Rethinking Myth as a Hermeneutical Tool in Pauline Studies

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Declaration:

This thesis is the result of my own work and includes nothing which is the outcome of work done in collaboration except as declared in the preface and specified in the text. It is not substantially the same as any work that has already been submitted before for any degree or other qualification except as declared in the preface and specified in the text. It does not exceed the prescribed word limit for the Divinity Degree Committee.

Abstract:

This thesis undertakes a fundamental rethinking of 'myth' as a heuristic analytical tool in Pauline studies. It contends that the discipline's longstanding resistance to, and insufficient engagement with, the concept of myth has deprived scholars of a rich and illuminating means of interpreting Paul's letters. It first appraises the reception of 'myth' in Pauline research since the dawn of the scientific method, unpacking how the category has previously been engaged, and to what extent this has been critically informed. Each of the main phases of prior engagement with Paul, his gospel and 'myth' are shown to have been ideologically driven, theoretically confused and superficial, and to have scarcely ever risen above the popular pejorative equation of myth with 'unhistorical'. After noting a few nascent attempts in recent decades to engage a more nuanced approach, this thesis then engages more fully than has hitherto been done in New Testament scholarship with modern myth theory across various branches of the humanities and social sciences, with a view to constructing a theoretically informed model of core properties and functions of mythic narrative. A preliminary context for the development of the scholarly study of myth is offered. This is then met by an unpacking of six positive currents in crossdisciplinary myth theory, along with what this body of scholarship has to say about the popular myth-versus-history stance that has loomed large in Pauline studies, where this is shown to be a false dichotomy. Armed with an extensive crossdisciplinary modelling of 'myth', the thesis then demonstrates how this offers a rich interpretative framework shedding light on the operative character of the gospel story in key problematic portions of the Pauline corpus—including Romans 6:3-11, 2 Corinthians 1 and 4, and Philippians 2:5-11.

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ABBREVIATIONS

AB	Anchor Bible
ALHR	American Lectures on the History of Religions
Ambr. *Sacr.*	Ambrose, *De sacramentis*
AmJT	*American Journal of Theology*
AnBib	Analecta biblica
ANRW	*Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt*
ANTC	Abingdon New Testament Commentaries
ApocMos	*Apocalypse of Moses*
AscIsa	*Ascension of Isaiah*
ASNU	Acta Seminarii Neotestamentici Upsaliensis
ATANT	Abhandlungen zur Theologie des Alten und Neuen Testaments
ATR	*Anglican Theological Review*
August. *Serm.*	Augustine, *Sermons*
b. Šabb.	*Babylonian Talmud Šabbat*
b. Yeb	*Babylonian Talmud Yebamot*
Barn.	Barnabas
Bas. *Spir*	Basil of Caesarea, *De Spiritu sancto*
BCAW	Blackwell Companions to the Ancient World
BDAG	W. Bauer, W. F. Arndt, F. W. Gingrich, and F. W. Danker, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*. 3rd ed. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000
BDF	F. Blass, A. DeBrunner, and R. W. Funk, *A Greek Grammar of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1961
BECNT	Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament
BETL	Bibliotheca Ephemeridum Theologicarum Lovaniensium
BevT	Beiträge zur evangelischen Theologie
BI	*Biblical Interpretation*
BISDSL	Britische und Irische Studien zur deutschen Sprache und Literatur
BJRL	*Bulletin of the John Rylands Library*
BJS	*British Journal of Sociology*
BK	*Bibel und Kirche*
BNTC	Black's New Testament Commentary
BPS	Brill's Plutarch Studies
BSIH	Brill's Studies in Intellectual History
BThSt	Biblisch-theologische Studien
BU	Berner Universitätsschriften
BUSPR	Boston University Studies in Philosophy and Religion
BW	BibleWorld

