; he is greater than Jonah in 12:41; he is greater than Solomon in 12:42; all work together to indicate that Jesus is qualitatively distinct in being a man who demonstrates the presence, preaching, authority, and wisdom of God Himself. Who could be greater than a prophet except the one who sent the prophet? Who could be greater than the temple except the one who ordained and set apart the temple? Who could be greater than Solomon in wisdom except the one who gave the wisdom to Solomon? This Jesus Christ of Matthew is, indeed, more than a prophet. As Jervis says, “Jesus’ distinguishing characteristic is that he is intimately connected to the reign of God. Rather than his identity being tied to the prophets of the past, it is linked to God’s current work of bringing in God’s reign.”¹³⁶ If the disciples are affiliated with one such as this, why would they prefer to be affiliated instead with Israel’s prophets of old?

Further indication that Christ is not pictured in Matthew primarily as a prophet is the point made by Adolf Schlatter, that Matthew 11:13 serves to demarcate a concluding point in the long series of prophets, culminating with the arrival of John the Baptist.¹³⁷ Beyond being pictured as a prophet in Matthew’s gospel, Christ is pictured as the one who fulfills the prophets. Beyond being a prophet, this Christ is pictured as a righteous king—indeed as the righteous king who fulfills that which was promised by the prophets—culminating both the offices of king and prophet, even bringing together the

¹³⁶Jervis is speaking more broadly of all the Q logia, not simply that about which we are speaking here in Matthew. See Jervis, “Suffering for the Reign of God,” 329.

¹³⁷Adolf Schlatter, *Der Evangelist Matthaus* (Stuttgart: Calwer, 1929), 370.

sometimes warring factions and frequent tensions having existed between the two offices since the days of Saul and Samuel or David and Nathan.

The concern in Matthew is more than prophetic. The concern is the righteousness of God. In fact, Matthew is concerned about a settling of accounts for παν ἄμα δίκαιον. The fact that prophets and apostles are being sent and are being persecuted only confirms the point that they are (because they are manifesting kingdom righteousness) suffering on account of Christ. The main point, again, is that the righteous since the time of Abel have suffered persecution at the hands of the unrighteous. There is no sure proof here that any continuance of the prophetic line is on-going in the Christian disciples. Jervis leaves open the possibility that Jesus' disciples are considered prophets in the Deuteronomistic sense; however, the evidence is not at all overwhelming.

Even if the evidence were overwhelmingly in favor of treating the followers of Christ as prophets in the Deuteronomistic sense, still, the other two conditions would need to hold. Yet, the second condition is more difficult to demonstrate than the first. The followers of Christ are not shown in the logia of Q (so in Matthew) as preaching repentance in the manner of the prophets. Jervis argues that the Q logia do not require repentance at all. In addition, Jervis notes that in the Q logia Jesus does not instruct his followers to demand repentance. The message is one of kingdom life available to those who will follow Christ.¹³⁸ Jervis concludes that repentance is not required in the Q logia. To be fair, this conclusion appears to overstate the case for kingdom life, considering that Q (also Matthew) speaks early through John the Baptist equating the kingdom with repentance. Jervis sees a stricter contrast between John the Baptist and the kingdom which Christ preaches than perhaps the Q source or the writer of Matthew sees. The author of Matthew records Jesus preaching, "Repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand," in the same manner as John the Baptist. Still, it is true for Matthew, as Jervis says

¹³⁸Jervis, "Suffering for the Reign of God," 318-22.

with Q, that even though Christ preaches repentance in a prophetic manner the followers of Christ are not pictured as preaching repentance. Indeed, the picture, as we have it in Matthew, is that the followers of Christ are to go out teaching all that they have learned from Christ in an effort to make disciples of all nations (28:18-20). Likewise, Matthew records Christ teaching his followers to make the Father known by their good deeds and to live as salt and light (5:16). The preaching of righteousness pictured is not exactly preaching repentance as the prophets did with Israel (10:7). The preaching and actions of the followers of Christ are not as much a preaching of judgment against Israel as they are preaching to all for the kingdom of heaven. Judgment and repentance are not necessarily excluded, but the preaching after the coming of the Christ is undoubtedly distinct from the preaching of the prophets to unfaithful Israel.

Third, Jervis shows that the persecution in view throughout the Q logia is not persecution related to the rejection of the message of prophets speaking against Israel. Rather, the evidence indicates “that the reason followers of Jesus suffer is that they have fealty to Jesus.”¹³⁹ The emphasis of the Sermon on the Mount, Matthew as a whole, and the Q logia (as Jervis has shown) is trusting the regnal authority of Christ. This trust, as we have seen, may occasion persecution.

The mention of the prophets in Matthew 5:10-12 and Matthew 23:34-36 serves not so much to make the statement that the followers of Christ are in the line of prophets officially. Rather, this mention serves to establish the followers of Christ in a long line (dating back to Abel) of those whose righteousness has not been silent, thus occasioning persecution against themselves. After the arrival of Christ preaching the kingdom of heaven, those yielding to the authority claims of Christ would suffer persecution as their actions demonstrate both His authority over them and His loyalty to them. Thus, the

¹³⁹ibid., 326.

persecution against them is against Him and, ultimately, against the righteousness of God.

Conclusion Concerning Regnal Righteousness in Matthew

Matthew 5:11 may be translated, “How privileged you are whenever others insult you and persecute you and falsely speak all kinds of evil against you because of me.” English translations follow the same order of insulting, persecuting, and speaking evil when making translation of this verse. Two versions, God’s Word Translation and the Darby Bible Translation, include the concept of lying somewhat separately from speaking evil, although “falsely speak all kinds of evil” would certainly include within it the concept of lying.¹⁴⁰ The content of the verse, then, is quite similar to this translation in all the English translations. Matthew 5:11 makes clear that those who act in accordance with Christ might be making themselves objects for persecution against them. What has been referred to until now as “persecution” is shown to include “hounding,”¹⁴¹ as well as slander in verse 11. The nature of the aggression is evidenced by the use of the preposition *κατα* which here is employed to indicate hostility.¹⁴² Though the violence of slander is not equal, perhaps, to that reached in a Chinese prison today, still, the aggression in view is more than a snide remark. As Plummer says, “The cruelties of the arena . . . are in abeyance, but reviling clamour and slanderous statements are still

¹⁴⁰This author’s translation follows the better manuscripts of the Alexandrian and Majority groups against the Western manuscripts which omit (*ψευδόμενοι*). In accordance with M. W. Holmes, “The Text of Matthew 5:11,” *New Testament Studies* 32 (1986): 283-86, this translation omits even the brackets around the translation *falsely*. For explanation of bracketed option, see Bruce Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament*, 2nd ed. (London and New York: United Bible Societies, 1971), 12-13.

¹⁴¹Translation of *διώκω* offered by Daan Cloete in his article, “In the Meantime, Trouble for the Peacemakers: Matthew 5:10-12,” *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa* 52 (1985): 42-48. This translation captures the idea of pursuit integral to *διώκω*.

¹⁴²So, Bauer et al., *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 2nd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958), 405.

frequent; and those who suffer from them should remember these verses.”¹⁴³ Slanderous statements and false accusations are persecution of the same essence as beating, imprisonment, and execution—just not to the same degree. This study of Matthew 5:10-12 has demonstrated that persecution is any retaliatory action against the righteousness of God as displayed in Christ, whether that action is name-calling or flogging.

Plummer makes the additional point in his commentary on verse 11 that those who are presently suffering have comfort in Matthew 5:11. Though the suffering of the Roman Coliseum has, in fact, ended, the persecution against the righteous authority of Christ has not yet ended. Those suffering even today appear to be included in Christ’s teaching in verse 11. The instruction of Jesus which Matthew records abides for Jesus’s followers *whenever* (ὅταν) the persecution happens. The subordinating conjunction ὅταν is, in one sense, temporal and could be translated *as often as*, though it need not be since the translation *whenever* used above covers the same temporal generality. *Whenever* insults, false charges, or persecutions come against the followers of Christ (*because of Christ*), these followers are privileged people indeed. So says Matthew 5:11.

The privilege or blessing holds *whenever* the persecution happens. The delimitation indicated in Matthew 5:11 is, in another sense, not temporal. Rather, it is personal. The blessing is promised *whenever* in time. The limit of the blessing is reached, however, only when the suffering of persecution is not ἕνεκεν ἐμοῦ. Frequently in the discussions on the verse, the point is made that not all suffering is in view in these verses. Only suffering *because of Christ* is privileged with this kingdom blessing. Only suffering occasioned by the manifestation of righteousness because of the authority of Christ is in view in Matthew 5:10-11.

¹⁴³ Alfred Plummer, *An Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to S. Matthew* (London: Robert Scott Roxburghe House, 1915), 71.

The essential character of persecution, then, is understood regnally. It has to do with the reigning Christ and His kingdom righteousness. The regnal righteousness of Christ in Matthew provides the following definition for persecution: Christian persecution is a hostile, retaliatory action against Christ directed against the followers of Christ who by faith represent and proclaim the righteousness of God. Because Christ is sovereign, this manifestation will often include conflict with other authorities which hold captive most of humanity through fear and rebellion. Yet, God is vindicated through the triumph of Christ. As a result, righteousness is a primary theme related to Christ and to those persecuted on account of Him according to the gospel of Matthew. Righteousness is clearly the picture in view in Matthew 23:29. In Matthew 23:29, woe is pronounced against the Pharisees because of the hypocrisy of adorning the monuments of the *righteous*. Matthew inserts that the blood of Abel and Zechariah is *righteous* blood (ἀπὸ τοῦ αἵματος Ἰβελ τοῦ δικαίου ἕως τοῦ αἵματος Ζαχαρίου υἱοῦ Βαραχίου). The comments in Luke (cf. Q11:50) do not include the righteous blood of Abel; yet, in Matthew, the blood of righteous Abel is but a part of πᾶν αἷμα δίκαιον ἐκχυννόμενον ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς. The thrust of the woeful discourse in Matthew is that upon this generation all the guilt of righteous blood spilled is going to be brought to full account. As one translation puts it, there will be a settling of accounts for this righteous blood.¹⁴⁴ We might even say there will be a righteous reckoning in which God will be vindicated and the righteous separated into His presence forever (25:33).

Matthew 5:10-12 demonstrates both in its structure and content that Christ possesses a kingship authority over heaven and earth. The kingdom is offered freely to those who believe Jesus (4:17; 11:25-30). Instead of believing Christ and yielding allegiance to Him, many will be threatened and offended by His claim to authority. Thus,

¹⁴⁴James M. Robinson, Paul Hoffman, and John S. Kloppenborg, eds., *The Critical Edition of Q*. Hermeneia (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2000), 286.

those offended will lash out against the righteousness of Christ and against any whose faith and actions identify them with Christ. As Kodjak concludes, “Thus, righteousness and the Speaker Himself are synonymous in the language of the Beatitudes.”¹⁴⁵ Because righteousness is equated with Christ, the persecution of the followers may be said to happen either for the sake of righteousness (5:10) or on account of Christ (5:11). Christ arrives on the scene proclaiming the interjection of the kingdom of God, while claiming the divine right to issue proclamations concerning the rewards of the kingdom and asserting divine authority to bring to final reckoning all peoples—both the sheep and the goats. Such an audacious message would send Christ into the hands of opposing authorities for his crucifixion, and it may bring his followers to a similar fate. Whether His followers share the same fate or a similar fate with regard to persecutions, they are the recipients of great reward in heaven on account of Christ. And they will suffer persecution on the earth on account of Christ.

¹⁴⁵Kodjak, *A Structural Analysis*, 66.

CHAPTER 3

CONSIDERATION OF REGNAL PERSECUTION IN MARKAN, LUKAN, AND PAULINE PERSPECTIVES

The purpose of this chapter is to compare and contrast the regnal dynamic of Christian persecution as demonstrated from Matthew with the findings of research related to persecution in Mark, Luke-Acts, and the Pauline literature. This exploration of the Markan, Luke-Acts, and Pauline literature seeks to discover whether these New Testament writings utilize the regnal righteousness framework when they approach the topic of Christian persecution. General outlines of the material with relation to persecution must suffice for this chapter, as any single aspect of Markan, Lukan, or Pauline studies could easily fill volumes. This comparative study begins with the next book in canonical order, the gospel of Mark.

Markan Perspective Regarding Regnal Persecution

Since at least the time of Professor Riddle's publishing his article on the martyr motif in the gospel of Mark in the first quarter of the last century, scholars have noted the prominence of the persecution theme in this gospel.¹ Many scholars have concluded from the martyrological methodology of Mark that the book was intended for an audience suffering under persecution. So, Weeden states, "There can be little doubt that Mark finds himself and his church in the throes of a persecution severely testing the survival capacity of the faith."² Whether this matter can be doubted or not will be explored

¹Donald W. Riddle, "The Martyr Motif in the Gospel According to Mark," *The Journal of Religion* 4 (1924): 397-410.

²Theodore J. Weeden, *Mark: Traditions in Conflict* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1971), 82.

below. Ultimately, however, this present paper will argue that the more significant, though admittedly less discussed, point is that the martyrological motif in Mark appears in many ways to confirm the regnal dynamic of persecution found in Matthew. The function of the persecution passages in Mark is to demonstrate that the sufferings of the followers of Christ (past and ever present) connect back to Christ himself in a manner consonant with the regnal dynamic disclosed in Matthew. So, first, the paper will explore the strongest textual evidences typically presented in favor of a persecution *Sitz im Leben* for the Gospel of Mark. Out of this exploration will emerge a portrait of a perpetual, regnal righteousness dynamic, which, as the second portion of the paper will show, implies that all faithful followers of the Markan Jesus might expect persecution as a result of the kingdom righteousness of Christ.

The recent translation and commentary of Mark by Joel Marcus offers a good outline of the various evidence supporting a persecution *Sitz im Leben*.³ Marcus begins his discussion of the matter with mention of Mark 10:30 and the presence there of the phrase *μετὰ διωγμῶν*. Pesch, who says, “*die Einschränkung μετὰ διωγμῶν ist urchristlicher Zusatz*,”⁴ views the phrase as an early Christian addition consistent with the proclamation of Jesus. Marcus asserts that “Mark introduces the phrase ‘with persecutions’ into a saying that appears to have previously lacked it,”⁵ while Hooker reacts by saying that the phrase “sounds like an artificial addition.”⁶ The logion *μετὰ διωγμῶν* does not appear in Matthew 19:29 or Luke 18:30. The inference, of course, is that Mark inserted *μετὰ διωγμῶν* and had good reason for so doing. The reason which

³Joel Marcus, *Mark 1-8: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, Anchor Bible (New York: Doubleday, 2000), 28-39.

⁴Rudolf Pesch, *Das Markusevangelium* (Freiburg: Herder, 1977), 2:145.

⁵Marcus, *Mark 1-8*, 28.

⁶Morna D. Hooker, *A Commentary on the Gospel According to St. Mark*, Black’s New Testament Commentaries (London: A. and C. Black, 1991), 243.

seems to make the most sense is that his readers needed to hear a word about persecution. They needed to know they would receive the promised rewards of houses, brothers, sisters, and children—μετὰ διωγμῶν. The inference seems simple enough, but is it?

Though this inference flows naturally enough from the assertion that Mark (or some other early Christian) inserted the syntagma μετὰ διωγμῶν into the original promise of rewards for Christian discipleship, the truth is, the assertion itself is somewhat tenuous and not without its difficulties. For instance, the assertion is built upon the assumption that there was an original source without the phrase to which Mark added it.⁷ But what is this source? Is it an oral source, say perhaps, Peter? Is it a written source? Is it Matthew or Luke or Matthew *and* Luke? Were there several written sources to go along with the oral tradition? Regardless, there is no single Markan source extant which would give certainty to the assertion that Mark added the logion from an original source which lacked it. Scholars offer numerous opinions about what might have served as a Markan source.⁸ In addition, considering that most scholars view the gospels from the lens of Markan priority, the question arises that if Mark is, in fact, the first gospel, then is it not possible to view μετὰ διωγμῶν as original and say, instead, the Matthean or Lukan tradition deleted it? If the Markan version were the original source for the saying, then the significance of the syntagma being an addition for a particular *Sitz im Leben* appears somewhat handicapped; instead, the syntagma might be significant for its absence in the gospels of Matthew and Luke.

Source and redaction criticism in the gospel of Mark are far from a settled conclusion on the matter. Because the gospel of Mark offers so few clues about its

⁷Most commonly, the assumption behind this position is the Griesbach (or Two Gospel) Hypothesis which views Mark as dependent upon Matthew and Luke.

⁸Harold Riley, *The Making of Mark: An Exploration* (Macon: Mercer University Press, 1989), vii-xx, offers a good discussion of the state of the contemporary debate and a defense of the Griesbach Hypothesis.

sources and the purpose for which it was written, scholars readily admit the difficulty of reconstructing this gospel. In view of the obvious vagaries, Stein, pointing out the notoriously inconclusive nature of Markan *Redaktionsgeschichte*, asks, “How then are we to determine what the sources which were available to Mark were like?”⁹ Stein points out that Markan seams, insertions, summaries, and modifications help to identify what is Markan and what is most likely pre-Markan tradition, but, in the end, says, “The difficulty of ascertaining the pre-Markan tradition is not to be minimized.”¹⁰ The exact origins of the syntagma μετὰ διωγμῶν remain contested and uncertain. Therefore, the claim that μετὰ διωγμῶν is an addition necessary to address the issues of a persecution *Sitz im Leben* is at minimum not certain, though widely accepted.

Perhaps a more substantive assertion than the assertion that μετὰ διωγμῶν is a Markan addition from a prior source is the functional assertion of Van Iersel.¹¹ According to Van Iersel, μετὰ διωγμῶν is to be read in apposition to the temporal textual signal, νῦν ἐν τῷ καιρῷ τούτῳ. According to Mark 10:30, the reception of the rewards, including the persecutions, happens now, in this present time. So, whether or not the syntagma μετὰ διωγμῶν is a Markan addition, the end result linguistically is that it speaks in apposition to νῦν ἐν τῷ καιρῷ τούτῳ, which causes Van Iersel to conclude, “One may indeed rightly say that this time period—the time of Mark himself and his readers—is characterized by persecutions.”¹² Certainly, Van Iersel is right in saying that one may say that the time of Mark and his readers is characterized by persecutions. However, saying

⁹Robert Stein, “The Proper Methodology for Ascertaining a Markan Redaction History,” in *The Composition of Mark’s Gospel: Selected Studies from Novum Testamentum*, ed. David E. Orton (Leiden: Brill, 1999), 35.

¹⁰Ibid., 39.

¹¹B. M. F. van Iersel, “The Gospel According to St. Mark,” *Nederlands Theologisch Tijdschrift* 34 (January 1980): 15-36.

¹²Ibid., 20.

what one *may* say is not the same as saying what one *must* say about the time of Mark and his readers and whether it was characterized by persecutions. It seems just as probable to conclude that the logion does not necessarily mean the Markan *Sitz im Leben* is one of persecution. After all, the phrase in Mark 10:30 is written in the form of direct speech from the mouth of Jesus speaking to his disciples, particularly in response to a question from Peter. The author of Mark has painted a scene in which Jesus offers instruction on blessings present $\nu\upsilon\nu \acute{\epsilon}\nu \tau\acute{\omega} \kappa\alpha\iota\rho\acute{\omega} \tau\acute{\omicron}\upsilon\tau\omega$, adding $\mu\epsilon\tau\grave{\alpha} \delta\iota\omega\gamma\mu\acute{\omega}\nu$. As the picture is painted in the gospel, the original audience consists of the inquisitive followers of Christ. Most immediately, then, the persecutions do not apply to the original literary audience (to the disciples) as pictured by Mark, considering that the disciples did not suffer persecutions until a later time after Christ's Passion. Christ's saying to Peter that blessings will come with persecutions $\nu\upsilon\nu \acute{\epsilon}\nu \tau\acute{\omega} \kappa\alpha\iota\rho\acute{\omega} \tau\acute{\omicron}\upsilon\tau\omega$ hints that the time in question has its origins as far back as the pre-Passion instructions and is enduring, not immediately contextual.

One could say, of course, that this is the very point: The author inserted the phrase in the mouth of Jesus speaking to his followers so that the Markan audience would realize that God rewards those who suffer with Jesus. In this way of adding the phrase, the author offers encouragement to those later disciples who follow Jesus through times of trial in the persecution *Sitz im Leben*. Yet, as has been seen, the certainty of the addition of this phrase has not been established. Further, if the phrase were added for this purpose, the question could well have been raised by the Markan audience of whether Jesus actually made this particular statement, particularly if one considers that Mark's gospel was most likely written before the death of all the apostles. If the writer of Mark had contrived the entire story (or just the line on persecution), then it seems that someone would have questioned it. After all, if we were to hear someone claim that John Kennedy promised that America would lose a war to the Soviet Union, we would be very quick to

investigate and dispute the person's claim. Even more, we would have a visceral sense about us which would alert us to the dubious nature of the claim. Yet, the distance between our time and the time of John Kennedy is most likely greater than the distance between Jesus' ministry and the writing of Mark.¹³ Granted, information is more readily available today than it was in the time of the writing of Mark, but it is at least a possibility that some of Mark's original audience had met Jesus. And, in addition to that possibility, Peter and John may both have still been alive. If there were evidence that Christ had never spoken this logion, then there would be little encouragement for the people receiving the gospel and reason not to embrace the other encouragements contained in the gospel as authentic teachings of the Christ. If Christ did not actually teach his original followers that rewards would come μετὰ διωγμῶν, then why should the Markan audience be comforted by the writer's attempt to say that he did? If the writer of Mark were to delude his readers on this point, then might he not also have deluded them on other points of encouragement and instruction in the gospel? The addition, then, rather than comforting, might have ended up discrediting the gospel itself. One is left to wonder whether such an addition would actually have comforted those persecuted. The idea of an addition seems implausible and inefficient on the grounds presented. Certainly, reverting to the position of reading μετὰ διωγμῶν as an addition does not substantiate the claim that the Markan audience was necessarily suffering persecution.

In considering Mark 10:30, Evans's conclusion states the matter plainly: "In the time of the evangelist Mark and his community, the phrase μετὰ διωγμῶν, 'with persecutions,' may have reflected the harsh persecutions inflicted on Christians by Nero following the disastrous fire that destroyed half of the city of Rome. But the prophecy

¹³This statement would allow for a possible date for Mark as late as the middle 60's, only 35 years or so after the death of Jesus as opposed to the 46 years which have passed since Kennedy's assassination. For dating Mark, see D. A. Carson, Douglas J. Moo, and Leon Morris, *An Introduction to the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992), 99, who argue for a date in the middle 50's.

may very well derive from Jesus himself and reflect his expectations of struggle and violent opposition before the kingdom of God finally obliterates evil.”¹⁴ So, Evans makes the reasonable point that Mark’s audience may have been in a time of persecution, but it also may not have been. The phrase *μετὰ διωγμῶν* may well go back to the original Jesus saying and be connected integrally with the kingdom. So, given the uncertainty of the Markan *Sitz im Leben* and the probability that the syntagma hearkens back to Christ himself, the time marker is best understood as referring not just to the time of Mark’s original audience but potentially to any point of time *νῦν ἐν τῷ καιρῷ τούτῳ*. Using the framework of Mark 10:30, the saying *νῦν ἐν τῷ καιρῷ τούτῳ* refers to all of the time from Christ’s original coming to the coming age (*ἐν τῷ αἰῶνι τῷ ἐρχομένῳ*) after his return. The persecutions in question may have occurred at the time of Mark’s original readers, or they may have occurred before the time of Mark’s audience, or they may have occurred after the original audience. The persecutions are pictured as perpetual potentialities characterizing the present age. The term *perpetual* here, as in its botanical use to describe plants which flower throughout a season and yet not at all times, refers to continual occurrence for a time but is not to be taken as continuous. As Van Iersel’s functional explanation of Mark 10:30 says, “The persecutions are represented as being characteristic for the time preceding the coming aeon Anything preceding that aeon therefore belongs to the time characterized by persecutions and not only to the time during which the book was written.”¹⁵ Though the actual persecution *Sitz im Leben* remains uncertain, the potential for a persecution *Sitz im Leben* for the followers of Christ is certain prior to his return, according to Mark 10:30.

¹⁴Craig A. Evans, *Mark 8:27-16:20*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 34b (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2001), 103.

¹⁵van Iersel, “The Gospel According to St. Mark,” 20, 35.

Following the discussion of Mark 10:30, Marcus moves to a discussion of chapter 13 and a consideration of whether it establishes a persecution *Sitz im Leben*. Mark 13 includes a number of direct references to persecution. In verse 9, Jesus tells the disciples to “watch out”¹⁶ because they will be called before councils, will be beaten (δαρῆσεσθε), and will stand before governors and kings for Christ’s sake (ἐνεκεν ἐμοῦ). Verse 11 promises the followers of Christ a word from the Spirit when they are most anxious about what to say in defense at their trials. Verse 12 teaches that families may be torn apart, betraying one another. Then, verse 13 makes the astonishing statement that the followers of Christ (the inquisitive disciples in the literary context) would be hated by everyone on account of Christ’s name (διὰ τὸ ὄνομά μου). Again, in verse 13, the promise is made of salvation for those who persevere to the end,¹⁷ with perseverance being taken here as a call to endure the suffering of persecution. From Mark 13, Marcus points particularly to verse 19 as a reflection of a Markan situation of persecution. Marcus contrasts Daniel 12:1—where the LXX reads ἕως τοῦ καιροῦ ἐκείνου (*until that time*)—with Mark 13:19 which, of course, reads, ἕως τοῦ νῦν: *until now*. Marcus views Mark 13:19 as an alteration from Daniel 12:1 indicating that the terrible tribulation “has *now* become a terrifying reality.”¹⁸ But again, though the emphasis *may* fall upon the *now*, as Marcus supposes, it *may not*. Two considerations come immediately to mind.

First, Marcus is assuming that the writer of Mark is quoting Daniel 12:1 from the LXX. It is possible that he is not. The phrase which includes the translated *until now*

¹⁶The actual Greek is clearly emphatic, βλέπετε δὲ ὑμεῖς ἑαυτοὺς.

¹⁷For the view that the “end” here is eschatological, see Elliott C. Maloney, *Jesus’ Urgent Message for Today: The Kingdom of God in Mark’s Gospel* (New York: Continuum, 2004), 113ff. The “end” may also be viewed apocalyptically (with an immediate end in view) or more indefinitely as with R. T. France, *The Gospel of Mark*, The New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), 518-19.

¹⁸Marcus, *Mark 1-8*, 29.

is not uncommon throughout the Old Testament.¹⁹ The writer of Mark may well have had a more general reason for using this particular terminology. The phrase may have been used generically to refer to a period of intense suffering. France, taking the phrase this way, cautions, “It is probably unwise to press too closely any specific link with the Daniel text here.”²⁰ So, on the first consideration, the phrase could be more generic than specific in relation to Daniel 12:1.

The second consideration is this: the writer of Mark is addressing his readers through the character Jesus Christ. Mark 13:19 is written as a form of direct address in which Jesus Christ, the Son of God,²¹ is responding (as Διδάσκαλε) to questions from his followers. The entire matter is presented as though there were a real, historical Jesus and real, historical disciples having a genuine conversation about the Temple, leading to an authentic mention of suffering. The phrase ἕως τοῦ νῦν appears in the conversation to be applicable not as a temporal marker as much as it is, in conjunction with the entire phrase οἷα οὐ γέγονεν τοιαύτη ἀπ’ ἀρχῆς κτίσεως ἢν ἔκτισεν ὁ θεὸς ἕως τοῦ νῦν καὶ οὐ μὴ γένηται, a marker of the intensity of the suffering, like our expression, “Like nothing you’ve ever seen before.” The phrase, as Edwards describes it, is “an attempt to express that nothing like ‘those days’ has ever happened before or since.”²² Hermeneutically, the key is that the writer is placing this statement first in the literary context of Jesus and the disciples, not in the context of the readers. If the writer of Mark had inserted this logion as an indication of a persecution *Sitz im Leben*, then, surely, he would have left the logion

¹⁹France notes the use of the expression in Exod 9:18; Exod 10:14; 11:6; Joel 2:2; 1 Macc 9:27.

²⁰France, *The Gospel of Mark*, 527.

²¹So called in Mark 1:1 and 15:39.

²²James R. Edwards, *The Gospel According to Mark*, Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), 400. Edwards offers a number of examples including Josephus which are parallel to the Markan construction.

ἕως τοῦ καιροῦ ἐκεῖνου—pointing to a suffering which is future from the literary context of the disciples’ conversation—instead of inserting the alternative ἕως τοῦ νῦν. It would make better sense for the original reader to hear that Jesus taught his followers of a time to come when there would be intense sufferings than it would for the reader to think Jesus taught his disciples that the time of those sufferings was *now* (in light of the historical fact that the intense sufferings did not materialize immediately for the disciples—though, of course, the sufferings were uniquely awful for Jesus). Even more to the point, it is hard to see how the original readers might read a discourse between Jesus and his followers in which Jesus says to his disciples that *now* is the time of intense sufferings and yet the readers understand the *now* to be written for their time and not to time of the original disciples. It is of course possible (perhaps probable in view of the use of the expression νῦν ἐν τῷ καιρῷ τούτῳ as noted in the discussion of Mark 10:30) to read the νῦν as indicative of an enduring time period as opposed to a specific literary or temporal context, but reading the *now* as indicative of a persecution *Sitz im Leben* remains doubtful, or at least not conclusive.

So, as the matter of the *Sitz im Leben* of Mark is concerned, Weeden’s comment appears too strong; the point of whether the original audience is in the throes of persecution at the time of the writing of Mark can at least be doubted. Van Iersel has pointed out that reading Mark with persecution in view gives greater significance to the text, but, he also finally admits, “this does not necessarily mean that there actually had to be persecutions at the very moment the book was written, divulged or read.”²³ Van Iersel’s investigation demonstrates that the persecution theme is prevalent in Mark. As he puts it, the meaning of the gospel is “most pregnant” in a situation of persecution. However, the “pregnancy” of the text is best understood not as the offspring of a persecution *Sitz im Leben*, but rather as the offspring of the relationship pictured between

²³van Iersel, “The Gospel According to St. Mark,” 35.

Christ and his followers in Mark's gospel. This relationship between Christ (the Son of God) and his followers produces perpetually the potential for persecution. The reader of the gospel may or may not be in an actual situation of persecution, but the reader will understand, as both Van Iersel and Weeden agree, that following the Christ of Mark carries with it the potential for persecution and martyrdom.

Weeden demonstrates the relationship between discipleship and Christology, believing that “the way in which one formulates Christology determines one's formulation of discipleship.”²⁴ Weeden does not elaborate on the precise dynamic of how Christology formation determines one's formulation of discipleship, or even what is meant by the process of formulating discipleship. Nonetheless, the relation between Christ and discipleship in Mark is clear, as Weeden notes, in 8:31, 34ff. In Mark 8:31, Christ speaks of his impending passion and the cross which is awaiting him. Then, in 8:34ff, Christ states that any who wish to follow him must likewise be prepared to “take up his cross” and follow; so, the suffering of the disciples is in some manner akin to the suffering of Christ. The way of Jesus is the way of the cross, and those who follow Jesus ought to expect also to travel the way of the cross. Jesus, as pictured in chapter 8, does seem to suggest that the way of the cross is his way and the way of his followers.

Beyond chapter 8, there is more direct textual evidence indicating a nexus between Christology and discipleship in Mark. Following Weeden, the evidence of such a nexus between the disciples and Christ rests on two textual keys: (1) the Markan arrangement of persecution passages in connection with the Passion narratives and (2) the linguistically parallel usage of ἕνεκεν ἐμοῦ. Weeden notes that three passages—8:34-9:1; 10:23-31; and 13:9-13—share the phrase *for my sake* (ἕνεκεν ἐμοῦ). In Mark 8:35, the one who loses his life (ὁς δ' ἂν ἀπολέσει τὴν ψυχὴν αὐτοῦ) for the sake of Jesus and the gospel will save it. In 10:29-30, the one who leaves family and houses for Jesus' sake

²⁴Weeden, *Conflict*, 59.

and for the gospel is told that he will receive a hundredfold reward in this age and eternal life beyond that. And, in 13:9-13, the followers of Jesus are told to watch out because they will be arrested and will have to stand before governors and kings for Jesus' sake (ἐνεκεν ἑμοῦ), as a witness to them. Yet, they are told that they will be saved if they endure to the end. Weeden points out that the phrase ἐνεκεν ἑμοῦ occurs only in these three instances in the gospel of Mark.²⁵ Weeden also points out that the arrangement of these three passages containing the logion ἐνεκεν ἑμοῦ is significant. The passage in Mark 8 follows the first passion prediction in Mark, and the passage in Mark 10 is placed just prior to the third passion prediction, all sandwiched within the context of the passion, thereby linking the disciples with the suffering Jesus. "In this way," Weeden says, "Mark has inextricably linked Christology with discipleship. The linking of the phrases *and of the gospel* and *the sake of the gospel* respectively to the phrase *for my sake* in 8:35 and 10:29 is an attempt to bind up the gospel inextricably with the person of Jesus and with the Christian's call to discipleship."²⁶ The suffering on account of Christ in the gospel of Mark is suffering on account of the Christ who will suffer through the cross. Through the linking of the gospel and the suffering of the disciples for Christ's sake, discipleship and Christology do appear integrally wed in the gospel of Mark.

In his establishing the link between Christology and discipleship in the gospel of Mark, Weeden is in agreement with most other contemporary Markan scholars.²⁷ However, Weeden is saying more than that there is an inherent relationship between Christology and discipleship. Therefore, a few points of clarification need to be made in

²⁵The improper preposition ἐνεκεν is also used in Mark 10:7, but the full expression ἐνεκεν ἑμοῦ is found only in the three places mentioned.

²⁶Weeden, *Traditions in Conflict*, 84.

²⁷See Suzanne Watts Henderson, *Christology and Discipleship in the Gospel of Mark*, Society for New Testament Studies Monograph Series 135 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 7. As Henderson says, "This sharply Christological understanding of the second gospel has provided an almost universally accepted template for studies of the Markan disciples."

relation to Weeden's claim. In Weeden's view of Mark, understanding the relationship between Christology and discipleship is essential because the gospel sets up a clash between two Christological traditions, each producing its own view of discipleship. On the one hand, there is the *Theios-aner* Christology. On the other hand, there is what Weeden calls the Markan Jesus' Christology, a Christology of suffering servant which is typically called a *theologia crucis*.²⁸

Theios-aner Christology maintains in the Hellenistic tradition that "Jesus is characterized as the epiphany of God, the divine savior in human form, who intervenes in human affairs to work miracles in behalf of man. He is not a deity, but superhuman—a combination of the divine and human. He is imbued [*sic*] with the power and authority of God, and possesses supernatural knowledge and wisdom which he selectively reveals as divine revelation to those of his own choosing."²⁹ According to Weeden, the Markan redactor has made this the view of Christology held by the disciples in order to address the needs of the original Markan community which had, evidently, been infiltrated by boastful adherents to the *Theios-aner* Christology. Weeden argues further that these adherents, being influenced by the Hellenistic culture about them, view the miracles and actions of Jesus through *Theios-aner* lenses. Mark, utilizing his prowess as redactor, emphasizes the suffering servant (*theologia crucis*) Christology through the character of Christ. The superhuman miracle worker of the *Theios-aner* tradition is hard-pressed to conform to a suffering servant Christology; so, because there is the presence of the suffering servant Christology, Weeden understands there is a clash being set up between these two notions in the gospel of Mark, a clash that he does not wish to minimize.

²⁸For a full overview of the literature concerning the *theologia crucis* as it is typically contrasted with a *theologia gloriae*, see Aage Pilgaard, "The Hellenistic Theios Aner," in *The New Testament and Hellenistic Judaism*, ed. Peder Borgen and Soren Giversen (Aarhus: Aarhus University Press, 1995), 101-22.

²⁹Weeden, *Traditions in Conflict*, 55.

Weeden views the clash as the key to understanding Mark 8:27-33, and, in league with many scholars, he views Mark 8:27-33 as integral to understanding the gospel itself.³⁰

Though Weeden's position has been specifically criticized from a number of sources,³¹ the more general remarks offered by Henderson appear most apropos for the scope of this work.³² According to Henderson, Weeden is typical of a dichotomizing approach to the gospel of Mark.³³ Henderson is speaking of the repeated tendency in scholarship since Wrede³⁴ to dichotomize the study of Mark into the first half of the gospel versus the second half of the gospel; or the Pre-Easter Christology versus Post-Easter Christology; or, as the case is with Weeden, Jesus' Christology versus the disciples' Christology. Henderson's concern is that such dichotomizing tends toward creating fissures which "call into question the very possibility of detecting a coherent claim that might hold together the gospel's two halves, its reports of glory and suffering, and its complex portrait of discipleship as both faithful and fumbling."³⁵ The aim of Henderson's claim is not necessarily to minimize the tension to any of the dichotomized elements in these presentations of the gospel's message; rather, Henderson seeks to show that cohesion adheres in the gospel in spite of these tensions, and, once understood, the cohesion offers a portrait of discipleship "in its intended form."

³⁰Weeden and van Iersel agree on the centrality of this passage, Van Iersel's scheme being built upon the central focus of Mark 8:27-9:13. As van Iersel notes, "There is hardly anybody who does not consider Mk 8:27-9:13 to have an important structural function . . ." See van Iersel, "The Gospel According to St. Mark," 28.

³¹See especially W. L. Lane, "THEIOS ANER Christology and the Gospel of Mark," in *New Dimensions in New Testament Study* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1974), 144-61.

³²See Henderson, *Christology and Discipleship in the Gospel of Mark*.

³³Pilgaard, "The Hellenistic Theios Aner," 101-22, offers the same criticism.

³⁴Wrede saw the disciples acting as foils to Jesus in William Wrede, *The Messianic Secret*, trans. J.C. Grieg (Cambridge: James Clark, 1971), 106.

³⁵Henderson, *Christology and Discipleship in the Gospel of Mark*, 15.

The cohesion that offers a view of discipleship in its intended form is found in Mark, according to Henderson, in the light of the gospel mission that characterizes Jesus' life and death. The gospel mission includes the significant role that Jesus plays as the harbinger of God's coming reign upon the earth. In emphasizing this gospel mission, Henderson is building upon the work of Beavis, Watts, and Marcus, among others, who view the gospel in Isaiah's prophetic terms of a messianic "apocalyptic rectification of the world."³⁶ Henderson notes this kind of apocalyptic, gospel mission views as necessity a cosmic showdown between the opposing forces at work in human existence. The power of God is unleashed in Mark's gospel through the regnal Jesus who demonstrates power and authority over the demons and over the grisly hearts of murderous men who would execute him unjustly on the cross. In one sense, then, all of Jesus' life and death in Mark's gospel can be viewed in relation to Mark 3:27 as a binding of the strong man, which Henderson refers to as "the decisive subduing of the adversarial powers whose grip on the world is being loosened."³⁷ The gospel mission is a mission which involves nothing less than a reversal of power over the course of world events, a reversal of power symbolized in Mark's gospel (Mark 15:38) by the power of God ripping the temple veil at the very moment Jesus suffers his apparent defeat by death upon the cross. Because the gospel mission concerns God's dominion, its certainty is secured. By the end of Mark's gospel, though there are still many who do not recognize God's rule, the work of Jesus has been successful and approved by God so that the certainty of "God's coming rule has been . . . decisively secured."³⁸

Keeping the gospel mission in view, Henderson shows how the disciples are called not simply to Jesus but also to the gospel mission of which Jesus himself is such an

³⁶Ibid., 16.

³⁷Ibid., 17.

³⁸Ibid., 18.

integral part. The entire story of God and his dominion as prophesied through Isaiah is unfolding through Mark's picture of Jesus. When, in this story, Jesus calls the disciples to follow him, he calls them to follow him in the work he is accomplishing. Jesus tells his disciples, "Follow *me*." In Mark's gospel, Jesus calls his disciples to follow him in Mark 1:17; 2:14; and 8:34, with the first-person pronoun present each time, thus indicating that their call was not a generic following of a religion or a way; rather, the call was to follow Jesus himself. The personal nature of this call is made clear by Peter, who says in 10:28, Ἴδοὺ ἡμεῖς ἀφήκαμεν πάντα καὶ ἠκολουθήκαμέν σοι. It was to follow Jesus that the disciples left their families and jobs. The gospel of Mark is clear to point out also that this following of Jesus means following also the kingship mission he was accomplishing. In Henderson's understanding, the gospel of Mark unfolds the relationship between Christ and his followers as beginning with the call to be the presence of Christ but always accompanying that call with the expectation that the disciples will also join with Christ in the practice of announcing the coming of a new kingdom. So, the Christological confession is important for the disciples; yet, the disciples are called to more than confession. They are called to join "the initiation of God's sovereign action that brings salvation and is to end in a transformed universe."³⁹ They are called to faith, to *believe* (1:14-15). In fact, we might say they are called to righteousness. Being called for Christ's sake and for the sake of the gospel in Mark appears quite similar to being called on account of righteousness in Matthew. Also in Mark 3:14, Jesus appointed twelve to be in his presence and to go out and preach, and, in this one verse, both of Henderson's controlling ideas are found: presence and practice. One should recall here the two-fold appointment of Christ's followers mentioned by Deines in chapter 2, namely, representation and proclamation. The disciples, from the

³⁹G. R. Beasley-Murray, "Matthew 6:33: The Kingdom of God and the Ethics of Jesus," in *Neues Testament und Ethik*, ed. Rudolf Schnackenburg (Freiburg: Herder, 1989), 88, referencing Mark 1:15.

time of their calling, are called both to Christ and to his kingship. Though the technical vocabulary of the *δικ-* words is not prevalent in Mark, the ideas of righteousness clearly persist (8:34-38). Regnal righteousness is not absent in Mark.

Henderson, from this basic notion of the disciples being called to the presence and practice of Christ, traces and examines the six episodes of discipleship found in the gospel of Mark prior to the first explicit demonstration of incomprehension by the disciples in Mark 6:52.⁴⁰ Henderson then argues that the narrative development through these six episodes indicates that the disciples were instructed in the expectation of participation in the gospel mission with Jesus from the beginning. However, they fail to grasp and embrace this mission participation so that, over time, a growing chasm develops between the original calling of the disciples and their increasing inability to live up to that calling. The disciples are censured in the gospel not for holding to the wrong Christology (*Theios-aner* or *Theologia gloriae*), but rather they are censured for proving to be obdurate servants both of Christ and of the kingdom mission to which they are called. By the end of the gospel, the disciples are found sleeping instead of keeping watch as Jesus commanded them at Gethsemane (Mark 14:37). In Mark 14:49, all the disciples flee from Christ at his hour of need. And Peter—the same Peter who confessed, “You are the Christ,” in Mark 8:29—by the end of chapter 14 actually denies three times that he even knows Jesus. The problem is not merely confessional. The disciples are pictured as being guilty of more than failing to realize the full scope of Jesus’ messianic claims. The disciples refuse to act upon the authority of the Christ who called them to his mission. When Jesus enlists the disciples, he enlists them as agents of his authority. When they slumber in the garden and succumb to the pressures of earthly authorities arrayed against Christ, they cease to exercise the authority with which they had been

⁴⁰The six episodes of discipleship interaction chronicled in Henderson’s study are Mark 1:16-20; Mark 3:13-15; Mark 4:1-34; Mark 6:7-13; Mark 6:30-44; and Mark 6:45-52.

entrusted by Christ himself. Clearly, as was the case in Matthew, the faithfulness of the disciples is wanting, thereby demonstrating that the promises of Christ—even the promise of persecution—are not secured by the disciples, but by Christ himself. The disciples are brought in to the righteousness of Christ by calling, by grace. Mark's gospel, like Matthew's, makes plain that the disciples will need a body broken and blood poured out for their salvation (14:22-25).

The righteousness of Christ will perpetually (though not necessarily continuously) put his disciples in the way of persecution, just as Christ Himself suffered persecution at the hands of the authorities. Christ is the king who has come to announce His kingdom. He is the king who has demonstrated the power of the kingdom of God over the "strong man." Christ is the king who calls forth His followers and charges them with the message of the messianic kingdom. When He is gone (a disappearance foretold in the three passion predictions) the disciples will be charged with heralding forth the kingship mission.⁴¹ As they fulfill their charge, they will suffer for the sake of Christ and of the gospel of the kingdom, that is, for righteousness on account of Christ. This connection between the disciples and Jesus explains what is lacking in Weeden concerning the manner in which Christology determines discipleship. If the messianic king is truly king, he may well be expected to give orders to his servants. If he orders them to speak,⁴² he likewise authorizes them in their speech. If the authority with which he spoke was offensive to the public, then the same authority may well continue to cause the same offense when the disciples arrive in other settings speaking from such authority. Thus, we find in the gospel of Mark the same elements as those present in Matthew:

⁴¹Even when He is gone, Christ has not abandoned the disciples, as Peter is told in 14:28 and 16:7. See also 13:11 for the context of persecution.

⁴²William C. Weinrich, *Spirit and Martyrdom: A Study of the Work of the Holy Spirit in Contexts of Persecution and Martyrdom in the New Testament and Early Christian Literature* (Washington, DC: University Press of America, 1981), 17-22, argues for the spiritual necessity of proclamation and persecution.

Jesus is claiming and demonstrating kingship authority; the disciples display his righteousness through their service (faith/obedience); and those who show this allegiance to Christ may expect persecution, even as Christ Himself suffered persecution to the point of death on a cross. The gospel of Mark does not contradict the thesis demonstrated in Matthew and may actually endorse it. Although Mark does not utilize the noun δικαιοσύνη, and he only mentions the adjectival form on two occasions, readers of his gospel should not too hastily assume that the regnal righteousness framework fails to explain Markan persecution. Mark presents, in many ways, the same picture of Jesus as that portrayed in Matthew: Son of God (1:1, 11); authority over the kingdom of God (1:15); authority over disciples (1:16ff.); authority over the Sabbath Law (2:23-28); and the authority to forgive sins (2:8ff.). In addition, the same features of the persecution being linked to Christ (ἕνεκεν ἐμοῦ) are readily visible. And Christ is viewed as the one who will separate humankind at the judgment (13:24-27). Obviously, Mark does not employ the language of righteousness, but that does not mean the core ideas are absent. They are very much present. The regnal righteousness framework is clearly present in the gospel of Mark.

Studies in Mark have tended to follow the well-worn path of context, asking and answering the question of whether the original context was one of persecution. We have already traced the course of this study in the twentieth century. However, there is a more recent work which offers a fresh perspective on Mark with particular emphasis on martyrology. Craig Hovey's theology of martyrdom is constructed from the gospel of Mark.⁴³ Essentially, Hovey argues that "martyrdom is a possibility for all Christians because the church of Jesus Christ is a martyr church."⁴⁴ Obviously, Hovey takes some

⁴³Craig Hovey, *To Share in the Body: A Theology of Martyrdom for Today's Church* (Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2008).

⁴⁴Ibid., 21.

liberty with the gospel of Mark, utilizing terms like *martyr church*, rather than the language of the text itself. In this approach, Hovey displays a paradox—if not an outright contradiction—in his approach to the text. On the one hand, Hovey believes hermeneutics embarked on a terrible journey of error when it held the belief that it was either possible or desirable to know the intent of the author.⁴⁵ Yet, on the other hand, the first assumption Hovey holds in his own interpretation is that “Mark was written for the whole church of Jesus Christ.”⁴⁶ One wonders on what Hovey bases this assumption. Granted, such an assumption does not require that he know the mind or the intention of the author *per se*, but it does indicate his own belief that the purpose of a text is both discernible and determinative. For Hovey, Mark is intended to convey a martyrology in which “every Christian is a member of a martyr-church.”⁴⁷ By *martyr-church* Hovey intends a community of self-denial. Self denial leads to martyrdom, though self-denial itself is not intrinsically good. Neither does self-denial warrant the pursuit of martyrdom. That would be suicide, according to Hovey. Rather, self-denial is a peaceful, non-coercive attempt to display non-violently the hope of a new order of reality in which the mechanisms of force no longer hold sway. In this way, the church witnesses to the reality of the witness of Christ.

Hovey’s work is noted here to make two final points concerning the interpretation of the gospel of Mark. First, Markan studies are heavily burdened by contextual reconstructions. Most commentators utilize the gospel for the purpose of reconstructing the background of persecution into which it probably first landed. Ironically, Hovey does much the same thing, only his work seeks to reconstruct the foreground into which the gospel will always go. So much focus on the recipients of the

⁴⁵Ibid.

⁴⁶Ibid.

⁴⁷Ibid., 60.

gospel has a tendency to diminish studies of the more substantial features of the gospel such as righteousness and persecution, which—though often unnoticed—are extant in the second gospel. Second, Hovey’s approach is martyrological and based on imitation, rather than diokological and based on righteousness. In this brief mention of Hovey’s orientation toward imitating the powerless (pacifistic) tendencies of Christian witness, one can see the dangers of idealism incubating. In Hovey’s form, idealism extols non-resistance. As we shall see in Slane’s work on Bonhoeffer, the idealism there extols sacrificial death. Neither gets quite to the heart of either the sacrifice of Christ or the triumph of the kingdom of God which are aspects of the regnal righteousness dynamic found in Matthew and Mark. However, Hovey’s emphasis on suffering does point to the nature of Christ who was sacrificed so that those who lose their lives for His sake (and for the gospel) will be saved.

Lukan Perspective Regarding Regnal Persecution

The Lukan perspective on persecution is discussed thoroughly in Scott Cunningham’s *Through Many Tribulations: The Theology of Persecution in Luke-Acts*.⁴⁸ As the title suggests, Cunningham’s work is diokological as opposed to martyrological. Though Cunningham recognizes the importance for all Christians to understand persecution, he has the church in Nigeria particularly in view as he writes this theology of persecution. He admits that Luke-Acts was chosen in part because of the prevalence of the theme throughout the corpus. According to Cunningham, all but six chapters in the Luke-Acts corpus contain instruction concerning persecution.⁴⁹ Of these six chapters, five of them are in the gospel; only one chapter in Acts fails to mention persecution, chapter 27. The prevalence of persecution throughout the corpus leads Cunningham to

⁴⁸Scott Cunningham, *‘Through Many Tribulations’: The Theology of Persecution in Luke-Acts* JSNTSup 142 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1997).

⁴⁹*Ibid.*, 13.

conclude that Luke's audience was likely suffering persecution, although Cunningham admits that such prevalence does not necessarily "imply anything about whether or not persecution is part of [the reader's] current situation as well."⁵⁰

Cunningham writes in an effort to aid the Christian church in understanding persecution biblically, and his thesis from Luke-Acts is derived through his employment of narrative criticism.⁵¹ Cunningham approaches his study of Luke-Acts from the perspective of narrative criticism after the manner of R. C. Tannehill.⁵² In his approach, Tannehill looks for what he calls *disclosures*. The disclosures guide one's understanding of the story. Tannehill (hence Cunningham) approaches Luke-Acts as a unified narrative and employs criticism in the interpretive task of discerning plot, character, and authorial intent. In this approach, each text appears as a functional member of the total narrative. This narrative approach seeks to avoid what Tannehill calls the "flattening effect" of many commentaries which so focus on the details of the text that they tend to lose sight of what might be an overarching, narrative emphasis.⁵³ As adopted by Cunningham, this approach is concerned with Luke-Acts in its finished form as a literary narrative. His foremost concern is the narrative, not the potential reaction to it. Neither is Cunningham primarily concerned with any particular reconstruction from Lukan tradition. The text stands as a literary narrative and that narrative is the subject of his exploration.

The narrative consideration, however, seems to be something different than a theological consideration, even though Cunningham's title indicates the study is

⁵⁰Ibid, 329.

⁵¹See his discussions on the distinctions he makes between his approach and these others in Cunningham, *Through Many Tribulations*, 23-41. He states particularly here his opposition to source or redaction criticism.

⁵²Ibid., 15-16.

⁵³Robert C. Tannehill, *The Narrative Unity of Luke-Acts: A Literary Interpretation*, Foundations and Facets: New Testament, vol. 1 (Philadelphia, Fortress, 1986), 5.

theological. In other words, Cunningham appears to make statements in his narrative methodology concerning the literature of Luke-Acts only, indicating that his study is an inductive, literary one. Yet, if the statements are merely narrative in their scope, then the questions asked will be questions of the texts and of the comparisons therein. One would, in such a case, need an additional step to establish the theological nature of the textual interpretations. In other words, Cunningham appears to slide between narrative categories (such as *author, narrator*) and theological categories (such as *providence* or *perseverance*); it is not readily apparent how such a transition is accomplished.

Evidently, Cunningham assumes Luke is writing as a Christian to a Gentile Christian audience, seeking to explain the presence of persecution *theologically*.⁵⁴ If such is the case, then Cunningham is utilizing the exegetical tools of narrative criticism in the hands of a Christian theologian to reach a theological interpretation. From the perspective of his narrative criticism, Cunningham can assert continuity between the actions and fate of Jesus as compared with the actions and fate of Paul. In this regard, Cunningham engages the debate concerning comparative analysis, as he references the narrative considerations of O'Toole, with whom he agrees, and Maddox, with whom he disagrees.⁵⁵ Maddox is not confident that the text allows for such a one-to-one comparison of Paul and Jesus. Cunningham believes that it does. Yet, Cunningham recognizes the unique nature of the Christ event to the narrative so that the comparison is never one among equals. Still, he seeks to demonstrate a measure of continuity between Christ and Paul, between Christ and the followers of Christ, and between Christ, His followers, and the prophets.

Cunningham argues that the narrative of Luke-Acts does indeed present parallels between the followers of Jesus and Jesus Himself. In his words, "The fundamental purpose of these parallels between Jesus and the disciples is to demonstrate

⁵⁴Cunningham, *Through Many Tribulations*, 328.

⁵⁵*Ibid.*, 287.

a continuity in salvation history.”⁵⁶ Cunningham means by this declaration that such continuity serves Luke’s narrative purpose—to narrate the history of salvation for the people of God. Specifically, Cunningham believes that such a narration is possible in terms of the persecution of the people of God. With such continuity in mind, the reader of Luke-Acts may be tempted to ask the practical and theological question as to whether he might suffer persecution like Paul, Jesus, and Peter. To answer that question, Cunningham offers his theological functions of persecution in Acts. Cunningham walks inductively through the unfolding narrative of Luke-Acts and—in the end—draws out six theological functions from the persecution theme as it is portrayed in the Luke-Acts corpus.

First, he asserts that the persecution portrait in the book of Acts displays the reality of God’s providence, persecution being a part of the plan of God. To Cunningham, persecution is never pictured as an “accident” or “surprise.” Rather, persecution is pictured as an aspect of divine providence. Specifically, such providence acts to fulfill the prophecies of Jesus as recorded in the gospel of Luke (21:12; 24:44-49). Jesus, then, acts as a prophet of God, revealing the will of God to the people of God who follow him.

Second, Cunningham views persecution as the rejection of God’s agents by those who are supposedly God’s people. Here, Cunningham’s thesis undergoes an undulation of sorts as he considers the conflict Christ’s followers experience both in Jewish and Gentile contexts. For him, the central focus of the persecution pictured in Luke-Acts “is clearly on the rejection of the salvation of God and the persecution of the agents of God *by Israel*, those who are supposedly the people of God.”⁵⁷ This second point of Cunningham’s is a bit dubious, for it is one thing to assert in agreement with F.

⁵⁶Ibid., 286-87.

⁵⁷Cunningham, *Through Many Tribulations*, 302, emphasis original.

W. Danker that “much” of the opposition comes from those who claim allegiance to God, and quite another to assert as Cunningham does that persecution is the rejection of God’s agents by those who are supposedly God’s people (the Jews). The formulation of this aspect of his thesis makes Cunningham tilt his attention more toward the Jewish-Christian fissure than toward the more general theme of persecution in Luke-Acts. Of course, if one considers the stated purpose of the narrative by the author (“an orderly account,” Luke 1:3; Acts 1:1), he could consider the tilting of emphasis toward conflict with the Jews simply to be an accurate reflection of the historical context, considering that the likely period of authorship coincided with the continued separation of the Christians from their original affiliation with the Jews. In other words, if one considers that the Christian church grew out of the soil of Jewish faith, then he will have no more difficulty accepting that *most* of the early conflict occurred with the Jews than a botanist would have difficulty recognizing that most of a tree’s early life depends upon its interaction with the soil. The botanist would still understand, however, that later other threats such as lightning and wind will endanger the tree. Nevertheless, Cunningham asserts that his research makes no comment on the historicity of the events in the narrative⁵⁸; thus, it seems unlikely that he would agree with this explanation, opting instead for a theologically motivated explanation of the conflict between the Jews and Christians. While it is true that much of the persecution in Luke-Acts is instigated by the Jews, Cunningham is oversimplifying the matter to say, by definition, that persecution in Luke-Acts is the rejection of God’s salvation *by Israel*. Even if Luke-Acts emphasizes the conflict between Jews and Christians, still, that does not mean that persecution—in essence—originates from the Jews. And, perhaps more important, the issue with

⁵⁸Cunningham, *Through Many Tribulations*, 18: “This study will not comment on the correspondence the events about which Luke writes may or may not have to history.”

persecution is the rejection of God's salvation—regardless of whether that rejection is from Jews or Gentiles.

Third, Cunningham avers that the persecuted people of God stand in continuity with God's prophets. As was shown in the prior chapter, this affinity with the prophets has not gone unnoticed in New Testament studies. Cunningham appeals to the connection with the prophets on display in the sermon of Stephen to make this point. Stephen tells his audience that they are in league with those of Israel's past who always resist the Holy Spirit and, instead of listening to the prophets, kill them (Acts 7:51-52). Because Stephen is killed just after this pronouncement, Cunningham concludes that Stephen is in line with the very prophets who were killed by past generations of stiff-necked rebels. Though it is not unwarranted to draw such conclusions, it is also not necessary to do so. Simply because Stephen was killed for preaching a sermon in which the audience was implicated in the killing of the prophets does not mean that Stephen himself was considered a prophet. In what sense is the relation between Stephen and the prophets secured? Might it not be possible for Stephen to be related to the prophets in his preaching of righteousness, yet not necessarily be deemed one of the prophets? Why not, rather, assume that Stephen is an apostle, since Jesus is recorded earlier in the Luke-Acts corpus as foretelling the persecution of prophets and apostles (Luke 11:49)? The point here is to say that the link between the prophets and Stephen may be the link demonstrated in chapter 2 of a line of righteousness in the face of stiff-necked rebellion rather than the line of official prophetic identification.

The reflex of establishing continuity between Christians and the prophets (though warranted perhaps in the sense of continued righteousness) is inadequate as a statement of formulating a framework for understanding the persecution dynamic in Luke-Acts or elsewhere. Simply asserting a relationship back to the prophets only begs the question, "Why were the prophets persecuted?" A simple statement from

Cunningham alludes to the inadequacy of the concept of *prophet* for bearing the weight of responsibility for persecution. Cunningham writes, “The disciples are sure to experience persecution because that was the fate of the true prophets before them.”⁵⁹ This statement is not precise enough. The persecution is not *because* of the prophets. And, more importantly, this statement adds a necessary qualifier to the term *prophet*, indicating that the persecution does not occur because of an identity as prophet. Rather, the persecution occurs because of the identity as *true*—true proclaimers of the righteousness of God—like the persecuted prophets of old. The simplicity of this analysis needs no explanation beyond the example of the prophet Micaiah, who appeared to stand alone against Ahab as a proclaimer of the truth (1 Kgs 22). Micaiah alone preached the righteousness of God, even though Ahab is reported to have about 400 prophets in his service. There were many prophets in Israel who were never persecuted. The prophets who were persecuted were thus mistreated not simply because they were prophets but because they were, as Cunningham says, *true*. The contention here is that the significance of *true* extends backward all the way to Abel, whose was the first righteous blood spilled, and forward to its fulfillment in Christ, whose was ultimately the divinely acceptable righteous blood spilled (11:49-51). So, the supplemental modifier *true* carries more significant force than simply the concept of *prophet*. This is implied in Jesus’s instruction on the continued suffering of the saints in view of the history of the persecution of the prophets. It also explains why Luke affirms (as Matthew also did) that in Christ “something greater than Jonah is here” (Luke 11:32). The issue of offense is not prophecy, *per se*, but true prophecy—a true proclamation of righteousness. With this clarification in view, we can agree with Cunningham’s conclusion that “the persecution of Jesus and his disciples are [sic] clearly presented by the narrative in terms of a continuation of the pattern of the rejection of God’s messengers typical of Israel’s

⁵⁹Cunningham, *Through Many Tribulations*, 310.

salvation-history.”⁶⁰ True messengers like true prophets will face persecution—not because they are prophets, but because they are truly representing the righteousness of God in Christ.

Fourth, Cunningham concludes that persecution functions theologically in Luke-Acts to demonstrate how it is an integral consequence of following Jesus. Cunningham’s functional assertion here is clearly an affirmation of the regnal dynamic thesis under examination in the sense that he argues that Jesus Himself serves as the root provocateur of persecution. Cunningham clearly affirms a central element of the regnal dynamic already established from the gospel of Matthew and now being tested against other New Testament writings. The significance of this overlap between the Lukan account and that of the regnal dynamic drawn from the Matthew account will be explored further below.

The fifth theological function of persecution in Luke-Acts, according to Cunningham, is to display Christian perseverance. Persecution acts as an occasion in which the Christian demonstrates perseverance in the faith. Cunningham views the need for the saint to persevere in the face of persecution as the primary paraenetic aspect of the persecution theme in Luke-Acts, though he acknowledges—in light of the dissertation by D. R. Adams⁶¹—that this exhortative aspect of persecution is not as prevalent as the other aspects of the persecution theme. Still, Cunningham insists, it is a significant part of the Lukan portrait of persecution.

Finally, the sixth theological function of persecution in Luke-Acts is to demonstrate the reality of divine triumph. As Cunningham puts it, “Persecution cannot

⁶⁰Ibid., 311.

⁶¹D. R. Adams, “The Suffering of Paul and the Dynamics of Luke-Acts” (Ph.D. diss., Yale University, 1979), 135.

stop the growth of the Word of God.”⁶² Building his case (as others have done⁶³) from the proclamation of Gamaliel in Acts 5, Cunningham concludes, “The message of salvation in Jesus *is* of God, and therefore, as the narrative of Acts in particular demonstrates, the persecutors are unable to halt the growth [of] the movement.”⁶⁴

Cunningham demonstrates from the narrative that the Word of God grows both in spite of and because of persecution. The persecution which begins as a potential defeater for the followers of Christ ends with a victory through God’s sovereignty.

Cunningham’s six theological functions are intended to make the point from Luke-Acts that the varied functions cannot “be subsumed under one theological umbrella.”⁶⁵ But perhaps they can. And perhaps they should. Cunningham acknowledges that the six functions often do relate theologically to one another. With that in mind (and assuming his six functions are fair observations of the Luke-Acts narrative), Cunningham’s conclusions do not appear to be irreconcilable with the basic tenets of the regnal dynamic of persecution as presented in the prior chapter. Yet, as consistent as Cunningham’s conclusions appear with what has been said with regard to the regnal dynamic, the truth remains that he does not speak in regnal terms related to persecution in Luke-Acts. Relating the disparate theological functions under one theological umbrella such as the regnal dynamic might actually strengthen Cunningham’s work, in light of the fact that his project is stated as an attempt to portray persecution in a “sufficiently integrated and comprehensive” way.⁶⁶ It is difficult to see how Cunningham

⁶²Cunningham, *Through Many Tribulations*, 321.

⁶³Brian Rapske, “Opposition to the Plan of God and Persecution,” in *Witness to the Gospel: The Theology of Acts*, ed. I. Howard Marshall and David Peterson (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 235-56.

⁶⁴Cunningham, *Through Many Tribulations*, 322.

⁶⁵*Ibid.*, 14.

⁶⁶*Ibid.*, 41.

will have successfully accomplished the task of his research if his conclusion provides only six often related functions with no integrated or comprehensive way of viewing them. Cunningham's conclusions might be integrated comprehensively with the regnal dynamic. In fact, the explanations undergirding his conclusions trace only corollary aspects of the regnal dynamic, without ever zeroing in on the root ball out of which the corollary (functional) elements grow. Cunningham describes the six theological functions of persecution but does not offer an explanation as to why such enmity arises between the followers of Christ and those who persecute them. In his effort to explain further the six theological functions, Cunningham focuses attention on four significant aspects or characteristics of the persecution in Luke-Acts. These aspects are here referred to as corollaries. Concerning Cunningham's four corollaries, three are Christological, the other, missiological.

The first Christological corollary related to the persecution of the disciples in Luke-Acts is (as noted before) the foundation of prophecy. Christ acts as prophet in Luke's gospel, and the prophecies he makes there are seen as being fulfilled in Acts (cf. Luke 12:11-12; Luke 21:12-19). However, in light of the statement previously made from Luke 11:32, we may question whether Luke isn't pushing toward a greater Christological affirmation for Jesus than merely that of prophet. The question is whether prophecy—or Christ's identification as a prophet—truly acts foundationally. If one is willing to allow that the narrative of the Gospel of Luke progresses to its crescendo with the victory of the resurrection, then he may also allow that the progress of the narrative provides clarity to its concepts as the gospel comes to its close. Particularly, the end of the gospel makes plain that both the prophecy identification and the witnessing function of the disciples are enveloped within the greater scheme of kingdom righteousness. Prophecy cannot be foundational if a greater concept is beneath it and surrounding it. Christ is a prophet of the kingdom of God after John the Baptist (16:16). The status of

Christ is unique, as Luke's comparison with John makes plain. John was called προφήτης ὑψίστου (1:76) but Christ was called υἱὸς ὑψίστου (1:32), ἅγιον . . . υἱὸς θεοῦ (1:35) and was promised to reign on the throne of David forever (1:32-33).

Christologically, Cunningham needs to make more of the kingship authority of Christ because Luke-Acts makes much of this notion, and its significance is not downplayed in relation to persecution. After noticing the declaration in 11:32 that something greater than Jonah is here, the reader begins to see more and more clearly throughout Luke's gospel that Jesus is no mere prophet. From the early chapters, Jesus was demonstrated to be the Son of God (chapter 3) who preached the kingdom of God (4:43), but it is the unfolding of the drama at the conclusion of the gospel which makes all too plain the divine authority—the regnal righteousness—of this man who had to face the world's execution. Not coincidentally, before he dies, Jesus instructs his followers in the reality of the persecution they will face in Luke 21:12ff. In this passage, a couple of key observations speak to the foundational nature of regnal righteousness as opposed to prophetic identification in Luke-Acts. First, Jesus clearly teaches his followers about their persecution: ἔσεσθε μισούμενοι ὑπὸ πάντων διὰ τὸ ὄνομά μου.⁶⁷ Clearly, their persecution is not linked to prophetic identification, but to identification with Jesus, who, in the pericope is pictured as the one for whose sake they would be asked to stand to be judged before kings and governors (21:12); this is the dynamic of regnal righteousness. The offense originates with the righteousness of God in Jesus Christ. And the διὰ τὸ ὄνομά μου makes plain that the authority of Christ is not forgotten in Luke. In addition, Christ's instruction makes plain to his followers that their persecution will precipitate witness. In other words, their witness, spoken of in 21:13, is itself the consequence of their persecution. The consequential nature of this witness is displayed in the language

⁶⁷Obviously, Luke utilizes the more common διὰ rather than the irregular preposition ἔνεκεν as was prevalent in Matthew, but the idea is surely the same; the name—hence authority—of the kingly Christ would be enough to get the disciples persecuted.

and construction of Luke, where the future middle form of “ἀποβαίνω has the sense ‘to turn out, lead to.’”⁶⁸ So, the witnessing is a consequence of persecution in this case, not a cause. The cause is Christ (reigning, ruling in righteousness).

The second Christological corollary is that the disciples are persecuted like Jesus, meaning in the same manner as Jesus. While Cunningham, again, seeks to link the likeness back to the suffering of the prophets, he also is concerned to maintain the uniqueness of Christ (contra Adams).⁶⁹ Christ is the paradigmatic guide for all future persecution. Yet, Cunningham makes a helpful distinction, noting that the Lukan view of persecution is not one of imitation; rather, it is one of continuation. The danger of imitation as the cause of persecution has been noted in the case of Hovey, but imitation is an inadequate foundation on which to rest the explanation of persecution. The disciples do not so much imitate Christ as they continue serving His mission, thereby continuing the opportunity for the rejection of His work.

Cunningham leans heavily upon the prophetic identification in his explanation of continuation. Not unlike Conzelmann, who says, “It is prophecy in particular that creates the continuity,”⁷⁰ Cunningham views the persecution of the disciples as linked directly to the Old Testament prophets, connected by the “persecution interlock” proposed by R. J. Miller.⁷¹ Here again, the case concerning the prophet identification does not appear as plain as Cunningham makes it. He says, “The disciples are sure to suffer persecution, because that is what happened to God’s prophets before them.”⁷² The

⁶⁸I. Howard Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978), 767.

⁶⁹See discussion and related footnotes, Cunningham, *Tribulations*, 315.

⁷⁰Hans Conzelmann, *The Theology of St. Luke* (London: Faber and Faber, 1960), 150.

⁷¹R. J. Miller, “Prophecy and Persecution in Luke-Acts” (Ph.D. diss., Claremont Graduate School, 1986), 234-38.

⁷²Cunningham, *Through Many Tribulations*, 72-73.

text to which Cunningham is referring nowhere asserts such a causal relation between the persecution of the disciples and the persecution of the prophets. Rather, Luke 6:23 asserts that the followers of Jesus are blessed and ought to rejoice in their persecutions because the same folks who persecute the followers of Christ once also persecuted the prophets (vicariously through their forefathers). The idea, then, is that the disciples can be encouraged because they are proving to be *true* followers of God on account of who their enemies are. They are not being taught that their persecution happens because they are prophets or because that is the fate of prophets before them.⁷³ In fact, Luke 6:22 states unequivocally that the root cause of the persecution is ἕνεκα τοῦ υἱοῦ τοῦ ἀνθρώπου.

In his third Christological corollary, Cunningham makes the point just emphasized, namely, that persecution of the followers of Christ happens because of association with Jesus. Disciples are not persecuted on account of their personal shortcomings or their own guilt; they are persecuted because of their fealty to Jesus Christ. In this persecution, the disciples are identified with Jesus, and Jesus is identified with them. This Christological corollary comes very close to an outright affirmation of the regnal dynamic; however, Cunningham insists that the implication focuses narrowly on the continuation of salvation-history which began with the prophets, though he believes that in this corollary of fealty to Jesus one finds that “the disciple’s persecution is given its firmest foundation.”⁷⁴ The nature of the firm foundation is not explicit. Quoting from the conversion of Saul, in which Jesus asks, “Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?” Cunningham concludes that Luke does not define the nature of the identification between the disciples and the Lord. Notably, however, Cunningham asserts, “Jesus maintains an identification with his witness in [the disciples’]

⁷³In contrast to the false prophets spoken well of in Luke 6:26.

⁷⁴Cunningham, *Through Many Tribulations*, 318.

persecution.”⁷⁵ In discussing this third corollary, Cunningham leaves the nature of identification unstated, while in other places, he tends to attribute the nature of the identification to be prophetic continuation. The righteousness of God in Jesus Christ explains the nature of the relationship between Christ and His followers. Christ brings His followers into fellowship with God in the unfolding of His kingdom. Luke 21:10-19 makes plain that salvation and judgment are on display in the persecution dynamic. The hatred which fuels persecution is against the name of Jesus (21:17). The conversion account of Saul of Tarsus makes plain that persecution against followers of Christ is persecution against Christ Himself (Acts 9:4-5). And Jesus promises that He will remain present with His people in their witness through persecution (21:15).⁷⁶ Persecution in Luke-Acts displays the regnal righteousness dynamic as plainly as does persecution in Matthew. The regnal dynamic agrees with Cunningham that fealty to Jesus is the firmest foundation for understanding the persecution of Christ’s followers—particularly if the Jesus of the follower’s allegiance is understood in terms of regnal righteousness.

The fourth corollary is not a Christological one. It is, instead, missiological. In this missiological corollary, Cunningham explores and displays the function of witness. Persecution is a natural outworking of the disciples’ lives as they live out the command to witness to the remotest parts of the earth. This functional witnessing in relation to persecution is personified in the life portrait of Paul, according to Cunningham. Perhaps significantly, Paul is not pictured in Acts as a prophet; rather, he is an apostle, although he is often found in the company of prophets.⁷⁷ From the beginning of his ministry (Acts 9:15-16), Paul learns that he must suffer for the name of Christ as he

⁷⁵Ibid.

⁷⁶Weinrich, *Spirit and Martyrdom*, 22-23, explains the extent of the promise of presence at the time of witness.

⁷⁷John T. Squires, *The Plan of God in Luke-Acts*, Society for New Testament Studies Monograph Series 76 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 139.

bears this name among the Gentiles. Such name bearing is categorized by Cunningham as missiological because it serves the function of extending the works of Christ to the remotest places of the earth. The name bearing is, in his view, evangelistic. Yet, bearing the name of Christ is more than evangelistic, too, as it represents being identified with Christ and living in the promises which He offers to His people. Name bearing means representing as well as proclaiming Christ. It means righteousness in the sense it was noted in chapter 2, as the followers of Christ represent and proclaim Him. Even though Cunningham has labeled this fourth corollary as “missiological,” one could see the missiological task as unfolding the witness of righteousness of God to all nations (Acts 1:6-8) through the establishment of the kingdom of God promised through the prophets and ushering in the salvation of God’s people (Luke 12:32, Acts 3:20-21). Such a view would clearly establish the missiological aspect within the soteriological aspect of justification.⁷⁸

Interestingly, Cunningham concludes this section with the summary statement: “For Luke then persecution is an integral part of what it means to be a follower of Jesus. To be identified with him and to witness about him means to invite persecution.”⁷⁹ In his explanation of why such fealty begets persecution, Cunningham hints at salvation history or prophetic continuation, but he never emphasizes the righteousness aspect of Christ’s kingship. He clearly observes the continuation element of the disciples’ persecution after Christ; however, he attributes such an integral relation to the continuing prophetic function of the disciples fulfilling the work “that Jesus began to do and teach” (Acts 1:1), without full regard for the kingship of Christ or the righteousness of God. This statement is not meant to suggest that Cunningham denies these Christological realities in the Luke-

⁷⁸Peter Stuhlmacher, *Revisiting Paul’s Doctrine of Justification: A Challenge to the New Perspective* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2001), 46-52.

⁷⁹Cunningham, *Through Many Tribulations*, 319.

Acts corpus. He does not. However, he also does not establish them as the root Christological focus out of which the corollary elements grow. That Cunningham emphasizes the prophetic aspect of Lukan Christology is understandable in light of how “prophetic figures play a significant role throughout Luke’s two-volume work.”⁸⁰ Yet, this fact does not by itself explain why there is a nexus between prophecy and persecution, and it certainly does not exclude an underlying regnal dynamic of righteousness at play in the persecution of the disciples of Christ after Him. To leave the matter where Cunningham has left it with his prophetic identification (explaining the historical reality that Christ and His followers share the same fate as the prophets) and his Christological continuation (identifying the relationship between Christ and His followers as completers of the same work) is to leave the matter of persecution largely incomplete. Again, why were the prophets persecuted? Why are the Christians now persecuted like the prophets? What is it about the work of Christ and the disciples which causes such offense leading to imprisonment and execution?

Answering those questions within the framework of the regnal righteousness dynamic sheds fresh light on this thematic consideration of Luke-Acts. The regnal dynamic, of course, links together the righteousness of God with the kingdom of God which Christ inaugurated as part of the accomplishment of the salvation God accomplishes for His people, who are united within it by faith. Both concepts of righteousness and kingship exist in Luke’s writings. The concept of *righteousness* is on vivid display, even as the Lukan account of the Lord’s Supper makes abundantly clear (Luke 22:15-18, 29-30). Scholars have noted the presence of righteousness in Lukan writings as a residual and necessary inference of Luke’s apologetic aims. As Seebass says, “In the Lukan writings the word group [*righteousness*] is important as one of the means whereby Christianity is shown to be the legitimate development of Judaism, the

⁸⁰Squires, *Plan of God*, 139.

latter being a religion tolerated by the Romans and having the status of a *religio licita*.”⁸¹ Working from within this paradigm, scholars have viewed Luke-Acts apologetically, assuming that Luke-Acts was written with a focused intent to establish the legitimacy of the Christian church’s status in the eyes of the Roman Empire. As a result of such an apologetic, Luke would be employing the Jewish vernacular with regard to *righteousness* in an attempt to exhibit the organic, progressive nature of Christianity as the outworking of Jewish faith.

However, this view of Lukan righteousness has been challenged by Walaskay, who sought to “turn upside down” this conventional thinking in favor of the view that Luke’s writings were intended not so much as an *apologia pro ecclesia* as they were an *apologia pro imperio*.⁸² For Walaskay, this Lukan intention explains how the corpus depicts the relationship between the Christian Church and the Roman Empire as one of amenable aims. The way Walaskay understands it, “The church could stand in partnership with the empire”⁸³ because of its common objective for humanity. Walaskay argues that the Lukan writings promote the concept that the church must be corrected in its thinking of the empire because the empire could enable the church to complete its mission by providing security and stability from a political vantage point. As he says, “Luke was less concerned about the political stance of the church than he was to defend the imperial government to the church.”⁸⁴ For Walaskay, this rather pragmatic,

⁸¹Horst Seebass, “Righteousness,” in *NIDNTT*, ed. Colin Brown (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1978), 3:361.

⁸² Paul W. Walaskay, *And So We Came to Rome: The Political Perspective of St. Luke* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983).

⁸³*Ibid.*, 66.

⁸⁴*Ibid.*, 67.

politically expedient approach is the very accomplishment which proved that “Luke was a clear-headed, practical theologian *sans egal*.”⁸⁵

Without desiring to challenge—much less disprove—the point that Luke was a clear-headed, practical theologian *sans egal*, one may still question the efficacy of Walaskay’s argument as it relates to *righteousness* in the Luke-Acts compendium. For one thing, as was pointed out by Verheyden, Luke’s portrait of the relationship between Rome and the Christian church is “not positive enough to side with [Walaskay].”⁸⁶ Even Walaskay admits that there are “items in Luke-Acts that must have raised questions in the minds of Roman officials (if such were intended to read this work) about Christian political loyalties.”⁸⁷ There is friction in the narrative between Jesus and the Jewish leaders, to be sure, but there is also friction between Jesus, the disciples, and Rome. The friction between Rome and Jesus appears in consideration of the regnal righteousness of Christ in Luke-Acts. In fact, it would be difficult to illustrate the friction more plainly than Walaskay himself has done:

The annunciation to Mary—‘he has put down the mighty from their thrones’ (Luke 1:52)—is hardly a pious statement, nor is the biblical text (Luke 4:18-19) which Jesus read to the congregation at Nazareth, nor is Jesus’ declaration, ‘I came to cast fire upon the earth; and would that it were already kindled! . . . Do you think that I have come to give peace on earth? No, I tell you, but rather division’ (Luke 12:49, 51). These words of Jesus could not have been more opposed to the imperial goals of peace and harmony. Only with great difficulty can one conclude that a non-Christian Roman reader would have construed these messages as politically harmless.⁸⁸

⁸⁵Walaskay, *And So We Came*, 67.

⁸⁶Joseph Verheyden, “The Unity of Luke-Acts: What Are We Up To?” in *The Unity of Luke-Acts*, Bibliotheca Ephemeridum Theologicarum Lovaniensium 142 (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1999), 35.

⁸⁷Walaskay, *And So We Came*, 22.

⁸⁸*Ibid.*, Discussion follows from 22-25.

The truth of the matter is that Luke has portrayed Christ in these writings as claiming the righteousness of God as ruler in the kingdom of God. For Walaskay, such a claim is politically charged, yet directed ultimately at the Jews. In his explanation of Luke 13, for instance, Walaskay points out that though Pilate is mentioned in a negative context, the larger context of the passage makes plain that the judgment in view is not against Rome, but against Jerusalem for her rejection of Jesus. As Walaskay puts it, “By her rejection of Jesus the doom of the nation is now scheduled on the divine calendar.”⁸⁹ Walaskay argues that the polemic is against the Jews more as a matter of demonstrating Luke’s apologetic aim of establishing an amicable relationship between Rome and the Church. But even if one grants that Luke has softened the edges of conflict between Rome and the Church, still, there is more than a hint of adversarial relations between the two. Acts 4 makes plain—after quoting Psalm 2—that Pontius Pilate was arrayed with others against God’s holy servant, Jesus. In addition, even if the Jews were active in stirring opposition to the disciples in areas of Roman control, still, the fact remains that in Philippi the *Romans* beat Paul and Silas and threw them into prison (Acts 16). Furthermore, in Thessalonica, the charges against the Christians were for allegiance to another king in opposition to Caesar (Acts 17). No matter how Luke has sought to paint Rome amicably, the truth remains that in Luke-Acts the Romans do persecute the followers of Christ. Against Walaskay, Neagoe observes, “While it is beyond dispute that Luke portrays Pilate in a more positive light than the Jewish leaders, there is little justification for taking the positive portrayal of the Roman system as Luke’s dominant concern.”⁹⁰

⁸⁹Ibid., 24.

⁹⁰Alexandru Neagoe, *The Trial of the Gospel: An Apologetic Reading of Luke’s Trial Narratives* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 90.

Rather than pitting the Roman system against the Jewish system in terms of Lukan favorability, a better response to the narrative of Luke-Acts might be to understand (as Neagoe does in observing the various trials⁹¹) that there is a sense in which Romans, Jews, and pagans all oppose—and bring charges against—the followers of Christ. Though the predominance of the opposition is rooted in Jewish antagonism, the truth is (as Cunningham says) Christ Himself is the cause which begets persecution. The constant in all this opposition is Jesus, and the reason he is so contentious is that he displays the righteousness of God in judgment and salvation. Even John Howard Yoder, who labors to demonstrate the non-violent, apolitical portrait of Jesus in the gospels, reaches the undeniable conclusion that “both Jewish and Roman authorities were defending themselves against a real threat”⁹² according to Luke’s gospel. Though not armed, Jesus—the one crucified as king of the Jews—was a threat in the sense of his relationship to the righteousness of God. Both the theme of righteousness and the concomitant theme of kingship authority make up the Christological portrait of Jesus in the Luke-Acts corpus, thus best explaining comments concerning the perceived threat on the Roman political front. Kingship authority threatens all other authority, and righteousness threatens everyone either with certain condemnation from the righteous judge of all the earth or from a just indictment which would preclude salvation. The arrival of Christ proclaiming the kingdom of God is only good news when it is somehow related to justification.⁹³

⁹¹Though this is not the thrust of Neagoe’s argument *per se*, he does make this point in his conclusion. See Neagoe, *The Trial*, 215.

⁹²John Howard Yoder, *The Politics of Jesus: vicit Agnus noster*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994), 49.

⁹³John Piper, *The Future of Justification: A Response to N. T. Wright* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2007), 90.

Not everyone, of course, agrees with such a Christological assessment of regnal righteousness and persecution from a Lukan perspective. C. M. Tuckett, who is rather skeptical of the very concept of a Lukan Christology, nonetheless argues that if one were to consider Lukan Christology, the end result would be to view Christ simply as Χριστός.⁹⁴ One of the main hesitations Tuckett has in formulating the Lukan Χριστός is that the narrative of Luke-Acts ends up completely redefining what would likely have been first century Jewish, messianic expectations. Thus, according to Tuckett, the text of Luke-Acts does take up the notion of Jesus having completed Jewish messianic expectations, and it does so without leaving any of the Jewish expectations in tact—completely overhauling the very idea of a messiah. As Tuckett explains, “The significance which Luke attaches to the term Messiah derives almost entirely from the Jesus story itself and *not* vice versa. It is Jesus who determines what messiahship means; it is *not* messiahship that determines who Jesus is.”⁹⁵ So, Tuckett views Lukan Christology in terms of messiahship and not, strictly speaking, in regnal terms of kingship. Yet, the concepts of the regnal dynamic still abide within the framework Tuckett proposes. So, for instance, Tuckett—relying on the work of Mark Strauss—describes the Χριστός as a royal, Davidic Messiah.⁹⁶ Royal language in connection with David is certainly regnal language. Tuckett does not necessarily utilize regnal language in his formulation of a Lukan Christology, but the regnal character is not lacking in his Χριστός. Indeed, Luke 23:2 asserts a nexus in the first century mindset between Χριστός and *king*. As Marshall notes, Χριστός is explained for Gentile ears by βασιλεύς in

⁹⁴By Christology, Tuckett understands the implied Christology from the narrative and not the actual Christology of its author, who is presumed to be primarily Luke. See C. M. Tuckett, “The Christology of Luke-Acts,” in *The Unity of Luke-Acts*, Bibliotheca Ephemeridum Theologicarum Lovaniensium 142 (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1999), 133-64.

⁹⁵Ibid., 164, emphasis original.

⁹⁶Ibid., 161. See especially n. 105.

apposition, ‘Christ, a king’.”⁹⁷ Hence, even if one were not inclined to take the terms as synonymous, he would at least agree that the implications of Luke 23:2 demonstrate the two concepts are not unrelated, again showing the prevalence of the regnal dynamic in Lukan Christology. If Χριστός summarizes Lukan Christology (as Tuckett asserts), and is synonymous (or nearly synonymous) with kingship (as Marshall asserts), then kingship would be a vital aspect of Lukan Christology. Thus, regnal language is a prevalent part of Luke-Acts and appears to be related to the persecution of Christ’s followers.