BWANT	Beiträge zur Wissenschaft vom Alten und Neuen Testament
BZ	*Biblische Zeitschrift*
BZAW	Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft
BZNW	Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft
CA	*Current Anthropology*
CBC	Cambridge Bible Commentary
CBET	Contributions to Biblical Exegesis and Theology
CBQ	*Catholic Biblical Quarterly*
CH	*Church History*
Chrys. *HomJo*	Chrysostom, *Homiliae in Johannem*
Cic. *Verr.*	Cicero, *In Verrem*
CNT	Commentaire du Nouveau Testament
ConBNT	Coniectanea biblica: New Testament Series
ConstApost	Constitutiones apostolorum
CR	*Centennial Review*
CTM	*Concordia Theological Monthly*
CW	*Christliche Welt*
CyrJ *Cat.*	Cyril of Jerusalem, *Catecheses*
Diod. *Bib.*	Diodorus, *Bibliotheca historica*
DionHal *Ant.*	Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Antiquitates romanae*
DPL	*Dictionary of Paul and His Letters*. Ed. G. F. Hawthorne and R. P. Martin. Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1993
DtPfrBl	*Deutsches Pfarrerblatt*
EASA	European Association of Social Anthropologists
EB	Études bibliques
ECL	Early Christianity and Its Literature
EKK	Evangelisch-Katholischer Kommentar zum Neuen Testament
ELT	*English Literature in Transition*
Epict. *Diss.*	Epictetus, *Dissertationes*
ESEC	Emory Studies in Early Christianity
ETL	*Ephemerides Theologicae Lovanienses*
EvQ	*Evangelical Quarterly*
EvTh	*Evangelische Theologie*
ExpTim	*Expository Times*
FRLANT	Forschungen zur Religion und Literatur des Alten und Neuen Testaments
FS	Folklore Studies
GosPhil	*Gospel of Philip*
GosThom	*Gospel of Thomas*
GRBS	*Greek, Roman and Byzantine Studies*
GregNaz *Or.*	Gregory of Nazianzus, *Oratio*
GregNyss *Cat.*	Gregory of Nyssa, *Oratio catechetica magna*

GSSP	Geological Society Special Publication
GTA	Göttinger theologische Arbeiten
Hes. *Theog.*	Hesiod, *Theogony*
HeyJ	*Heythrop Journal*
HHS	*History of the Human Sciences*
Hipp. *Trad.*	Hippolytus, *Traditio apostolica*
HNT	Handbuch zum Neuen Testament
Hom. *Il.*	Homer, *Iliad*
HR	*History of Religions*
HTKNT	Herders Theologischer Kommentar zum Neuen Testament
HTR	*Harvard Theological Review*
HTS	*HTS Teologiese Studies/Theological Studies*
ICC	International Critical Commentary
IgnRom	Ignatius, *Epistula ad Romanos*
IVPNTCS	IVP New Testament Commentary Series
IWWKT	*Internationale Wochenschrift für Wissenschaft, Kunst und Technik*
JAC	*Jahrbuch für Antike und Christentum*
JAF	*Journal of American Folklore*
JANER	*Journal of Ancient Near Eastern Religions*
JBL	*Journal of Biblical Literature*
JES	*Journal of Ecumenical Studies*
JETS	*Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society*
JHI	*Journal of the History of Ideas*
JHS	*Journal of Hellenic Studies*
JQR	*Jewish Quarterly Review*
JR	*Journal of Religion*
JRR	*Journal from the Radical Reformation*
JSNT	*Journal for the Study of the New Testament*
JSNTSup	*Journal for the Study of the New Testament*, Supplement Series
JSHJ	*Journal for the Study of the Historical Jesus*
JSPL	*Journal for the Study of Paul and His Letters*
JTS	*Journal of Theological Studies*
KCR	Key Concepts in Religion
KD	*Kerygma und Dogma*
KEK	Kritisch-exegetischer Kommentar über das Neue Testament
LHD	Library of History and Doctrine
Lib. *Ep.*	Libanius, *Epistulae*
LLP	Library of Living Philosophers
LNTS	Library of New Testament Studies
Louw-Nida	J. P. Louw and E. A. Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*. New York: United Bible Societies, 1988
LQ	*Lutheran Quarterly*

LSEMSA	London School of Economics Monographs on Social Anthropology
LSJ	H. G. Liddell, R. Scott, and H. S. Jones, *A Greek-English Lexicon*. 9th ed. 2 vols. Oxford: Clarendon, 1940
m. Pesaḥ.	*Mishnah Pesaḥim*
m. Šabb.	*Mishnah Šabbat*
Mart. Lyons	*Martyrs of Lyons*
MHT	J. H. Moulton, W. F. Howard, and N. Turner, *A Grammar of New Testament Greek*. 4 vols. Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1906-1976
ML	SUNY Series, The Margins of Literature
MLP	Muirhead Library of Philosophy
MNTC	Moffatt New Testament Commentary
MTZ	*Münchener Theologische Zeitschrift*
Musurillo	H. Musurillo, *The Acts of the Christian Martyrs*. Oxford: Clarendon, 1972
NAC	New American Commentary
NASNCGLC	North American Studies in Nineteenth-Century German Literature and Culture
NB	*New Blackfriars*
NBS	Numen Book Series
NCB	New Century Bible
NCBC	New Cambridge Bible Commentary
NGC	*New German Critique*
NICNT	New International Commentary on the New Testament
NIGTC	New International Greek Testament Commentary
NLH	*New Literary History*
NovT	*Novum Testamentum*
NovTSup	*Novum Testamentum* Supplements
NTD	Das Neue Testament Deutsch
NTL	New Testament Library
NTS	*New Testament Studies*
NVBS	New Voices in Biblical Studies
NZSTR	*Neue Zeitschrift für Systematische Theologie und Religionsphilosophie*
OM	Oceana Monographs
Orig. *CommRom*	Origen, *Commentarii in epistulam ad Romanos*
Orig. *ExhMart*	Origen, *Exhortatio ad martyrium*
PaulNol *Ep.*	Paulinus of Nola, *Epistulae*
PCPS	*Proceedings of the Cambridge Philological Society*
PEQ	*Palestine Exploration Quarterly*
Perp. Fel.	*Passio sanctarum Perpetuae et Felicitatis*
Phil. *Aet.*	Philo, *De aeternitate mundi*
Phil. *Agr.*	Philo, *De agricultura*
Phil. *Conf.*	Philo, *De confusione linguarum*
Phil. *Det.*	Philo, *Quod deterius potiori insidari soleat*

Phil. *Leg.*	Philo, *Legum allegoriae*
Phil. *Post.*	Philo, *De posteritate Caini*
Phil. *Prob.*	Philo, *Quod omnis probus liber sit*
Phil. *Spec.*	Philo, *De specialibus legibus*
Phot. *Bibl.*	Photius, *Bibliotheca*
PJ	*Preussische Jahrbücher*
Plat. *Rep.*	Plato, *Republic*
Plut. *Is.*	Plutarch, *De Iside et Osiride*
Plut. *Poet.*	Plutarch, *De audiendis poetis*
Plut. *QConv.*	Plutarch, *Quaestiones convivales*
PNTC	Pillar New Testament Commentary
Pol. *Phil.*	Polycarp, *Epistula ad Philippenses*
PQ	*Philosophical Quarterly*
PRCY	Philosophy and Religion: A Comparative Yearbook
RB	*Revue Biblique*
RBS	Resources for Biblical Study
RC	*Religion Compass*
RCS	Religion and Civilization Series
RevExp	*Review & Expositor*
RevPol	*Review of Politics*
RLEAR	Routledge Library Editions: Anthropology of Religion
RNT	Regensburger Neues Testament
Robertson	A. T. Robertson, *A Grammar of the Greek New Testament in the Light of Historical Research*. 3rd ed. London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1919
Robinson	J. A. Robinson, *The Passion of S. Perpetua*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1891
RRT	*Reviews in Religion and Theology*
SANT	Studien zum Alten und Neuen Testament
SBLAB	Society of Biblical Literature Academia Biblica
SBS	Stuttgarter Bibelstudien
SBT	Studies in Biblical Theology
SBTS	Sources for Biblical and Theological Study
SCL	Sather Classical Lectures
Scheck	T. P. Scheck, trans. Origen, *Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans, Books 1-5*. Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 2001
SipreNum.	*Sipre Numbers*
SJLA	Studies in Judaism in Late Antiquity
SJOT	*Scandinavian Journal of the Old Testament*
SJT	*Scottish Journal of Theology*
SNT	Studien zum Neuen Testament
SNTSMS	Society for New Testament Studies Monograph Series
SNTW	Studies of the New Testament and Its World