Far from contradicting the regnal dynamic for Christian persecution, Luke-Acts affirms it. The kingship of Christ demonstrating the righteousness of God in establishing the kingdom of God is the underlying catalyst of animus against the followers of Christ. Persecution seems always to be related to the righteousness of God in Christ. The argument being examined here, having been brought forward from the thesis derived in Matthew, is, essentially, the simple statement which Cunningham asserts: “The narrative shows an awareness that persecution may come from Gentiles as well as Jews. Where Christ is proclaimed, the status quo is upset and there will be people, both Jews and Gentiles, who will resist this change. Jesus is not only the cause of division in Israel, he also produces division among the Gentiles (Lk. 12.51-53).”⁹⁸ The division, the resistance is rooted in kingdom allegiances other than to the kingdom of the Christ of God. Cunningham continues in this vein to state what is plainly in agreement with the thesis of this research, namely, that “the ones who proclaim [Jesus] can expect persecution (Acts 14.4-5). And God’s judgment will come, not only upon rejecting Israel, but upon all those who reject the salvation brought by his Son (Acts 10.42;

⁹⁷Marshall, *Luke*, 853.

⁹⁸Cunningham, *Through Many Tribulations*, 307.

17.31).”⁹⁹ Clearly—with the themes of salvation and judgment—this dynamic as described by Cunningham refers to the righteousness of God in the kingdom of Christ.

Pauline Perspective Regarding Regnal Persecution

With firsthand knowledge of the persecution and oppression prevalent in his home country of Ghana, J. S. Pobee devoted his Cambridge studies to understanding persecution and martyrdom. The result of this study is his published work on the subject, titled *Persecution and Martyrdom in the Theology of Paul*.¹⁰⁰ As the title indicates, this work focuses on the Pauline writings and attempts systematically to develop the theme of persecution and martyrdom from its historical roots to its Pauline expression, concluding with its implications for the on-going Church of God. If Pobee is correct, then the Pauline literature exposes zeal (ζηλος) as the root provocateur of Christian persecution, which is to say, that persecution is a sure sign of zeal for the Lord. Simply put, Pobee argues that “persecution occurs as a manifestation of conflicting zeals.”¹⁰¹

Pobee’s study of persecution begins with the contextual matter of forms of persecution mentioned in the Pauline corpus, including both figurative and literal forms from the first century: the arena, crucifixion, the sword, stoning, burning, imprisonment, expulsion, and corporal punishment. Oddly enough, however, Pobee draws only two conclusions from his review of these forms of persecution: (1) that the Romans maintained the right of the sword of justice, thus taking responsibility for enforcing punishments, particularly capital punishment; and (2) that, as a result of the first conclusion, the New Testament depiction of the Jews is to be considered “a tendentious

⁹⁹Ibid.

¹⁰⁰J. S. Pobee, *Persecution and Martyrdom in the Theology of Paul*, JSNTSup 6 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1985).

¹⁰¹Ibid., 118.

statement which needs to be taken *cum grano salis*.¹⁰² One may rightly wonder how it is that a survey of the forms of persecution found in the writings of Paul ends with only a statement nearly discrediting the very picture found in the Pauline corpus, at least discrediting the Jewish application of such forms in the persecution of Christians.

It is necessary, then, to pause at this point to consider Pobee's approach to the New Testament because his treatment of the Pauline passages will be affected by what he considers those passages to be. Are they reliable accounts of historical events? Do they offer authoritative instruction? Or, are they mythical accounts from a superstitious people? Are they culturally conditioned political responses? It is clear that Pobee treats the writings of Paul and the New Testament with great respect. This respect is evident in the attention Pobee gives to the original Greek in formulating his argument that persecution demonstrates the presence of zealous faith. Nevertheless, in establishing his formulation of the Pauline persecution dynamic, Pobee leans heavily—possibly too heavily—upon the extant, non-canonical writings of the first century and intertestamental period, thus giving rise to the kind of statement that allows for the New Testament account to be taken *cum grano salis*, as though the New Testament were the product of a small group of Jews with a theo-political axe to grind. The truth, of course, may be that the early Christians—like the Maccabeans and the Romans—had a kind of axe to grind, but they are not by that fact discredited or to be diminished in what they are saying, particularly (as Gamaliel pointed out in Acts 5) if the axe they were grinding were itself in step with the Spirit of God. Or, to make the point differently, the early Christian writers had both a particular perspective and an expressed agenda, just as did the Maccabean and Roman writers. Determining which writers to offer hermeneutical priority is a matter of bias itself.

¹⁰²Ibid., 12.

Pobee's approach to the New Testament is clearly an historical-critical approach, which appears very much in concert with that of his instructor C. F. D. Moule. Thus, Pobee views the New Testament writings—at least in their discussion of persecution—as embodying a “defence or counter-attack.”¹⁰³ On this view, the New Testament writings developed out of the unique experiences of the New Testament writers with the unique character of Jesus Christ. Moule, of course, labeled this approach “developmental,” attempting to counter the more prevalent “evolutionary” approach which viewed the New Testament writings as having evolved over time, reflecting less the culture immediately influenced by an encounter with Jesus of Nazareth and more closely mirroring a culture generations removed from him.¹⁰⁴ Though one might be inclined to agree with Moule and Pobee on the necessity of correcting the evolutionary view, taking into account the self awareness of the historical character of Jesus, still, the developmental view—an improvement to be sure—is lacking in hermeneutical specificity.

So, for instance, Pobee makes the claim that “theology emerges from the experience of a people...”¹⁰⁵ He may mean by this that theology does not evolve but, rather, emerges experientially within community. This would, of course, be true in a manner reminiscent of how Paul's theology emerged from the experience of lightning on the Damascus Road. However, more needs to be said. Is it experience alone which generates theology? Is there—or can there be—a theology behind and responsible for the experience? Is God capable of forming and shaping a community by His Word? From the standpoint of epistemology, Pobee may or may not here be subscribing to a Post-

¹⁰³Ibid., 13. Pobee has taken these terms from C. F. D. Moule, *The Birth of the New Testament* (New York: Harper and Row, 1962), 105.

¹⁰⁴See C. F. D. Moule, *The Origin of Christology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), 1-10.

¹⁰⁵Pobee, *Persecution and Martyrdom*, 13.

Kantian phenomenology, which would begin with an experiential perspective and generate from it a theology, particularly a theology which—to us—makes sense of the extant contextual data. The point is not to belabor epistemology; rather, the point is to say, contextually speaking, Pobee seems to assume that the community determines the shape of theology, rather than assuming that theology fundamentally determines the shape of the community. As a result, the greater portion of *Persecution and Martyrdom* is spent unpacking the contextual community out of which he assumes Christianity arose, namely, a Judaism shaped by the intertestament period of the Maccabees.

Out of this contextual framework, Pobee extends and defends the thesis that a Maccabean martyrological construct shaped the early Christian perspective on suffering persecution. Specifically, the martyrological construct is that of a suffering hero.¹⁰⁶ In this framework, the martyr is the one who is zealous to obey the Lord and, because of that zeal, ends up suffering at the hands of godless men (as in the death of Judah Maccabee), thereby proving to be a “martyr.” The early Christians, then, given this framework, set forth Jesus also as a martyr. For Pobee, this explanation provides a solution to the dilemma of the scandal of the cross for the Jews. The Christians adopted the martyrological framework as an explanation of the Cross, thus explaining how it could be that the Cross might become “good news.” In other words, a Jew from the first century would have serious difficulty with the notion of a crucified messiah. He would be unable to accept such a concept (given the Torah’s commentary in Deut 21:23). Those Jews, then, who were followers of Christ would have to make some sense out of having lived through the experience of seeing their leader hanging from the tree. Their experience, then, was interpreted through the first century contextual lens of martyrdom provided by the Maccabean community. In this Maccabean martyrological framework,

¹⁰⁶In contrast to Schlier, Pobee does not insist on including in this framework the suffering servant of Isaiah. See Pobee, *Persecution and Martyrdom*, 49, and his citations of Schlier referenced there.

those leaders who were zealous for obedience were, in a sense, “asking for it.” Their zeal caused them to be a target for persecution. In the Pauline adaptation of this Maccabean martyrological framework, Jesus became the new prototype of the martyr.

We return here to epistemology, or, more specifically, hermeneutics. In constructing the Maccabean martyrological framework, Pabee relies primarily on Maccabean sources and historical or contextual sources from the first century, rather than resting his case primarily on canonical sources. Without delving into the protracted debates involving Childs, Brueggemann, and others on the validity of canonical criticism, we can see that the truth still remains that Pabee has constructed an historical context behind the biblical text and then used that context to interpret the texts, thus enabling him to take the historical information provided in the Scriptures *cum grano salis*. This approach leaves Pabee somewhat detached from the Old Testament material, which obviously influenced the intertestament period, and sometimes uninvolved with seemingly important data from the New Testament.

To be sure, Pabee is not completely without Old Testament interaction. He interacts, for instance, with the apocalyptic book of Daniel. Yet, his interaction with Daniel is roughly equivalent to his interaction with 1 Maccabees, and his interaction with the Old Testament as a whole is about the same as his interaction with the intertestamental Apocrypha. The point here is that the New Testament writers themselves appear far more concerned with the Old Testament than they are with the Apocryphal writings. Pabee does not appear to reflect that dynamic in his development of a martyrological framework. As a result, though he treats the Apocryphal writings with great thoroughness, he does not make full use of the canonical Scriptures in his developmental framework. Three examples will illuminate this point.

First, though Pabee sees a clear connection between Jesus’ death and the martyrdom of the seven sons and their mother recorded in 4 Maccabees 16-17, he refuses

to acknowledge any relationship between the Pauline portrait of a crucified Messiah and the depiction of the Suffering Servant in Isaiah 53. Other scholars readily acknowledge the validity of 4 Maccabees without excluding Isaiah 53. Dunn, for instance, says, “The tradition of the death of the beloved Son, and Rom. 8.32 in particular, therefore, like the suffering Servant of Isaiah 53 and the martyr theology of 4 Maccabees 17, provides a further variation on the sacrificial metaphor as a way of comprehending the meaning of Christ’s death.”¹⁰⁷ Surely, the significance of justification and righteousness in the Pauline literature will have some relationship to persecution. Whether they include 4 Maccabees in the equation, many scholars—including C. F. D. Moule—see in the Pauline portrait of persecution a reflection of Isaiah’s Suffering Servant.¹⁰⁸ Gorman goes even further and builds a strong case for the paradigmatic parallel between Isaiah 53 and the Pauline portrait painted of Christ in chapter 2 of Philippians.¹⁰⁹ Gorman’s case rests largely on the humiliation-to-exaltation pattern found both in the Isaiah 53 passage and Paul’s portrait in Philippians 2, but it is this very relationship whose existence Pobee denies, thereby justifying his exclusion of Isaiah 53 in formulating a martyrological theology. According to Pobee, those scholars advocating a relationship between humiliation and exaltation (he has W. D. Davies in mind) have misread the Isaiah text. Pobee argues that the Isaiah passage “does not say that the exaltation is the result of the humiliation,” explaining further that “the pattern of humiliation and glorification is a theologoumenon of the early Church, expressing the death and exaltation which ‘meant that he [Christ] was not only alive but sovereign.’”¹¹⁰ The text of Isaiah itself, however,

¹⁰⁷James D. G. Dunn, *The Theology of Paul the Apostle* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 225.

¹⁰⁸See C. F. D. Moule, “Further Reflections on Philippians 2:5-11,” in *Apostolic History and the Gospel*, ed. Gasque and Martin (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1970), 264-76.

¹⁰⁹See Michael Gorman, *Cruciformity: Paul’s Narrative Spirituality of the Cross* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001), 316-19.

¹¹⁰Pobee, *Persecution and Martyrdom*, 81.

betrays Pobee's rejection of the Suffering Servant passage. As Gorman points out concerning Isaiah 53, "The language there suggests that the exaltation is some kind of resurrection, but whatever its precise meaning, the exaltation is clearly a *consequence of and reward for the humiliation and death.*"¹¹¹ Gorman relies on the text of Isaiah 53:12 for his conclusion that the Servant's reward is a consequence of his humiliation, and the text of Isaiah twice confirms this consequential relationship in verse 12, using both *therefore* (לְכֵן) and *because* (תַּחַת אֲשֶׁר). Because Pobee does not allow influence from Isaiah 53, he is unable to draw out completely the picture Paul actually paints in Philippians, a picture which has direct implications for Christians suffering persecution. Paul exhorts Christians in Philippians 2 to have the humiliation-to-exaltation mindset of their Lord, and, throughout the epistle, Paul urges these believers to work out their salvation, to stand firm in Christ through trials, even unto death. In living this way—with the mindset of Christ (and Paul)—the Philippian Christians could expect both that God would supply their needs and that their faith would show the futility of those opposing them (1:28). In other words, like the Suffering Servant, these Philippian Christians would see their humiliation turn to exaltation. Ultimately, the mindset called for in Philippians 2 is a mindset given to the righteousness of Christ who sacrificed Himself for others who would become partakers of the kingdom.

Second, New Testament research has progressed in the area of persecution studies since Pobee published *Persecution and Martyrdom*. This research has demonstrated that the early Christians were quite concerned to understand martyrdom and persecution in light of Old Testament themes. So, for instance, chapter 2 demonstrated that a foray of investigation has occupied the minds of Q scholars over the question of whether the writers of the gospels were more concerned with viewing persecution and martyrdom through the lens of *prophet-martyrs* or through the lens of

¹¹¹Gorman, *Cruciformity*, 317, emphasis original.

regnal-martyrs.¹¹² Those viewing martyrdom as a continuance of the persecution of Old Testament prophets have launched their salvos against those who do not.¹¹³ Likewise, those viewing the matter of martyrdom more as a representation of divine authority have fought back against the view of *prophet-martyrs*.¹¹⁴ Both rely upon the Old Testament context as that out of which a persecution theology must derive. Such scholarship displays that there are viable Old Testament themes which reasonably could explain persecution and martyrdom and would, perhaps, even explain the matter more sufficiently than an inter-testamental development approach. Pobe, to his credit, foreshadows some of the Q debate, both recognizing and speaking against the *prophet-martyr* motif, yet without exactly arguing for a regnal righteousness paradigm. In fact, Pobe mentions the notions relevant to the regnal righteousness position only in an eschatological framework, stating that true zealots would be forward-looking for the kingdom to come.¹¹⁵ Yet, this forward approach to the regnal righteousness paradigm appears to mitigate against a clear integration of Old and New Testaments, thus explaining why Pobe prefers rather to de-emphasize the old, build from the inter-testamental, and, from that, describe the New Testament, Pauline position in terms of an anticipated eschatology.

Yet, the Apostle Paul clearly displays that the Old Testament was vitally important [indeed, indispensable!] for formulating doctrinal matters. As Paul views it, even Christ Himself died *according to the Scriptures*. In fact, the evidence from first century Judaism indicates that the Hebrew canon was venerated in a unique manner,

¹¹²These terms are mine and attempt to represent the positions of Q scholars fairly.

¹¹³See, for instance, Arland Jacobson, "The Literary Unity of Q," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 101 (1982):388.

¹¹⁴L. Ann Jervis, "Suffering for the Reign of God: The Persecution of Disciples in Q," *Novum Testamentum* 44 (2002):315.

¹¹⁵Pobe, *Persecution and Martyrdom*, 29.

exceeding the privilege accorded all other texts—including the intertestamental texts. As Davies notes, “The lectionary activity of the synagogue in that period points to an elevation of the sacred Hebrew texts for which there is no fully adequate parallel in the Graeco-Roman world.”¹¹⁶ So, the conclusion that Paul was influenced by the Scriptures of the Old Testament as much as—and probably much more than—he was influenced by the Maccabean martyrs is one which might be reached on warranted grounds. Indeed, entire schools of thought in biblical exegesis have prospered in the last decade in which Christ and the community called by his name are viewed as intentionally taking over the Old Testament Scriptures. Development in New Testament studies on the role of the Old Testament at least call into question the heavy reliance Pobeé suggests from the Maccabean martyrdom motif. Pobeé has demonstrated there is much to gain from a consideration of Maccabean martyrdom, but he has not altered the reality that the New Testament authors, including Paul, were more intensely influenced by the Old Testament Scripture than any other.

Third, Pobeé, in focusing on the Maccabean development, does not always consider the logia attributed to Jesus on the matter of persecution. So, for example, Pobeé does not mention Matthew 5:10-12, a passage which has been shown to be significant in that Jesus pronounces blessings on his followers who are persecuted. In Matthew 5:10-12, Jesus more than hints at the reality of persecution befalling his followers. He also delineates those conditions which qualify as persecution. In his description, Jesus includes slander and lying as persecution when it occurs against his followers on account of His name. Pobeé fails to consider the rich implications of such instruction from Christ and how Paul may have been influenced by it. Surely, there is evidence that Christ’s instructions on persecution influenced Paul. Paul instructs the

¹¹⁶W. D. Davies, “Canon and Christology in Paul,” in *Paul and the Scriptures of Israel*, ed. Craig A. Evans and James A. Sanders, JSNTSup 83 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1993), 27.

Christians in Rome to learn how to suffer slander and reproach on behalf of Christ, using Christ Himself as the example. Quoting the Old Testament, Paul writes of Christ in Romans 15:3, “The reproaches of those who reproached you fell on me,” thus demonstrating the nature of Christ who suffered on behalf of others. Paul, in turn, encouraged the Christians of Rome to likewise suffer reproach, that through endurance and through the encouragement of Scriptures they might have hope. Paul had, of course, suffered much in the way of slander and false accusations. He had endured much reproach for the cause of Christ, as Acts is quick and thorough to report. Persecution was stirred up against Paul and Barnabas in Antioch because of the slanderous remarks of some of the Jews to some of the leading women. Likewise, in Lystra, false accusations were made against Paul and, as a result, he was stoned and left for dead. He was falsely accused and imprisoned. Then, he was falsely charged with capital offenses which landed him before governors and kings. As was noted earlier, many interpreters, in fact, believe that the accounts of such trials in Acts are a kind of “fulfillment” of Luke’s earlier recorded prophecy on the lips of Jesus in Luke 21:12. Regardless of whether one accepts the depiction of Paul in Acts as a fulfillment of Jesus’ prophecy recorded in Luke, the fact still remains that Paul was slandered, and that slander was part of what he understood to be persecution. So, for instance, in 1 Corinthians 4:12-13, Paul—speaking of himself and the other apostles—says, “when we are reviled, we bless; when we are persecuted, we endure; when we are slandered, we try to conciliate; we have become as the scum of the world, the dregs of all things, [even] until now.” Paul has obviously been influenced by the instructions of Christ, as reflected here in 1 Corinthians 4 and, likewise, displayed in Romans 12:14 (cf. Matt 5:44-48). Paul clearly knew persecution and sandwiched its mention between being reviled and being slandered.¹¹⁷ This mindset concerning slander

¹¹⁷I am using here the NASB Update translation; it keeps the same word order as the original Greek for this list.

and persecution makes sense if we treat seriously the Jesus logia, particularly taking into account the instruction attributed to him by Matthew 5:10-12. One can see this same mindset exhibited by Peter (1 Pet 4:14), who says that one is blessed if he is reviled for the sake of Christ's name. Pobee does not consider Matthew 5:10-12 or Matthew 5:44-48 as to whether or how this instruction might have affected Paul's understanding of persecution. Neither does Pobee include slander in the list of types of persecution found in the Pauline literature, but it certainly belongs, particularly if one credits the Gospel accounts with accurate witness to the actual teachings of Jesus. Though Pobee does speak of the gospel accounts, he tends to view them as contributing to an overall Christological lens through which one might view Paul's preaching, rather than looking to find from the Gospels accurate instructions attributed to Jesus. If these logia were being attributed to Jesus in such a manner that the Gospel writers were familiar with them, is it not likely, too, that Paul would know of them? Is it not likely, then, that they may have influenced the development of his martyrological notions? It seems so. Paul was familiar with the teachings of Jesus (cf. Acts 20:35).

Even more telling than these three examples, however, is Pobee's neglect of 2 Timothy 3:12: "Moreover, all who want to live in a godly way in Christ Jesus will be persecuted."¹¹⁸ Many scholars view 2 Timothy 3:12 as a paradigmatic, generalized commentary by Paul on the topic of persecution and see the verse as normalizing an expectation for all Christians. So, for instance, Knight views this passage as "a general principle regarding persecution."¹¹⁹ Luke Timothy Johnson refers to the verse as "a generalizing statement."¹²⁰ And Philip Towner sees the verse reflecting a "pattern of

¹¹⁸Translation by Jerome D. Quinn and William C. Wacker, *The First and Second Letters to Timothy: A New Translation with Notes and Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 744.

¹¹⁹George W. Knight, *The Pastoral Epistles: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1992), 440.

¹²⁰Luke Timothy Johnson, *The First and Second Letters to Timothy: A New Translation with*

righteous suffering” which “encompasses the whole community of faith.”¹²¹ Towner develops the idea further and believes the verse to be intrinsic to a proper understanding of Christian existence. As Towner explains it, the persecution in view involves all Christians and in some way “normalizes” the experience of persecution. Whether one agrees with the assessment of these commentators or not is subordinate to the fact that their comments demonstrate the presence of a significant statement being made by the Apostle Paul in 2 Timothy 3:12—a statement concerning the nature of persecution as it relates to Christians in general, a statement which, it seems, ought to be examined and explained by scholars seeking to formulate a theology of persecution from the writings of Paul. That Pobeë leaves off discussing this passage is a peculiarity indeed. It is not in any way plain why there is no attempt by Pobeë to explain this passage. One may suppose that he does not accept Pauline authorship of 2 Timothy, but that notion would be countered by his mention of 2 Timothy 3:10-11 in its relation to the memory of Paul.¹²² Even if one were to doubt Pauline authorship of 2 Timothy 3:12, he might still conclude, as Gorman does, that the statement adequately “summarizes Paul’s perspective” regarding persecution.¹²³

Whatever the explanation, the fact remains that 2 Timothy 3:12 speaks to Pauline theology regarding persecution, and the message it carries does not—at least on its surface—appear to support Pobeë’s argument that persecution occurs as a manifestation of conflicting zeal. Rather, this passage speaks of an origin for persecution that is more basic. Fundamentally, 2 Timothy 3:12 moves from Paul’s own sufferings to the expected sufferings of the Church which follows Christ. As Knight notes, “The

Introduction and Commentary, The Anchor Bible (New York: Doubleday, 2001), 422.

¹²¹Philip Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006), 577.

¹²²Pobeë, *Persecution and Martyrdom*, 95.

¹²³Gorman, *Cruciformity*, 152.

postpositive *de* and *kai* . . . together have the force of ‘and also’: Just as Paul has endured persecutions so ‘also’ this will be the case for Christians in general.”¹²⁴ Why will Christians in general, like Paul, face persecution? The answer from 2 Timothy 3:12 is not that Christians will be zealous and, thus, persecuted. Instead, the reason given is that Christians will face persecution because they wish to live devoted to Christ. The translation from Arichea and Hatton captures the sense: “You are aware, I’m sure, that anyone who wants to live as a follower of Christ Jesus will be persecuted.”¹²⁵ It appears, then, that the Pauline literature suggests that a Pauline theology of persecution is inherently linked with fealty to Christ. It is alliance with Christ which is sufficient to provoke persecution, according to 2 Timothy 3:12. Indeed, reading a few verses down from 3:12, one sees plainly that persecution is related to righteousness. Salvation is appropriated by faith in the Christ of Scripture (3:15). Continuation of faith through the Scriptures is called “training in righteousness” (3:16). The Christian life is one of obedience that proceeds from the work of the gospel (Eph 2:8-9). Christ is the source of righteousness for Paul. So, Christ—His righteousness and rule—is the root animus of persecution against his followers (2 Tim 3:12). From a canonical standpoint, this conclusion would not be surprising, considering that “this principle was already stated by Jesus (cf. Matt 10:22-23; Luke 21:12; John 15:20) and by Paul, both on his first missionary journey (Acts 14:22) and in his earliest correspondence (1 Thes. 3:4).”¹²⁶ Of these last mentioned verses, only the 1 Thessalonians passage is treated by Pobee. Yet, taken together, these verses affirm that alliance to Christ is the sufficient condition for persecution because at root Christ is the provocateur who instigates persecution.

¹²⁴Knight, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 440.

¹²⁵Daniel C. Arichea and Howard A. Hatton, *A Handbook on Paul's Letters to Timothy and to Titus*, UBS Handbook Series (New York: United Bible Societies, 1995), 231.

¹²⁶Knight, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 441.

One might wish to interject at this point that the desire to live godly in Christ is what Pobee intends by zeal, that is, that fealty and zeal are indistinguishable, thus approving Pobee's thesis. Certainly, there are times throughout Pobee's discourse in which he seems to offer such a conflation between the ideas of zeal and fidelity. So, for example, Pobee lists the following heading in Chapter 6: "Persecution of Christian Congregations a *sine qua non* of Zeal for the Lord."¹²⁷ Then, in the first sentence under the heading, Pobee asserts that Paul views the persecution of Christians as a *sine qua non* of "being in Christ."¹²⁸ Here, Pobee has clearly made the two notions—zeal and fealty—synonymous, indicating that persecution comes because of connection to Christ, which is intended by the terms *fealty*, *allegiance*, or *alliance*. Pobee, in doing this, is making zeal the same as relationship to Christ. Another way in which the conflation of the two ideas is displayed by Pobee is through his continual use of the term *devotee*, as a descriptor of Christians expecting persecution. So, for instance, Pobee says of Christians, "They show by their patient endurance of persecution that they are true devotees of Christ whose example they are following."¹²⁹ But is a *devotee* necessarily zealous, especially when that devotee is patiently enduring persecution? Does devotion demand zeal, or might one be devoted and another be zealous in his devotion?

Elsewhere, Pobee wishes to preserve the distinction typically reserved in English for the notion of zeal—a heightened intensity. So, for instance, Pobee offers the example of Abraham and discusses how Abraham is accepted by the Maccabean writers as a true martyr. Pobee's example of Abraham is instructive in answering whether or not he is making a distinction between allegiance and zeal. Pobee argues that Abraham is a legitimate martyr (in the Maccabean framework) not because Abraham was faithful in the

¹²⁷Pobee, *Persecution and Martyrdom*, 107.

¹²⁸Ibid.

¹²⁹Ibid., 109.

biblical sense (Gen 15:6, Rom 4:3) but because Abraham demonstrated zeal in the legendary (Apocryphal) account in which Nimrod threw him into a fiery furnace. The legendary account is the one which the Maccabeans (thus Pobee) accepts as the fully developed theology. According to this view, the typical understanding of Abraham's faith is inadequate as an explanation of persecution and martyrology.¹³⁰ What Pobee is saying here is that the Maccabean martyrological framework—the framework which he suggests provides the soil out of which Paul's theology grows—recognizes a distinction between faithfulness and zeal. The zealous Abraham is the Abraham who is a martyr. So, Pobee does appear to view a distinction between fealty and zeal, and he argues that it is the latter—in accordance with the Maccabean tradition—which provokes persecution.

Yet, the text of 2 Timothy 3:12 makes no demand to zeal; rather, it demands mere desire for godliness in Christ (οἱ θέλοντες εὐσεβῶς ζῆν ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ). In the context surrounding 2 Timothy 3:12, there is contrast between what is true and false, between that which is evil and that which is godly, between those who follow the example of the world and those who follow after Christ (and thus become persecuted). There is no distinction made in the passage between lukewarm Christians and zealous ones. What Paul appears to be saying in this passage is not that those who are zealous (as opposed to those who are not) will be persecuted, but, rather, he is saying that those who desire to live in Christ (as opposed to those who do not) will be persecuted. Affinity with Christ is enough to ensure persecution. Moving from a Maccabean lens to the teachings of Christ, we see just such a distinction as that being made in the teachings attributed to Christ in Matthew's gospel. As chapter 2 demonstrated, Matthew's gospel records that Christ pronounced blessings on those persecuted *for the sake of righteousness* (Matt 5:10) and equated them with those persecuted *on account of Me* (v. 11). Consequently, righteousness related to the person of Christ (regal righteousness) appears to be the root

¹³⁰Ibid., 25.

provocateur of persecution in Matthew 5:10-11. We might call this righteousness related to Christ *fealty* or *allegiance*. Assuming Paul was aware of the teachings of Christ, this interpretation of Matthew 5 might then apply to 2 Timothy 3:12 and make some sense of it, demonstrating that righteousness which belongs to Christ is the root cause of persecution. Paul's assurance in 2 Timothy 3, then, that all who wish to live as followers of Christ Jesus will be persecuted, is explained better by alliance to Christ than by zeal.

There are a number of practical reasons why the regal righteousness approach to persecution makes better sense of the New Testament texts (particularly the Pauline texts) than does Pobee's explanation of zeal. First, zeal does not seem substantial enough to explain persecution. It is difficult to see how zeal by itself would cause the Nazis to chain Paul Schneider in a bowing position day after day¹³¹ or how zeal itself would be what provoked the persecution against Brother Yun of China.¹³² Why would armies be concerned about a zealot? Would it not rather be the concern of those armies what the object of the zeal happened to be? Would Communists be concerned about a man zealous for a fine cup of tea? Certainly not, even if the fellow were obsessive about getting the perfect cup of tea. Such a fellow would most likely go unnoticed. Zeal takes an object. Folks tend to be zealous for something or someone, zealous for a cause or for a movement. Brother Yun and Paul Schneider were identified with Christ and with a Christianity which was perceived as a threat against other authorities. This identification with Christ—and not merely *zeal*—is the catalyst which led to their persecution. It would seem that the issue at root is not the zeal but the object of the zeal. Pobee's thesis takes this issue into account by its assertion that persecution occurs as a manifestation of *conflicting* zeals. Though Pobee does add the element of conflict to further explain how

¹³¹See Rudolf Wentorf, *Paul Schneider: The Witness of Buchenwald*, trans. Franklin Sanders (Tucson: American Eagle Publications, 1993).

¹³²Brother Yun and Paul Hattaway, *The Heavenly Man: The Remarkable Story of Chinese Christian Brother Yun* (London: Monarch Books, 2002).

zeal provokes persecution, still, he is leaving out the more substantive issue at hand. What is the root conflict? There may be two men in China who have conflicting zeals. Say, for instance, one man is zealous for his perfect cup of tea, the other zealous for the finest cup of coffee. China has a long history with tea. The second man is going against such history and “conflicting” with the zeal of the tea man concerning which beverage is, in fact, most satisfying. Surely, the man zealous for coffee is right in his zeal, but will he ever chain the tea man to the floor or try to kill him to make his point? Probably not. Zeals may, in fact, be in conflict without ever producing persecution. Zeal does not inherently provoke persecution any more than color inherently clashes with color. It is too generic. The zeals must be spelled out in order to know if there will be a violent clash, just as colors must be particularized before one can say they clash. Some shades of pink simply will not coordinate nor complement some shades of green; so, too, some zeals will neither cooperate with nor complement other zeals. The matter of conflict is decided not on the basis of the zeal itself, but on the more substantive root issue of the objects—or allegiances—in conflict. Most often, this root issue of conflict will be authority and control. Those under the authority and control of Christ—that is, those who are in allegiance to Christ—are a threat to the authority and control of others such as the Nazis or the Communists. To put the matter another way, those who live under the sovereignty of Christ in the kingdom of God will not always live in the same manner as those who abide in the “domain of darkness” (Col 1:13). Zeal is not the substance of what brings about their persecution. The regal righteousness of Christ is the substance.

Second, if we were to frame the matter of persecution in relation to zeal, then the question would arise as to whether zeal might not be optional. Should Christians work to avoid persecution by simply not being zealous? Indeed, this very scenario is on display throughout many Muslim and other hostile contexts today, giving rise to “underground” Christians who keep a low profile so as not to be noticed by their families

or by the authorities. They attempt to temper their zeal so as not to bring about persecution. Yet, even with their tempered zeal, they are often persecuted when their allegiance to Christ is exposed. Richard Wurmbrand's testimony is illustrative on this issue.¹³³ He was persecuted after claiming allegiance to Christ. He displayed no particular zeal. He simply stated that his first allegiance was to Christ and not Communism. Granted, from a Communist perspective, the "not Communism" aspect of Wurmbrand's decision might have been enough for him to head to prison. There were non-Christians imprisoned for their non acceptance of Communism. Yet, as Wurmbrand bears witness, his action was driven by faith in Christ. Insofar as he could be both Christian and Communist, he was willing. His action was not taken against Communism as much as it was for Christ. For that he was imprisoned and routinely persecuted for fourteen years. The point is, Christians ought to be wise and, sometimes, cautious, but, even with their attempts at caution, ought to expect persecution—not because they are zealous but because they are aligned with Christ, whose authority claims are perceived as a threat to other would-be autonomous entities. Zealous or not, those wishing to follow Christ are subject to persecution, as Paul writes in 2 Timothy 3:12. So, to answer the question concerning whether Christians ought to avoid persecution by tempering their zeal, the reply is that, in wisdom, Christians ought to demonstrate prudence and caution, but they will not by such efforts avoid persecution. Persecution is not rooted in their zeal but in Christ's authority and righteousness.

Third, there is a history of equating zeal with zealotism, in which those who are zealots are viewed negatively by the social community. Rome, in the century in which Paul was writing, certainly had a particular distaste for zealots. And some zealots, as Paul himself testified in Philippians 3:6, had a particular distaste for Christians. Such

¹³³Richard Wurmbrand, *Tortured for Christ* (Bartlesville, OK: Living Sacrifice Book Company, 1967).

zealotism did, in fact, increase the likelihood of conflicts in the first century setting, particularly since the zealots were often characterized by violence. Nonetheless, increasing the likelihood is not the same as being identified as a root cause. Because of the negative associations with the word *zeal* (both then in Rome and now in relation to Islamic terrorism), the Christian scholar must be very careful in setting up expectations of zeal with respect to persecution and martyrdom. Whereas the Apostle Paul would through a Christological lens cry out, “I die daily,” he was not, as a Christian, willing to kill. He did not advocate killing or violence in relation to his devotion to Christ. Where zealots were characterized by their willingness both to die and to kill, Paul was characterized by teaching Christians to live in peace with others (Rom 8:6; 12:18; 14:19; 1 Cor 7:15; 1 Cor 14:33; 2 Cor 13:11; Col 3:15; 1 Thess 5:13).

The Apostle Paul in his writings viewed zeal both positively and negatively. In the correspondence from 2 Corinthians, Paul was pleased with the Corinthian zeal which was produced from godly sorrow (2 Cor 7:11). Yet, Paul also recognized that the zeal of the Jews was not in accordance with knowledge (Rom 10:2). And, Paul went so far as to say that there is a zeal which is evidence of the flesh (Gal 5:20). Zeal can also be a mark of godliness (as in 2 Cor 11:2). The object of zeal must be considered in determining whether zeal is positive or negative. So, if the zeal in question is for Christ, there may be an increased probability of persecution, but that persecution is not instigated by the zeal but by the Christ for whom the zeal is exhibited. Pobe might adjust his thesis just a bit to say that persecution (rather than being a sure sign) is more likely in contexts where Christians are zealous for Christ. Zeal will no doubt increase the likelihood that the Christians will be noticed, but it does not initiate the provocation to persecution. Christ’s righteous authority does that.

Pobe rightly points out concerning Paul’s former life as a persecutor that “in Galatians it is because he was Ζηλωτης, an ardent supporter of the traditions of the fathers.

In Philippians it is out of zeal for the Law which appeared to be contradicted by the proclamation of the Christians that the crucified one was also Lord.”¹³⁴ However, Pobeë leaves the substance of the conflicts out of the equation in considering persecution and draws the conclusion that “it was zeal of sorts, misguided zeal perhaps, the contrast of the zeal of the martyrs and confessors. Persecution occurs as a manifestation of conflicting zeals.”¹³⁵ His statements about Paul’s persecuting out of support for the traditions of the fathers and from his zeal for the Law betray his conclusion that persecution is rooted in zeal. It is not. Persecution was rooted in Paul’s case before coming to Christ in his allegiance to the Jewish traditions which appeared to be threatened by Christ. Christ Himself was the root issue, which explains why Luke’s conversion narrative in Acts 9 has Christ asking Paul, “Why are you persecuting *me*?” Elsewhere, Pobeë acknowledges the very point being made here, that “Paul interpreted the persecutions he underwent as evidence that he was a devotee of Christ and of God.”¹³⁶ The presence of persecution, then, is a sure sign in Pauline theology that there is the presence of Christ. If zeal were the root provocateur, then we might view zeal as optional or even sinful, since zealots so often advocate violence in carrying out their agenda. Zeal is not the root cause, however, and so we, like Paul, do not have the privilege of opting out of persecution: anyone who wants to follow Christ will be persecuted. It is not zealots who are persecuted. Those desiring to live as Christians are persecuted.

Far from being disproved by a comparison of the literature in New Testament studies, the regnal righteousness dynamic as a framework for understanding persecution appears viable—and even preferable—to alternate explanatory models. If the research of this chapter is sound, then the regnal dynamic as derived from Matthew is not

¹³⁴Pobeë, *Persecution and Martyrdom*, 117.

¹³⁵*Ibid.*, 118.

¹³⁶*Ibid.*, 94.

inconsistent with the teachings of Mark, Luke, Acts, or the Pauline literature.

Cunningham's thesis appears too broad in his assertions of six theological functions, and Pobee's thesis proves to be too narrow in limiting zeal as the root provocateur of persecution. The regnal dynamic improves upon the deficiencies of Cunningham's approach by integrating the disparate functions into a unitary, Christological focus, and it enhances Pobee's claims of conflicting zeals by forcing attention onto the object of such zeal. The regnal dynamic remains viable as a framework for understanding Christian persecution. Assuming this chapter (and the last) have demonstrated such viability for the regnal dynamic, the next step is to test the definition theologically and pragmatically. Such a theological test is the focus of the next chapter.

CHAPTER 4

THEOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS FOR THE APPLICABILITY OF REGNAL DIKOLOGY

In Chapter 1, we saw that a need exists for further study in what is being termed here *diokology*, that is, study in persecution, as contrasted from study in martyrology. In persecution studies, there is a further need to clarify definitions in order to understand what, biblically speaking, is the dynamic at play in Christian persecution. Understanding this dynamic provides an explanation for why it is that each Christian ought to expect persecution. Chapter 2 was an attempt to frame diokology within the regnal righteousness dynamic as it is displayed in Matthew's gospel. From that chapter, the conclusion was reached that Christian persecution is caused by the regnal righteousness of Jesus Christ on display in and through those who are identified with him (those who represent and proclaim his righteousness by faith). The righteousness of Christ—because he is pictured as a divine, ruling king—is the righteousness of God on display both in terms of salvation and condemnation. Such divine righteousness comes with divine authority. This Christ with claim to righteous authority proves to be the root provocateur of persecution in Matthew's gospel, thus explaining how Christ could teach His followers that they, too, would be persecuted either on account of Him or on account of righteousness. His presence with them—manifested by their faith—would display His righteousness, thus causing them to become objects of persecution. Chapter 3 served as an attempt to test this basic understanding against the writings of other New Testament authors to determine whether it would remain a viable thesis in light of other New Testament studies. The goal was to demonstrate that such a regnal righteousness was not in contradiction with the teaching of other New Testament writers on the matter of

persecution. Comparisons were made with Mark, Luke-Acts, and the Pauline literature. If the research was successful, then it demonstrated that the regnal righteousness dynamic is consistent with the portrayal of persecution in these other New Testament books. No claim is being made here that a New Testament theology of persecution has been completed for the books here mentioned, much less for Johannine and Petrine literature, which have not been examined in this study. Nevertheless, this research has at least moved toward the goal of a biblical definition of persecution. Even more important, the research has moved toward the goal of establishing a practical framework for understanding persecution in the Christian life and providing a framework for categorizing instances of persecution rightly. As such, the thesis ought to withstand further scrutiny from New Testament studies, and it also should be able to interact with the theological literature concerned with persecution.

Consideration of Lausanne's Call for Definition

Chapter 4 is an attempt to demonstrate the viability of regnal righteousness to speak in a theological context related to persecution. Beyond merely speaking theologically, the regnal righteousness dynamic offers something of an ethic of persecution, clarifying what ought to be present in living a Christian life. Hence, this chapter will, first, clarify again what is meant by regnal righteousness from a theological perspective, then proceed to juxtapose such an understanding of persecution with extant literature in diokology. Specifically, after examining the pragmatic significance of the regnal righteousness diokology through the work of the Lausanne Conference, this chapter will interact primarily with two other treatises in diokology, the first being Glenn Penner's book, *In the Shadow of the Cross: A Biblical Theology of Persecution and Discipleship*.¹ The second interaction will be with Josef Ton and his book *Suffering*,

¹Glenn Penner, *In the Shadow of the Cross: A Biblical Theology of Persecution and Discipleship* (Bartlesville, OK: Living Sacrifice Books, 2004).

*Martyrdom, and Rewards in Heaven.*² Such interactions should prove to be a kind of barometer of theological practicality, measuring the weight and significance of the regnal righteousness dynamic against the depth of diokological literature extant. We begin with a theological consideration of regnal righteousness related to Lausanne’s call for persecution studies, and this theological consideration takes us back to consider further the diokological framework as found in Matthew.

As was mentioned in chapter 2, Robert Gundry, in his now infamous commentary on the gospel of Matthew, asserts that no reason exists to make distinctions concerning righteousness as the occasion of persecution versus righteousness as the cause of persecution. The explanation Gundry offers for making this assertion is that Matthew’s gospel understands the definition of *Christian* to necessarily include righteousness: “Otherwise he is a hypocrite,” Gundry says.³ Gundry understands the term *righteousness* to refer to “the disciples’ right conduct” in Matthew 5:10.⁴ In the earlier Beatitudes, Gundry understands *righteousness* to be a statement of divine justice. As Gundry views the Beatitudes, “The first four have emphasized the persecuted condition of Jesus’ disciples. The latter four have emphasized the ethical qualities which led to their persecution. Accordingly, the first four end on the note of righteousness as divine justice, the second four on the note of righteousness as good conduct.”⁵ So, in Gundry’s explanation, the key concepts in the Beatitudes are *righteousness* and *persecution*.

²Josef Ton, *Suffering, Martyrdom, and Rewards in Heaven* (Wheaton: The Romanian Missionary Society, 1997; reprint, 2000).

³Robert H. Gundry, *Matthew: A Commentary on His Handbook for a Mixed Church under Persecution*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994), 73.

⁴Ibid., 72.

⁵Ibid., 73.

Righteousness, as he sees it, is knowable in two forms: theological and anthropological. On the theological side, the first four Beatitudes demonstrate the righteousness of God in blessing the poor in spirit, those who mourn, the gentle, and those hungry or thirsty for righteousness. Such sufferers God declares righteous with reference to his own standard of justice. On the anthropological side of the equation, the last four beatitudes picture the righteous as those who show mercy, maintain purity in heart, make peace with others, and suffer persecution. In all, the Beatitudes offer not “a gospel for the unevangelized, but a word of encouragement to the suffering church.”⁶ One would assume that the encouragement for those having suffered persecution would come from realizing that the first four Beatitudes teach that the persecuted enjoy a righteous standing before God, while the last four Beatitudes demonstrate that their righteous deeds (evidences of righteousness) are what exposed them to a world which would persecute them. The comfort in the latter Beatitudes would come from the reality of God’s favor established in the former Beatitudes. Both sections are devoted to righteousness, but righteousness, according to Gundry, comes in two distinct forms.

Curiously, after noting the distinct emphasis of the first four Beatitudes against the also distinct emphasis of the last four Beatitudes, Gundry states that there is no reason to make distinctions in the relationship between righteousness and persecution when it comes to distinguishing the cause of persecution from its occasion, even though, in his view, the Beatitudes are arranged with the first four emphasizing divine righteousness and the last four emphasizing acts of the righteous which lead to their persecution. It appears that Gundry is making distinctions in righteousness based on both the state of persecution the disciples are in and the external cause of their persecution. He divides the eight Beatitudes into two parts based on these distinctions, but he concludes his discussion of them by stating that there is no reason to distinguish between righteousness

⁶Ibid., 73.

as the cause of persecution as opposed to righteousness providing the occasion for persecution. A closer investigation of these verses within the broader teachings of the Sermon on the Mount (and the broad contexts of Christian persecution) may show that there is, in fact, good reason for making a distinction between righteousness as the occasion of persecution and righteousness as the cause of persecution.

The discussion in chapter 2 established that Christ Himself was the cause of the persecution. His righteousness, too, is the righteousness against which the persecutors act in hostility. Thus, it was necessary to point out in chapter 2 that Matthew has a number of promises related to the presence of Christ with His people. In Matthew 6, Jesus teaches His disciples to maintain faith in the face of anxieties because the Father sees and knows them and will supply their needs. Even more to the point, Jesus teaches in 10:19-20 that His disciples need not plan ahead what to say when persecution corners them: “Do not be anxious how you are to speak or what you are to say, for what you are to say will be given to you in that hour. For it is not you who speak, but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you” (ESV). Significantly, the Son teaches the disciples that the Spirit will speak through them from the Father. The Trinitarian formulation is indicative of the name into which disciples are to be baptized (28:19) and is itself a noteworthy testimony to the nearness of identification between God and His people effected by Christ in the unfolding of the kingdom. Matthew’s gospel highlights this nearness extensively, such as the promise in 18:20 of the presence of Christ among those gathered in His name. Such intimate, divine presence is the final note sounded by the gospel, as Matthew ends with the promise from Jesus to His disciples: καὶ ἰδοὺ ἐγὼ μεθ’ ὑμῶν εἰμι πάσας τὰς ἡμέρας ἕως τῆς συντελείας τοῦ αἰῶνος. This emphatic promise from Jesus is all the more astounding when it is viewed in relation to the name given to Jesus in 1:23, “God with us.” So Christ is and always will be present with His followers.

The significance of the presence of Christ is shown in the promises of persecution in the gospel. Persecution always comes about on account of Christ (5:11, 10:18), His name (10:22), or His righteousness (5:10). In addition, Christ teaches that the reception of a disciple equates to receiving Him when it comes to the matter of rewards (10:40). The presence of Christ is real with and to the disciples. Those who refuse the disciples are culpable before God for their rejection of His kingdom as in 10:14-15, where the judgments on the towns refusing the disciples will be worse than the judgment of Sodom and Gomorrah. So, Christ Himself is not to be left out of the persecution equation, even though the violence is perpetrated against His followers. Christ is not absent in this persecution. Indeed, it seems plausible to suggest that the blessings of Matthew 5:10 and 5:11 offer present-tense assurances of identification with Christ. In other words, persecution for righteousness' sake affirms that the persecuted are being mistreated because of their participating in the outworking of the righteousness of God, that is, they are participating in Christ. What could be more encouraging for the believer than to know he is representing God and the kingdom of heaven is his? He is identified with Christ, and Christ is present with Him. This blessing for the disciple is made possible as the disciple acts faithfully based on the teachings of Christ concerning righteousness in the kingdom. By faith, the disciple learns the way of Christ—the way of the righteousness of God in the kingdom unfolding. As the disciple does by faith what Christ commands, he puts on display the righteousness of the Christ of God who gave the commands. He demonstrates that he believes the promises Christ has made. Christ provides and unfolds the righteousness to which His followers are called. As they in faith obey His call, they are identified with Him, and He is present with them. Such identification with Christ fuels the occasions of persecution. The cause is Christ. The issue is the righteousness of God displayed in Christ through the faith of His followers.

Gundry's reason for saying that there is no point in distinguishing between righteousness as the cause of persecution and righteousness as the occasion of persecution is that he believes that in the gospel of Matthew all Christians are by definition righteous. The concept *Christian* is necessarily inclusive of the concept *righteous* for the writer of Matthew. Gundry does not elaborate much on this point, but one may assume he is speaking in the same manner that we may logically say, "All husbands are male." The notion *husband* includes within it *maleness*. Just as one cannot be a husband unless he is male, so, too, one cannot be a Christian unless he is righteous. All Christians are righteous. Granting this definition to Gundry, it is still difficult to see how it also follows that this definition precludes the possibility of ascribing functional categories to the notion of righteousness. How is it that the *definition of Christian* governs also the *function of righteousness*? Gundry gives no further explanation. In one sense, Gundry's definition appears on the mark. The disciples are by definition righteous, but it is not because of their anthropological righteousness. It is because of the righteousness of Christ. As they are believing that Christ has inaugurated the kingdom of God, the disciples act in accordance with His righteousness. Their acting in accord with His righteousness provides occasion for them to be identified with Christ. Because the world has always hated Christ, the world will continue to hate Christ. Persecution against the followers of Christ is persecution against Christ. Thus, Christ informed His disciples they would be hated by all διὰ τὸ ὄνομά μου (10:22). Whether the disciple is persecuted ἕνεκεν ἐμοῦ, ἕνεκεν δικαιοσύνης, or διὰ τὸ ὄνομά μου, the same dynamic is at work: the regnal righteousness dynamic, which says that persecution is hostile action against the revelation of the righteousness of God in Jesus Christ.

The reason for making a functional distinction between the cause of the persecution and the occasion of persecution is two-fold. First, as this interaction with Gundry illustrates, the point must be maintained that the cause and occasion belong to

Christ primarily, not to the disciples. Yet, a second and intensely more practical point must be made as well. Though ultimately it is Christ against whom the hostilities are mounted, it is His followers who must bear the blows of persecution—the insults, the slanders, the beatings, and the imprisonments. So, meticulous care must be taken to define precisely what is occurring in the instances in which persecution takes place. Consider, for instance, how near Turner comes to affirming the regnal righteousness dynamic in Christian persecution.⁷ According to Turner,

As disciples cultivate the countercultural graces of the Beatitudes, they are in reality cultivating likeness to the Master. Living in the present by the values of the future kingdom marks Jesus's disciples as out of step with their contemporaries and equips them for witness⁸

The statement is a clear affirmation of the regnal dynamic and affirms the point of labor here in relation to the occasion of righteousness except for one crucial factor not spelled out by Turner. The persecution happens on account of Christ, not on account of the disciples living by the values of the kingdom. While it is true that the disciples ought to be marked by living according to the values of the kingdom—and thus out of step with the world—it is also true that their suffering persecution is not on account of their living out such values. The persecution happens on account of Christ. Lest Christ be diminished in our formulation of diokology, we must insist that persecution happens on account of Him, on account of His name, or on account of His righteousness. Hence, it is significant to state clearly that the cause of persecution is Christ, and, on occasion, the righteousness of Christ will be on display in and through the faith of His followers. Christ is the offense and the ultimate target of the persecution, but the occasion of

⁷David L. Turner, *Matthew*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008), 153-54.

⁸Ibid., 154.

righteousness means that the followers of Christ are the ones who will be forced to suffer under the violent actions or slanderous deceptions of persecution.

As for the original question broached by Gundry of whether there is good reason to make such a distinction, one need only to turn his attention to the 2005 report of the Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization to see how practical the distinction can be—and how functional the regnal righteousness diokology proves to be.⁹ The Lausanne persecution paper openly calls for theologians and biblical scholars to help the conversation on persecution to progress by providing categories for theological discussion related to persecution. For example, Section 1.1 of the paper lists issues that have been raised repeatedly since the first meeting of Lausanne in 1974 and yet still remain to be dealt with more extensively. The first issue mentioned in the bulleted list is “the relationship between human suffering in general, suffering *for Christ’s sake*, and Christ’s own suffering.”¹⁰ The Lausanne Committee has recognized the need for distinguishing what it means to suffer for Christ’s sake as opposed to suffering on account of oppression or some other suffering brought about by the frailties of the human condition. The Lausanne persecution paper concludes Section 4 with this call for theological research in the area of persecution: “There is clearly a need for deeper theological reflection on the issues pertaining to suffering, persecution, martyrdom, religious freedom and human rights, and an appropriate Christian response.”¹¹ The Lausanne persecution paper brings forward many other questions concerning the theological nature of persecution: Is there a Christian ethic of persecution? What

⁹David Claydon, ed., “The Persecuted Church” (paper presented at the Lausanne Conference on World Evangelization, October 2004) [on-line]; accessed 15 August 2009; available from http://www.lausanne.org/documents/2004forum/LOP32_IG3.pdf; internet.. Hereafter this occasional paper will be referred to as the Lausanne persecution paper.

¹⁰Claydon, “Persecuted Church,” sec. 1.1.

¹¹Ibid., sec. 4.

distinctions can or should be made between individual Christian martyrdom and ethnic Christian genocide, as has been seen in Sudan? What should be the attitude of Christians towards suffering, persecution, and martyrdom?

On this last question, as far as persecution is concerned, the text of Matthew 5:10-11 proves helpful, especially if the distinction between occasion and cause is kept in clear focus. Again, the Lausanne persecution paper recognizes this fact implicitly when it says, “Not all persecution happens for the sake of Christ.”¹² Matthew 5:11 calls those blessed who are persecuted because of Christ (ενεκεν εμου). The Lausanne persecution paper, aware of the incredibly diverse contexts and circumstances surrounding the situations of persecution throughout the world, calls for theologians and scholars to help define *persecution* so that it can be understood rightly and responded to correctly. The distinction being proposed here concerning righteousness functioning as the occasion of persecution appears to be precisely the kind of conversation the Lausanne persecution paper seeks to generate.

The following example should help both to explain the function of righteousness in persecution and demonstrate how the regnal righteousness diokology is helpful in the theological conversation about persecution. Sister Chang, a house church leader from Henan province in China, was arrested by Communist officials and, without a trial, sent to the local women’s prison, where she spent the next several months.¹³ Was Sister Chang persecuted or simply oppressed? Utilizing the regnal righteousness model, we would begin asking questions related to Christ and to righteousness in the matter (not about the Communist official’s intentions). What was the occasion that sparked the arrest of Sister Chang? Was this occasion related to righteousness? How was her practice of

¹²Ibid., 49.

¹³See Paul Hattaway, *Back to Jerusalem: Three Chinese House Church Leaders Share Their Vision to Complete the Great Commission* (Waynesboro, GA: Piquant/Gabriel Resources, 2003), 116, for this story of Sister Chang.

righteousness—her faith—related to Jesus Christ? In other words, was the righteousness of God the occasion and Christ the ultimate cause of the actions against her? Was it her faith in Christ and her efforts to represent and/or proclaim Him that exposed her to the actions carried out against her by the Communist government? If so, we would have a case of persecution. If not, we may simply have a case of “repression of minority and nonconventional religions.”¹⁴ The Apostle Peter (1 Pet 4:15-16) pleads with the followers of Christ to make sure that their suffering is related not to criminal activity but to their faithful alliance to Christ. Keeping righteousness in view, then, the Christian is able to have a guide by which actions against him can be classified as persecution and which may be oppression or simply foolishness.

So, what was the occasion of Sister Chang’s arrest? Was it the righteousness of Christ? Sister Chang, as it turns out, was arrested for preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ on the steps of the local police station. Many Christians would agree that this is a righteous act, or, at least, that preaching the gospel of Christ is outwardly an action consistent with the righteousness. Ostensibly, the case appears to be one of persecution. One may wish to interrogate Sister Chang further concerning her motive for preaching on the steps of the police station. Though preaching the gospel is an action based on righteousness (as established in chap. 2: representation and proclamation), preaching the gospel on the steps of the local police station may not be; it could, instead, be an unrighteous way to call attention to oneself, or it could be an act of defiance against legitimate, governmental authority. Jesus, of course, in the Sermon on the Mount warned his followers about just such actions. As we noted in chapter 2, Christ says, “Beware of practicing your righteousness before men *to be noticed by them*; otherwise, you have no

¹⁴Rosalind I. F. Hackett and Mark Silk, “Introduction,” in *Religious Persecution as a U.S. Policy Issue*, ed. Rosalind I. J. Hackett, Mark Silk, and Dennis Hoover (Hartford, CT: Center for the Study of Religion in Public Life, 2000), 1.

reward with your Father who is in heaven.”¹⁵ If Sister Chang’s motive was to be noticed by the world or even to be noticed by other Christians, then the occasion of the action against her was not the occasion of righteousness. This fact would be further borne out by the reality that the actions against her were against her for engaging in illegal activity for the purpose of self-aggrandizement. In that case, there would be no persecution against Christ because there would be no occasion of the display of His righteousness. Surely, self-aggrandizing actions against authority do not display the presence of Christ. If, however, Sister Chang’s motive was to please the Lord in her proclaiming Christ, and if her reasoning were that she was seeking to obey God, seeking for His kingdom to come, then the occasion precipitating the action against her was the occasion of righteousness. This fact would be borne out by the clear connection of her action to the Christ of Scripture, as she was seeking to please Christ (and present Christ) by engaging in activities Christ himself commands, or might reasonably expect, from His followers (Matt 5:14-15; 9:35-38; 10:27-28; 28:19). If her actions had been those proscribed or forbidden by Christ, then the situation would not be persecution because those actions would be a *misrepresentation* of Christ. On the other hand, if her actions accorded with the teachings of Christ, she might expect blessing from the Lord.¹⁶ The category of righteousness and the further functional distinctions between the occasion of righteousness and the ultimate cause of righteousness provide a clarifying methodology in order to properly classify persecution as such.¹⁷

Yet, let us consider the case further by this framework. The individual police officer who arrested Sister Chang may have no obvious malice against Christ or the

¹⁵Matt 6:1, NASB, emphasis added.

¹⁶See Hattaway, *Back to Jerusalem*, 117. As the story goes, Sister Chang preached in the women’s prison causing so many to be converted that the warden released her.

¹⁷This methodology for classifying persecution will undergo much more scrutiny later in chap. 5, where the case of Dietrich Bonhoeffer is considered.

gospel. He may simply be following orders. Indeed, considering the calculations some have made about the number of Christians in China now exceeding the number of Communists, it could even be possible that the arresting officer might be a Christian who is called to follow his Captain's orders and arrest the lady who is disturbing the peace on the steps. If so, would this still be persecution by our definition? On first glance, it may appear not, since the definition says that persecution is a retaliatory action in response to the revelation of the righteousness of Christ. In fact, the scene pictured this way appears to militate against our whole thesis that the categorization of persecution consists in the righteousness of the persecuted rather than in the intention of the persecutor. Have we now come to the place where we must acknowledge the intention of the persecutor? Yes and no. While it is true that the definition of persecution speaks of retaliatory actions (obviously referring to the persecutors), it is not the case that this aspect is the controlling force in the paradigm.

The insistence still remains that the primary consideration is not the motive of the arresting officer, but, rather, the functional display of Christ's righteousness through the faith actions of Christ's followers who are, in turn, persecuted. This distinction must be maintained because there is another important distinction (heretofore unsaid) between systemic and solyptic persecution. There are times when people are part of a systemic alignment against the cause of Christ, where individuals participating might well be ignorant of the larger issues at stake. The arresting officer may well be ignorant of his superior's desire and design to crush Christianity in the province. He may simply be following orders, thus indicating, once again, that Sister Chang's display of righteousness provides the occasion of her arrest, even though the arresting officer is ignorant of that fact. The point, though, is that there are both individuals, institutions, and other powers and structures who oppose Christ. A solyptic episode of persecution would occur when an individual—on his own authority—lashes out against the faithful follower of Christ,

initiating hostilities without attachment to any particular cause or institution. Most often, the solypitic episodes would occur at the individual level and not, as was the case with Sister Chang, at the level of police or other institutional involvement.

One may still question whether such a categorization and functional distinction is necessary, and the Lausanne persecution paper indicates that it is in several ways. First, the Lausanne persecution paper calls for further theological reflection so that Christians will know how to respond to persecution. This call for distinguishing persecution by making use of righteousness is the starting point for Christian response. Before responding to persecution, the Christian must first understand whether her suffering is persecution. If her suffering is the result of foolishness instead of righteousness, then her response ought to be to learn the way of wisdom. If her suffering is the result of pride or arrogance or angry provocation, then she will need to repent and learn the way of peace. Only if her suffering is occasioned by righteousness—righteousness related to Jesus Christ—can she rightly be said to be suffering persecution in the Christian, New Testament sense. The necessary first step in responding to a certain behavior, in this case persecution, is to recognize rightly the occurrence of the behavior. So, for example, governments have classified certain behaviors as acts of war. There may be missile testing and armed combat training along the way, but a nation will not typically announce war until an official “act of war” is perceived. In the same way, the Christian, before responding to persecution, should be able to identify persecution clearly. In calling on theologians and scholars to reflect about the issues related to persecution so that Christians will know how to respond, the Lausanne persecution paper is asking for categories like the ones being proposed here, categories which pinpoint the root cause of persecution, thereby explaining the occasions in which persecution arises.

A second way the Lausanne persecution paper indicates the necessity of such categorization is by proving to have such difficulty with its own persecution taxonomy.

In the “Convener’s Preface,” Patrick Sookhdeo, convenor of the issue group on persecution, asserts, “Many situations of repression and persecution are to a greater or lesser extent a result of political and legal principles, decisions and actions in the countries concerned. This report is not intended to carry any particular political message.”¹⁸ The truth of the matter is that nearly every episode of persecution is related to “political and legal principles.” Almost always, political and legal issues are intertwined with the persecution of Christians. This reality dates back to the gospels and the time of the writers of the New Testament. When, according to the writer of Hebrews, the Christians of the first century had their homes plundered and property seized, it was by the government, probably the Roman government.¹⁹ Moreover, the persecution of the Christians in Hebrews could refer to Emperor Claudius’ expulsion of the Jews from Rome in 49 A.D. If this is the case, the Christians being persecuted would have been caught in a complete web of political and legal principles; yet, the author of Hebrews also believed they were persecuted because their actions identifying them with Christ became the occasion of their being targeted for expulsion.²⁰

The Lausanne persecution paper demonstrates just how difficult a matter it is to disentangle Christian persecution from political and legal associations. In the section of the paper titled, “1.2 Factors contributing to persecution,” the authors cite globalization, religious fundamentalism, nationalism, mistrust, economic disparity, capitalism, post-modernism, and “the West’s so-called War on Terror” as factors which

¹⁸Patrick Sookhdeo, “Convener’s Preface,” in Claydon, “Persecuted Church.”

¹⁹F. F. Bruce, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, rev. ed., The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), 267.

²⁰This interpretation of Heb 10 relies upon the commonly accepted notion that Suetonius, in his coverage of Claudius, misrepresents “Christ” as “Chrestus.” Suetonius’ *De vita Caesarum* is available as a free download in English from <http://www.gutenberg.org/etext/6400>. For the Latin with English commentary, see Donna W. Hurley, *Suetonius: Diuus Claudius*, Cambridge Greek and Latin Classics (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

presently—either directly or indirectly—contribute to *the persecution of Christians*.²¹ Surely, many other factors could be named, such as terrorism (in Indonesia), drug-trafficking (in Colombia), or democracy (in Iran, China). The point is to say that the persecution of Christians is no more clear-cut today than it was in the day when the writer of Hebrews was encouraging Christians to pay close attention to Christ and his teachings. The question is how does the Christian know whether his suffering is persecution and not merely the outgrowth of globalization, fundamentalism, or terror attacks? The Lausanne paper bemoans its own inability to classify such occurrences, although it does recognize them. If a Christian suffers because some local non-Christian tribal leader feels threatened by the globalization of McDonald's franchises around the world, and, consequently, lashes out at the unsuspecting Christian in the neighboring tribe because he feels that Christians are part of the problem—being a supposedly Western religion—then is it possible that the Christian is suffering persecution, or is it necessarily the case that the Christian is simply a victim of political or economic circumstance?

The Lausanne persecution paper has difficulty answering questions like this one because it appears to be viewing persecution through the lens of religious freedom rather than through the biblical lens of regnal righteousness. This difficulty does not mean that there is no place for studying Christian suffering through the sociological categories and methodology of religious freedom; rather, this statement is a recognition of what the Lausanne persecution paper has already noted, namely, that there needs to be a more thorough biblical, theological consideration of persecution. Instead of considering causes of persecution through the framework of righteousness as recommended in this paper, the Lausanne persecution paper considers causes of persecution in relation to sociological factors such as the practice of Islam (including Muslim doctrine, Wahabbism, and anti-West bias); the practice of oriental religions

²¹Claydon, "Persecuted Church," sec. 1.2.

(Hinduism, extremism, nationalism, caste system); the ideology of Communism (Marxism, fear); and the rise of secularism (including freedom of expression, freedom of speech, and church autonomy). As a consequence of following sociological categories, the Lausanne persecution paper labels as causes of Christian persecution what are actually occasions of social and political conflict. In describing the various contexts in which persecution appears, the Lausanne persecution paper is providing descriptions of occasions in which conflict has arisen. Yet, in providing such descriptions, the Lausanne paper has not actually considered (biblically or theologically at least) the cause of the persecution. Two examples from the Lausanne persecution paper should help to make this point.

First, in its description of the case of a man named Hammond of the United Kingdom, the Lausanne persecution paper assumes that the matter fits under the broad category of persecution, but the discussion of the case takes place solely in the categories of “religious freedom.” Hammond, an evangelical Christian who preached regularly in the town square at Bournemouth, was assaulted by thirty or more individuals. The authorities agreed that Hammond was ‘temperate’ in his language and demeanor. Still, Hammond, a sixty-nine year old in poor health, was beaten. After the incident, he was also arrested and prosecuted for inciting violence (even if the violence he incited was against himself). The reason he was convicted, and the reason the conviction was upheld on appeal after his death, was that the High Court “under Section 5 of the Public Order Act 1986 [argued] that ‘criticism’ of homosexuality as ‘immoral’ was ‘insulting’ language and a criminal penalty was appropriate.”²² The situation, considering that Hammond had a sign attached to him which pleaded with people to “Turn to Jesus,” was probably a legitimate occasion of persecution. The occasion of the incident was Hammond’s practice of faith in proclaiming Christ. The cause of his persecution was

²²Claydon, “Persecuted Church,” Sec. 2.4, “Secularism.”

related specifically to his faith in Christ and his representation of the righteousness of God. However, the Lausanne persecution paper concludes the description with a reflection on the hypocritical nature of religious freedom in the United Kingdom. The paper says of Hammond's case, "Such a 'restricted' form of freedom of expression is of particular concern in the light of the rise of both radical Islam and anti-Semitic discourse. There is a significant undermining of freedom of expression if temperate criticism of Islam or homosexuality receives antagonism and suppression from State and non-State sources, whilst the Christian and Jewish communities face outright hostility."²³ Though true, this statement does not acknowledge that the situation of Hammond is persecution. The Lausanne persecution paper fails to consider Hammond's case through the biblical, theological category of persecution.

A second indication of this failure to consider biblical, theological categories is found in the fact that the Lausanne persecution paper puts the example of Hammond under the heading "Freedom of expression" and includes it in a larger section titled, "The challenge posed by secularism to the Church in the West." The significance of this title can be seen as it is juxtaposed with the other three titles which make up the four parts of Section 2. The other three titles begin with the phrase, "Persecution of Christians." In the discussion of secularism in the West, as illustrated by Hammond's story, the Lausanne persecution paper fails to categorize the matter in terms of persecution at all. The discussion of secularism in the Lausanne persecution paper follows the pattern of the loss of a traditional Judeo-Christian freedom of religious expression. The Hammond illustration demonstrates the validity of that conversation, but the whole paper is supposed to be a treatment of persecution against the Christian Church. There may be a need for a discussion of the loss of religious freedom, but the main point of the Lausanne persecution paper is supposed to be Christian persecution. Again, this critique points

²³Lausanne persecution paper, Section 2.4 (b) (i) Freedom of expression.

more than anything else to the need that the Lausanne persecution paper already recognizes for a more thorough biblical, theological consideration of the subject of persecution.

Keeping with the sociological categories of the Lausanne persecution paper leads in the end (as illustrated in the Hammond case) to adopting religious freedom categories and a sociological outlook. In framing the causes of persecution as the outward actions of individuals or groups against the Christian community,²⁴ the Lausanne persecution paper ends up defining persecution based on the motivation and action of the persecutor, rather than considering the actions of the persecuted. This approach to defining persecution is not uncommon, but, biblically, it is not the most helpful way to examine the issue. First, as has already been pointed out from Matthew 5:10-11, Christians are promised reward or blessing if they are persecuted for righteousness' sake (ΕΝΕΚΕΝ ΔΙΚΑΙΟΣΥΝΗΣ). From Matthew 5:10-11, then, it seems to follow naturally that Christians will want to understand why they are suffering insults and slanders and beatings and imprisonments. Indeed, Christians are promised a blessing if their persecutions stem from the righteousness of Christ. To understand their own experiences of suffering and to know whether such suffering is persecution, Christians will need to test whether they are representing—or misrepresenting—the righteousness which identifies them with Christ (suffering persecution ΕΝΕΚΕΝ ΕΜΟΥ).

Beyond understanding their own persecution, Christians are also expected—when the emphasis of the definition of persecution is placed on the persecuted rather than the persecutor—to test their manifestation of righteousness. This second point of the Christian needing to test righteousness is significant in order to prevent, on the one hand, the Christian from lumping himself into a mass of other victims and possibly falling prey

²⁴The Lausanne persecution paper does include examples in Mexico, the Middle East, and South America where Christian groups are persecuted by other Christian groups.

to a helpless victimized status, and, on the other hand, in order to keep the persecuted Christian focused (as, for instance, the Revelation of John does) on overcoming and receiving the promised reward—the Kingdom of Heaven, promised in Matthew 5:10 to those who are persecuted on account of Christ. Christians in Pakistan illustrate this point well. According to the Lausanne persecution paper, Christians in Pakistan are despised by the Muslim majority. Christians make up only 3 percent of the total population of Pakistan. They are offered only the lowest paying jobs. Following the United States' invasion of Afghanistan, Christians in Pakistan have become more direct targets of persecution.

According to the Lausanne persecution paper, more than 40 Christians were killed and 100 injured in attacks in Pakistan in 2002. Sociologically, the actions against the Christians can be traced to 9/11 and the military actions of the United States in response. However, if the Christians begin to think of their suffering in terms of geopolitical events, then their response may be a political one rather than a Christian one. They may feel that they are victims of political associations which they did not choose. They may begin a political movement to distance themselves from the United States, repudiate all that the U. S. military is doing, refuse any contact with missionaries from the West, and even refuse aid from the West in an effort to stop the attacks and make clear that they are not associated with the West. The entire situation is focused upon and related to political concern. Where is Christ in this? Where is righteousness? Should the Christian's first response not rather be one of great comfort and encouragement from Matthew 5:10-11? He should see how righteousness has identified him with Christ, and he should understand that the kingdom of heaven belongs to such sufferers as he has become. Of course, the suffering may instead cause him to realize that he did not suffer for righteousness because he had not been acting rightly in relation to the Lord. Yet, the suffering may, as has been the case with countless Christians on countless occasions in

the past, sober him and prove his hope in Christ. Either way, he should begin with a Christian, not a political, framework for understanding his suffering so that when he suffers he can, as Peter exhorted, suffer “as a Christian” (1 Pet 4:16). Indeed, when approached through the lens of righteousness, the Christian may even be blessed to “rejoice and be glad” because of affirmation of great reward in heaven (Matt 5:12).

Third, emphasizing the need to focus on the persecuted (rather than the persecutor) with a view toward regnal righteousness and its relation to Christ is extremely important in the context of Christ’s teaching in the Sermon on the Mount. While it is true in the Sermon on the Mount that those persecuted for the sake of righteousness have the kingdom of heaven, it is not the case that all persecution is promised the kingdom. As we have seen, not all violence and suffering is rightly classified as Christian persecution. Also, not all righteousness is promised the kingdom, just as it is not the case that all righteousness is acceptable for inheriting the kingdom of heaven. Matthew 5:20 states, “Unless your righteousness surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees, you shall not enter the kingdom of heaven.” Deines says, “Righteousness, which is at the same time demanded and presupposed in verse 20, means a new reality that is possible through Jesus and—because it is available from now on—also necessary for entering the kingdom of God.”²⁵ As Deines shows, Jesus righteousness is necessary for entry into the kingdom of heaven. Jesus righteousness is that which is necessary for establishing persecution and claiming the promised reward accompanying it in heaven. If the disciple is able to trace his persecution back to Jesus righteousness, he has incalculable encouragement from Christ (Matt 5:10-12; Mark 10:30; Jas 1:12; 1 Pet 3:14).

One may object to this formulation of the persecution dynamic on the basis that persecution is an action taken against another. Just as murder is an action that the

²⁵Roland Deines, “Not the Law but the Messiah,” in *Built Upon the Rock: Studies in the Gospel of Matthew* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008), 80.

perpetrator engages in against the victim, so, too, persecution is one of a series of actions that the persecutor perpetrates against the persecuted. Thus, as we would define the presence of murder by the motives and actions of the murderer, so, too, we should define the presence of persecution by the motives and actions of the persecutor. While this reasoning is sound enough and surely recognizes that there is moral culpability for those who persecute Christians (even as there are judgments against murderers), still, the situation is different with persecution. So different are the situations, in fact, that there seem to be at least three further reasons for not classifying persecution *primarily* by the perpetrator.

First, the actions and, especially the motives, of the perpetrators of persecution are often extremely difficult, if not altogether impossible, to determine. For instance, the Lausanne persecution paper makes repeated references to the War on Terror being a major factor in the increase of persecution of Christians throughout the Middle East and Asia. Can we be sure that Christians suffering in Palestine are suffering more now as a result of the War on Terror, or might they be suffering (as the Lausanne persecution paper asserts) because of retaliation on the part of angry Muslims who have had their houses razed by Israelis? Political affiliations and motivations make the actions of governments and individuals perpetrating persecution very difficult to classify rightly, a point which will become more sharply focused later in chapter 5 when the case of Dietrich Bonhoeffer is considered.

Even beyond the problem of political affiliations and motivations, there is the additional problem of the interplay between diverse social and contextual factors. The Lausanne persecution paper, as mentioned above, notes several of these factors: globalization, nationalism, traditionalism, economic disparity (to name a few). The reality of the interplay between these factors sometimes makes it quite difficult to discern which factors are actually related to the persecuting activities and which are not. In

Marxist countries, for instance, nationalism and economic disparity might always be contributing factors, and everything—even Christianity—might be viewed politically. The Lausanne persecution paper notes this reality when it makes mention of the oft-repeated occurrence in Colombia where Christians are routinely attacked because they happen to be in the midst of a cross-fire between two local warring factions, even though they are not directly linked to one side or the other. According to the Lausanne persecution paper, more than 100 pastors were killed between 1998 and 2004 by such illegal warring factions. Are they casualties of war or persecuted Christians? In these instances, their murders do not appear related to their manifestation of the righteousness of Christ, even though they are Christians who die violent deaths as Christians.

Even if the contextual factors were all cleared away, and the persecuting parties were completely honest about their reasons for attacking Christians, still, the categories would not be clearly defined because of the deception inherent in the human heart. The teaching of Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount warns the Christian to make sure he seeks first the kingdom of God and the righteousness that inherits the heavenly reward (as opposed to the righteousness of the Pharisees). If those concerned about righteousness might be wrong about their righteousness (the Pharisees) and if those concerned about their righteousness might need to examine their motives to make sure they are righteous (the disciples), then how much more is it certainly the case that those who are not concerned about righteousness could be deceived about their own motives and righteousness! The point has already been made (in the example of Sister Chang) that outward actions may not always disclose inward motives. The truly righteous (according to Jesus' teaching in the Sermon on the Mount) understand this, but even they must have qualifiers such as "for righteousness' sake" because intentions and actions are not always equal—and not always immediately recognizable. The actions and motives of those instigating persecution are, to say the least, difficult to ascertain.

A second reason that the category for defining persecution ought primarily to follow the persecuted and not the persecutor is that it is possible—or even likely—that the persecutor is not willing to acknowledge his action in persecuting Christ. The obvious example of this case is the Apostle Paul who once persecuted the Church of Christ. In persecuting the disciples of Jesus Christ, Paul, according to Acts 9:4-5, was persecuting Christ Himself. This passage makes clear, as Cunningham demonstrates, that “the persecution of the disciples of Jesus is equivalent to the persecution of Jesus Himself.”²⁶ Paul was persecuting Jesus when he was “breathing threats and murder against the disciples of Jesus.”²⁷ Yet, when Jesus appeared to him on the road to Damascus, Paul said, “Who are you?” Of course, Paul knew about Jesus and his followers. His presence at the stoning of Stephen is a clear indication of this knowledge. Still, the narratives in Acts 9, 22, and 26 indicate that there was much about Christ that Paul simply did not know. According to the Acts 26 account, Paul was very zealous to keep the Pharisaical traditions, and, as a result, he decided he had to do many things hostile to the name of Jesus of Nazareth. Though Paul knew about Jesus of Nazareth, he, evidently, did not know the resurrected Jesus until he met him on the Damascus road. Paul was, in fact, persecuting Jesus in a very real sense, much like that of those who pierced Him (John 19:34; Rev 1:7). Nevertheless, Paul would not have acknowledged Christ as the object of his persecution at the time.

Like the situation of Paul’s persecution, the present day situation in Sudan is quite illuminating on this issue. The Lausanne persecution paper reports that millions of Sudanese have been killed in the past decades because of the government’s “ruthless

²⁶Scott Cunningham, *Through Many Tribulations: The Theology of Persecution in Luke-Acts* JSNTSup 142 (Sheffield Academic Press: Sheffield, 1997), 221.

²⁷See Acts 9:1. The passage begs for a thorough discussion of what it means that Jesus is equivalent to his disciples. Is it a question of presence or identification or mystical union? See Cunningham, *Through Many Tribulations*, for a discussion and further reference to the problems of the debate.

policy of Arabizing and Islamizing the mainly non-Muslim and non-Arab south.”²⁸ Obviously, the government, in its Islamizing efforts, has made no distinction between Christian and non-Christian. Christians and animists, along with any other non-Muslims, have been targeted for killings and displacement. The government has not offered, as Paul did, the explanation that they just had to do something against Jesus of Nazareth. The government of Sudan has a much more comprehensive plan of Islamization. Christians, along with other non-Muslims, stand in the way of that plan. So, they have been killed or displaced collectively because they are not Muslim. Nonetheless, the Christians in Sudan, according to the Lausanne persecution paper, are experiencing growth in numbers and in strength as they determine to understand how to fulfill their role as Christians in Sudan.²⁹ The Christians—at least some of them—consider their suffering as persecution on account of being Christian. Is this persecution? The answer seems to hinge on the whether the persecuted are manifesting the righteousness of Christ. If the persecuted are targeted on account of Christ’s righteousness, then the situation is persecution. If not, it isn’t. The categories of religious freedom, Christian suffering, perhaps even genocide, could be invoked, but persecution should not. The answer to the question depends not upon the motive of the persecutor, but, rather, on the manifestation of righteousness concerning the persecuted. The Christians would need first to assess their own motives and seek to understand why this suffering targets them specifically.

Third, categorizing persecution based on the persecuted instead of the persecutor fits most naturally the paradigm of the Sermon on the Mount. Getting back to Gundry’s point, the Beatitudes speak a “word of encouragement to the persecuted church.”³⁰ The encouragement of the Beatitudes (and the Sermon on the Mount) is for

²⁸Lausanne persecution paper, Section 2.1(c).

²⁹Ibid., Section 5.3.3.

³⁰Gundry, *Matthew*, 73.

the righteous who are persecuted because of Christ. In the Sermon on the Mount, the disciples of Christ have a paradigm for assessing suffering. If they are identified with Christ on account of their manifesting His righteousness through their faith, then they may count the suffering as persecution on account of Him, thus being encouraged by the blessings. If they are unable to see the relation between their suffering and His righteousness, then they may conclude that their suffering is not the persecution described in the Sermon on the Mount. The introspection should serve as a healthy check on righteousness, too, to make sure the righteousness they are displaying is the righteousness of Christ, that is, the Jesus righteousness that exceeds that of the Pharisees. Categorizing persecution based on the persecuted seems to be consonant with the pattern Christ establishes with his disciples in the Sermon on the Mount. The follower of Christ seeks first Christ's kingdom and his righteousness even as he turns his attention to the more worldly concerns of politics and religious freedom.

With the many diverse and complex contexts in the global array of Christian persecution, Christians will, undoubtedly, have a difficult time categorizing particular instances of persecution rightly. The Lausanne persecution paper gives numerous examples of just how difficult the matter can be. However, the Sermon on the Mount offers a basic paradigm established from the perspective of the persecuted which can certainly help with the proper categorization of persecution. Beginning with the manifestation of righteousness and tracing those faith actions back to Christ ensures, on the one hand, that the categorization of persecution is rightly determined in relation to righteousness, while, on the other hand, it ensures that the follower of Christ who is truly persecuted is also comforted by the promise of reward and blessing in the kingdom of God. Christian persecution occurs as a retaliatory action against the revelation of the righteousness of Christ. The need for categorizing and the need for comfort with which to encourage persecuted Christians appear to offer two possible arguments in favor of

making a functional distinction between righteousness as the cause of persecution and righteousness as the occasion of persecution.

The consideration of the Lausanne call for theological definition has demonstrated also that there is a need for works in diokology. The regnal dynamic of persecution as developed from Matthew 5:10-12 offers a viable construct from which definitions and categorizations can be made with respect to persecution. At this point, it is necessary to acknowledge that this present research is not the only research which has been done attempting to offer theological categories toward understanding persecution. Two recent works have, in fact, emerged. So, our attention is now turned to consider the regnal dynamic in relation to these two recent works by Glenn Penner and Josef Ton.

Consideration of Penner's Biblical Theology

Glenn Penner seeks to serve the church of Jesus Christ through his ministry to persecuted Christians around the world. Penner has met with and ministered to persecuted Christians on four different continents and in many different countries. His work on staff with Voice of the Martyrs Canada and his academic work as visiting professor at Oklahoma Wesleyan University have given Penner an opportunity to pursue the study of persecution both academically and experientially. Surely, Penner has seen the problems spoken of in the Lausanne occasional paper. As a result of his observing Christianity and studying the Bible through the lens of persecution, Penner has been able to see what he believes many in the West have failed to see—that not all suffering is the result of sin. In fact, some suffering is the result of righteousness. Penner notes that typical Bible students in America never even suspect “that the texts that deal with pain and suffering might be dealing with suffering for righteousness’ sake rather than suffering because of sin.”³¹ Penner explains that the reason students never suspect such

³¹Penner, *In the Shadow of the Cross*, 8.

suffering is that they have never experienced such suffering for righteousness' sake. These students, then, assume wrongly that the suffering in the biblical text refers to general suffering in a fallen world. One sees immediately in the thrust of Penner's work an affirmation both of the need called for by Lausanne to understand suffering for Christ's sake. One can also see in Penner's work an affirmation of the regnal righteousness dynamic. Penner believes the failure of Christians in the West to have suffered physical persecution as a result of faith has led to their neglecting contextual issues related to persecution in their study of the Scriptures. Most of the New Testament, Penner asserts, was written by persecuted Christians to persecuted Christians.

Penner's book *In the Shadow of the Cross* is an attempt to point out the significance of the theme of persecution for biblical Christianity. Furthermore, the book is designed to help Christians both in persecuted and non-persecuted contexts understand why there is persecution and what it means to suffer for righteousness' sake. As a resource for cataloguing the biblical passages related to persecution, the book proffers an acceptable, albeit brief, overview of biblical passages related to persecution.³² Beyond being a general aid for surveying biblical examples of persecution, this book also intends to be a "biblical theology" of persecution and discipleship. However, the preface of the book makes clear that—regardless of the sub-title *A Biblical Theology of Persecution and Discipleship*—the main intention of Penner's book is not to develop a biblical theology in the academic tradition but, instead, is to attempt to develop a teaching manual for Christians in persecuted contexts. So, speaking of his book, Penner says that it is "written primarily for church leaders in religiously restricted nations in the hopes of

³²Penner, *In the Shadow of the Cross*, often only mentions passages, offering neither biblical nor theological interpretations of them. For instance, his section on Old Testament history mentions the execution of Zechariah (2 Chr 24:20-22) in bullet form as part of a list of examples of suffering in relation to allegiance to the living God (41).

helping equip them to minister more effectively to their congregations.”³³ Because the intended audience is the suffering church abroad, this book probably may not fit best in the genre of biblical theology at all. It is written for congregational instruction and not for academic consumption.

Still, Penner does state that a secondary function of this book is to correct misunderstandings prevalent in the West concerning biblical texts. In correcting these misunderstandings, Penner hopes to strengthen the church in the West and help it develop and live by a biblical view of suffering.³⁴ Thus, he states that he does intend for Christians in the West to engage the book seriously on the matter of biblical theology in general and, in particular, on the matter of a biblical theology of discipleship and persecution. Therefore, Penner’s biblical conception of persecution shall be considered with respect to the regnal righteousness dynamic.

Penner begins his biblical theology of persecution appropriately enough in the book of Genesis. Particularly, Penner says that in Genesis 3 “we see the basis for the coming persecution of God’s people.”³⁵ By “the coming persecution,” Penner intends the unfolding conflict between the people of God (who are persecuted) and those under the dominion of Satan who do the persecuting. The basis of the coming persecution is the inherent conflict consequent to the reconciling of creation to its creator. For Penner, the reconciliation takes place in a framework of conflict. Penner enumerates this framework in four parts. First, the main problem which caused creation to be in need of divine conciliatory action is the problem of the sin of humankind. Concerning sin and the Fall, Penner offers a brief and general infralapsarian approach to God’s foreordination and what would probably be classified as a semi-Pelagian view of original sin, although he

³³Penner, *In the Shadow of the Cross*, 9.

³⁴Ibid.