SP	Sacra Pagina
SPAMA	Studies in Philo of Alexandria and Mediterranean Antiquity
ST	*Studia Theologica*
StL	*Studia Liturgica*
STR	Studies in Theology and Religion
TBei	*Theologische Beiträge*
TCH	Transformation of the Classical Heritage
TDNT	*Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*. Ed. G. Kittel and G. Friedrich. Trans. G. W. Bromiley. 10 vols. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964-1976
Tert. *Bapt.*	Tertullian, *De baptismo*
ThG	*Theologie der Gegenwart*
ThHk	Theologischer Handkommentar zum Neuen Testament
ThLZ	*Theologische Literaturzeitung*
THP	*The Humanistic Psychologist*
ThR	*Theologische Rundschau*
ThStKr	*Theologische Studien und Kritiken*
TM	Theorists of Myth
TMW	*The Muslim World*
TS	*Theological Studies*
TSFBul	*TSF Bulletin*
TSS	Themes in the Social Sciences
TTCS	Teach the Text Commentary Series
TTJ	*Torch Trinity Journal*
TynB	*Tyndale Bulletin*
TZ	*Theologische Zeitschrift*
UBL	Ugaritisch-biblische Literatur
VSI	Very Short Introductions
WBC	Word Biblical Commentary
WMANT	Wissenschaftliche Monographien zum Alten und Neuen Testament
WMTEL	World Mythology in Theory and Everyday Life
WP	World Perspectives
WR	*Westminster Review*
WSC	Wisconsin Studies in Classics
WTJ	*Westminster Theological Journal*
WUNT	Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament
ZBNT	Züricher Bibelkommentare Neues Testament
ZECNT	Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament
ZNThG	*Zeitschrift für Neuere Theologiegeschichte*
ZNW	*Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft und die Kunde der älteren Kirche*
ZTK	*Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche*

PROLEGOMENON

Modern Pauline studies have been the battleground of a plethora of theological, historical and exegetical debates. The secondary literature on Paul, our earliest extant window into the most nascent period of Christian origins, is so vast and multifarious that one may justifiably inquire as to what stone could possibly remain unturned. The purpose of this study, nevertheless, is to indicate that one crucial subject demands considerable rethinking within the discipline: the concept of *myth*.

Around the turn of the nineteenth century cognates of 'myth' entered European scholarship as a technical term with reference to various narratival and cultural phenomena. Developed fruitfully as a heuristic concept within various disciplines, New Testament scholarship has tended to shun it, as typified by Gustav Stählin's entry in Kittel's *Theological Dictionary* under 'Mythos': 'there is within it an inherent antithesis to truth and reality which is quite intolerable on NT soil'.[1] As Oden notes, following David Strauss' controversial *Das Leben Jesu* (1835), deeming the gospel miracles 'myth', the category of myth was essentially exiled from biblical studies.[2] This, Oden suggests, is to be understood against the 'setting of such scholarship within a set of apologetic and theological concerns', namely, the desire to set biblical truth apart from the fabled 'myths' of other cultures.[3] And, as Ballentine observes, this has led to a 'lapse of engagement with current myth theory in biblical studies from which we are still recovering.'[4] While informed theoretical engagement with myth in Hebrew Bible scholarship has become commonplace over the past few decades,[5] the same cannot be said for New Testament studies. While the thought world within which the authors of the New Testament have most frequently been located—that of the Old Testament and Jewish apocalyptic—is readily labelled 'mythic',[6] scholars continue to 'balk at admitting myth in the New Testament'.[7] The issue of myth has not remained wholly outside New Testament scholarship's purview. It has surfaced intermittently throughout the history of the discipline—predominantly in relation to Paul—and outright rejection has usually been prompted precisely by those who *have* appealed to the concept. Such engagements, however, have often been polemically charged, superficial and indiscriminate. The contention of this thesis is that a thoroughgoing 'rethinking' of the concept of myth within Pauline studies is necessary. For the discipline's longstanding resistance to, and insufficient engagement with, the concept has deprived scholars of a rich and illuminating means of situating and interpreting Paul's letters.