³⁵Ibid., 27.

engages neither of these issues in his statements.³⁶ He says only, “To create humankind in His image but deny them the freedom not to love and trust Him would have been a violation of His own character.”³⁷ He speaks further of God’s decrees being put in motion from the foundation of the world, but he does not elaborate on the tension produced by the interplay of two such statements. Whether he understands distinctions within the debate of original sin related to both inward and outward effects of the Fall, he does not say. The reader is left to speculate. Penner simply states that sin is the main factor which caused creation to find itself in need of divine reconciliation. In his own words, “The culprit responsible for this world’s condition is man.”³⁸ Perhaps it would be too much to ask of such a biblical theology to provide specificity on these points of original sin; yet, McFadyen makes a point concerning original sin in its Augustinian formulation which may impact diokological studies. McFadyen argues that the Augustinian formulation of original sin which includes man in an utter bondage and yet a willing culprit “has more to offer . . . victims of oppression than is generally recognized.”³⁹ McFadyen means by this that, although victims are not experiencing free agency in the Pelagian sense, the will is not incapacitated. Rather, the will is coerced into cooperation with those who oppress. One may see in the case of persecution how such a dynamic with regard to the will might be significant. Nevertheless, Penner does not engage such distinctions. McFadyen goes on to say that contemporary models of original sin “have been marked by the principal cultural assumption of modernity: the inalienable freedom of the person In modern theology it is freedom rather than sin that is an

³⁶Ibid., 280. Penner addresses his Arminian convictions with respect to depravity. In this extended footnote, Penner argues for the kind of prevenient grace found in the writings of Arminius.

³⁷Ibid., 27.

³⁸Ibid., 25.

³⁹Alisdair McFadyen, “Sin,” in *The Oxford Companion to Christian Thought*, ed. Adrian Hastings, Alistair Mason, and Hugh Pyper (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 667.

inescapable structure of being.”⁴⁰ Perhaps such is the case with Penner’s formulation, too.

Second, Penner draws the conclusion that reconciliation will not arrive in the fallen world apart from suffering. He derives his conclusion from the mention of a bruised heel in the section of Scripture the church fathers called the Protoevangelium (Gen 3:15). There will be a crushing of the Serpent’s head, to be sure, but that crushing will not take place apart from bruising. Perhaps following Wenham,⁴¹ Penner argues that the bruising in view is metaphorical, symbolizing a long battle between the forces of good and the forces of evil, with the good finally triumphant in the war. Penner neither quotes nor engages any Old Testament scholars with regard to this interpretation of the bruising of the heel. It is, perhaps, just as likely that Penner is following the interpretation of Gerhard von Rad, who, though he is not quoted directly in this section, is quoted in Penner’s following section on the blood of Abel crying out against Cain. On the matter of the conflict between the seed of the serpent and the seed of the woman, von Rad says, “Wherever man and serpent meet, the meeting always involves life and death.”⁴² The reconciliation, then, will not happen apart from bruising and crushing.

Third, Penner says that persecution takes place because the context of reconciliation is one “of battle between the serpent and the woman, which is echoed in Revelation 12.”⁴³ Unfortunately, Penner does not elaborate on this point; so, the reader is left again to speculate what he might argue if pushed to greater precision on this point.

⁴⁰Ibid., 668.

⁴¹Gordon Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 1 (Waco: Word Books, 1987), 80-81.

⁴²Gerhard von Rad, *Genesis: A Commentary*, rev. ed., The Old Testament Library (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1973), 93.

⁴³Penner, *In the Shadow of the Cross*, 26.

Most likely, Penner does not mean that the on-going conflict of persecution in the world is a mystical conflict of the serpent and a female. He does not mention the nature of the relationship of the woman to Christ. He may or may not intend for this passage to be viewed as the Protoevangelium. He does not say for sure how the Genesis passage relates to the Revelation 12 passage. By calling attention to Revelation 12 as he does, Penner only heightens the interest in the question of whether he views Genesis 3:15 as the Protoevangelium, considering the fact that in Revelation 12, “God protects Christ and the Messianic community against Satanic harm.”⁴⁴ Probably, Penner is arguing that the context of reconciliation is one in which the godly (those in right relationship to God) will be targets of persecution at the hands of those who remain at enmity with God (the ungodly, like Cain).

In tune with the flow of the narrative, Penner offers the fourth aspect of his framework for persecution: Cain and Abel offer the first example of persecution. In my estimation, this acknowledgement by Penner is a strong point of the book. Often when listing martyrs, scholars fail to consider Abel as the first.⁴⁵ Penner acknowledges both that Abel is a martyr in the biblical sense and that something about his martyrdom is characteristic of (if not essential to) persecution. Penner speaks of the murder of Abel as the first case of persecution. Penner also recognizes that “Abel’s death was because Cain’s acts were evil and Abel’s were righteous.”⁴⁶ This persecution against the righteous Abel was mentioned in reference both to the earlier studies of Matthew and Luke. Unfortunately, however, Penner fails to recognize the manner in which such righteousness frames the entire persecution dynamic. Instead, he says that persecution

⁴⁴G. K. Beale, *The Book of Revelation*, NIGTC, vol. 20 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 624.

⁴⁵For example, see Mark Water, *The New Encyclopedia of Christian Martyrs* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2001). Though this book speaks of Christian martyrs specifically, it treats biblical martyrdom generally, too, and lists the Old Testament martyrs, excluding any mention of Abel.

⁴⁶Penner, *In the Shadow of the Cross*, 28.

began “because of religious intolerance.”⁴⁷ This conclusion is unfortunate indeed because Penner already noted the comment from 1 John 3:12 that this persecution happened because (ὅτι) Abel’s works were righteous and Cain’s evil. Would this distinction based on righteousness not prove to be the outworking of Genesis 3:15? If so, this would illumine in what way the offspring will bruise and crush each other throughout the Old Testament, and it would highlight the manner in which the Christ would triumph in the conflict, thereby explaining, too, how he is connected to Genesis 3:15, though not directly the subject of it. More than failing to clarify the relation of Genesis 3:15 to biblical persecution, Penner’s classification of Abel’s murder as resulting from “religious intolerance” fails to understand the role of righteousness in persecution throughout the Bible. Granted, it is too great a task to establish a full biblical theology of persecution in this research project. Nevertheless, seeing the prevalence of righteousness in the first biblical example of persecution is an encouragement for continuing to pursue the regnal righteousness framework for understanding all persecution in the Old and New Testaments. Though Penner does not mention this fact, it is the case that 1 John is not alone in establishing the connection between the persecution of Abel and the presence of righteousness: Matthew, Luke, and Hebrews speak the same way. While it is true that Luke does not use the term *righteousness*, surely, the idea is in place just the same as he, too, speaks of the requiting of innocent blood at the hands of the guilty. Bloodguilt and retribution are in view in Luke. Salvation of the godly and condemnation of the ungodly are in view, which is to say, righteousness is in view in Luke and in all these instances. Surely, the regnal righteousness dynamic explains Cain, Abel, and biblical persecution better than religious intolerance.

To his defense, Penner’s project could not allow a full synthesizing of the biblical materials on every pertinent point of doctrine because he attempted to construct a

⁴⁷Ibid., 29.

biblical theology of persecution and discipleship. What a monumental task! Even within evangelicalism, scholars do not agree on the exact shape of biblical theology, some emphasizing more the synchronic analysis within certain documents, while others pursue a diachronic synthesis over larger sections of the canon—presumably the approach Penner takes in this work, though he does not declare such an approach avowedly. The use of *biblical theology* in Penner’s title raises the expectation of a certain type of dialogue with biblical theology as an academic field. With *biblical theology* in the title, the book conjures up the expectation of a consideration of Vos, Schlatter, or Childs, but such expectations are never met. Penner never addresses the questions of biblical theology. He never defends his implied thesis that there can be a biblical theology as a whole, even though many scholars insist that there must remain at the least a separation between Old Testament theology and a New Testament theology, with the possibility of a synthesis beyond these two categories considered dubious at best because of the peculiarly Jewish mindset of the Old Testament and a dependence upon a canon which was closed before the arrival of the Messiah. Neither does Penner concern himself with ontological considerations of the nature of revelation as either divine communication or historical reflections, though his respect for the text and his theological convictions tend to answer that question for the reader.

Beyond the specific questions related to establishing a biblical theology are the questions concerning the downstream effects of maintaining a biblical theology. More than one scholar has pointed out the necessity of keeping biblical theology in check by the more traditional forms of systematic, historical, and philosophical theology. One of the more recent confrontations between the “theologies” in the academic arena has come from Carl Trueman.⁴⁸ Trueman has stoked the ire of biblical theology purists by insisting

⁴⁸Carl Trueman, “A Revolutionary Balancing Act,” *Themelios* 27, no. 3 (2002): 1-4. See also the counterpoint by Graeme Goldsworthy, “Ontology and Biblical Theology—A Response to Carl Trueman’s Editorial: A Revolutionary Balancing Act,” *Themelios*, 28, no. 1 (2002): 37-45.

that an emphasis on biblical theology undermines the traditional (and necessary) Christian Trinitarian ontology. Speaking of the new academic emphasis (at least among evangelical scholars) on biblical theology, Trueman says that such an emphasis will, in the end, “prove ultimately self-defeating: a divine economy without a divine ontology is unstable and will collapse.”⁴⁹ Goldsworthy, though he acknowledges the legitimacy of Trueman’s concern related to the pitfalls of diachronic synthesis, argues instead that the alarm Trueman has sounded speaks not of inherent dangers with biblical theology, but, rather, with a failure to apply adequately (or at least appreciate fully) the hermeneutical spiral as proposed by Grant Osborne.⁵⁰ Either way—whether one adheres to Trueman or one incorporates the safeguards of Osborne—the truth remains that producing a biblical theology would prove an arduous and precipitous task. Penner need not necessarily engage Trueman’s ontological concerns; nor does he necessarily need to adapt Goldsworthy’s adaptation of a hermeneutical spiral, but he does need to recognize and defend his own approach to the topic of biblical theology in order to avoid the pitfalls Trueman and Goldsworthy acknowledge as present in biblical theology.

Just how intensely practical these considerations are for a work like Penner’s is illustrated by the fact that the first attempt Penner makes at presenting a biblical theology of persecution and suffering ends with philosophical—not biblical—categories prevailing. Penner follows the biblical (canonical) order of the books of the Bible, thus beginning his discussion with the Pentateuch. Adhering closely to the categories of the Bible in their canonical order would seem to yield a first order importance to the category of creation. One might expect to begin the biblical theology of persecution and discipleship with creation, but Penner actually begins his biblical theology with the extra-

⁴⁹Trueman, “A Revolutionary Balancing Act,” 3.

⁵⁰Graeme Goldsworthy, “The Ontological and Systematic Roots of Biblical Theology,” *Reformed Theological Review* 62 (2003): 152-64.

canonical (and perhaps extra-biblical) category of human rights. Under his heading of “In the Beginning: Insights from the Pentateuch,” Penner embarks on a lengthy discussion of “The Christian view of human rights and religious liberty.”⁵¹ Now, the point here is not to gainsay the grounding of Christian anthropology in Pentateuchal revelation. Rather, the point is to demonstrate just how necessary a fleshing out of prolegomena is for a biblical theology of persecution and discipleship. The terms *Christian*, *human rights*, and *religious liberty* are not specifically terms of biblical theology proper—at least not as derivations of the Pentateuch. Penner would help the reader more and strengthen the effectiveness of his work in correcting “misunderstandings of Bible passages in the West” if he were to establish his biblical theology of persecution more precisely in the categories of biblical theology.

In a similar way, Penner needs also to show just why it is that *persecution* itself is such a category in biblical theology needing fuller development. Just as *human rights* and *religious liberty* were not biblical theology categories derived from the Pentateuch, so, too, *persecution* might not be, particularly from the viewpoint of the Old Testament. Implicitly, Penner actually does argue for such a status for persecution as a biblical category by stating that persecution is such a major theme throughout the canon of Scripture that it demands fuller theological development. Penner’s strongest argument in favor of establishing a biblical theology of persecution is the sheer amount of biblical material on the topic. As his work demonstrates, the concept of persecution (even if not the terminology) is prevalent and significant in every major division of the canon—Pentateuch, History, Wisdom, Prophets, Writings, Gospels, Acts, Letters, and Revelation. However, Penner does not focus synchronically (at least not in a discernible, systematic way) on the various authors of the various canonical divisions. On occasion, Penner does this sort of synchronic analysis, as is demonstrated by his treatment of Matthew 10:16-

⁵¹Penner, *In the Shadow of the Cross*, 11.

42.⁵² On the whole, though, Penner moves away from synchronic analysis, leapfrogging often over diachronic analysis to treat a number of themes from systematic theology or missiology—themes such as impassibility, Arminianism, and Muslim dialog.

Beyond the validity of a theology of persecution is the question of whether such a theology can be a theology both of persecution and discipleship. The same problems inherent in the effort to justify a biblical theology of *persecution* are also applicable to the effort of establishing a biblical theology of *discipleship*. With *discipleship*, though, the problem is particularly acute because the concept *discipleship* seems, *prima facie* at least, to be a uniquely New Testament concept, related to the coming of the Messiah. That being the case, an author intending to develop a biblical theology of discipleship would need to clarify the limits of such a biblical theology. His attempt at defining *discipleship* would need to be limited exclusively to the New Testament—or somehow explicitly demonstrate its relationship to the Old Testament. Either way, the relationship between the two testaments would need to be stated in order for *discipleship* to be a biblical category and not just a category of New Testament theology. So Penner, even if he had defended the position that *discipleship* is a uniquely New Testament concept, would still be obliged to establish diachronically its theological shape across the testaments. This diachronic work is not possible, as demonstrated in the aforementioned case with *persecution*, without first compiling a synchronic analysis separately of the works of the various New Testament authors. Perhaps it is not necessary to say, but such a task would be monumental.

Efforts have been undertaken to develop “theologies” of discipleship, but they have generally focused on one particular author. So, for instance, Ernest Best has published a kind of theology of discipleship for the gospel of Mark.⁵³ In this theology,

⁵²Ibid., 119.

⁵³Ernest Best, *Following Jesus: Discipleship in the Gospel of Mark*, JSNTSup 4 (Sheffield:

Best illustrates the dilemma of defining discipleship in Mark by exploring how one must begin with Jesus for his understanding of discipleship but move toward men as examples, either positive or negative.⁵⁴ Best's effort is book-length. In addition, a great amount of further scholarship has been focused on whether Mark's view of the disciples is a positive or a negative one. If this is the case with the topic of discipleship in Mark, then how much academic work is there to sort through in defining discipleship throughout the remaining 26 books of the New Testament? To do justice to the category of *discipleship* would mean to engage in extensive interaction with vast amounts of academic treatises in New Testament theology before making a substantial statement on the biblical theology of discipleship. Penner does not do this kind of academic engagement. His book does not address the issues brought out by Ernest Best on the issue of discipleship. As a matter of fact, Penner does not specifically define discipleship or defend its legitimacy as a biblical or theological category; neither does he illuminate the nature of the affinity between persecution and discipleship.

As stated, *discipleship* is not an Old Testament category. It is understood to be a New Testament term relating specifically to the followers of Jesus. As Best says, "True understanding of discipleship depends on a true understanding of Jesus."⁵⁵ If Best is right, then all discussions of discipleship need to begin with discussions of Jesus, which, of course, would mean discussions of the New Testament. As a result, Penner needs to explain how, in his discussion of the Psalms, he is able to conflate the idea of discipleship into the idea of persecution. What exactly is the definition of discipleship and how does the idea of discipleship relate to persecution? This question leads to the conclusion that for Penner the relationship between persecution and discipleship is inevitable. While this

JSOT Press, 1981), 283.

⁵⁴Ibid., 11.

⁵⁵Ibid., 12.

is not unreasonable as a working assumption for the New Testament, it is at least puzzling as a framework for understanding the people of God in the Old Testament. In his discussion of the Psalms, for instance, Penner discusses “How the Early Church Used Psalms in Their Discussion of Persecution and Discipleship.”⁵⁶ While there is no doubt that early Christians used the Psalms as they struggled with being faithful disciples through persecution, there is confusion in the way Penner presents this material. The discussion of the use of the Psalms by the early church comes in Penner’s book not as part of a section covering the early church fathers, but, rather, in a section of biblical theology titled, “Poets and Philosophers: Insights from the Wisdom Literature.”⁵⁷ Discussing how the early church utilized the Psalms is not a biblical, theological discussion of the Psalms. Further, no scholars producing biblical, theological discussions of the Psalms have proposed *discipleship* as a category of the Psalms. In fact, scholars generally concede that *discipleship* is exclusively a New Testament concept related to Jesus and his followers. Blendinger, for instance, states emphatically that there are no Old Testament precedents for the New Testament language of *discipleship*.⁵⁸ Rengstorf adds that there is in the Old Testament “no place for the establishment of a master-disciple relation.”⁵⁹

In this section on the wisdom literature, Penner appears to be conflating the idea of discipleship into an inevitable partnership with persecution. Penner’s further discussion of persecution and discipleship under this heading does nothing to dispel the negative impact of appearing to conflate the two ideas into one, considering that the

⁵⁶Penner, *In the Shadow of the Cross*, 56.

⁵⁷*Ibid.*, 42-72.

⁵⁸C. Blendinger, “ακολουθεω,” in *The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology*, ed. Colin Brown (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1986), 481.

⁵⁹K. H. Rengstorf, “μαθητης,” in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1967), 431.

discussion following this heading is little more than a discussion of a letter from Athanasius to Marcellinus on the interpretation of the Psalms. Nowhere in his discussion does Penner clarify the distinction he is making between the two categories of persecution and discipleship. Nowhere does he relate the New Testament idea of *discipleship* back to the Psalms or to any other part of the Old Testament. Practically speaking, Christians have certainly used the Psalms in discipleship and devotion. One need not deny that reality to question whether, academically, the relationship between the two can simply be taken for granted. Can the Psalms serve as a guide to discipleship if the writers of the Psalms never had an idea of discipleship? Perhaps. Yet, the onus certainly is on the scholar making such a claim to demonstrate how this relationship between discipleship and persecution would work. At least with the concept of *persecution*, there are New Testament references in which persecution is related in some way back to the Old Testament prophets.⁶⁰ Yet, with *discipleship*, this connection is significantly harder to establish.

Even more serious, because it is more damaging to his effort to construct a biblical theology of persecution and discipleship, Penner's conflation of the two concepts of persecution and discipleship undermines the fine work he has accomplished in establishing the reality of a biblical theology of persecution. The linking of the category of *discipleship* with the category of *persecution* unnecessarily limits Penner's ability to actually construct a biblical theology of persecution. Penner perceptively (and rightly, I believe) begins his biblical theology of persecution with the narrative of Cain and Abel, seemingly saying that persecution begins in the earliest parts of the Old Testament, immediately following the narrative of the Fall and the curses placed on creation in Genesis 3. In so doing, Penner is establishing the presence of persecution in the Old

⁶⁰See prior discussions in chap. 2 related to Matt 5:12 and in chap. 3 to Cunningham's use of prophetic identification in Luke-Acts.

Testament context.⁶¹ If his book wishes to be a biblical theology of persecution, then he is free to proceed from this account in Genesis to the remainder of the Pentateuch, then on to history, wisdom, prophets, and writings, covering the Old Testament completely because the Old Testament knows of and speaks to the idea of persecution in Daniel, Jeremiah, Ezra, Nehemiah, and the Chronicles. Particularly, Penner might have traced the Abel/righteousness encounter with the mentions of it in the New Testament to formulate a canonical, regnal righteousness paradigm which could be tested. Penner summarizes nicely the many Old Testament passages related to persecution. If, however, Penner is asserting that persecution is inherently linked with discipleship, then the matter changes entirely. His ability to construct a biblical theology of persecution *and* discipleship is hampered by the reality that discipleship is a New Testament—never an Old Testament—concept. It would have been more prudent for Penner to have sought to develop persecution alone. The effort of combining discipleship with persecution is unnecessary for a biblical theology of persecution. Hence, Penner’s work—though it does enumerate the biblical texts relating to persecution—cannot provide the theological definitions Lausanne seeks.

Penner’s work would be a more viable academic venture if these biblical, theological matters were addressed in a more thorough fashion. As it is, however, the book is probably best suited for two purposes. First, Penner, having taught in Canada, the United States, and in persecuted contexts around the world, has already demonstrated the value of his work by using it to minister to Christ’s global church. Focusing attention on the many passages of Scripture related to persecution is necessary in our modern context where, perhaps, millions of Christians have never suffered for the sake of righteousness. Penner’s work can awaken—and most likely already has awakened—

⁶¹Some works in persecution studies do not view Cain as the first instance or as paradigmatic. See, for example, Mark Water, ed., *The New Encyclopedia of Christian Martyrs* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2001), for an example of not including Abel in the discussion of biblical martyrs.

Christians to the biblical reality that persecution is related to Christ Himself. The Church in America and abroad surely will only benefit from a fresh realization of biblical teachings on persecution.

Second, Penner's work shows just how much material is available for further study both in the areas of persecution and discipleship. The attempt to study the two ideas together for a sustained diachronic synthesis of the biblical canon is, most likely, too much for any person to attempt. Penner's work, however, offers a helpful "fly over" or aerial view of the landscape needing to be explored more intensely. Surely, his suspicion that many Christians have lost the capacity to think of suffering as occurring *for righteousness' sake* is on the mark, or, at the very least, worthy of further consideration. This present research has, in fact, sought to begin such a consideration. Penner shows there is much ground yet to till in persecution studies.

Consideration of Ton's Suffering Martyrology

Although Penner's book may not be best suited for satisfying the theological needs of the Lausanne conference, it does highlight the vast amount of biblical data on persecution, and it hints that persecution actually began with the original offspring of the original couple. Since the day that Cain struck down his brother Abel, the worshipers of God in righteousness have faced persecution and suffered martyrdom for their faith. The Old Testament book of Job points out that righteousness made him a target for the calamitous attacks that befell him (Job 1:1, 8-9). In addition, many of the prophets of Israel and Judah were persecuted—Jeremiah and Isaiah among the most noteworthy of them. Of course, even Jesus, the promised Messiah—the Son of God Himself—was persecuted to the point of death on a Cross. The same Jesus who suffered this death on the cross warned his followers to take up their own crosses, expecting persecution for his

name's sake.⁶² The history of the followers of Christ demonstrates the reliability of these warnings, considering that this history is laced throughout with the persecution of the righteous on account of Christ: Stephen, Paul, James, Peter, John, Polycarp, Perpetua, Huss, Tyndale, Luther, Bunyan, and, more recently, Paul Schneider, Allen Yuan, and John and Betty Stamm. Given this long (and anticipated) history of the persecution of Christians, Josef Ton makes this startling disclosure: "Protestant theologians unfortunately have never articulated a systematic and universal investigation of suffering and martyrdom."⁶³ Obviously, Ton is not forgetting *Foxe's Book of Martyrs* or other compilations of martyrdom.⁶⁴ Rather, the deficiency he sees is the same as that of Lausanne. There exists a need for theological categories in order for Christians to understand and respond rightly to Christian persecution both in America and in more hostile contexts.

Ton's book, *Suffering, Martyrdom, and Rewards in Heaven*, is his own attempt to correct this deficiency in diokological studies and provide necessary categories for understanding persecution. For Ton, the study of persecution is personal and experiential as well as academic. Ton, in addition to studying and lecturing on persecution and martyrdom for more than two decades, is familiar with persecution through the experience of preaching and teaching as a Christian in Communist Romania. Of his experience in Romania, Ton says that he "preached, lectured, and wrote for nearly a decade, ready to be martyred for what I was doing, yet knowing that death would be my

⁶²Matt 10:22-23, Matt 24:9, Luke 9:23, John 15:21, (cf. 2 Tim 3:12; Heb 11:26; Jas 1:12; 1 Pet 4:14; Rev 6:11).

⁶³Josef Ton, *Suffering, Martyrdom, and Rewards in Heaven* (Wheaton, IL: The Romanian Missionary Society, 2000), xii.

⁶⁴W. H. C. Frend, *Martyrdom and Persecution in the Early Church: A Study of a Conflict from the Maccabees to Donatus* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1965) offers an historical approach to the study of persecution.

supreme weapon of conquest and my road to the highest glory in heaven.”⁶⁵ Eventually, Ton, along with his wife and daughter, was exiled from Romania. In exile (at Wheaton), Ton turned again to his studies of persecution, fleshing out precisely how the Christian road to “the highest glory in heaven” might pass through suffering persecution.

The conclusion of Ton’s research is that “throughout the course of earthly history, God has been at work shaping His children, forming their character, preparing them for ruling, and testing their faithfulness and reliability.”⁶⁶ Ton states this conclusion after reviewing the literature of the Old Testament, the literature of the inter-testamental period, the literature of the New Testament, and the literature of church history related to persecution. For his study of the Old Testament, Ton focuses on three books: Job, Daniel, and Isaiah, “because the basic ideas that should make up our theology of martyrdom have already been outlined in these books.”⁶⁷ Though the significance of Ton’s work exceeds any focus on his methodology, still, Ton’s methodology is worth mentioning briefly, as it appears to start with a theology (“basic ideas”) in place and then chooses books of the Bible to review which seem best to support those ideas. One may question, for instance, why Ton’s discussion of persecution does not begin (as Jesus’s discussion does)⁶⁸ with Cain and Abel from chapter 4 of Genesis. A biblical, theological hermeneutic, it seems, would need to address the first instance of the persecution of the righteous and wrestle with how the Old and New Testament writers interpret that event in relation to Christ. The writers of Genesis, Matthew, Luke, Hebrews, 1 John, and Jude all speak of Cain’s persecution of Abel, but this is not the case with the writers of Job, Daniel, and Isaiah. In addition, questions arise (as we saw in the Penner discussion)

⁶⁵Ibid., xii.

⁶⁶Ibid., 422.

⁶⁷Ibid., xv.

⁶⁸See the statements attributed to Christ in Matt 23:33-36 and Luke 11:51.

concerning Cain and Abel in relation to persecution—questions such as whether there is an emanation of an ungodly line of persecutors starting with Cain. Do Cain and Abel set forth a paradigm of hostility between the godly line and the ungodly line? This question becomes more interesting when one notes the inclination often in the Old Testament to favor the chosen younger brother: So, Isaac is chosen over Ishmael; Jacob is chosen over Esau; Ephraim is chosen over Manasseh; David is chosen over seven brothers and over the reigning king, Saul. Persecution often follows these choices—perhaps displaying God’s righteousness in salvation and judgment, while explaining man’s ire in opposing it (and opposing the people favored by it). In view of these Old Testament features, the Cain and Abel narrative seems to be, at least, worth considering insofar as the persecution of the righteous may be under review. Ton, however, never mentions Cain and Abel; nor does he give any consideration to the contribution the Cain and Abel narrative makes toward a biblical theology of persecution. The New Testament passages speaking of Cain and Abel are largely ignored by Ton, even though they treat Abel as the first martyr.

Ton’s disregard for these passages is, most likely, related to the fact that his work is more narrowly focused on the issue of rewards as a motivation and encouragement for the victims of persecution. In other words, he is not so much developing a biblical theology of suffering and martyrdom as he is developing a theology of suffering and martyrdom which is *related to rewards*. His choice, then, of the Old Testament books relating to suffering and martyrdom is limited by his desire to demonstrate that suffering and martyrdom are linked to rewards in heaven. That linkage between suffering and reward in heaven is not readily visible in the Cain and Abel narrative, although the mention of it in Hebrews 11:4 might support Ton’s thesis, considering that the text affirms that God *commended*⁶⁹ Abel as righteous. Ton has a

⁶⁹But in Greek, ἐμαρτυρήθη εἶναι δίκαιος.

specific focus on rewards that he wishes to establish. Thus, he chooses his texts with this focus in view.

The same focus is seen in Ton's understanding of resurrection and rewards and, thus, in his choice of which inter-testamental literature to consider; his choice of which New Testament texts to discuss; and his choice of historical literature to explain. So, for example, Ton, in focusing on the literature with regard to persecution, engages in re-making the argument "that *only the martyrs* will be resurrected to reign with Christ for a thousand years."⁷⁰ The teaching of a first resurrection exclusively for the martyrs may, indeed, have prospered for a season among the church fathers and in the midst of the period of the veneration of the martyrs. By the time of Ambrose, however, the doctrine must have lost its currency because, though Ambrose was himself a millenarian, he did not emphasize chiliastic teachings. Augustine, too, once held a sympathetic millenarian view; yet, by the time he penned *de Civitate Dei*, he had abandoned all chiliastic tendencies, which he believed had descended into *ridiculas fabulas*.⁷¹ To be sure, other scholars have advocated a special resurrection. As late as the nineteenth century, Frederick Louis Godet appeared sympathetic to such a resurrection of the just.⁷² Yet, this particular view of the resurrection is not representative of biblical doctrine since the Reformation. Ton himself acknowledges that his understanding of the resurrection is not consonant with the prevailing opinion of biblical scholars, saying, "I am aware that this view is vehemently opposed by most Protestant theologians."⁷³ Whether vehemently

⁷⁰Ton, *Suffering*, 215, emphasis original (cf. 332).

⁷¹St. Augustine, *The City of God*, trans. Marcus Dods, vol. 2 of *The Nicene and Post Nicene Fathers*, ed. Philip Schaff (Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1997), 426-27.

⁷²Frederic Louis Godet, *A Commentary on the Gospel of St. Luke*, Clark's Foreign Theological Library, vol. 46 (Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1875), 135.

⁷³Ton, *Suffering*, 215.

opposed or simply in disagreement with, most Protestant theologians will not be persuaded to view the matter as Ton sees it until significant theological labors have been completed; it may even be the case that most Protestant theologians are unconcerned with the question of a martyrs' resurrection, considering that persecution and martyrdom are not primary emphases of study.

But even if one were to consider the claims being made on behalf of the special resurrection of the martyrs, at least three deficiencies in Ton's defense of the special resurrection would arise. First, Ton does not have adequate exegetical support for texts germane to the subject. To attempt to alter the eschatological and martyrological landscape, Ton will first need to demonstrate exegetically that the doctrine exists from the New Testament. He quotes from Revelation 20:4-5; Hebrews 11:35; Luke 22:28-30; and Philippians 3:10, interpreting such passages from the viewpoint of a special resurrection. Yet, he hardly offers any commentary on the texts from the Protestant theologians' point of view. If Ton wishes to effect change with regard to this doctrine, he will need to interact exegetically on each of these major texts, interacting with the prevailing Protestant theologians' interpretations in view. Grant Osborne, for instance, offers sound, exegetical reasons for understanding Revelation 20:4 as referring to the martyred saints, particularly if one allows for an exegetical *καὶ*: "And I saw thrones and those sitting on them . . . *namely*, the souls."⁷⁴ Though Osborne argues that the raw materials of the text support this conclusion, he argues instead for the proposal of Krodel, who understands the martyrs to be a representative subset of the entirety of those faithful to Jesus who overcame compromise, lukewarmness, and persecution—but not martyrdom in the technical sense.⁷⁵ In short, one may recognize strength in Ton's argument yet still

⁷⁴Grant Osborne, *Revelation*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2002), 704.

⁷⁵*Ibid.*, 705.

conclude there is a better option. On a distinction such as that proposed by Krodel, Ton agrees, “The text might support such a distinction.”⁷⁶ If, as Ton says, the text supports other readings, then the doctrine of the special resurrection may not need to be a central feature of a biblical theology of persecution.

Second, Ton leaves the reader desirous of exegetical interaction with contrary opinions concerning such eschatological assessments as a special resurrection. A healthy dialogue in which Ton might interact with Meredith Kline’s theological argument on the first resurrection⁷⁷ would prove beneficial. Kline insists that this first resurrection is not ordinal terminology for the first in a series of resurrections. Yet, such an ordinal sequence would be required in Ton’s interpretation. Even in the places where Ton does interact with other academic works, he sometimes does not clarify the distinctions between his argument and those of the scholars he is quoting. Again, as was the case with Penner, this shortcoming in his work is most likely the outflow of the vast territory he was attempting to cover. In one book, Ton seeks to cover the Old Testament, New Testament, and church history instruction on suffering and martyrdom. With such a vast exploration undertaken, Ton is unable to scrutinize thoroughly every doctrine put forward. Ton, for instance, agrees with Mounce’s interpretation of the resurrection of the martyrs, but he appears less patient than Mounce is when it comes to alternate interpretations. So, rather than interacting with opposing views on the first resurrection, Ton says, “Protestant theologians tend to dismiss the teaching of a judgment of believers according to their deeds on earth; sadly, they tend to do the same with the biblical concept of rewards in heaven.”⁷⁸ In truth, Ton could have seen in Mounce’s interpretation (which he quotes) numerous references to Protestant theologians who have

⁷⁶Ton, *Suffering*, 314.

⁷⁷Meredith G. Kline, “The First Resurrection,” *WTJ* 37 (1974): 366-75.

⁷⁸Ton, *Suffering*, 300.

considered whether rewards are promised to the martyrs in Revelation 20:4. Ton's work is best seen as an argument for a nexus of reward with martyrdom more than it is a biblical theology of persecution. This clarification of Ton's genre is evident upon closer scrutiny of his method. Methodologically, then, Ton does make a case for a nexus between suffering, martyrdom, and rewards, but he does not specifically isolate within or beyond that case a biblical theology of persecution. Rather than a strict focus on persecution, Ton focuses more on the martyr's reward. The focus of Ton's attention, then, is the relation of *rewards* to suffering and martyrdom.

Ton demonstrates the relation of rewards to suffering in three ways. First, he argues that suffering and martyrdom "should be perceived as two of the best means by which God achieves his purposes with man."⁷⁹ In speaking of how God achieves his purposes with man, Ton means to say two things. In one sense, he means to say that God accomplishes his purposes in his people by means of their suffering and martyrdom. This accomplishment is seen, according to Ton, in the process of testing and purifying. Through the testing and purifying of persecution, the people of God become conformed more to the image of Christ. The people of God learn to trust God's purposes for them as they remain faithful to him through their sufferings. Thus, as Ton sees it, "We learn that God, the sovereign Ruler of history, has the purpose of raising and forming a people whom He plans to entrust dominion and authority and glory in His eternal kingdom."⁸⁰ This raising and forming of His people is one of the means by which God achieves his purposes with man. In another sense, Ton views God as accomplishing universal purposes in history through mankind in general and through his people in particular—through their suffering and martyrdom. Speaking of God achieving his purposes with the suffering of his people, Ton says, "When it appears that God's plans have been shattered,

⁷⁹Ibid., 422.

⁸⁰Ibid., 36.

God is in fact systematically and consistently accomplishing all that He has purposed from the beginning.”⁸¹ Thus, Ton views suffering and martyrdom theologically, as two means by which God accomplishes his purposes with man. Ton views all kingdoms and rulers of history to be subject to God’s overall purposes for his people and for the kingdom to come.

The second manner in which Ton connects the suffering of persecution to rewards is by arguing that whatever purposes God achieves in a man in this life abide with that person in the next life. In other words, after establishing that God achieves his purposes in people, Ton next establishes that the achievements gained in people remain with those people for all of eternity. Indeed, these achievements play a major role in determining whether one is counted faithful or worthy in the kingdom. Ton understands texts like 1 Corinthians 3:10-15 to be teaching that there is a judgment which even the people of God must face. Thus, the progress the people of God make in this life is of utmost importance because “in the end, our works and our character will both determine the verdict of the judge: the place and rank He will assign to us in the kingdom of heaven.”⁸² Logically, one might be led to conclude from Ton’s statement here that rewards are meritorious in relation to receiving the kingdom, considering that works and character will be judged in relation to *place* in the kingdom. Ton’s third point with regard to persecution and rewards seeks to answer such concerns.

Ton argues that this system of rewards is not meritorious. Though man is called to develop a character which will be judged blameless and worthy, he is not able to earn anything from God, according to Ton. The reason man’s efforts are non-meritorious is that God, in his sovereign rule over all things, has predestined whatsoever comes to pass, including what rank and honor each man has in the kingdom of heaven. The root of

⁸¹Ibid., 36.

⁸²Ibid., 422.

each person's faith is the regenerative work of the Holy Spirit of God. That same Holy Spirit works out the fruit of good works and faithfulness over time. In addition, God is the one whose plan is being enacted, and it is the plan and foreordination of God which has established that there might be such kingdom rewards in heaven. In speaking this way of rewards, Ton's voice sounds very much in harmony with the chorus of Protestant doctrine since the time of Calvin, Luther, and Tyndale, all of whom wrote on the topic of heavenly rewards. Another reformer, Hugh Latimer, in a 1552 sermon, popularized this doctrinal position of predestination for eternal rewards with the oft-repeated phrase, "Every man shall be rewarded for his good works in everlasting life, but not with everlasting life: For it is written, *Vita aeterna donum Dei*, 'The everlasting life is a gift of God.' Therefore we should not esteem our works so perfect as though we should merit heaven by them: yet God hath such pleasure in such works which we do with a faithful heart, that he promiseth to reward them in everlasting life."⁸³ Emma Disley offers the following summary of the generally held Protestant doctrine of rewards:

For the majority of Protestant writers who addressed the issue, belief in degrees of reward in heaven thus did not conflict with the Protestant insight of justification freely attained through the merits of Christ, since rewards resulted naturally or automatically from good works, which were part of the elect's sanctification. Neither did heavenly rewards imply a recurrence of the medieval doctrine of condign merit, since Protestant writers who admitted the concept of degrees of glory hereafter were careful to attribute them not to the merit of works, but rather to the bountiful mercy of God.⁸⁴

Though sounding much like these Protestant theologians, Ton also sounds at times as though he is singing in a different key from the Protestant theologians. Though himself a Baptist pastor and worker for an evangelical missionary society, Ton speaks always of

⁸³Hugh Latimer, "The Second Sermon of Master Hugh Latimer on the Beatitudes," in *The Sermons of the Right Reverend Father in God, and Constant Martyr of Jesus Christ, Hugh Latimer, Some Time Bishop of Worcester* (London: Paternoster-Row, 1824), 156.

⁸⁴Emma Disley, "Degrees of Glory: Protestant Doctrine and the Concept of Rewards Hereafter," *JTS* 42 (1991): 105.

“Protestant theologians” in third person form. Superficially, this disconnect (at least linguistically) signals the alarms for the presence of a chasm or breach with regard to the doctrine of rewards. At the end of the debate, however, Ton appears less like an adversary crying, “Heresy!” and more like a colleague to the Protestant theologians, calling for them to finish a task he believes was left incomplete after the Reformation. As Ton puts it, “Protestants have been deficient in putting together a reasonable and well-integrated theology of good works, of character development, and of the momentous judgment of every Christian according to his works.”⁸⁵ Apparently, Ton’s concern is not so much with any erroneous views of Protestant theology as much as with incomplete or insufficient considerations of Protestant doctrines with respect to rewards. Ton expects his book, then, to supply at least a portion of what is lacking in a Protestant theology of suffering, martyrdom, and rewards. He seeks to establish his own theology of suffering, martyrdom, and rewards with respect to the sovereignty of God.

All of the sufferings and martyrdoms in the history of the world are part of the overarching plan of the Sovereign who rules heaven and earth. As Ton sees it, God works the events of suffering and martyrdom to fulfill His own grand, universal design. Suffering and martyrdom are employed by God, on the one hand, to accomplish victory and establish the final eternal kingdom of Christ, while, on the other hand, developing kingdom characteristics in the chosen people of God so that they will be worthy of honor and well-suited for reigning with Christ, each according to his own predetermined rank and place. With such emphases on rewards and predetermination, Ton’s thesis is, to say the least, provocative. Many questions are provoked by his understanding of suffering, martyrdom, and rewards in heaven. We shall consider further two such questions.

First, the question might be asked of Ton’s thesis, “How does faithfulness through persecution fit one for ruling over others in the glory of an eternal kingdom?”

⁸⁵Ton, *Suffering*, 321.

Using texts like Daniel 12:3, 13, Ton argues that the Old and New Testaments promise regnal rewards for those who prove faithful through persecution. Leaving aside the question of whether the “allotted portion” of Daniel 12:13 refers to regnal rewards in the eternal kingdom, one still wonders what exactly is the connection between suffering well on earth and ruling well in heaven.

Is Ton arguing that one who suffers is suited for ruling because he has been trained by his suffering under an abusive ruler how to rule over others justly? One might see how this argument could be put forward, in a kind of Marxist-Socialist notion of the underclass learning from their oppression how to rule more equitably. Of course, history is against lending this argument any support, considering the atrocities of the Killing Fields of Cambodia and the failures of Stalin, Lenin, and other such revolutionaries. These egregious examples of people feeling victimized and rising to rule offer no sure hope that suffering leads to the ability to rule. The promise of this argument breaks on the perpetual cycle of tyrannical dictators in revolutionist countries. Just because one has suffered does not mean he is also fit to rule. Victims of crimes may not turn out to be the best wardens of prisons. Granted, Ton is not arguing specifically that victims make good rulers. His experience in Romania, surely, showed him that this argument is not necessarily the case. Ton is arguing that it is the faithfulness displayed through persecution that fits one for regnal rewards. Enduring faithfulness is the quality suitable for regnal rewards. So, Ton views the suffering as demonstrating (or proving) allegiance to the ultimate Sovereign. So, as Ton argues, the one who remains faithful to the ultimate Sovereign while being threatened—even with death—by a lesser sovereign is demonstrating that he, in fact, understands authority and rule rightly. This faithful one is learning through the suffering that he has made the right determination in his allegiance. As he learns this, he further submits to God’s authority and further is shaped by such submission. Thus, the faithful follower is demonstrating that he is worthy of (in the sense

of being prepared for) the regnal rewards of kingdom reign. Undeniably, Ton alludes to the nexus between suffering faithfully and ruling in the kingdom (not just receiving rewards).

Following this line of reasoning, however, leads to the question of whether obedience is suitable to fit one for exercising authority. Allegiance to authority and a disposition toward obedient action are admirable qualities indeed, but are they also somehow related to exercising dominion? Might they not better be classified as necessary qualities for a follower than for a leader—better for a subject than for a king? Ton argues that there is a connection between the obedient spirit and regnal rewards, saying, “A person’s poverty in spirit *produces* the inner qualities required for obtaining the inheritance, or for being put in charge over God’s possessions.”⁸⁶ But there are two very different rewards here: inheritance and being put in charge. The first reward—the inheritance—has been struck down with a vengeance by post-Reformation scholars who have decidedly disavowed themselves from any hint of condign merit in their soteriology.⁸⁷ The second reward—being put in charge—leads to more questions. How does poverty in spirit produce the inner qualities required for being put in charge of God’s possessions? Is the position of authority earned or a gift? For Ton, this production of abilities comes about as the faithful are trained by their suffering, “thereby proving them reliable.”⁸⁸ Again, the answer creates more questions. To whom are the children proved reliable—God, themselves, or others? If God, then a problem arises with the notion that human suffering is necessary for God to know future suitability of His children for His work. Must God see His children endure torture in order to prove they

⁸⁶Ton, *Suffering*, 417, emphasis original.

⁸⁷See Disley, “Degrees of Glory,” 77-105, for an historical, theological consideration of reward.

⁸⁸Ton, *Suffering*, 419.

are reliable? Indeed, must God see Stephen stoned to death by a mob in order to validate his reliability for future service in kingdom labors? In response, it is fair to say that Ton is not arguing that the children are proving to God that they are reliable. Rather, God proves them reliable in two ways: God educates the children as to the work He is doing in them, and God achieves through the children the work He seeks to accomplish through them in this world. In short, “Suffering and martyrdom are an integral part of the process by which God is educating and testing His children here on earth.”⁸⁹

Or, a different line of questioning might ask, does God offer these regnal rewards because there is an inherent link between acting obediently and ruling faithfully? Might it not rather be the case that God offers regnal rewards to the obedient because of his generous disposition, offering, as in the case of the parable of the workers in the vineyard, one hundred times reward in this life and the inheritance of eternal life? The latter explanation seems to hold, given that Ton moves immediately from the statement that poverty in spirit produces inner qualities required for being put in charge of God’s possessions to a discussion of the parable of the workers in the vineyard. However, elsewhere in the book, Ton sounds as though he is saying that there is a necessary relationship between obedience and regnal rewards. So, for instance, in his discussion of the people of God appearing before the judgment seat of Christ, Ton says, “According to what is ascertained at the judgment, God will assign to each person a place, rank, and function in His eternal kingdom and over His new creation.”⁹⁰ Is God then to dispense regnal rewards in proportion to obedience, or is he, rather, to dispense regnal rewards out of his great generosity? What does Ton mean when he says the judgment will be made according to what is ascertained? Ton sounds here as though he is supporting condign merit, considering that *place*, rank, and function are included in the judgment. Is the

⁸⁹Ibid., 321.

⁹⁰Ibid., 320.

reward merited or gifted? For Ton, the answer seems to be both. On the one hand, he can say “that in God’s kingdom, there will be a differentiation of function and *position* according to what the child of God has done and according to what he has proven himself to be during his life on earth.”⁹¹ On the other hand, Ton says emphatically, “the possibility of merit is utterly excluded.”⁹² The tension remains. Ton argues that the tension is essential, as it reflects both the slave-master relationship and the father-child relationship which characterize the relation between God and his people.

For Ton, the regnal rewards are established in creation and never have ceased being pertinent. God created man to have dominion, that is, to rule over the earth. The Fall, of course, thwarted man’s ability and perverted his desires in relation to regnal responsibilities. Nevertheless, the Fall did not thwart God’s design for man to exercise regnal authority. In redemption, then, God works to re-establish for man his exercise of regnal authority. Testing his people with suffering and opportunity for martyrdom, God, in effect, puts them through what Ton refers to as a training program. Ton says, “The training process is meant to produce in His children the ability to handle authority and the capacity to administrate wisely, thereby proving them reliable.”⁹³ Though Ton is comfortable asserting that suffering persecution is a process for fitting the children of God to the eternal, kingdom work of God, not everyone will be comfortable with such assertions for the various reasons mentioned. Ton’s emphasis on training for regnal authority is potentially problematic, and these potential problems lead to a second major line of questioning.

⁹¹Ibid., 321. The term *position* here (and place just above) must mean for Ton “place of honor” or “position of honor,” rather than place or position in the kingdom itself.

⁹²Ibid., 423.

⁹³Ibid., 419.

The second major question is this: Does Ton's understanding of regnal rewards diminish the glory of Christ? The potential of such a diminishing appears real enough. In speaking of what he perceives as a problem in Protestant theology, Ton states, "The redemption of man through the cross of Christ has been made so central that for many, it has become the primary purpose of human history. This is equal to saying that God created man in order to save him. The simple reformulation shows us by just how far our theology has missed the mark."⁹⁴ Against making Christ "so central," Ton argues for a sort of reverting back to the order of creation, holding that, although the Fall did cause problems, the regnal purposes for man still hold. Without denying that man has a place in God's plan which includes exercising regnal authority under Christ, Ton needs to be extremely cautious in making any statement which diminishes the centrality of Jesus Christ. The New Testament, of course, speaks of Christ as the highest authority and the reigning king of heaven and earth.⁹⁵ Christ is not only the first-born of many brothers, as Ton points out, but he is also, as the Apostle Paul points out, the "first-born of all creation."⁹⁶ Christ's being first-born of all creation means that he was (and is) central to creation apart from his relationship to the people of God. Furthermore, in the Colossians 1 passage, Paul goes on to say that everything has been created by Christ and *for* him (εἰς αὐτὸν ἔκτισται). The centrality of Christ is "so central" to Protestant theology because it is so central to New Testament theology. According to the New Testament, Christ is before all things, and in him all things hold together. We might presume that the *all things* (τα πάντα) here includes the people of God and the kingdom of God. Christ is to have first place in everything. Ton speaks easily of the training

⁹⁴Ibid., 421.

⁹⁵See, for instance, Heb1:3, Col 1:15-16, Matt 28:18-20.

⁹⁶Col 1:15. The rest of this paragraph mentions teachings found in the Col 1 passage, though other New Testament passages could have been used.

exercises between God and his people, as though such exercises began at the Fall, have continued until now, and will continue until earth and heaven meet. He speaks in his concluding section as though the relationship between God and man has not changed since the advent of Christ.⁹⁷ The danger of such talk is a diminishing of Christ as the one mediator between God and man, of Christ as the ruling head and authority over the church, of Christ as the New Covenant, and of Christ Himself as the reward.

To see an example of the danger of the diminution of Christ in Ton's approach, consider the following assertion he makes: "Throughout the course of earthly history, God has been at work shaping His children, forming their character, preparing them for ruling, and testing their faithfulness and reliability Moreover, God will continue this work until the end of history."⁹⁸ Taken by itself, the quotation appears to imply that a work between God and human beings preceded Christ and will continue throughout history apart from relationship to Christ. Further, Ton asserts that "suffering and martyrdom should be perceived as two of the best means by which God achieves his purposes with man."⁹⁹ Taken together, these quotes make it appear as though there is an on-going training mission between God and man with no apparent *necessary* relation to Christ as intercessor, mediator, or priest. Worse than these statements is Ton's declaration that "in the end, our works and our character will determine the verdict of the Judge."¹⁰⁰ However such statements may appear, they should be interpreted in the light of Ton's insistence that "God in His goodness and generosity, has determined to give all His possessions to His children. Due to all these divine investments, the possibility of

⁹⁷Ton, *Suffering*, 421.

⁹⁸*Ibid.*, 422.

⁹⁹*Ibid.*

¹⁰⁰*Ibid.*

merit is utterly excluded, leaving no reasons whatsoever for man to boast.”¹⁰¹ Though Ton does not mention that the children are predestined to be conformed to the image of God’s Son (Rom 8:29), surely this Christ-conformity is what Ton has as the backdrop of His understanding of God’s work of training the children for the kingdom because he says that our goal should be to develop a Christ-like character. Nevertheless, any statement which links works and character of the individual with the verdict of the Judge is too near the precipice of the curse for most Protestant theologians who, undoubtedly, would be racing through verses in Galatians 3 at the mention of such an idea: “Are you so foolish? Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh?”¹⁰²

In another paradoxical twist on Protestant doctrine, Ton takes issue with the notion of Christ himself being the reward. He views such a position with the suspicion that it reflects a “reluctance to accept the notion of rewards and the consequent refusal to see them as a motivation for working for Christ and His gospel.”¹⁰³ He cites Leon Morris as being guilty of such reluctance, but he does not interact with Morris’s point that the rewards in question might be rewards related to intimacy with Christ. Morris’s point, as quoted by Ton, is that those who give themselves wholeheartedly to the service of Christ experience a deeper joy than the half-hearted do.¹⁰⁴ Likewise, in heaven, the reward of the faithful may be linked directly to intimacy with Christ. Erickson makes a similar point in contemplating the rewards promised to the faithful. Against views like Ton’s—views which rely on different ranks and levels of rewards—Erickson asks, “If this is the case, would not the joy of heaven be reduced by one’s awareness of the differences and

¹⁰¹Ibid., 423.

¹⁰²Galatians 3:3 (ESV) which, in context, deals with justification, appears to apply here because it is addressing those who reverted to the works of the law after times of suffering and seeing the faithful work of God on behalf of those counted righteous by faith.

¹⁰³ Ton, *Suffering*, 239.

¹⁰⁴Ibid., 238, quoting Leon Morris.

the constant reminder that one might have been more faithful?”¹⁰⁵ Instead, Erickson proposes that the case with rewards might be “that the difference in the rewards lies not in the external or objective circumstances, but in the subjective awareness or appreciation of those circumstances.”¹⁰⁶ Given the centrality of Christ and the reality that everyone will bow down and confess before Him (Phil 2:10-11), and given the fact that every eye will see Him, even those who pierced Him (Rev 1:7); given the fact that to Christ belongs the glory and the dominion forever and ever, Erickson’s point is worth considering. If Christ is all in all, then how could the people who have grown to love Him so deeply be distracted by ranks and places? Surely, as the psalmist asserts, in the presence of God is fullness of joy with pleasures at His right hand forever (Ps 16:11). Most likely, Ton would not disagree with such assertions because he acknowledges that his own position concerning the doctrine of rewards has been significantly impacted by G. de Ru, who argues that “closer communion with God in Christ through the Holy Spirit is, in fact, the most fundamental aspect, indeed, the essence of the New-Testament ‘conception of reward.’”¹⁰⁷ Yet, much of what Ton asserts is a turning of attention away from the works of Christ toward the works of His followers.

When the disciples in Jesus’ day became motivated by ranks in the kingdom, they caused division and had to be corrected by Jesus (Matt 20:24ff.). Granted, Jesus taught that there may be positions in the kingdom, but he discouraged the disciples from dwelling on such things as a motive for action. Instead, he taught them to become servants and slaves such as He was. The point is that Christ—His kingdom and His righteousness—remain the issue, not the rewards. This is why Protestant theologians have insisted on keeping Christ central. Rewards—like most anything else—can prevent

¹⁰⁵Millard Erickson, *Christian Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1985), 1234.

¹⁰⁶Ibid.

¹⁰⁷G. de Ru, “The Conception of Reward in the Teaching of Jesus,” *NovT* 8 (1966): 202-22.

the faithful from keeping their eyes fixed on Jesus. Indeed, the very disciples who divided over rewards in the kingdom also proved unfaithful. Was it not the case, in fact, that all the disciples proved unfaithful in the hour of their opportunity for faithfulness (Matt 26:40)? And yet, Christ promised them that they would sit with him on thrones in the kingdom (Matt 19:28). The real tension in the biblical text is how could it be that these unfaithful followers might sit anywhere in Heaven with a Holy God. Is it possible that they might be justified by faith and then exalted by works? What works made Peter a rock on which to build—his thrice-repeated denial of Christ? Schreiner appears to represent the New Testament more faithfully when he concludes his article about “works of the law” by saying, “What [Paul] opposes is the delusion of those who think they can earn merit before God by their obedience to the law, even though they fail to obey it.”¹⁰⁸ Ton’s discussion of regnal rewards is undoubtedly provocative, and it underscores the need for continued diokological study on rewards. Nonetheless, many will remain reticent of his effort to focus more attention toward faithfulness and less on faith. As a biblical theology of persecution and suffering, Ton’s work remains too narrowly focused on rewards and not focused enough on the righteousness of Christ. As we have seen, the righteousness of Christ is the root cause of persecution and the necessary element for receiving the blessings of God for the persecuted.

¹⁰⁸Thomas R. Schreiner, “‘Works of Law’ in Paul,” *NovT* 33 (1991): 244.

CHAPTER 5

APPLICATION OF REGNAL RIGHTEOUSNESS DIKOLOGY TO CONTEXTS OF PERSECUTION RELATED TO PROCLAMATION

If the regnal righteousness diokology has demonstrated its ability to interact with and endure the scrutiny of extant diokological literature, then another question remains for consideration. The question is whether this diokological perspective works, that is, whether it coheres in its application to the Christian in real life. Does this diokological dynamic answer the questions raised by contexts of persecution, and can it provide guidance for those undergoing such persecution? This line of inquisition guides the present chapter of research. Specifically, this chapter will test the applicability of the definition to the rather difficult case of Dietrich Bonhoeffer. Following the consideration of Bonhoeffer's case, the chapter will conclude by a juxtaposition of Bonhoeffer with Paul Schneider, about whom Bonhoeffer is reported to have said: "*Paul Schneider ist unser erster Märtyrer.*"¹ This juxtaposition with Schneider—the preacher of Buchenwald²—promises to show more clearly the benefit of a diokological perspective of the regnal dynamic as it pertains particularly to preachers and preaching. The transition from Bonhoeffer to preaching and preachers should be quite natural as Bonhoeffer's life and death is compared and contrasted with that of Paul Schneider. These two twentieth

¹This is a popular quote repeated by many, originating from Sabine Leibholz-Bonhoeffer, *The Bonhoeffers: Portrait of a Family* (Chicago: Covenant Publications, 1994), 112. The quote is taken from Bonhoeffer's visit to his twin sister's home in London, returning from the U.S. He was reportedly speaking to children gathered around a piano, although mention of Paul Schneider does not appear in Eberhard Bethge, *Dietrich Bonhoeffer: A Biography*, rev. ed. (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2000). Bethge offers the same story and context, without the mention of Paul Schneider.

²This title is taken from Margaret Schneider, *Der Prediger von Buchenwald: Das Martyrium Paul Schneiders* (Stuttgart: Hänssler-Verlag, 1996).

century examples will supply the context for testing our application of the regnal righteousness diokology. The hope of such testing is to demonstrate how the regnal righteousness diokology may help Christians in general and preachers in particular to understand the persecution they ought to be suffering. Such testing should also aid the church in classifying persecution and martyrdom more accurately.

Though it never has been an exact science, persecution seems only to have become more difficult to grasp over the past century. A century ago, there was a great anticipation of vast scientific progress sweeping through the Western world. Arthur Lewis compared the advance, ironically enough, to that of a Midwestern wildfire sweeping across the plains in rapid advance, with each finger-like advance of the fire striving to outdistance the other.³ The twentieth century, in a sense, proved Lewis correct in that technology advanced at an unprecedented rate. Yet, with the technological advance came also advances in the use of weaponry, warfare, and killing. In the end, the great wildfire of progress burned more than the grass across the Midwestern plains, as human beings were killed at an unprecedented rate. Many of those killed were Christians. Indeed, many were Christian martyrs. Bishop Kallistos of Diokleia in the Eastern Orthodox tradition comments,

Twentieth-century Christians surely have particular reason to reflect on the centrality of martyrdom, for ours has been pre-eminently an age of martyrs. The ordeal undergone by contemporary believers—in the Soviet Union since 1917, in Ethiopia since 1974, to mention but two examples—makes the persecution of the early Church in the Roman Empire, even under Diocletian, appear relatively mild and humane. In the past sixty years incomparably more Christians have died as martyrs for their faith than in the whole of the three hundred years following the Crucifixion.⁴

³Arthur M. Lewis, *Vital Problems in Social Evolution* (Chicago: Charles H. Kerr & Company, 1911), 3-6.

⁴Kallistos of Diokleia, "What is a Martyr?" *Sobornost* 5, no. 1(1983): 7-8.

Christians have been martyred both in the Eastern and Western traditions of Christianity throughout the past century. With some scholars estimating martyrdom occurring at a rate of 200,000 per year in the last decades of the twentieth century,⁵ Christians, as Bishop Kallistos says, surely have particular reason to reflect on Christian persecution. Examples of Christians dying abound all around the globe in varying political contexts.⁶ But, the National Socialism of Germany has become something of an example of killing which most readily symbolizes the nature of the twentieth century. Blended into its Aryan program and political machinations, Nazism killed many Christians who would not embrace its ambitious program. Because Nazi Germany was at the center of so much of the history of the twentieth-century *progress*, the study of this regime provides fruitful grounds for exploring the utility of the regnal righteousness diokology. If Nazism is at the heart of twentieth-century history killing, so too, in the opinion of many, is Dietrich Bonhoeffer at the heart of Nazi Germany's twentieth-century persecution of Christians. Thus, it should be no surprise that his has become a paradigmatic study of contemporary Christian martyrdom.⁷ Intertwined in social struggle, political intrigue, ecclesiastical crisis and personal division, Bonhoeffer's case provides the martyrologist with ample ambiguity to strain even the most complex systems of classification. So, Bonhoeffer presses to the fore the problem of how to demarcate Christian martyrs from political martyrs in light of the political and social struggles of the

⁵David Barrett, ed., *World Christian Encyclopedia: A Comparative Study of Churches and Religions in the Modern World, 1900-2000* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982). These are the highest numbers estimated. Most scholars assume the actual number is much less.

⁶For one example of a chronicle of twentieth-century martyrs, see James Hefley and Marti Hefley, *By Their Blood: Christian Martyrs of the Twentieth Century* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1996).

⁷Craig Slane, *Bonhoeffer as Martyr: Social Responsibility and Modern Christian Commitment* (Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2004). In addition, see also Eberhard Bethge, *Bonhoeffer: Exile and Martyr* (London: Collins, 1975); Susan Bergman, *Martyrs: Contemporary Writers on Modern Lives of Faith* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1998); and for general overview, Stephen R. Haynes, *The Bonhoeffer Phenomenon* (London: SCM Canterbury Press, 2004).

twentieth century. As James Hefley and Marti Hefley admit, “The line is hard to draw here.”⁸ An exploration of Bonhoeffer is sure to bring the problems to the fore which prove to be common for any study of persecution. More importantly, Bonhoeffer’s case may demonstrate the increased utility of a diokological approach like the regnal righteousness dynamic, as opposed to a martyrological one.

Application of Regnal Righteousness to Dietrich Bonhoeffer

Bonhoeffer lived and taught, of course, during the Hitler regime of Nazi Germany. Unquestionably, he died for what he believed and taught with regard to that regime. Bonhoeffer was a Lutheran pastor, a founder of the Confessing Church, and a Christian theologian. But whether he was a Christian martyr is, indeed, a matter of some debate within the larger Christian community. Though popular sentiment regularly awards Bonhoeffer the title “martyr,” many have not so easily admitted such a declaration. Lutheran Bishop Hans Meiser, for instance, distanced himself from celebrations related to Bonhoeffer’s martyrdom because “Bonhoeffer was a member of the political resistance and not a church martyr.”⁹ Likewise, Philip Pfatteicher notes that “on the new Lutheran calendar for North America, [Bonhoeffer] is not accounted a martyr since he was killed not for his adherence to the Christian faith but for his political activities against the German government.”¹⁰ Craig Slane notes that the *Lutheran Book of Worship* does not refer to Bonhoeffer as a martyr.¹¹ And, Detlev Daedlow, a member

⁸James Hefley and Marti Hefley, *By Their Blood*, 10.

⁹Renate Wind, *Dietrich Bonhoeffer: A Spoke in the Wheel*, trans. John Bowden (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1992), 146. Also quoted in Slane, *Bonhoeffer as Martyr*, 30. The quote found in Wind makes the charge that Meiser was acting consistently with the Church’s overall capitulation to Nazi rule.

¹⁰Philip Pfatteicher, *Festivals and Commemorations: Handbook to the Calendar in Lutheran Book of Worship* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1980), 151-54.

¹¹See Slane, *Bonhoeffer as Martyr*, 32, especially n. 11 and personal reference contained therein.

of the Confessing Church quite familiar with Bonhoeffer, recognizes Bonhoeffer's courage in the face of political turmoil yet regards Bonhoeffer's witness as one of political sacrifice, not Christian martyrdom.¹² Daedlow reports that a meeting was held on the subject of Bonhoeffer's request to the Confessing Church for absolution concerning his participation in the subterfuge and plot to overthrow Hitler. The end result of that meeting was that Bonhoeffer's actions were not biblically justified. Bonhoeffer, then, according to Daedlow, "is not an ecclesiastical, but a political-secular martyr."¹³ On the first anniversary of the July 20 plot, Bonhoeffer's own church in Berlin-Brandenburg recognized Paul Schneider as a martyr but offered only a voluminous silence concerning Dietrich Bonhoeffer.¹⁴ Similarly, historian Lacey Baldwin Smith claims, "Dietrich Bonhoeffer was a political martyr, a nomenclature that has bedeviled martyrdom from the start."¹⁵

These and other scholars have felt obliged to weigh in on the question of Bonhoeffer's martyrdom in spite of its many ambiguities. Bonhoeffer's legacy, as Huntemann describes it, "as a whole provokes perplexity and a sense of helplessness more than anything else."¹⁶ He is not easy to place into any category—modern or anti-modern; critical or biblical; orthodox or heterodox; godly or godless; political or pious; martyr or criminal. Whatever the category or case, Bonhoeffer proves elusive, as he seemed always to be on a dialectical edge. He spoke, for instance, of the powerlessness

¹²In Georg Huntemann, *The Other Bonhoeffer: An Evangelical Reassessment of Dietrich Bonhoeffer*, trans. Todd Huizinga (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1993), 269-70, cited in Slane, *Bonhoeffer as Martyr*, 32.

¹³Original quote in German from *Evangelische Sammlung*, Berlin, 5 January 1986, ed. H. Fuhrmeister, G. Koppers, and K. Motschmann, 1986. Cf., Huntemann, *The Other Bonhoeffer*, 270.

¹⁴Bethge, *Dietrich Bonhoeffer: A Biography*, 931.

¹⁵Lacey Baldwin Smith, *Fools, Martyrs, and Traitors: The Story of Martyrdom in the Western World* (New York: Knopf, 1997), 336, cited in Slane, *Martyr*, 32.

¹⁶Huntemann, *The Other Bonhoeffer*, 9.

of God; yet many Christians read his works routinely for devotional purposes. He affirmed the work of Bultmann; yet, he was said to hold to a “naïve Biblicism” because of his audacious attempt to draw modern application from a passage in Ezra of the Old Testament.¹⁷ In this, “Bonhoeffer had affirmed what historical-critical investigation had declared impossible,” thus causing scholars to conclude he was operating on an “almost antimodern biblical foundation.”¹⁸ Bonhoeffer both founded a seminary at Finkenwalde and participated in the July 20 plot to assassinate Adolph Hitler. Bonhoeffer “has been variously adopted as the champion of radical 'death-of-God' theology (J. A. T. Robinson, Gabriel Vahanian, Harvey Cox), liberal theology (Larry Rasmussen, Geoffrey Kelly) and conservative evangelical theology (Georg Huntemann, David Gushee and, somewhat incredibly, James Dobson).”¹⁹ His case—like the times out of which it arises—is not a simple one. He cannot, of course, be discounted from martyrdom simply because of our frustrated ability to classify his execution. The fact that it is difficult to determine his case is not at all proof against it. Difficulty and ambiguity, obviously, shrouded the case of Christ Himself, as his case brought together confused revolutionaries, political intrigue, betrayals, and religious hypocrisy, too. Bonhoeffer’s case is a good one to consider, then, if for no other reason than for the sheer reason that it—like the Crucifixion—brings together many disparate elements which illumine the human condition and force a clarification of categorization in martyrology. Bonhoeffer’s case will test the strength of a regnal righteousness diokology.

¹⁷Huntemann, *The Other Bonhoeffer*, speaking of a citation by Bethge in the German edition of *Bonhoeffer’s Works*, 132.

¹⁸Huntemann, *The Other Bonhoeffer*, 132. The latter quote is cited in Huntemann from Gerhard Krause, *Theologische Realenzyklopadie*, 1981, 7:59.

¹⁹Mark L. Lindsay, review of *The Bonhoeffer Phenomenon. Portraits of a Protestant Saint*, by Stephen R. Haynes. *Association of Contemporary Church Historians Newsletter* 11, no. 3 (2005) [newsletter on-line]; accessed 9 September 2009; available from <http://www.calvin.edu/academic/cas/akz/akz2504.htm>; Internet.

If Bonhoeffer's is the case to explore, then surely Craig Slane's book, *Bonhoeffer as Martyr: Social Responsibility and Modern Christian Commitment*, is the trailhead through which that exploration best begins.²⁰ Slane has made the most recent and most thorough case for classifying Bonhoeffer as a martyr. Slane's case rests upon an evolutionary extension in the definition of *martyr* both before and after the time of Bonhoeffer. Particularly, based on the temporal uniqueness of the Nazi era and the political dimensions of his actions, Bonhoeffer appears to be uniquely suited to speak to those whom Slane refers to as "a new generation of martyrs." So, Slane understands a new dimension in martyrdom to have arrived after Bonhoeffer. "Insofar as martyrdom is tied to church-historical development, it will be necessary to ask whether and what new dimensions of martyrdom may be surfacing in our own historical epoch, and whether Bonhoeffer himself may be a factor in the illumination of such dimensions."²¹ Notice that Slane's understanding of the new martyrdom is tied to development.

Slane's view of church-historical development is essential to his call for a reconsideration of martyrdom. Critically speaking, there are several ways this *development* might be viewed. On the one hand, the *development* in question might be after the order of C. F. D. Moule.²² On the other hand, the similarities to Moule may be only superficial similarities. Moule, in defiance of the evolutionary model greatly accepted in critical scholarship, pioneered an approach which viewed the New Testament writers embodying a "defence or counter-attack."²³ This method of development views the writings of the New Testament apologetically, which is to say, the New Testament

²⁰Slane, *Bonhoeffer as Martyr*.

²¹Ibid., 34.

²²See C. F. D. Moule, *The Origin of Christology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), 1-10.

²³For the use of these terms, see C. F. D. Moule, *The Birth of the New Testament* (New York: Harper and Row, 1962), 105.

writers experienced their theology in their temporal context and wrote about it “apologetically,” defending the meaningfulness of their theology against the prevailing counter-claims of the culture. One could readily see how a theology of martyrdom might arise for the first Christians out of the crisis situation of the death of their leader at the hands of the Romans. As was shown in chapter 3, John S. Pabee exemplifies this approach to development, as is evidenced by his comments, “Since theology emerges from the experience of a people, it would be a surprise if the experience of attack, indeed persecution, did not leave its mark and did not influence the documents of the Church.”²⁴

On the surface, several factors indicate that Slane’s *development* approximates Moule’s approach. It might be best to mention each of the similarities with Moule before discussing them in further detail. First, Slane makes use of the term *development* in describing his methodology. Second, as is indicated in the Pabee quotation, Slane speaks in terms of an “experienced theology.” So, for example, when speaking of the distinctions originating in the crisis related to the Lyons martyrs, Slane says, “It is true that the account of the Lyons martyrs is strewn with the older understanding of the martyr as witness, but this should not be dismissed as mere inconsistency and left to obscure what is a *genuinely new development*.”²⁵ The experience of the church in the situation of Lyons led to “a genuinely new development,” according to Slane. Third, Slane approaches the language and terminology of the New Testament through a developmental lens. This approach is most readily seen in Slane’s reliance upon Strathmann for a fleshing out of the usage of the Greek term *martus*.²⁶ Building on the

²⁴John S. Pabee, *Persecution and Martyrdom in the Theology of Paul*, JSNTSup 6 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1985), 13. Pabee allows for and develops a certain influence from the Maccabean period, but it is clear that, as Pabee’s thesis develops, Christ is the proto-martyr.

²⁵Slane, *Bonhoeffer as Martyr*, 50, emphasis mine.

²⁶H. Strathmann, “*martus, marturia*,” in *TDNT*, ed. Gerhard Kittel (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1967), 4:474-508.

work of Strathmann, Slane argues for an intra-textual development concerning the New Testament usage of *martus*. Finally, the notion of development is again displayed in Slane's conclusions concerning the titular fate of Bonhoeffer. Slane argues that "a consensus is growing that someday will likely yield a full-scale revision in our understanding of martyrdom. My work," he says, "I hope is a contribution toward that end."²⁷ The fact that Slane calls for the revision to be full-scale appears, at least *prima facie*, that he is calling for a developmental interpretation of martyrdom, an interpretation that allows for new definitions of martyr to arise pertinent to the exigencies of a given historical context.

On the other hand, there is evidence to the contrary which displays in Slane an intentional aversion to what he views as the pitfalls of such a developmental approach. On the point of describing his method as developmental, he says, "One cannot dispute that the broader matrix of culture is surely a critical factor in the development of any theological idea and must be allowed a contribution to the interpretation of martyrdom."²⁸ Clearly, theological ideas are said to develop. Indeed, notice the di-pronged nature of Slane's notion of development, allowing both for the context to play a role in the development of the theological idea, on the one hand, and yielding to context a certain hermeneutical function on the other. However, one cannot too hastily conclude from this talk of development that Slane is speaking of development *ex cultura*. The culture, in Slane's view, certainly does play a role, but what exactly is the extent of that role? Slane tells us in his discussion of Bowersock. Bowersock put forward a thesis which argued, essentially, that the early Christian idea of martyrdom developed from the surrounding Roman culture. Bowersock says, "Christianity owed its martyrs to the mores and

²⁷Slane, *Bonhoeffer as Martyr*, 12.

²⁸*Ibid.*, 38.

structure of the Roman empire.”²⁹ Slane, though recognizing that the Roman empire left indelible impressions on Christian martyrdom, cautions against Bowersock’s developmental thesis, saying, “One must exercise a bit of caution here, for an interpretation of this kind explains the development chiefly as a function of external causes.”³⁰ The problem, then, as Slane sees it, is that too heavy a reliance on the culture leads to a disconnected theological eruption outside of the original line of Christian witness. Development, it would seem, does not mean for Slane an entirely new development; rather, it means development along a continuum, within certain bounds. So, in response to Bowersock, Slane says, “From this angle one could argue that the church’s martyrological engagement with Roman history did not introduce the idea of death into martyrdom but rather created a situation in which the nature of Christian witness in a pagan world could be clarified from within.”³¹ Development for Slane, then, is more closely akin to clarification than eruption.

On the second point, Slane appears to be applauding the “genuinely new development” which the church arrived at in the matter of the Lyons martyrs. Yet, the development in view, though contextual to be sure, is less about the alteration or revision of *martus* and more about the necessary development of a category of the persecuted, called “Confessors.” In one sense, Slane claims, the definition of *martus* did develop—in the sense that after Lyons only those who actually remained faithful unto death would be called “martyrs.” Yet, the major development in this context is not concerned with *martus*, which, of course, is an appellation used of both Stephen and Christ—both of whom died as a result of their faithful witness—rather, the major development is the new

²⁹G. W. Bowersock, *Martyrdom and Rome* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 28. Also quoted in Slane, *Bonhoeffer as Martyr*, 38.

³⁰Slane, *Bonhoeffer as Martyr*, 38.

³¹*Ibid.*, 38.

category “confessor” arising from the exigency of persecution. So, again, context is important for development in a certain sense, but the development itself is not entirely new. It is inherent in the original concept and drawn to the foreground by the pressures of persecution and other contextual conundrums.

Third, Slane follows closely the work of Strathmann in tracing the development of the term *martus* from its original use in the New Testament to the point that it comes to refer technically to a bona fide *martyr* in the time of the Lyons martyrs. In this etymological advancement, Slane carefully considers each step in the development of the *martus* word group from its use, say, in 1 Timothy 6:12, where Paul says Timothy made a good confession in the presence of *many witnesses*—obviously using the term μαρτύρων in its primary sense of legal witnesses—to its use in Acts 22:14-15, where Luke records Paul witnessing to the truth of certain historical facts. “It is Luke’s account of Paul’s situation,” Slane avers, “that first opens the way to the critical link from a witness to facts (*Tatsachenzeuge*) to a witness that confesses faith (*Bekennenzeuge*).”³² Obviously, there is development in view here, but, once again, care must be taken to clarify precisely what degree of development is in view. Strathmann himself points out prior to the beginning of his study of the New Testament concept of *martus* that both elements of the definition of “witness” are in place long before the New Testament writers begin their works. Strathmann, speaking of the ancient Greek writers (and Epictetus especially), says of the *martus* word group, “The group now refers not merely to the establishment of events or actual relations or facts of experience on the basis of direct personal knowledge. It signifies also the proclamation of views or truths of which the speaker is convinced.”³³ So, there is development in a sense, but it appears to be development in the sense of flexibility (pertaining to contextual exigencies) and clarity

³²Ibid., 40-41.

³³Strathmann, “*martus, marturia*,” 478.

(pertaining to ecclesiological terminology) within the boundary of an abiding semantic domain. Slane, for his part, appears also to take the development in this sense, as he admits concerning the origin of the technical usage of *martyr*,

The term ‘technical usage’ is here intended to convey the emergence of a new aspect in the idea of *martyria*: the older idea of witness survives but in a way increasingly focused upon death, such that a true martyr is the one who suffers and dies for the sake of witness. That is, one qualifies as a martyr not simply by bearing faithful witness, as in the New Testament literature, but by bearing that witness in a situation hostile to the gospel and thereby incurring the penalty of death.³⁴

The development is a development within the semantic domain, not abandoning the original notion of witness, only further clarifying and delineating its usage. The development of *martus*, then, can be likened to the development of a child *in utero*; while it certainly will change and take new form over time, it will not go beyond what was originally encoded in embryonic form. Something like this seems to be what Slane is saying with regard to the Greek terminology related to our concept of martyr.

Fourth, as for the kind of development Slane hopes to see in relation to the definition of martyrology, there is ambiguity, if, for no other reason, for the mere fact that the question itself concerns future unknowns. When Slane predicts (and calls for) a full-scale revision in our understanding, he makes it difficult for the reader to understand precisely what the limits of that development may be or ought to be. Slane sounds, at times, to be speaking from a “micro-evolutionary” framework for his interpretation of martyrdom. Indeed, even the term *revision* denotes an original entity intact with certain variations or adaptations made. Even a full-scale revision would not necessarily signify the entire loss of the original etymological entity. So, Slane may actually mean—even in this instance—to describe not a new development *per se*, but rather a development in the sense of an evolutionary, etymological variance still rooted in the semantic domain of the

³⁴Slane, *Bonhoeffer as Martyr*, 45.

original concept, only shading its meaning according to contextual exigency and vernacular. This point, admittedly, is not clear in Slane. It is also not clear just how far Slane hopes and expects the whole-scale revision to go. There is a measure of tension here. What is clear from his writing, however, is that the fully developed idea of martyrdom he hopes for will be flexible enough to include both Bonhoeffer as a martyr and social responsibility as indicative of Christian witness. Bonhoeffer represents more than martyrdom for Slane. Bonhoeffer is the specimen Slane puts forward in the hopes of revising the concept of *martyr* via theological-ethical engagement in the *polis*.

For Slane, Bonhoeffer illuminates new dimensions of martyrdom in a “world come of age.”³⁵ Bonhoeffer represents for Slane a new era in martyrology—an era in which the old definition pertaining to Christological confession has been forced to give way to a refined definition of martyrdom depending more on the concepts of neighbor love and Christian involvement in the *polis*. Slane’s case is made with the understanding that there has been, in the past, a certain development along the way both etymologically with the word *martus* and theologically with the concomitant theological-ethical concept of *martyr*. Thus, theological (and hence ethical) development is crucial to Slane’s case. Even as Slane (and Bethge) would agree that the expectation of progress at its crest at the beginning of the twentieth century ended with the crashing breakers of the Holocaust, so, too, Slane would view the crash as an opportunity for Christianity—after Bonhoeffer—to reclaim its heritage of theological-ethical action in the *polis*. Muller says, “In the Letters and Papers from Prison the world come of age forms the centre of an optimistic way of thinking—not as endangered and threatened, but in its legitimate autonomy”³⁶

³⁵For the concept of Bonhoeffer’s world come of age, see Ronald Gregor Smith, ed., *World Come of Age* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1967). For a shorter overview, see Peter Selby, “Christianity in a World Come of Age,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Dietrich Bonhoeffer*, ed. John W. de Gruchy (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 226-45.

³⁶Hanfried Muller, “Reception and Interpretation of Bonhoeffer,” in *World Come of Age* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1967), 186.

Slane, like Muller before him, views the upshot of the “world come of age” as opportunity for a new Christian witness and, thus, a new Christian martyr.³⁷

Indeed, Slane argues for an entirely “new alphabet” of martyrology to make clear the manner in which (in general) Christian martyrs might be classified in the world come of age and (in particular) how Bonhoeffer is rightly to be classified as a Christian martyr. In making a plea for a new alphabet in this regard, Slane is not the first. In a biography of Bonhoeffer, Eberhard Bethge, Bonhoeffer’s close friend and confidant, argues for a new alphabet for classifying martyrs, one which might include those (like Bonhoeffer) condemned for the opposition they levy against a tyrannical regime.

What Bethge intended by the call for a new alphabet is an interpretation of Bonhoeffer’s death that would be both in line with the historical development of the concept of martyrdom and in tune with the temporal exigencies of the Nazi crisis for the Christian church. Bethge himself was, apparently, building upon an earlier, somewhat prophetic insight from the German professor Michael Baumgarten, who believed there would come a time for Christians which would call for more than words, more than truth.³⁸ These times would call for actions of sacrifice by the saints in order to make the necessary statement more plainly than words could. Bethge saw the Nazi era as such a time and Bonhoeffer as such a suffering saint. And so, Bethge argued for the consistency of Bonhoeffer’s classification as martyr based on a new alphabet of five “letters.”³⁹ The five characteristic letters Bethge suggested for his alphabet were that (1) the martyr

³⁷Slane and Muller both at this point appear to be following the content and tenor of Bonhoeffer’s 8 June 1944 letter to Eberhard Bethge, for which see Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Letters and Papers from Prison*, vol. 8 of *Dietrich Bonhoeffer Works* (New York: Macmillan, 1971), 324-29.

³⁸See Slane, *Bonhoeffer as Martyr*, 67, for a quote from Baumgarten and the interpretation here mentioned.

³⁹Eberhard Bethge, *Bonhoeffer: Exile and Martyr* (Collins: London, 1975), 159-66. Slane discusses the five categories as well in *Martyr*, 67ff., but he uses the heading, “rejection of self-sought martyrdom,” for the second category.

would freely choose suffering; (2) the martyr's death would be at the hands of others; (3) the martyr would embrace a solidarity in guilt; (4) the martyr would display authentic Christian character; (5) the martyr would assume authority for his death.

For Bethge, the third characteristic in the five-letter alphabet was the one particularly new with the developed martyrology and the one particularly important in Bonhoeffer's case. What Bethge meant by the phrase *solidarity in guilt* was that the new martyr would be concerned to demonstrate solidarity with sinners in their sufferings, even, like Bonhoeffer, joining sinners in their guilt. Bonhoeffer, for instance, chose solidarity with conspirators. Bethge explained, "Thus a new type of martyr has emerged. No longer is he the holy, heroic martyr, but one who is a dishonoured witness on behalf of humanity. He does not distance himself from the world as an example of purity, but stays and shares with those who are involved in the hopes and wrong-doings of this world."⁴⁰ Bethge and Slane after him seek to capitalize on the concept of sacrifice. In Bonhoeffer's case, the sacrifice is not just one of life, but one of reputation.

One can easily see the shift Bethge is aiming at with only a cursory glimpse of Christian history, chock full as it is with legendary tales of holy heroes and paragons of virtue in the face of danger. The martyr cult with which Augustine had to deal in his own day—and even had to defend against the Donatists—stands as but one clear example of contrast to Bethge's way of approaching the matter of martyrdom in a world come of age. Christian history has viewed martyrs as heroes of virtue. If that is to be the standard—if purity is the mark of the martyr—then Bonhoeffer's is a difficult case indeed. As Slane admits in this regard, "If Bonhoeffer is a martyr, he is not an easy one!"⁴¹ If, on the other hand, the new world come of age calls for a different kind of martyr, a different kind of

⁴⁰Bethge, *Bonhoeffer*, 164.

⁴¹Slane, *Bonhoeffer as Martyr*, 11.

Christian witness to the *polis* via theological-ethical imperative, then Bonhoeffer's case remains open for investigation.

Slane answers the concern about the seeming "open-endedness" of martyrological development by an appeal to ecclesiastic authority. According to Slane, the investigation of martyrdom and the adjudication which follows each case belongs to the Church, the community of faith that ultimately pronounces the verdict for the saint to be a *martyr*. Slane's new alphabet of martyrdom is supposed to be an instrument—an ethical, exploratory scalpel—which enables the church to ascertain rightly the contextual facts and garner the ecclesiastical flexibility necessary to adjudicate in light of temporal exigencies in a world come of age. Slane's new alphabet is a conscientious development from within the Christian tradition. Particularly, his ideas, affectionately akin to Bethge⁴² and not unrelated to Fischel,⁴³ are developed within the framework of the *Imitatio Christi* and have as their goal social responsibility.

At this point, the point in which Slane seeks to employ the theological-ethical motif of the *Imitatio Christi*, the concept of development seems to take on a bit of a more open flavor, leaving the reader with many questions about the functional validity (and constraining ability) of Slane's application of this motif. Gary Mann welcomes this aspect of Slane's developmental hermeneutic, as is evidenced by his saying, "Slane's hermeneutic can go a long way towards moving theology beyond notions of Christian life, death, and faith, which are closed and set in stone, towards notions that are open to conversation with the secular world."⁴⁴ But just how open is the Christian to be in conversation with the secular world? What precisely are the constraints of *Imitatio*

⁴²Outlined in Bethge, *Bonhoeffer: Exile and Martyr*, 159-66.

⁴³Henry A. Fischel, "Martyr and Prophet," *JQR* 37 (1947): 265-80.

⁴⁴Gary Mann, review of *Bonhoeffer as Martyr: Social Responsibility and Modern Christian Commitment*, by Craig Slane, *Journal of Religion and Society* 7 (2005) [journal on-line]; accessed 23 September 2009; available from <http://moses.creighton.edu/JRS/2005/2005-r10.html>; Internet.

Christi as a paradigmatic martyrology? Slane proposes broadening the definition of martyr to include those who give their lives for the cause of humanity, those who are willing to die to bring justice to all—particularly to the oppressed. Speaking approvingly of the liberation theologian Jon Sobrino, Slane says, “Sobrino calls those who die in defending others ‘Jesus Martyrs.’ The political powers kill them not so much from the hatred of faith (*odium fidei*) as from hatred of justice (*odium iustitiae*). Their martyrdom is not because of Christ but because they are like Christ.”⁴⁵ Exactly how much like Christ must one be in order to be a martyr in this developed sense? What is the relationship to Jesus Christ in view? And, whose justice?

This question, in one form or another, has been around for decades. Concerning the case of Bonhoeffer specifically, John Godsey reconsidered the question back in the early 1970s, saying, “My real question is this: Did [Bonhoeffer] do what he did because of Christian convictions or because of the inbred and inculcated qualities derived from his unusual family? In the final analysis, what distinguishes him from his brother Klaus and his two brothers-in-law, all of whom also entered into the resistance and paid with their lives?”⁴⁶ Slane takes up Godsey’s question through the course of his work and concludes that Bonhoeffer’s motives are Christocentric, thereby conferring on him the appellation *martyr*. But three questions (two general to martyrdom and one specific to Slane) seem to be in order. First, specific to Slane’s approach, how certain can Slane be of Bonhoeffer’s motive in light of the fact that other non-Christians engaged in the same actions he did with the same goal of regime overthrow in mind? Of course, we possess Bonhoeffer’s letters from prison. Yet, those letters and papers have generated many more questions and no unanimity. So, even more pointedly, we might ask how

⁴⁵Slane, *Bonhoeffer as Martyr*, 75

⁴⁶John Godsey, “Theologian, Christian, Contemporary,” *Int* 25 (1971): 211, quoted also in Slane, *Bonhoeffer as Martyr*, 33.

sure we are that Bonhoeffer's motives were Christocentric in light of the fact that our reconstruction of his thoughts is somewhat fragmentary and pieced together. Though one may happen to agree with the prevailing interpretation of what Bonhoeffer meant by *die mundige Welte*,⁴⁷ still, not everyone will, thus leaving the fate of his life's testimony in the dubious position of being determined by how well others arrive at an accurate assessment of his personal thoughts and motives. In a sense, this dynamic would be true with any potential martyr, but does it not seem that something else needs to be said to help clarify Bonhoeffer's case? The fact that he died in opposition to evil does not mean that he lived in the righteousness of Christ. Are there no other indications of whether the life witness in question was a Christian life witness?

In Bonhoeffer's case, many others have ascribed different motives to him, as evidenced by the works of John A. T. Robinson and the so-called "death of god" theologians. It seems that if there were another perspective or alternate aspect of his situation to consider, then better judgments might be rendered concerning his possible martyrdom. Slane is very comfortable with Bonhoeffer's motives, but not everyone is. Perhaps, studying Bonhoeffer from the dialectic of persecution/righteous-life (as in the regnal righteousness diokology) rather than simply from Slane's martyrdom/righteous-death perspective would help, considering that persecution covers the life testimony which ultimately ends with martyrdom. In other words, human justice might be a significant motive in deciding the titular fate of a potential martyr, but, by itself, it is insufficient. Augustine, in his arguments against the Donatists, insists that martyrdom is perfect righteousness, that the martyr must die "*pro veritate et iustitia*,"⁴⁸ and that,

⁴⁷Peter Selby, "Christianity in a World Come of Age," in *The Cambridge Companion to Dietrich Bonhoeffer*, ed. John W. de Gruchy (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 226-45.

⁴⁸"For truth and justice (or righteousness)," quoted from T. J. van Bavel, "The Cult of the Martyrs in St. Augustine: Theology versus Popular Religion?" in *Martyrium: In Multidisciplinary Perspective*, ed. M. Lamberigts and P. Van Deun (Leuven: University Press, 1995), 357.

therefore, “there cannot be true martyrdom in paganism, heresy and error.”⁴⁹ Leaving aside the question of what Augustine means by perfect righteousness, we can affirm that Martyrdom for Augustine must be linked with persecution/righteous-life, which is a concept beyond Slane’s identified motive of dying for justice.

Beyond Bonhoeffer’s case particularly, a couple of other questions arise. Does the *Imitatio Christi* call for a positive confession of Christ or not? And, how tightly must the connection to Christ be in order to adopt the *Imitatio Christi* paradigm for classifying martyrdom? Slane makes a brilliant case of linking, hermeneutically, Bonhoeffer’s death to his life and to the *Imitatio Christi* form, pointing out that Bonhoeffer, like Jesus, ultimately sacrificed his own life to save Jews.

On a clearly reasoned yet sophisticated theological foundation, Bonhoeffer freely brought his faith into the polis—brought his confession to action—entering into solidarity with and sacrificing himself for the Jews of the Holocaust, and us, like Jesus, he laid down his life for others. I conclude therefore that Bonhoeffer deserves to be styled a true martyr of the church.⁵⁰

To be willing to die in order to save lives of others—especially Jews—is undoubtedly a Christ-like action. But what about being willing *to kill* to save Jews? Granted, Bonhoeffer did not actually kill anyone, and, in the end, he and the conspirators were not successful in killing Hitler. But the conspirators—Bonhoeffer in solidarity⁵¹ with them—were *willing* to kill Hitler. They attempted to kill him. This, Christ did not do. Thus, the question brought up by Bonhoeffer’s case remains a general concern, “How tightly must the connection to Christ be in order to adopt the *Imitatio Christi* paradigm?”

⁴⁹van Bavel, “The Cult of the Martyrs,” 357.

⁵⁰Slane, *Bonhoeffer as Martyr*, 248.

⁵¹Solidarity, of course, is a significant concept in studying Bonhoeffer and, particularly, in applying his theological-ethic to liberation theologies. The topic is too substantive to treat here.

Relatedly, how closely must one identify his actions with Christ in this view of political action and sacrifice for humankind? Must there still be a positive confession of Christ? Or, is there a sense in which a Gandhi might qualify as a candidate? For Slane, the evolutionary development appears to call for a root in the traditional vein of *martus*, calling for confession and positive witness to Jesus Christ, but what of his call for “full-scale revision?” How far might the revision take us from positively confessing Jesus Christ? Even more, on what is the church to depend for her judgment concerning martyrdom in particular cases? If the matter is left with the *Imitatio Christi* and motive of the potential martyr’s actions, then what will preclude men from concluding that killing is sometimes consistent with Christian action, as Joe Pavone apparently has done? He says,

Bonhoeffer and [Paul] Hill refused to recant their beliefs that their actions were justified. There was no retreating for these men of God. They were not ashamed that their fight against murder had put them in prison. With their lives at stake, they bravely upheld the principle of active resistance to evil and evil governments. The Nazi holocaust and the American murder of 45 million children did not conquer the spirit of these men. They followed Christ in life and death and challenge us to do the same today.⁵²

Paul Hill killed an abortion doctor in order to save unborn babies. Bonhoeffer participated in a plot to kill the tyrant Adolf Hitler. Each, in some way, believed himself justified on the basis of a kind of “Christ-like” action. Interpreters after these two men each believed that the temporal exigencies were such that the time for words had passed and action—radical action—was in order. Are these interpreters all accurate in their assessments? How might one decide?

The better question might be how we decide the matter of temporal exigency. It would, no doubt, be easy enough to draw distinctions between the exigencies of Nazi

⁵²Joe Pavone, quoted in Stephen R. Haynes, *The Bonhoeffer Phenomenon: Portraits of a Protestant Saint* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 2004), 172.

Germany and those of contemporary American democracy, thereby justifying Bonhoeffer and castigating Hill, the latter of whom, obviously, was not compelled to go to war against the unborn by a tyrannical regime. But a nagging question belies Slane's approach. How do we know when and how to act in response to the context? How do we decide the time has come for action instead of words? In his critique of Bowersock, Slane has already cautioned against too great a confidence concerning contextual interpretations. This caution would hold also for the matter of assessing temporal exigency, would it not? In Bonhoeffer's case, the matter of assessing temporal exigencies takes on a particularly pointed form through the life and death of Paul Schneider, the witness at Buchenwald.⁵³

Schneider, the first Christian martyred by the Nazi regime, read the times differently than did Bonhoeffer, in the sense that he thought the most important task was to preach, to continue to represent and proclaim Christ to the church and to the Nazi regime—calling both to obedience to the Christ of the Scriptures. Like Bonhoeffer, Schneider, too, recognized the threat that Nazism was to Christian faith in Germany. His action response, however, was to discipline those members of his church who persisted in supporting or being identified with the Nazi regime, which, in his estimation, was operating counter to the authority of Christ.⁵⁴ His disposition toward *die mundige Welte* was one of witness, determined to proclaim the gospel on the authority of the Scriptures. For this, he was arrested and eventually sent to the concentration camp at Buchenwald,⁵⁵ where he continued quoting Scripture and proclaiming Jesus Christ verbally until he was

⁵³This term is taken from the book by the same title: Rudolf Wentorf, *Paul Schneider: The Witness of Buchenwald*, trans. Franklin Sanders (Sun City, AZ: American Eagle Publications, 1993).

⁵⁴Bethge, *A Biography*, 568, demonstrates that in 1937 Bonhoeffer and Schneider were not far apart in their understanding of church discipline and ecclesiastical response to Nazism.

⁵⁵There were a series of events following Schneider's arrest in June 1934 after "the cemetery incident." These events ultimately led to his incarceration at Buchenwald. More details will be discussed below.

summarily called to the infirmary for a physician-administered lethal injection.⁵⁶ Whose approach—Bonhoeffer or Schneider—better adapted the *Imitatio Christi*? Who better understood the temporal exigencies of Nazi Germany, and who offered the better Christian sacrifice? Is the assessment of temporal exigencies and the decision for ethical response a matter of private interpretation or subjective action? Does the church not have recourse to the Scriptures in assessing such a time as this? Slane argues for the authority of the church in making these assessments; yet, as we have seen, Bonhoeffer’s church determined that he was not a martyr. Slane still argues that he is. Is it not the case that with Bonhoeffer there is a lingering and unrelenting question concerning the relation of his death to the righteousness of Christ? Sure, Slane has demonstrated in a generic fashion that Bonhoeffer’s death pattern is, in a sense, something like that of Christ, but the instructions from Matthew 5:10-12 challenge Slane’s notion of Bonhoeffer as martyr because they force the issue to a question of whether Bonhoeffer suffered persecution on account of Christ and on account of righteousness.

Slane leaves vagaries concerning whether Scripture has a definitive role. New Testament writers like the Apostle Paul thought it best to preach the word in season and out of season. As Paul says of men in the human condition, “Their feet are swift to shed blood, destruction and misery are in their paths, and the path of peace they have not known” (Rom 3:15-17 NASB). Does this biblical description apply to the Nazi context? If indeed the world has come of age, then how is Scripture affected? How ought the Christian church respond, biblically speaking, to *die mundige Welte*? What Bonhoeffer’s case points out—as well as what cases of thousands of victims in Sudan, Colombia, Saudi Arabia, North Korea, China also emphasize—is, as the Lausanne Conference pointed out more than twenty-five years ago (and affirmed at Manilla in 1989), that Christians will be persecuted and must be prepared in those contexts to proclaim the gospel. What is

⁵⁶Wayne Johnson, “Paul Schneider: The Martyr of Buchenwald,” *Leben* 1 (2005): 8.

needed to complete this task of witnessing faithfully in every global context, according to the Lausanne occasional paper on the topic, is, “Deeper theological reflection on the issues pertaining to suffering, persecution, martyrdom, religious freedom and human rights, and an appropriate Christian response.”⁵⁷ Bonhoeffer’s case appears as a call to twenty-first century Christians to reflect particularly on the subject of diokology, under the rubric of a persecution/righteous-life paradigm rather than reflecting primarily on martyrdom under the rubric of martyrdom/righteous-death.

Slane has certainly accomplished a laborious task in providing deeper theological reflection on issues pertaining to martyrdom/righteous-death and a Christian response to human rights abuses, or social responsibility. His developmental approach, however, calls us to consider more thoroughly the need for a diokological paradigm, such as the regnal righteousness paradigm for persecution. There are three reasons for reaching this conclusion. First, Bonhoeffer’s case typically is spoken of *solely* on the basis of martyrdom/righteous-death, without asking and answering questions related to persecution/righteous-life. The question with Bonhoeffer, as Bethge and Slane and others pose it, is whether Bonhoeffer is a *martyr*. Perhaps it is time for the church to focus more intently on the prior question demanded by the regnal righteousness dynamic, which is, was Bonhoeffer *persecuted*? Once that question is asked and answered biblically the church may find herself much further down the road toward the Christian response to persecution asked for globally by Lausanne, expected by the Bishop of Diokleia, and called for by the difficulties of Bonhoeffer’s case. Bonhoeffer’s case, as has been shown, forces many elements to intrude upon the conversation and will, inevitably, prove invaluable in distinguishing between Christian martyrs, the generally

⁵⁷David Claydon, ed., “The Persecuted Church” (paper presented at the Lausanne Conference on World Evangelism, October 2004), sec. 4c [on-line]; accessed 15 August 2009; available from http://www.lausanne.org/documents/2004forum/LOP32_IG.pdf; internet. Hereafter this occasional paper will be referred to as the Lausanne persecution paper.

oppressed, and victims of political killings. Asking whether Bonhoeffer was persecuted reframes the discussion along the lines found in Augustine's *pro veritate et iustitia* and, more importantly, Jesus's instruction in Matthew 5:10-12.

Second, Bonhoeffer's case calls the church to reflect biblically on the question of persecution, as the Bishop of Diokleia suggested. For all of Slane's rigorous consideration of theological and ethical motifs, he fails to wrestle with the biblical instructions handed down by Peter. In the Petrine beatitude—parallel to the case in the Matthean beatitude—we hear a blessing for those who are persecuted ἐν ὀνόματι Χριστου (1 Pet 4:14). However, that blessing is followed immediately by the admonition, “By no means let any of you suffer as a murderer, or thief, or evildoer, or a troublesome meddler” Of particular significance in these verses are the concepts κακοποιὸς and ἀλλοτριεπίσκοπος, the former of which may refer to a criminal and the latter to the concept of one who interferes in the affairs of others. Bonhoeffer might be guilty of violating Peter's demands related to suffering. While it is certainly true that Bonhoeffer was not convicted of the crime of high treason of which the Gestapo suspected him, it is also the case—as his close friend, confidant, relative, and biographer admits—that “only in autumn of 1944 did more substantial proof of this arise.”⁵⁸ Of course, one may wish to say in a manner reminiscent of the apostles in Acts 5:29 that Bonhoeffer merely sought to obey God rather than men. Bonhoeffer's writings add weight to the notion that the actions he took were undertaken by faith, seeking to do that which was good for Germany and for the Church. Nevertheless, there are many actions such as the forgery of letters⁵⁹ and participation in the conspiracy against Hitler⁶⁰ which—

⁵⁸Bethge, *A Biography*, 820.

⁵⁹Bethge, *A Biography*, 783, details such a forgery. The letter in question is mentioned later in the indictment, as it was used as evidence by Bonhoeffer that he had reason not to report for military service.

⁶⁰*Ibid.*, 791, 793-94.

in the words of Bethge—may “shock the susceptibilities of anyone whose standards are those of traditional ethics and normal times.”⁶¹ By the notion of “traditional ethics,” Bethge most likely intends the reader to understand the evangelical Lutheran tradition, which Bethge complains made no allowance for participation in a conspiracy such as Bonhoeffer joined.⁶² Yet, even in *die mundige Welte*, Christians have the responsibility to hear Peter’s admonition, do they not?

Along these lines, Slane offers a consideration of the concept of “the value of innocence.” In this consideration, Slane says, “In the temporal stream of occasions that mark the movement from confession to suffering and death, one may neither instigate any phase in the process nor surrender to any violent or retaliatory impulses that might be construed by one’s persecutors as attacking, taunting, or ridiculing. Naturally, one must not abandon one’s confession.”⁶³ At first glance, this definition appears well-suited for Bonhoeffer’s case since, as far as we know, he was placid and submissive⁶⁴ and never abandoned his confession throughout his captivity and execution. On Slane’s definition, Bonhoeffer may still fail the test. Consider how confining the statement is that Slane makes. Is the fate of the martyr to be determined by the perception of the persecutor? Slane says that the persecutor must not *construe* any action as attacking, taunting, or ridiculing. Is it not at least plausible that upon finding out how Bonhoeffer misled him throughout the Tegel prison investigation Manfred Roeder might have construed that Bonhoeffer was taunting or ridiculing him? And even more to the point, Slane’s definition of innocence under persecution clearly varies from that found in 1 Peter 4.

⁶¹Ibid., 791.

⁶²Ibid., 792.

⁶³Slane, *Bonhoeffer as Martyr*, 61.

⁶⁴Bethge, *A Biography*, 813. Though Bonhoeffer did not always speak truthfully to Roeder, he did—in Roeder’s mind—cooperate much more peaceably than Bonhoeffer’s brother-in-law, Dohnanyi.

Slane still attempts to remain rooted in the tradition of martyrological confession, but his account is not integrated within a biblical or ecclesiastical framework. His definition of innocence is an example of the development he advocates, but its restraints are unclear. More helpful than the standards established by Slane are the directives of Jesus and Peter in their beatitudes related to persecution and governed by the righteousness of Christ.

The reality is that Slane's definition standard of innocence does not make it any easier for Bonhoeffer's situation. Regardless of whether Bonhoeffer was placid during his imprisonment, he ought not be classified as a martyr unless his death is preceded by his being persecuted for the sake of righteousness. He cannot have suffered for the sake of righteousness (or because of Christ) if his suffering came about because of actions as a murderer, an evildoer, or a troublesome meddler according to the Petrine limitations. Even using Slane's paradigm, one might argue that Bonhoeffer suffered because of his being an attacker. He was, after all, in prison for "subversion of the armed forces." So, either way one approaches the matter—consulting Peter or consulting Slane—the case is still a difficult one for vindicating Bonhoeffer, but, certainly, the biblical case should be made first—before any general motif of martyrdom is employed (as in Slane's *Imitatio Christi*). Peter demands an answer before any developed alternatives of innocence are considered. Slane however offers his case with no regard for Peter's. Moreover, even though Slane's developed definition of innocence does not guarantee vindication for Bonhoeffer, it almost certainly establishes grounds for indictments against Schneider, who was daily guilty of "taunting" his captors by preaching to them, and he was equally guilty of quoting Scripture to Nazi officials concerning their guilt before God.⁶⁵ A portion of his wife's written work is dedicated to answering this specific charge against Pastor Schneider, as folks considered whether it

⁶⁵Johnson, "Paul Schneider," 17. Schneider's case will be considered in more detail below.

was necessary for Schneider to preach against the atrocities of Nazism and the horror of Buchenwald.⁶⁶

Finally, Bonhoeffer's case does, in fact, test the boundaries of our definition of *martyrdom*. Slane's solution of a developmental definition of martyrdom leaves many questions open for future consideration. Whether this openness is a reflection of Whitehead's influence on Slane's theological development is a question worth considering.⁶⁷ In relation to the study of martyrdom and persecution, however, this openness leaves us asking how far development can go from ecclesiastical and biblical constraints and still remain Christian in a meaningful sense. Bonhoeffer's case and Slane's conclusion point to the need for answers from diokology, taking into account both a righteous life and a righteous death, fleshing out more thoroughly the relationship between persecution and martyrdom, which is more easily accomplished utilizing the regnal righteousness framework.

Approaching the subject of Bonhoeffer first from the regnal righteousness perspective, instead of from the question of martyrdom, will in a sense satisfy the desires of Slane as professed in his book. On the one hand, studying through the regnal righteousness lens would provide him with a much more direct route to ethics than does his present approach to martyrdom. Martyrdom has to do with life viewed from beyond death. It is a work of after-the-fact appraisal. It is always a third-party appraisal and, as such, always unable to enjoy the beatitudinal blessings of Matthew 5:10-12 (or Luke 6:22 or 1 Pet 4:14). Thus, in Slane's reckoning, the agent of action will never know if his ethical action is worthy of the blessing of Christ, which is related to persecution/righteous life, not martyrdom or death. The before-death parameters of the regnal dynamic with its

⁶⁶Margarete Schneider, *Der Prediger von Buchenwald: Neu herausgegeben von Elsa-Ulrike Ross und Paul Dieterich* (Holzgerlingen: SCM Hänssler, 2009).

⁶⁷Slane acknowledges the impact of Whitehead's theological concept of *concrecence* in his martyrological development. See Slane, *Bonhoeffer as Martyr*, 13.

persecution/righteous life outlook at least provide ethical guidelines for a witness to follow who might later become a martyr. Heavy reliance on an after-the-fact appraisal makes Slane's ethical appeal to martyrdom somewhat less appealing. Making the study of persecution/ righteous-life primary would provide a much more natural bridge to ethics for Slane, in that persecution has to do with "this-world" action and "this-world's" response to that action. In drawing upon the life of Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Slane is making a call to all for social responsibility, a call for taking action in step with God's conforming the world to Christ. This call to action in the world—if it is in allegiance to Christ—will inevitably (according to the New Testament writers) lead to a confrontation between allegiances and, thus, to persecution. This confrontation and the consequent persecution is already ethical prior to any pronouncement or consideration of martyrdom. Thus, the study of persecution appears to be logically prior to the study of martyrdom.

In addition to being logically prior, persecution also is the greater of the two, considering that all who are martyrs ought to have suffered persecution, but not all who are persecuted will eventually be martyred—at least not in Slane's technical sense of *martus*. Persecution is the inevitably ethical and public side of the Christian life and precedes martyrdom. Slane admits as much, saying, "In precisely those places where Christ is presumed not to rule, martyrs participate with Christ to make known the truth that, despite appearances, the powers of this age are not ultimate."⁶⁸ This kind of participation with Christ against the powers of this age is ethical and at the root of the regnal righteousness dynamic of Christian persecution. An assessment of Slane's developmental martyrdom, then, calls for a more thorough study of the theological-ethical dynamic of Christian persecution; it calls for diokological studies as exemplified by the regnal righteousness diokology.

⁶⁸Slane, *Bonhoeffer as Martyr*, 64, taking the content of the quote from Bonhoeffer.

Bonhoeffer himself, indicative as he is of the state of martyrdom and persecution in a world come of age, leaves us with a demand to study Christian persecution more thoroughly. Bonhoeffer understood that Christian living meant living in conflict because of the inherent conflict built into the disunity of the world outside of Christ. Not surprisingly, in his work on ethics, Bonhoeffer discusses persecution on a number of occasions. The relationship between persecution and ethics comes to the fore in a consideration of Bonhoeffer's life and work. Indicative of Bonhoeffer's ethical consideration of persecution is his statement, "It is with the Christ, persecuted and suffering together with his church-community, that justice, truth, humanity, and freedom seek refuge. It is the Christ who is unable to find shelter in the world, the Christ of the manger and the cross who is cast out of the world, who is the shelter to whom one flees for protection; only thus is the full breadth of Christ's power revealed."⁶⁹ Bonhoeffer, too, understands the necessity of being identified with Christ in his ethical outlook, and he understands that such an identification invites persecution. Inherently, Christ conflicts with the priorities of the power structures present in the world. Bonhoeffer understood the reality of a conflict. There is no argument here against Bonhoeffer's status as a Christian. Neither is there an argument against his motives *per se*. The argument against his status as a martyr (based on the regnal righteousness dynamic) is simply that it was not a display of the righteousness of God (in Christ) which led to his suffering and death. Therefore, his arrest (and subsequent execution) was not the result of persecution. He was a Christian who died as a political martyr—much like a soldier on a battlefield. Many Christians have died in battle fighting for what they believed was right and good for mankind. However, we do not seek to classify them as martyrs because their deaths were not the consummative result of their being persecuted for Christ's sake. Persecution

⁶⁹Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Dietrich Bonhoeffer Works*, vol. 6, trans. Ilse Todt, et al. (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 2005), 346.

occurs as a retaliatory action of hostility against the revelation of the righteousness of God on display in the followers of Jesus Christ. Bonhoeffer's life does not meet the standard of the regnal righteousness definition of persecution.

One final note is worth reiterating concerning Bonhoeffer and persecution. To say that Bonhoeffer was not persecuted and therefore not a martyr is not intended to diminish his work on behalf of the Confessing Church. Bonhoeffer did strive to benefit those being persecuted. Dr. Kraell, the Senior Reich Military Prosecutor in Bonhoeffer's case, points out in his indictment that "in countless reports the defendant directs the attention of his supervisors Colonel Oster and v. Dohnanyi to alleged persecutions of the Confessing Church and its adherents."⁷⁰ As the prosecutor understood it, Bonhoeffer pled such cases because he found sympathy for the cause of the persecuted in Oster and Dohnanyi. Of course, in Dr. Kraell's view, these actions were subversive. The indictment even names particular individuals such as Hans Peter Jannesch who were recipients of aid from Bonhoeffer. And, the official indictment indicates Bonhoeffer knew the guilt and danger of his actions.⁷¹ Bonhoeffer knew well that he was defying the wishes of his government. He maintained a concern for the persecuted of the Confessing Church (and for Jews as well). Nevertheless, as Ripken reminds us, "Care must be given to retain a high standard of verification regarding issues as volatile as persecution and martyrdom."⁷² The notes related to persecution in the indictment against Bonhoeffer hover on the periphery of the Gestapo's interest in the matter. It was clear that the focal

⁷⁰Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Dietrich Bonhoeffer Works*, vol. 16, trans. Lisa E. Dahill (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 2006), 442.

⁷¹Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Konspiration Und Haft 1940-1945*, band 16 (Chr. Kaiser Verlagshaus: Gutersloh, 1996), 439. From the original, *Hierbei wußte aber der Beschuldigte, daß die Belange, die er vertrat, im Gegensatz zu der von der Deutschen Reichsregierung vertretenen Kirchenpolitik, vertreten durch das Ministerium für kirchliche Angelegenheiten, standen.*

⁷²Nik Ripken, "Servants in the Crucible: Findings from a Global Study on Persecution and the Implications for Sending Agencies and Sending Churches," unpublished manuscript (2004), 77.

issue Dr. Kraell and the Gestapo were interested in was treason. If they could not prove Bonhoeffer and Dohnanyi and the others guilty of treason, they would settle for “actions against the military.” Either way, the issue was not a response to the righteousness of Christ. In this manner, then, the regnal righteousness dynamic offers the high standard of verification Ripken mentions. Bonhoeffer does not appear to have been persecuted on account of righteousness. Nevertheless, Bonhoeffer’s life, at minimum, does point out the truth that has played out over the course of twenty centuries of Christianity: Christian living will conflict with the world. Christians like Bonhoeffer live soberly in the face of such conflict.

Application of Regnal Righteousness to Paul Schneider

Other Christians—like Paul Schneider—focus on calling particular attention to the righteousness of God which is at the heart of the conflict between Christ and alternate authorities. Whereas the arrest of Dietrich Bonhoeffer which led to his execution does not appear related to his revelation of the righteousness of Christ, the arrest of Pastor Schneider is directly related to his revelation of Christ. Pastor Schneider’s case is clearly one of Christian persecution because his suffering was a direct result of his acting righteously, in the sense of displaying the righteousness of God. Pastor Schneider’s actions leading to his numerous arrests and incarcerations were on account of Christ. Paul Schneider was first arrested after the cemetery incident of June 12, 1934.⁷³ In that incident, Pastor Schneider officiated at the funeral of Karl Moog, a 17 year-old⁷⁴ member of the Hitler Youth who died from encephalitis. The young man was not one of Pastor Schneider’s parishioners. In fact, Pastor Schneider was only four weeks into his

⁷³Claude Foster, *Paul Schneider: The Buchenwald Apostle* (West Chester, PA: West Chester University Press, 1997), 382-95. However, Wentorf, *Paul Schneider*, 56, records the date of the incident as Monday, June 11.

⁷⁴Paul Schneider’s June 12-13 letter to his superintendent lists Karl Moog’s age as 18, but the entry into the church record has his age as 17 years, 7 months, and 30 days.

Dickenschied pastorate when the incident took place. He was substituting at this funeral for another pastor who was away on business. During the funeral, Pastor Schneider took offense to the actions of a Nazi official named Heinrich Nadig from Gemuenden. Director Nadig spoke out concerning Karl Moog and said that the young man would now be taken up into the “Horst Wessel Troop,” a troop named after a Nazi Storm Trooper killed for service in the cause of National Socialism.⁷⁵ Pastor Schneider took great offense at the public comment and replied, “Whether there is a Horst Wessel Troop in eternity, I don’t know; but the Lord God bless your exit from time and your entry into eternity!”⁷⁶ As the pastor of the ceremony, Schneider felt obligated to speak on behalf of the gospel and the Scriptures. The Horst Wessel song which was sung by the Hitler Youth (many of whom attended the service) did indeed pit Christ against this Nazi hero: “Not Christ, but Horst Wessel is our hero,”⁷⁷ went the song. Director Nadig persisted in his affirmation of the presence of the Horst Wessel Troop in heaven and of Karl Moog’s place in it. So, again, Pastor Schneider spoke out.

After the funeral was over, Pastor Schneider attempted to contact Director Nadig to reconcile. When he was unable to contact the director in person, Schneider wrote a letter to him the following day, saying, “I regret that it came to this collision, but I was acting under pressure. Also, a cemetery service is strictly a church service, celebrated in the name of the triune God and closed with a blessing and an invitation to the house of God. It is not practicable that whoever wants to speak be allowed to say whatever he wants.”⁷⁸ Obviously, Pastor Schneider was concerned about the accuracy of

⁷⁵Wentorf, *Paul Schneider*, 56. See especially n. 33.

⁷⁶Ibid., 56. Foster, *Paul Schneider*, 386-87, offers two slightly different forms of the quotation, one from the report of the arrest and another from Schneider’s recounting of it in his letter to his superintendent.

⁷⁷Foster, *Paul Schneider*, 386.

⁷⁸Wentorf, *Paul Schneider*, 57.

the gospel message being presented. Indeed, at the funeral, Pastor Schneider had already made this clear by saying, “I protest. This is a church ceremony, and as the Gospel pastor I am answerable for the pure doctrine of the Holy Scriptures.”⁷⁹ He explained his protest in the June 13 letter, reminding the director that he only protested after the director persisted. In addition, Schneider said that his protest was the mildest form he could muster. Schneider maintained that a protest had to be made:

If the replacement of the living God by ‘Fate’ calling away the departed youth can’t very well be passed over in an evangelical church service, so the idea of enrolling him into the heavenly Horst Wessel Troop (invented in any event by former Bishop Hosenfelder) must necessitate a rebuttal from the pastor leading the service and responsible to ensure that it be carried out according to the creed of the church.⁸⁰

Schneider’s attempt at reconciliation failed. The letter never reached Director Nadig. The day after the letter was written, Pastor Schneider was arrested and kept in “protective custody” for the next five days.⁸¹ He was released with no trial or official proceedings of any kind during his arrest. Schneider’s congregation then signed a petition (which 43 of 48 signed⁸²) and confronted the district director. Not surprisingly, the director boiled the matter down to one of allegiance. Was their allegiance to National Socialism or to their faith in Christ? They answered that it was their faith in Christ which was most dear, and, for that, the congregants were accused of being disloyal to Germany.⁸³ Whether disloyal to Germany or not, the church sought at this point to remain true to Christ and to the Scriptures: “We are of the opinion that our pastor at the grave of Karl Moog in Gemunden could not have avoided making the remarks which he

⁷⁹Ibid., 56.

⁸⁰Ibid., 57.

⁸¹Foster, *Paul Schneider*, 388, discusses what the concept of protective custody implied. Both Schneider and Bonhoeffer were originally held in “protective custody.”

⁸²Wentorf, *Paul Schneider*, 59, says the signatories numbered 34 rather than 43.

⁸³Ibid.

made which were in harmony with the clear teaching of Scripture.”⁸⁴ In the case of Schneider’s first arrest, the regnal dynamic appears satisfied. Fealty to Christ precipitated the clash between Schneider and the Nazi authorities. The same was true for the congregants of the Dickenschied church.

Schneider’s other arrests followed the same basic pattern of his attempt to maintain the righteousness of Christ in the face of opposition against it. His second arrest came in March of 1935 concerning a communiqué released by the Berlin/Dahlem synod of the Confessing Church. In that communiqué, the synod emphasized again the righteousness of God: “We see our people placed before a fatal danger. The danger consists in a new religion. The Church is to watch over the command of our Lord that Christ be given the honor among our people, the honor due to the judge of the world.”⁸⁵ Clearly, the synod was concerned about the righteousness of Christ, the judge of the world. The synod expected all its churches to read the communiqué in their congregational meetings. The concern was for the Confessing Church to maintain a proper witness to Christ as National Socialism was threatening a reinvention of the faith: “If the German people stray from God and are unwarned, the Church knows that she will be held accountable before God.”⁸⁶

In what might be termed a “top-down” approach,⁸⁷ the Gestapo was already persecuting Christians, particularly pastors. Hence, in this instance, the Gestapo targeted pastors of congregations which might read the warning letter from the Confessing Church. Of course, Pastor Schneider was one such pastor. So, Constable Klein from

⁸⁴Foster, *Paul Schneider*, 389.

⁸⁵*Ibid.*, 449.

⁸⁶*Ibid.*

⁸⁷Ripken, “Servants in the Crucible,” 8. Top down persecution takes place when persecution is systemic oppression by military, school, government, and church authorities, thus institutionalized.

Simmern visited Pastor Schneider on Saturday, March 16, with orders from the Gestapo to make certain that Pastor Schneider signed a pledge stating that he would not read the communiqué to his church. Pastor Schneider refused to sign, was summarily arrested, and taken away to Kirchberg. In a letter to his wife shortly after his arrest, Paul Schneider identified his present suffering as “suffering for His cause.” And he continued, “We are not worthy to suffer for Him, but we greatly rejoice that He deigns us worthy to bear persecution and shame for His name’s sake.”⁸⁸ Schneider apparently believed that the brief communiqué from the synod was a proclamation of Jesus Christ to the Confessing Church, reminding her of her charge to be a faithful witness of Christ. Because the proclamation focused clearly on the righteousness of God and the authority of Christ, it was a proclamation Schneider felt obligated to read, and one the Gestapo felt obligated to stop. The Gestapo did stop the reading of the proclamation by arresting Schneider. He was the only pastor in the Hunsrück parish who refused to sign the Gestapo’s pledge of silence. He, of course, ended up in jail.

Schneider was in jail for only a matter of days before being released under the Gestapo’s burden of having 750 or so other pastors from various districts in jail for refusing to sign the pledge. So, in less than a week, Pastor Schneider was back at home with his wife, Gretel, serving his church in Dickenschied, and calling his fellow pastors to faithfulness in the face of persecution. Schneider was arrested again in May of 1937 because he brought three members of the Nazi party to the congregation for discipline. After two months, he was released, but exiled from Rhineland. Schneider was arrested a fourth and final time in October of 1937 for defying the exile order from the Gestapo. We may be inclined to think of these numerous arrests as an indication of obstinacy or unnecessary provocation. One may claim as the warden of the Koblenz prison did, that Schneider was not displaying righteousness at all in his disobeying the exile order. The

⁸⁸Foster, *Paul Schneider*, 453.

warden viewed Schneider's actions as "pigheadedness."⁸⁹ But, in truth, the issue was certainly one of maintaining righteousness. There are two ways of seeing Schneider's case on the grounds of righteousness which are particularly germane to the application of the regnal righteousness dynamic of Christian persecution.

First, Schneider was being asked by the warden to sign and agree with a penalty which was preceded by no formal charge. Of what was Pastor Schneider guilty before either the law of Germany or the law of God? The Gestapo never issued a charge against Schneider. His third arrest—like the first two—was for "protective custody." As in the other two arrests, he was never charged with a crime or offered a trial. Therefore, to agree to the penalty would have been to admit guilt without ever having been charged with a crime. Thus, Schneider was not being accused falsely; he wasn't being accused at all. Obviously, this was not the case with Bonhoeffer, who spent the first portion of his Tegel imprisonment answering Roeder's unofficial charge of high treason, only later to be charged with action against the military effort.⁹⁰ Even if he were noble in his motives, Bonhoeffer was guilty as charged. Schneider, however, was not even charged. The Gestapo did not wish to convict him as much as it hoped to silence him from preaching Christ and calling Germans to allegiance to Him.

The second, and much more important point regarding Pastor Schneider, was the issue of allegiance to Christ. On Saturday, July 24, 1937, a Gestapo officer unlocked Pastor Schneider's cell and told him he was free to leave as soon as he signed the prisoner release agreement. The release agreement included in it an order of exile from the Rhineland, including from his home in Dickenschied and his church in Womrath. In response to this seemingly favorable circumstance, Schneider replied to the warden, "I

⁸⁹Ibid., 669.

⁹⁰Bonhoeffer, *Works* 16: 420-21, from Bonhoeffer's pre-trial letter to the Supreme War Court Counsel.

cannot sign this statement.”⁹¹ The warden was in no mood for debating the matter and so explained that it was not a contract to be negotiated. Whether Schneider agreed with it or not, the statement was made, and he would be arrested if he ever went back to his Dickenschied/Womrath congregations. Schneider had received word of this coming offer of release and the exile notice which would accompany it on the night before it happened, and he spent a sleepless night pondering what ought to be his response. His refusal to sign the order was not impetuous. He knew it might mean his continued imprisonment. He knew refusing the order might incense the Gestapo further against him and would likely ensure that he would not get home to Gretel and the children, but he also knew that he had to respond by faith. So, he spent the night praying and sorting through Scripture passages, asking, “What should I do, O Lord?”⁹² Schneider understood the dilemma to be one of maintaining allegiance to Christ. He realized that he could reunite with his family and move somewhere outside of the Rhineland, but to do so would—in his opinion—have been to yield his allegiance to the state rather than to Christ. Christ had called him to the Rhineland, to the churches at Dickenschied and Womrath. Did the state have authority to overrule the call of Christ for him to shepherd the flock at Dickenschied? Schneider reasoned, “Accepting exile means abandoning my flock in Dickenschied/ Womrath; it means recognizing State authority over the Church of Christ; it means subjecting the freedom of the children of God to the tyranny of an anti-Christian and demonic political power.”⁹³ So, putting his name on the agreement to exile would have meant acknowledging an authority higher than that of Christ. Such an acknowledgement Schneider was unwilling to make. Schneider’s desire was to maintain allegiance to Christ and not allow state interference to diminish the authority of Christ.

⁹¹Foster, *Paul Schneider*, 669.

⁹²Ibid., 668.

⁹³Ibid.

Or, put in terms adopted from chapter 2, Schneider's concern was to represent Christ, not to misrepresent His authority to the Nazi government. This allegiance and concern for the authority of Christ was the foundation upon which Paul Schneider stood in defiance of the Gestapo order to never return to the Rhineland. In this, Paul Schneider appears to have been persecuted for the sake of righteousness.

Not only was Schneider persecuted for the sake of righteousness, but his persecution also culminated in his being killed. Because he was persecuted for Christ's sake to the point of death, Schneider is rightfully known as a Christian martyr. After being driven past the Rhineland border, Schneider was turned loose by the Gestapo with his exile orders in hand. This was Saturday, July 24. On Sunday morning, July 25, all three of the Womrath church bells rang out, signaling that the shepherd had returned to his flock.⁹⁴ Foster summarizes Schneider's sermon message from Isaiah 7:9 in this manner: "As the great prophet, Isaiah, admonished King Ahaz of Judah to believe in God's deliverance, despite the imminent attack by Syria and Samaria, Luther encouraged the German princes to defy pope and emperor for the sake of the Gospel."⁹⁵ The congregation welcomed the message and its incarnate example on that Sunday morning, but the pastor did not mention the exile order, which he had thrown in the trash on his way back to Womrath. The Gestapo had not thrown away the order, of course, and was quick to pursue Schneider. After a visit to the doctor concerning his leg, Schneider was abruptly waved down by an old friend who convinced him and Gretel that arrest was certain if he returned to his parsonage in Dickenschied. Schneider replied, "Could not my failure to return to Dickenschied be interpreted as a lack of confidence in God's providence?"⁹⁶ In other words, Schneider, again, was concerned about misrepresenting

⁹⁴Ibid., 670.

⁹⁵Ibid.

⁹⁶Ibid., 672.

Christ. Fritz Langensiepen—a long time friend and the man who waved Schneider down with the warning—was able to convince Schneider that God was providing in this instance an escape such as he provided often for David or the Apostle Paul. Fritz asserted that if Schneider defied this provision, he would be unlike Christ, who refused to put God to the test. Schneider acquiesced but continued to pray and seek certainty concerning the Lord's will in the matter of whether he ought to have avoided Dickenschied, again demonstrating his concern for the righteousness of Christ.

Ultimately, Schneider determined to use the time as a vacation period to recuperate from his imprisonment and leg injury. He wrote of his decision to Gretel and informed her that the vacation period would last for four weeks; then he must return to his flock at Dickenschied. He was resolved in this determination, feeling that it was a weakness of faith which allowed him to succumb to Fritz's escape plan. He wrote to Gretel, "If God can permit something good to come out of our un-faith, weak faith and feeble faith, that does not justify us, but merely testifies to His undeserved divine mercy from Whose sin-forgiving grace we live."⁹⁷ Still others encouraged Schneider to remain in his respite at Baden Baden. Pastor Paul Humburg of Barmen wrote to Schneider that it was important for the cause of justice that he remain outside of the Rhineland until the case could be cleared. Humburg told Schneider, "It is important that the justice of our cause be obvious to every court in order that the children of God may be able to support us."⁹⁸ Schneider, of course, believed in the justice of his cause and thought that the children of God should be supporting him. Schneider's allegiance to Christ set him on a course toward Dickenschied and, ultimately, Buchenwald.

⁹⁷Ibid., 675.

⁹⁸Letter from Humburg, quoted in Foster, *Paul Schneider*, 683.

As he promised, “At the harvest thanksgiving festival of 1937 Pastor Schneider stood again in his pulpit in Dickenschied.”⁹⁹ This would prove to be Schneider’s last sermon. His car was intercepted on the way home by Gestapo agents waiting in the woods near the edge of the village. Schneider was arrested and taken first to Kirchberg, then to the police jail in Koblenz. Wentorf writes, “He knew that he ‘stood in the holy service of war for the Church of Jesus Christ.’ He knew however also, that transfer to a concentration camp was possible.”¹⁰⁰ Schneider was again commanded to sign the exile order and agree to abide by it, but, again, he could not. For him, the matter “was extraordinarily important for the relations of church and state, and for the inward and outward freedom of the church which, for the gospel’s sake, must be asserted.”¹⁰¹ To his great dismay, Schneider learned that the church leadership had remained silent against the injustice of his banishment.¹⁰² He asked, “Should I, alone, as a little pastor from the Hunsrueck bear witness of what is right to the State? If that’s the case, then it’s almost asking too much of the state to take church decisions seriously.”¹⁰³ Except for a final visit from his beloved Gretel, Schneider was alone. He was put into a prison car and driven away to the new concentration camp at Buchenwald, never to see his wife, family, or flock again.

Gretel received word by telegram on Tuesday, July 18, 1939, that her husband had died. She had twenty-four hours to claim the body, or it would be cremated.

⁹⁹Wentorf, *Paul Schneider*, 96.

¹⁰⁰Ibid., 97.

¹⁰¹Ibid., Paul Schneider’s letter from jail.

¹⁰²Actually, there are a couple of letters of which Schneider must have been unaware from the Dusseldorf Protestant Consistory to the Central Church Office in Berlin and to the Gestapo inquiring about the irregularities in Pastor Schneider’s case and demanding to know the charge which was proven against him. See Foster, *Paul Schneider*, 681-82.

¹⁰³Schneider letter from Wentorf, *Paul Schneider*, 98.

Hurriedly, she enlisted the aid of Pastor Gerhard Petry and Ernst Schmidt, the latter of whom owned a Mercedes and a trailer on which the body could be transported. They drove through the night, arriving at Buchenwald the next day to receive the body. Gretel had many questions for the officials at Buchenwald, but her questions received no answers. Indeed, SS Officer Lugner dismissed her complaints, saying, “If only your husband would have accepted his exile from the Rhineland, he could have been released.”¹⁰⁴ For the sake of the gospel, Schneider never accepted the exile. Perhaps as a final testament to the power with which Paul Schneider spoke against the unrighteousness of National Socialism—and to the hatred German officials had for such speech—the casket was sealed with seven large, red seals and kept under constant guard until burial so that no one could see or hear anymore from Pastor Paul Schneider.

Paul Schneider was certainly murdered by the leaders of Buchenwald.¹⁰⁵ Throughout his two-year tenure at Buchenwald, Schneider was tortured, deprived, and literally, decimated. He was, however, never silent. He spoke for Christ and against the unrighteousness abounding at Buchenwald. Alfred Leikam, himself an inmate at Buchenwald, confessed, “To insure our own security, we remained silent in the face of monstrous brutality. As far as I know, there was only one person in the Nazi concentration camps who can be exempted from this charge of silence. That person was Pastor Paul Schneider of Dickenschied who in word and deed resisted the evil about him and finally died a martyr’s death at Buchenwald on July 18, 1939.”¹⁰⁶ With inmate Leikam, both Paul Schneider’s widow and E. H. Robertson (her translator) heartily agree, “We needed the record of a man who fought Nazism for no other reason than that he

¹⁰⁴Foster, *Paul Schneider*, 858.

¹⁰⁵See the discussion in Foster, *Paul Schneider*, 848-56, especially the testimony of Walter Poller.

¹⁰⁶Letter from Alfred Leikam in Foster, *Paul Schneider*, 849.

could not disobey Christ.”¹⁰⁷ With Leikam, Gretel, and Robertson, the regnal righteousness dynamic would concur. Paul Schneider was a Christian martyr because his persecution for the sake of righteousness was that which ultimately led to his death. The life and death of Paul Schneider represented and proclaimed the righteousness of Christ.

Paul Schneider’s life and death also speaks to one final question in this consideration of the regnal righteousness dynamic: Was SS Officer Lugner correct? Could Schneider have avoided the persecution which led to his death? If the regnal righteousness dynamic is correct, then the answer to the question must be no. As the Apostle Paul says in 2 Timothy 3:12, “All who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted” (ESV). Paul Schneider certainly sought to live a godly life in Christ at a time when doing so threatened the unity of the National Socialist movement in Germany. As a Christian, he could not have avoided the conflict anymore than Christ Himself could have. Indeed, the conflict proves to be the same conflict. The presence of Christ and the righteousness of God are manifest in the faith of Christ’s followers such as Paul Schneider. Faith in Christ then conflicts with allegiance to the various powers active in what Charles Campbell calls the “Domination System.”¹⁰⁸ The Apostle Paul called the system “the domain of darkness” (τῆς ἐξουσίας τοῦ σκότους) in Colossians 1:13. Whatever one calls this system of alternate authority, the New Testament calls for allegiance to Christ and to the Kingdom of God in opposition to it. Thus, as Jesus explains in Matthew 5:10-12, those who represent His righteousness are the blessed ones who are persecuted on account of Him. This persecution is the case for all whose fealty to Christ identifies them with Him and His kingdom purposes. So, Christ could instruct his followers that because the world persecuted him, the world would persecute them.

¹⁰⁷E. H. Robertson, *Paul Schneider, The Pastor of Buchenwald* (London: SCM Press, 1956) 7.

¹⁰⁸Charles L. Campbell, *The Word before the Powers: An Ethic of Preaching* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2002), 26.

Beyond this, however, especially in the case of gospel preachers like Paul Schneider, persecution is unavoidable. Christ, manifesting the righteous authority of God, is opposed by earthly powers which follow the prince of the power of the air, as Paul says in Ephesians 2:2. Preachers must understand this because their vocation, in effect, is to call attention to the conflict of allegiances as Schneider did. The preacher's task is to plead for faith that others might believe Christ and participate in the kingdom of heaven. Preachers are to engage the battle and equip other soldiers of Christ likewise to participate. As was shown from the study of Matthew in chapter two, the preaching of Jesus bears out this reality.

Application of Regnal Righteousness to Proclamation

According to the gospel accounts, Jesus began his public ministry by proclaiming, "Repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matt 4:17; cf. Mark 1:15). Consistent with such calls for repentance, Charles Campbell views the ministry of Jesus as being one which confronts prevailing systems of power and domination from beginning to end. Indeed, says Campbell, "Jesus continues the path of resistance that leads to the cross; at virtually every turn he proclaims and embodies an alternative to the ways of the Domination System."¹⁰⁹ If Campbell is correct in his assessment of the proclamation ministry of Jesus, then, on the assumption that the Jesus of the New Testament gospels is paradigmatic for Christian proclamation, it follows that Christian proclamation today (as in Schneider's day) will need also to confront what Campbell calls "the Domination System." Sounding in some ways similar to Kodjak's "anxiety of death" explanation in chapter two, Campbell says, "As preachers enter the reality of Jesus' resurrection . . . , they are prepared to preach with hope on Sunday mornings.... They are prepared to speak the Word that helps set the church free to live faithfully in the

¹⁰⁹Ibid., 48.

face of the powers of death.”¹¹⁰ Preachers are prepared, in other words, to preach the Word of hope in the face of the powers of opposition to the righteousness of God.

The two questions Campbell brings into sharp focus are the questions of whether Christian proclamation inherently (or necessarily) must confront contrary powers (“the powers of death”); and, if it does, in what manner does the confrontation take place. Answering these two questions will enable us to see more clearly whether Schneider could have avoided his fate, as the SS Officer suggested.

Campbell would agree with what is stated here that Christian preaching is inherently involved in confrontation with the world powers. The title of his most recent work gives the point away: *The Word Before the Powers* is Campbell’s ethic of preaching. His thesis is simple: The Word must take its stand in the presence of the powers. Campbell establishes this proposition, primarily, on two minor premises: first, that “the ethical context of preaching is the activity of the principalities and powers;”¹¹¹ second, that “the preaching of the Word is a critical practice of resistance to the work of the principalities and powers.”¹¹² When he says that the context of preaching is the activity of principalities and powers, Campbell means that “the principalities and powers of the world remain aggressive actors that shape human life today and provide the context of Christian preaching.”¹¹³ So, according to this dynamic, Christian preaching today as well as in the time of Nazi Germany would necessarily conflict with and confront abuses of power, thus asserting that the nature of Schneider’s conflict was not (as Bethge and Slane argued) simply the result of the exigencies of Nazi Germany. Nazi Germany provided the particular contours or shape of the conflict, but the essence of the conflict is

¹¹⁰Ibid., 188.

¹¹¹Ibid.

¹¹²Ibid.

¹¹³Ibid.

rooted in the gospel itself making authoritative claims over the principalities and powers of the world.

Clearly, those who preach in America and throughout the West are not preaching in the same context as Pastor Schneider. There is no Nazi Germany on the march. However, there are still powers at work (2 Cor 10:3-6). Western culture, by many academic accounts, is adrift in a sea of postmodern uncertainty. Religions abound, but truth and certainty appear as difficult to grasp in our day as the famed London fog. Though perhaps making an overstatement, David Lose describes the matter this way: “Raging like a whirlwind of relative values and subjective truths through the ivory towers of the academy, postmodernity has in one fell swoop severed the connection between language and its referent, divested history of its purely academic character, banished the pretense of objectivity from the sciences, betrayed the lie of social progress, and killed the authors of literary texts.”¹¹⁴ Even if hyperbolic, Lose’s statements remain quite in accord with a prevailing sentiment that the West abides in a *zeitgeist* of uncertainty. As Scott Black Johnston succinctly states, “To be post-modern is to be post-certain.”¹¹⁵ Nevertheless, even if there is a mood of uncertainty afoot in our postmodern milieu, there is also conflict pending between those who are aligned with Christ and those who are aligned with the various powers within postmodernity. For Campbell, the Christian community is called to live by and proclaim the truth of Jesus of Nazareth to opposition powers in this and in every age.

For Campbell, preaching is concerned to present Christ rightly before the prevailing powers of the world. However, Campbell’s homiletical method comes up against a difficulty concerning the manner of the confrontation with the powers. The

¹¹⁴David J. Lose, *Confessing Jesus Christ: Preaching in a Postmodern World* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), 1.

¹¹⁵Scott Black Johnston, *Theology for Preaching: Authority, Truth, and Knowledge of God in a Postmodern Ethos* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1997), 28.

difficulty with Campbell's method is found in the role of the community in relation to the Scriptures. For Campbell, the community develops and preserves the identity of Jesus, then proclaims it to the larger world. His approach appears to be circular and problematic. After all, the same community which has reached an interpretation of the identity of Jesus of Nazareth then calls itself to conform to its own interpretation. How can the community be sure it has generated the *actual* identity of Jesus of Nazareth in order, then, *actually* to conform to the identity of Jesus of Nazareth, instead of generating an identity of Jesus of Nazareth to which the community wishes to be conformed? In other words, what safeguards are there which might protect the community from a Christological "inbreeding," which allows only for an identity of Jesus which is commensurate with its own prior political preferences? The case of Paul Schneider is particularly germane on this point of Christological inbreeding because political preferences in his day were leading many of his fellow pastors and congregations to adopt a less authoritative view of Jesus in light of the increasingly authoritative claims of the Gestapo. Schneider's own imprisonment makes this point plainly, as many other pastors would have surrendered to the exile order on the premise that they might serve Christ somewhere else instead of making a confrontation with the Gestapo over the question of whether the State had authority to reassign Christ's pastors.

The prospect of this kind of communal "inbreeding" is recognized by Campbell. As he says, "Both the reading of Scripture and the preaching and hearing of the gospel are inseparably related to the political practices of the church."¹¹⁶ So, what if the congregation were made up largely of liberal-minded socialists? Or, as was the case in Schneider's day, what if much of the professing community of Christians had succumbed to the broader culture and adapted, say, the patriotic vision of German

¹¹⁶Charles Campbell, *Preaching Jesus: The New Direction for Homiletics in Hans Frei's Postliberal Theology* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 1997), 243.

nationalism? Would this community composition not alter the interpretation of biblical texts concerning the manner in which Jesus called for obedience to authority? Of course, it would (and in fact it did). Yet neither Campbell nor the rest of us would accept the legitimacy of such a representation of Christ. There needs to be a mechanism in place to check the authority of the community. To see how the community might greatly impact the interpretation of the texts, we need only remember situations such as Richard Wurmbrand described in *Tortured for Christ*,¹¹⁷ situations in which pastor after pastor in Romania spoke to congregation after congregation, telling them of the compatibility of Christianity with Communism. The congregation will, to some degree, reflect the larger culture out of which it comes. Campbell refers to this phenomenon as “the tyranny of the hearers,” indicating that those who listen to the sermon bring other traditions with them which shape both their hearing of the sermon and their hearing of the Scriptures.¹¹⁸ Campbell demonstrates the reality of this phenomenon when he offers the personal illustration of how his own friendship with adult singles affected his reading of the wedding liturgy he was expected to perform. Though the liturgy for the wedding ceremony had never bothered him before, he was unable to read it the same way after he had become well-acquainted with the singles community. He found himself in a dilemma when asked to perform the wedding of an acquaintance. At the end of the matter, Campbell could proceed only after producing a revised version of the wedding ceremony which was more sympathetic to the conviction that celibacy and singleness are viable options in the Christian community. So, if a community were of a like-minded political persuasion with German nationalism, might that community not reshape the identity of

¹¹⁷Richard Wurmbrand, *Tortured for Christ* (Bartlesville: Living Sacrifice Book Company, 1967).

¹¹⁸For a slightly different perspective on this same idea, see Peter C. Jones, *Pagans in the Pews: Protecting Your Family and Community from the Pervasive Influence of the New Spirituality* (Ventura, CA: Regal, 2004).

Jesus of Nazareth into a friendlier one for German nationalism? If so, then it is difficult to see how Campbell escapes the anthropological trap of the modernist-experiential tradition which he expects to escape. If not, then, what are the hermeneutical safeguards in place to prevent the identity of Jesus of Nazareth from being skewed and morphed into the mere whimsical wishes of the majority of the individuals in the interpreting community?

The reply might be that the community is more than simply a community; it is a community acting faithfully in semiotic relationship to Scripture. Scripture, then, is the mediating influence to render rightly the identity of Jesus of Nazareth. The community both interprets and is interpreted by Scripture. If this is the case, however, another hermeneutical dilemma arises: How does Scripture relate to the Christian community? As one thinks through the answer to this question, he pushes to the surface a series of other difficulties. First, there exists a difficulty which has to do with the presence of a hermeneutical theory at all. Campbell, in the tradition of Frei, is concerned that the presence of a hermeneutical system might undermine the actual role of the Scripture in shaping a particular community of faith, and it might also threaten that community's rendering of the particular Jesus of Nazareth found in the Scriptures. Campbell is adamantly non-foundational in his approach and wishes not to return to any form of foundationalism when speaking of biblical interpretation, believing that the past two "orthodoxies"—deductive propositionalism and inductive experientialism—have failed to render or maintain rightly the identity of Jesus of Nazareth and have failed to produce a particular community of faith related to that identity. Instead, the latter orthodoxy, liberalism, has accommodated itself to the culture because of its insistence on proving Jesus to be meaningful to the human condition. Both the deductive and the inductive approaches have failed. Consequently, Campbell, in the stream of postliberal thought, insists on building upon no hermeneutical foundation. He "refuses to substitute

hermeneutical theory for the church, the community in which Christians learn the rules for reading and performing Scripture.”¹¹⁹ The community is the starting point, for it is the community of faith which possesses and guides its own reading of the narratives which render the identity of Jesus. Campbell promotes the view that the Christian community possesses a distinctive identity because of her relation to the identity of Jesus. The church is shaped by the identity of Jesus. Yet, the identity of Jesus also is shaped by the church.

Beyond the problem of the existence of a hermeneutical theory is the problem of correction. Campbell wishes to keep open the option of correction, both from within the community, as well as from outside the community. He accepts the inclusion of philosophical, conceptual tools, so long as they are not allowed to dominate. These tools, of course, are to help ascertain the identity of Jesus of Nazareth *rightly*. However, if there is a *rightly*, then there is also a *wrongly*. And if there are both right and wrong ways to interpret the gospel narratives, then there is the potential need for correction. If there is a need for correction, then there is a need for a means of correction. If there is a means of correction in interpretation, then there is a need to access those means of correction. Access to a means of correcting the interpretation of biblical texts is what hermeneutics is all about; so, it seems Campbell is embracing a hermeneutical theory and promoting one as well. He is not starting merely with the community. If there is no right or wrong way to interpret the texts in order to arrive at the identity of Jesus of Nazareth, then, it would seem that any identity of Jesus of Nazareth may do, whether one identifies him as a pacifist, a socialist, or a German nationalist. If, instead, there is a right way to interpret the texts, then there also is a hermeneutical theory defining such a way. Campbell answers these concerns with “the concrete people of the community of faith.”

¹¹⁹Campbell, *Preaching Jesus*, 113. Here Campbell is speaking this way of Hans Frei. I have transposed the quote to refer to Campbell, who, obviously, has adopted Frei’s approach.

Campbell insists that there abides no general theory of hermeneutics by which one can explain how the biblical text is *rightly* interpreted, thus becoming meaningful to the community.

In speaking of how the community relates to Scripture, Campbell argues that the two are engaged in semiotic relation. While this seems right, in the sense that it is the preaching of the Word which brings one into the community, and it is the Word which sustains the community; still, Campbell needs to clarify both the relation between the Word and Christian community and the relation of the Word and the world. Campbell avoids these types of clarification because his approach is one which attempts to “free Christians from the shackles of historical methods and theory-laden assumptions so that they can receive the text as the kerygmatic document that it is: one that points to Jesus Christ.”¹²⁰ However, many scholars (at least many evangelical scholars) are not yet ready to concede that freedom from such shackles is a good thing for the Christian community or its preaching. More to the point, I do not see that Campbell himself has yet broken free from “theory-laden assumptions.”

Though there is much to commend in Campbell’s homiletic approach, particularly in view of the need for the church to be a peculiar people rather than an indistinct, unrecognized-from-the-surrounding-culture-people, Campbell still leaves lingering questions. What about the living Word? What about the Holy Spirit? What about Christ and the individual Christian? What about Paul Schneider? What about the individual Christian witness whose life and words confront the powers of the world? Campbell focuses on the community almost to the exclusion of the individual. He speaks of the community being shaped by the identity of its leader, Jesus Christ. This process of being peculiarly shaped by Jesus Christ makes the Christian community a peculiar

¹²⁰Keith Johnson, “The Resurrection and History: Hans Frei and His Evangelical Critics,” unpublished manuscript (2005), 2-3. The quote is Johnson’s affirmation of the efforts of Hans Frei, thus making it fitting for application to Campbell.

people. (Campbell labels the process as *figural interpretation*.) He makes mention of the fact that figural interpretation often flourished in the contexts of persecution, and one can easily understand how this is the case. Being a peculiar people may well come to mean being a persecuted people. In view of the history of the Confessing Church in Germany, one can see how a peculiar people might set themselves up for persecution by not fitting in to the culture at large. However, what one does not see in Campbell's discussion is how the individual—the peculiar person—confronts the powers, leading to persecution. The prospect of persecution seems to call for more than a communal hermeneutic. Though the church is, as Campbell notes, in great need of rediscovering and holding unwaveringly to her unique identity in Christ, still, she is also comprised of individuals like Paul Schneider whose particular lives may be threatened because of their participation in the community of faith. When persecution threatens, it threatens particular individuals. When an individual Christian is threatened, he will need to have more of a foundation than the mere fact that he is a member of a cultural-linguistic community which is formed by its narrative rendering of the identity of Jesus of Nazareth. Quite bluntly, he will need to know why he personally should be willing to die. He will need to know, as the Apostle Paul put it, the presence of Jesus Christ who “loved *me* and gave himself *for me*.”¹²¹ He will need to have, as Kay points out, a saving promise directly addressed to him: “Preachers cannot remain in ‘Bibleland,’ but must...risk taking account of the world in which the Christian message is proclaimed and to which it is addressed.”¹²² Campbell's system, strong in its impact on communal identity, is not as strong on individual promise, particularly in the face of the powers

¹²¹Gal 2:20, emphasis added.

¹²²James F. Kay, review of *Preaching Jesus: New Directions for Homiletics in Hans Frei's Postliberal Theology*, by Charles Campbell, *Theology Today* 56 (1999): 405.

prevalent in the domain of darkness. Persecution is just one example of why promise and presence are so important in preaching and Christian living.

As has been demonstrated, Campbell's communal hermeneutic does not appear able to ensure that the *actual* identity of Jesus of Nazareth will be rendered (at least not without the "shackles" he seeks to avoid). And, his communal hermeneutic does not address adequately the needs of the individual in the community by offering him the promise of the presence of Christ in persecution. Beyond this, Campbell's proclamation method also does not appear to offer the individual room to respond to the revelation of Jesus of Nazareth. David Lose, speaking about Campbell's postliberal proposal, notes that preaching "is decidedly assertive—making claims about the nature of reality—and therefore demands a response from the listener."¹²³ Lose points out that Campbell's communal hermeneutic, though it may well produce adherence to the community's traditional rendering of the identity of Jesus of Nazareth, may not produce faithful adherents to Jesus. Faithfulness to a religious tradition may not mean the same as faithfulness to the Living God, as Jesus himself often pointed out to the Pharisees. Consequently, I would conclude as David Lose has, saying, "While I intend to retain the strengths of Campbell's association between the biblical narrative and communal identity, I will also seek the means by which to preach so as to preserve the space in which hearers may be encountered by the Spirit, be brought to faith, and in this way genuinely respond to the identity and truth-claims asserted and offered."¹²⁴ Lose sums up the matter nicely in keeping both the strength of Campbell's concern for the particularity of the community and pushing for a clearer call for the particularity of the individuals who make up the community, as well as individuals to whom the community will preach the Word. Faithfulness to Jesus Christ remains both a communal *and* an individual

¹²³Lose, *Confessing Jesus Christ*, 126.

¹²⁴*Ibid.*

concern. The case of Pastor Schneider demonstrates the frustration of the one operating without the full support of the other. Schneider maintained allegiance to Christ, but his community did not always abide there with him.

In the book *The Word Before the Powers*, Campbell more narrowly focuses on the relationship of the faith community to the outside world, where conflict must occur. As was noted at the beginning of this section, Campbell realizes that a community shaped by the identity of Christ will necessarily conflict with the alternate authorities of the Domination System. To this extent, Campbell at least partially agrees with what has been said thus far concerning the function of the regnal dynamic in relation persecution. As the regnal righteousness dynamic has shown, the righteousness of God on display in Jesus Christ shows also through the faith of those who trust and obey Christ. This relationship of obedience to Christ is exactly what caused Pastor Schneider to stand out from others and face persecution for it. But why did the other pastors not all face such persecution? Was it not because Schneider would not remain quiet while they themselves were silent? Did Schneider do the right thing? Going back to our original question, must Christian proclamation necessarily confront contrary powers? Campbell says yes. For Campbell, the powers (in the negative sense) are to be confronted. The confrontation comes to the powers in the form of preaching. Preaching confronts the powers with a word of challenge from God. Specifically, after the order of Christ Himself, preachers are to confront the powers and call them *back* to obedience. They were originally created good. (While we might agree with Campbell that the powers are in rebellion and must be called to obedience, we might also remember 2 Pet 2:4 and the oft-repeated New Testament quotation of Ps 110 in which it is clear that Christ's enemies are being turned into a footstool for his feet). The method of engagement with the powers is proclamation.

Campbell (relying on Wink) classifies these powers by a five-fold description of their characteristics. First, the powers are “legion,” meaning ubiquitous. One gets a flavor for just how ever-present the powers are in Campbell’s recounting of an interview with one of the makers of the first atomic bomb: “Reflecting on why he did not cease work on the bomb after Germany was defeated, even though all his personal beliefs should have led him to quit, Robert Wilson commented, ‘It simply was not in the air.’”¹²⁵ Reflecting on the course of Paul Schneider’s life, Gretel once watched him swim against the powerful current of the Rhine River and admits seeing metaphorically a man who swam alone against the overwhelming power of the current moving fast against him. Likewise, those maintaining faith in Christ are so swimming in a narrow way against a legion of powers in the broad way arrayed against them. For the majority, it just will not be in the air for them to consider questioning the power of the air.

Second, for Campbell, these powers are the material and physical forces at work in the world. The material reality of the powers is found in institutions and established seats of authority. The spiritual reality is located in the general norms, mores, and “ethos” of a given community of individuals. Campbell adds to that description the notion of the Bank in Steinbeck’s *The Grapes of Wrath*, although Campbell differs from Steinbeck in his understanding of the power behind the Bank. For Steinbeck, the Bank was the product of men. For Campbell the Bank was animated by the powers which were created by God, bringing the discussion of the powers to this third point.

The powers were created by God and, thus, originally created good. Campbell draws primarily on Colossians 1:15-17 for his understanding of the creation and purposes of the powers. As he explains, “Not only are the principalities and powers created by God through the ‘cosmic’ Christ, but they also have their purpose and their ‘coherence’

¹²⁵Ibid., 20.

or ‘order’ in the life-giving purposes of God embodied in the way of Jesus.”¹²⁶ So, the powers function in relation to God’s purposes and do not possess the autonomy of a self-existent defiance of the creator. As Wink says, “When subsystems idolatrously violate the harmony of the whole by elevating their own purposes to ultimacy, they are still no more able to achieve autonomy than a cancer can live apart from its host.”¹²⁷ The idea here is explained by Wink, who offers that justice and order are from God. These notions call for fair monetary practices in an economic system like socialism or capitalism. Though God did not create those systems in the most immediate sense of the word, he does presently uphold those systems. This upholding of the system is not an endorsement; neither is it static. It presses for transformation, for conformity to the orderly purposes of Christ.

Finally, the powers are driven to survive and, if at all possible, to dominate. Again, Wink explains that the powers are not the Domination System itself. They, instead, “are merely the individual institutions and structures deployed under the overall aegis of the Domination System. The Domination System is what obtains when an entire network of Powers becomes hell-bent on control.”¹²⁸ The Domination System is represented in the New Testament terms *kosmos*, *aion*,¹²⁹ and *sarx*, representing the concepts of realm, time, and expression, respectively. So following this tripartite division offered by Wink, we might bring this discussion back to the concrete example of Paul Schneider by suggesting that Schneider, like Jesus in John 8:23, was addressing those in power this way: “You are of this *kosmos* (Domination System), but I am not of this

¹²⁶Ibid., 21.

¹²⁷Walter Wink, *Engaging the Powers: Discernment and Resistance in a World of Domination* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992), 66-67.

¹²⁸Ibid., 49.

¹²⁹I am using here the transliterated form of *aion* preferred by Wink.

kosmos.”¹³⁰ The *kosmos* is not evil, but it is under the dominion of powers which seek to dominate (Satan, death). Adding to Campbell’s description, we would assert that though not inherently evil the *kosmos* is under a curse. Those in Christ have been liberated through the preaching of the gospel and, so, are no longer subject to such domination (Heb 2:15). Again, with the temporal concept of *aion*, we might see that Schneider’s epoch was one in which evil took a peculiar form. So the *aion* will always manifest evil in variant forms since evil will remain a part of the world until the return of Christ consummates the inaugural ushering in of a new age. Thus, when the Christian is instructed to redeem the time, he is instructed to set his mind on the things above, that is, on the new age of Christ. The Christian is explicitly commanded not to conform himself to the pattern of this *aion* (Rom 12:2). Clearly, Paul Schneider did not conform.

And the last term, *sarx*, refers to existence in the Domination System. Here in the *sarx* is where the individual dwells. On this aspect of the Domination System, Wink, Campbell, and Kodjak all come together to speak against the life that is lived in subjection to the dominion of this *aion* and this *kosmos*. In our compilation and alteration of their views, we arrive at an understanding of intense animus arrayed against the individual. The Christian call is the call to freedom for individuals, who, if they embrace the gospel, can be liberated from the dominion and set free from these oppressive powers. Simply being a Christian is enough to call attention to this conflict, but the Christian will also desire to see others set free. So, the Christian (who himself is a witness) will witness to the power of Christ. To this degree, there is agreement with Wink and Campbell. Yet, at this point is where we also must depart a bit from Wink and Campbell. Wink, for instance, labels the primary evil in human existence as *alienation*. Campbell, as a result of his communal orientation, views the primary problem as *oppression*. Both call for liberation. But we remember that Jesus called individuals to repentance. Like Jesus,

¹³⁰Example adopted from Wink, *Engaging the Powers*, 52.

Paul Schneider called for more than liberation. He called for repentance. He did not merely call for repentance in the sense of abandoning the call of the *kosmos* or the spirit of the *aion*. Schneider called specific individuals like Martin Sommer to repentance for specific sins such as murder.¹³¹ For Schneider—beyond *kosmos*, *aion*, and *sarx*—it was ἁμαρτία (sin) which was the root problem in humankind. As an evangelical Lutheran, he understood the primary bondage of the will because of sin, and he believed the remedy for men was faith, which comes by the Spirit through the preaching of the Word. So, Schneider—an individual within the community—preached the Word of the gospel to individual guards and Germans outside of the Christian community, confronting them with the righteousness of God in Jesus Christ and calling them personally (as Christ did) to repent. This discussion of Campbell, then, prepares us to answer the question of whether the Christian can avoid persecution, as Lugner said Schneider could have done.

Because the Christian is shaped by the identity of Jesus of Nazareth, he cannot avoid conflict with the Domination System and the powers rampant therein. Those powers are shaped by the Domination System. Christ is not. Those who are shaped by their faith allegiance to Christ will also not be shaped by the powers of the world. They are inherently opposed to such powers because the powers are in rebellion against God. Inherently, the Christian will conflict with the powers of the *kosmos*. Like a mountain boulder in a whitewater stream, these Christians will prove to be obstacles in the way of the course of this *aion*. Therefore, even if Paul Schneider would not have said anything, chances are, his faith allegiance to Christ would have eventually caused him to be a noticeable obstacle in the path of German nationalism.

But Paul Schneider did not remain silent. Should he have? Could he have? No. The Christian preacher cannot remain silent in the face of evil, whether its presence

¹³¹Foster, *Paul Schneider*, 829. The murder in question followed *Kristallnacht*, November 9, 1938.

is *kosmos*, *aion*, or *sarx*. The reason is, first, because *God Is Not Silent*.¹³² The nature of God is to reveal Himself both in creation and in and through the Word of Christ. According to Christian faith, God reveals himself to this world most plainly and powerfully in His Son. As was demonstrated in chapter 2, this revelation is a revelation of the righteousness of God. The revelation of the righteousness of God is the revelation of a two-edged sword, which, on the one hand offers salvation to those who trust in Christ, and, on the other hand, condemnation to those who remain against Christ. Those who have been saved are themselves a testimony to the righteousness of God. This testimony will often be viewed as a threat, even if the particular Christian has not preached about God's judgment. Second, God calls preachers to preach the Word in season and out of season (2 Tim 4:2). In other words, preachers are called to preach the gospel, not just to live it. There may be times in which the preacher is silent as Christ Himself was before Pilate (John 19:9), but the silence will ultimately be broken (19:11) as a testimony to the working of the Spirit of God (Matt 10:20) for the sake of Christ. Preachers are called to their office by God Himself. Just as Schneider thought it unconscionable to allow the state to determine where he could serve as a pastor, so, too, the God-called minister will say that it is not optional whether he speaks the gospel. With the Apostle Paul, he will say, "Woe to me if I do not preach the gospel" (1 Cor 9:16). And what is the gospel if not the revelation of the righteousness of God in Jesus Christ? Preachers must preach Jesus, as Campbell implores us, but preachers must preach Jesus *and Him crucified*, as the Apostle Paul enjoins. There is an element of Christ crucified which is noticeably absent from the preaching ethic of Charles Campbell, but it is not absent in the life and preaching of Paul Schneider. In the face of the reality of the judgment of God against sinners for their sins, Paul Schneider called them to

¹³²Conflation of book titles by Francis Schaeffer, *He Is There, and He Is Not Silent* (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House, 1972); also, R. Albert Mohler, *He Is Not Silent: Preaching in a Postmodern World* (Chicago: Moody, 2008).

repent. He did not preach merely a *meaningful* Jesus. He did not preach a *liberating* Jesus. He preached Jesus and Him crucified for the sins of specific people who needed forgiveness. He called people to faith. He called specific guards to repentance. In fact, Schneider knew from experience all about institutionalized powers and a system of domination, but he knew something much more profound. He knew of ἀμαρτία in the heart of individual men. So, he preached for individual men to break allegiance with particular sins and with their own perverted determination to self rule and their egregious agreements with principalities and powers to align themselves with Jesus Christ.¹³³

So together, Campbell and Schneider helpfully display for Christian preachers—and for all Christians—the reality of why Christians ought to be persecuted. The underlying reason why such persecution occurs is on vivid display in the life example of Paul Schneider. Powers are real, and they are arrayed against Christ and against the righteousness of God. The righteousness of God is on display in Christ and those identified with Him. Both Campbell and Schneider agree that the solution to such a problem is understanding and so presenting Jesus Christ rightly. As Campbell points out, the community of believers is responsible for getting the identity of this Jesus correct. As this happens, the community is identified with this Jesus. And Jesus taught those identified with him what such identification would mean. Such identification occurs communally and individually. So, in John 15:19ff., Jesus says, “I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you But all these things they will do to you on account of my name” (ESV).

Our original questions are answered with regard to persecution. Paul Schneider, because of his spiritual relation to Jesus, could not have avoided persecution by the Nazis on account of the fact that the Christian life necessarily conflicts with the

¹³³Trevin Wax, *Holy Subversion: Allegiance to Christ in an Age of Rivals* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2010) calls for individual Christians to confront the “little Caesars” of power within their own lives which rule over them in a sinful manner. He means by *Caesars* things such as *success* and *lust*.

opposition powers of the Domination System (meaning here Paul's τῆς ἐξουσίας τοῦ σκότους). Anyone who attempts to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted. Though faith in Jesus Christ is itself enough to provoke persecution, the Christian will also seek to proclaim Christ. This proclamation, obviously, is particularly true in the case of preachers who themselves cannot be silent because their God is not silent. He speaks a word of salvation out of His great love, but it is a word of double significance in that His righteousness is revealed either way, whether the hearers heed the call and receive the salvation offered through faith in Christ or whether they remain deaf and disobedient and thus incur God's wrath. God's righteousness is on display in the preaching of the gospel and in the lives of His preachers. As a result, they will be persecuted as Christ was persecuted.

On a bit of a grander scale, the point of the chapter is completed here with the coalescing of Bonhoeffer and Schneider with the works of Slane and Campbell on one significant point: Identity. On identity, there is agreement across the spectrum between Slane, Campbell, Bonhoeffer, and Schneider that the Christian must be identified with Jesus Christ. (In Deines's terms, the Christian *represents* Christ). For Campbell, the identification comes communally, as the community of faith is shaped by the identity of Jesus of Nazareth. For Slane, the identity of Christ is seen through imitation in a death for life pattern of redemption. For Bonhoeffer, identification comes through sacrificially exposing oneself to slander for the good of others. And, for Schneider, the identification comes *for the sake of righteousness* as Jesus taught in Matthew 5:10-12. Though these men understand identification in variant ways, they would agree that the Christian by nature is identified with Christ. According to Matthew 5:10-12, those who are persecuted because of such an identification—those like Paul Schneider—are blessed and possess a great reward in Heaven.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

A great deal of research in diokology is still left undone. There is no lack of practicality to diokological study. Perhaps the most frustrating aspect of this study is knowing that so many questions have been left unanswered. In chapter 2, for instance, there are significant questions unanswered with regard to righteousness, persecution, and the possibility of a diokology of Matthew. Chapter 3 opens lines of inquisition for a New Testament diokology. Can there be a biblical diokology? Chapter 4 demonstrates the theological interaction regnal righteousness with contemporary theological studies, but it leaves other questions still unanswered. From Penner, the question arises about the nature of the distinction between an Old Testament and New Testament diokology. What significance does the New Testament concept of *discipleship* hold for diokological studies? From the consideration of Ton, questions persist concerning the nature of Christian rewards related to persecution, and Ton's work causes scholars to ponder more thoroughly the purgative, disciplinary, and meritorious dimensions of diokology. Finally, the application of the regnal dynamic to the case of Bonhoeffer demonstrates that this diokological perspective is capable of answering important questions concerning persecution and martyrdom. However, the juxtaposition with Paul Schneider again opens more questions, particularly questions regarding the nature of proclamation. Specifically, what precisely ought to be the nature of the provocation stemming from proclamation? How does the preacher define the line between proclaiming righteousness and simply becoming unnecessarily offensive? Or, to put it another way, how does the preacher make sure the provocation of his proclamation is on account of righteousness? Missiologically, the question has been asked, "How can we witness and disciple in such

ways that when persecution comes, it does so because of who Jesus is and not for secondary reasons such as being employed by a foreigner, worshipping with foreigners or proclaiming faith in culturally inappropriate ways?”¹

Many questions indeed remain. Much more study must be done ethically on the precise relation between the actions of the persecuted and their suffering for the sake of righteousness. No doubt, such study pushes into the arena of church-state relations and opens a panorama of possibilities. Nevertheless, some questions hopefully have been answered by this research. Particularly, this research has been foundational, attempting to provide groundwork which may yet prove helpful in answering other questions. Theological and missiological works point out the need for biblical definitions regarding persecution which are functionally applicable today. This present research project answers those needs with the regnal righteousness diokology. Persecution is a retaliatory action against the revelation of the righteousness of God in Christ which is represented and proclaimed by the followers of Jesus Christ. The revelation of the righteousness of God in Christ is the root provocateur of persecution. Understanding this reality provides Christians with a framework for interpreting their experiences, clarifying whether they are related to persecution, thus identifying whether they have the blessings of comfort.

Although in the overall scheme of the many questions needing to be answered regarding persecution, this research answers only one. Surely, this one is a significant question to be answered. Recent research suggests that “one of the greatest gifts that can be given to believers in the midst of persecution is for the believing community to assure them that what they are experiencing is for Christ’s sake and for no other reason.”² The regnal righteousness dynamic, as demonstrated in the cases of Bonhoeffer and Schneider,

¹Prakesh Gupta, Preface to Nik Ripken, “Servants in the Crucible,” unpublished manuscript (2004), 3.

²Nik Ripken, “Servants in the Crucible,” 34.

provides the framework for offering such a great gift to believers *in the midst of* persecution. Furthermore, the question is significant because hundreds of millions of Christians presently suffer persecution to one degree or another, and persecution is steadily increasing, particularly in Muslim areas.³

Theologically, the significance of the answers provided by the regnal righteousness dynamic are displayed in this research in their biblical, theological, and ethical aspects. The best summary may be offered by a final review of the regnal righteousness definition juxtaposed with a more common definition. So, in summary, consider this comparison of the regnal righteousness dynamic to the explanation of the persecution dynamic offered by Kantzenbach:

What really had to be shown in confessing Christ over against all other claims to lordship was faith in the one Lord of death and life, to whom Christians were totally committed and to whom they surrendered themselves in martyrdom as in not other act. By persecuting believers on account of their being Christians, earthly powers showed themselves to be ungodly, for they wanted to triumph over human conviction by physical force and, in so doing, acted as though they were absolute. In their readiness for martyrdom Christians refrained from trying to refashion the world as the kingdom of God, leaving the coming of his kingdom to God.⁴

With Kantzenbach's description of the persecution dynamic, this research affirms that Christ represents sovereign lordship over all other powers. Also, there is agreement that the faith of the disciples is what unites them with the Lord. However, because of the disobedience and faltering of the disciples, we do not hold that persecution is rooted in their "total surrender" or even in their offering themselves in martyrdom. The root provocateur has been demonstrated to be nothing less than Christ Himself. Kantzenbach

³Paul Marshall, "Persecution of Christians 4.3: The New Century," *The Encyclopedia of Christianity*, eds., Erwin Fahlbusch, Jan Milic Lochman, John Mbiti, Jaroslav Pelikan, Lukas Vischer (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005), 4:163.

⁴Friedrich Wilhelm Kantzenbach, "Persecution of Christians," *The Encyclopedia of Christianity*, eds., Erwin Fahlbusch, Jan Milic Lochman, John Mbiti, Jaroslav Pelikan, and Lukas Vischer (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005), 4:157.

is right to notice that to be persecuted one needs only to be a Christian. It is enough to be identified with Christ. Also correct is Kantzenbach's insistence that the earthly powers are ungodly powers. Yet, we also must stray from Kantzenbach on the issue of the earthly powers. Though the powers would certainly love to command obedience from all men, their primary animation is rebellion against God Himself and against His anointed. The powers are in rebellion against the righteousness of God which is on sharpest display in the person and work of Jesus Christ. Finally, while the regnal righteousness dynamic would affirm that the followers of Christ are content to leave the outworking of the kingdom to the one who reigns over it, this position would again emphasize that it should not be considered the readiness of the disciples which begets martyrdom. Such a formulation of martyrdom forgets the promise of Christ to His followers that the Spirit of the Father will give them utterance in their persecutions (Matt 10:20). Such utterances along with beatitudinal promises of presence (Matt 5:10-12; 1 Pet 3:14) demonstrate that persecution is the outgrowth of the implementation of the righteousness of God. The followers of Christ should understand what Saul of Tarsus had to learn, that Christian persecution is ultimately against Christ. As Saul was breathing threats and murder against the body of Christ, he was persecuting Christ (Acts 9:4), just as those were who placed the thorny crown on His head and mocked Him with their worship.

The obedience of the followers of Christ offers not an explanation for persecution but, rather, occasions for its occurrence. As the saints follow by faith Christ who is invisible (yet sovereign), they become objects of persecution on account of Him. He is the one implementing the righteousness of God which will ensue in the final condemnation of all those armed against Him in rebellion. Furthermore, the dynamic proposed by Kantzenbach fails to appreciate fully the necessity of understanding righteousness in relation to individuals, not just powers (as in Matt 25:31-46). The regnal

righteousness dynamic makes plain that persecution happens to individual Christians on account of Christ.

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ABSTRACT

NEW TESTAMENT PERSECUTION AND THE INCEPTION OF DIOKOLOGY THROUGH THE APPLICATION OF THE REGNAL RIGHTEOUSNESS DYNAMIC

Gregory Charles Cochran, Ph.D.
The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2010
Chairperson: Dr. E. David Cook

This dissertation seeks to derive a biblical definition of Christian persecution which both identifies the essential character of Christian persecution and offers a pragmatic application of the definition in Christian living. The introductory chapter sets forth the scope of the work biblically, theologically, and ethically.

Chapter 2 establishes the definition of Christian persecution through the instruction Christ offers to His followers in Matthew 5:10-12. Specifically, the definition is explored through an examination of the structure and content of Matthew 5:10-12, with particular emphases on the righteousness and kingship of Christ.

Chapter 3 offers a comparative study of the conclusions of chapter 2 with regard to other New Testament works. Specifically, the conclusions of the regnal righteousness dynamic from chapter 2 are juxtaposed alongside studies in Mark, Luke-Acts, and Paul.

Chapter 4 then places the results of the regnal righteousness dynamic for persecution against other diokological studies, including study by the Lausanne Conference for World Evangelism; study by Penner on discipleship related to persecution; and study by Ton on persecution and rewards.

Chapter 5 seeks to apply the results of the research to the notorious test case of Dietrich Bonhoeffer. Interacting with the work of Craig Slane on Bonhoeffer and Claude Foster on Paul Schneider, chapter 5 will show the practical effects of persecution studies.

VITA

Gregory Charles Cochran

PERSONAL

Born: March 5, 1966, Blakely, Georgia
Parents: Charles A. and Mamie Cochran
Married: Vickie Lynne Augustine, November 21, 1987
Children: Andrew Gregory Cochran, April 3, 1991
Hannah Lynne Cochran, February 24, 1993
John Charles Cochran, August 12, 1995
Polly Grace Cochran, June 26, 1997
Rebekah Ruth Cochran, May 14, 1999

EDUCATIONAL

Diploma, DeRidder High School, DeRidder, Louisiana
B.A. English & Technical Writing, Louisiana Tech University, Ruston, Louisiana,
1988
M.A. Human Relations, Louisiana Tech University, Ruston, Louisiana, 1989
M.Div., The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2000
Ph.D., Christian Ethics, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Expected
Graduation, May 2010

MINISTERIAL

Pastor, Cash Creek Baptist Church, Henderson, Kentucky, 1997-2000
Sr. Pastor, Cedar Grove Baptist Church, Shepherdsville, Kentucky, 2001-present
Moderator, Nelson Baptist Association, 2005-2007

ACADEMIC

Instructor in Leadership Development (Counseling 401), Louisiana Tech
University, 1991-1996
Research Assistant in Christian Ethics, The Southern Baptist Theological
Seminary, 2008-2009
Published: "Hell, no: Why Preaching Hell Is Insufficient for Saving Faith,"
Areopagus Journal, vol. 8, no. 5 (2008), 24-29.

ORGANIZATIONAL

Evangelical Theological Society
Evangelical Philosophical Society
Board Member, Kentucky Baptist Convention Committee for Public Affairs
Co-Chair Church Leadership Development Team, Nelson Baptist Association
Voice of the Martyrs, Volunteer Representative
Executive Board Member YMCA

OTHER INTERESTS

Kerusso Coffee (business); Racquetball; Soccer (coaching).