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[1] G. Stählin, *TDNT*, 4:794.
[2] Oden 1987, 40.
[3] Ibid. 42.
[4] Ballentine 2015, 9.
[5] E.g., Childs 1962; Rogerson 1974; Leach and Aycock 1983; Batto 1992; Wyatt 1996; van der Toorn 2001; H.-P. Müller 2001; Fishbane 2003; Human 2007; Cho 2019.
[6] With those cited n. 5 above, cf. Russell 1964, 122-27; Lindars 1975; Dunn 1977, 292; S.R.L. Clark 2016, 161; Bloch 2019, 109 n. 11.
[7] Batto 1992, 174.

To 'rethink' myth within the discipline it is requisite first to assess the ways in which the concept has been engaged in Pauline studies. This is the task undertaken in Chapter 1, where the reception of 'myth' in modern Pauline research is traced and critically appraised. The debate over Paul and 'myth', hitherto undocumented *in toto*, is shown to have passed through four main, broadly chronological phases. The unearthing of strong ideological agendas renders this *Forschungsbericht* of particular value, addressing the growing concern for ideological-critical scrutiny of biblical scholarship in the modern era.[8] Having assessed the main phases of engagement I conclude by noting a few inchoate attempts in recent years at a paradigm shift, which have largely gone unheeded, before turning in the ensuing chapters to a thoroughgoing rethinking of the concept of myth for the interpretation of Paul. Informed by the fact that one inevitably brings *to* a text one's own presuppositions in any attempt to draw meaning *from* it,[9] emphasis has increasingly fallen on the desirability of identifying and refining consciously adopted and clearly laid out interpretative frameworks, heuristic models or hermeneutical tools for engaging responsibly and effectively with the New Testament: 'we do not have the choice of whether we use models or not. Our choice, rather, lies in deciding whether to use them consciously or unconsciously'.[10] The aim of these chapters is to demonstrate that the concept of myth offers a profoundly illuminating heuristic model as a hermeneutical tool with which to illuminate Paul's writings.

As van Aarde and Joubert observe, 'models' have to be *constructed*.[11] To this end, Chapter 2 engages much more fully than has been done in New Testament scholarship with modern myth theory across various branches of the humanities and social sciences, with a view to constructing a theoretically informed model of core properties and functions of mythic narrative. Because of biblical scholarship's historic aversion to the category of myth, as well as laying the hermeneutical groundwork for the present study, this chapter addresses an increasingly recognised theoretical 'gap' in the secondary biblical literature.[12] Given the pejorative connotations of 'myth' in popular parlance, as an initial point of orientation a preliminary context for the development of the scholarly study of myth is offered. This is followed by a progressive unpacking of six main currents in crossdisciplinary myth theory, along with what this body of scholarship has to say about the popular myth-versus-history dichotomy. The main currents are myth as a *sacred narrative*; myth's relation to *ritual*; myth and *symbolism*; myth as a *foundational lens*; myth as a *paradigmatic model*; and myth as *therapeutic*.

Armed with an extensive crossdisciplinary modelling of 'myth', Chapters 3 through 6 apply this as a hermeneutical tool for interpreting Paul's letters. By means of several testing grounds, these chapters illustrate how the core properties and functions of myth gleaned in Chapter 2 significantly enrich our functional understanding of various dynamics at play in Paul's letters, shedding exegetical light on

[8] Meeks 2005, 165; Stichele 2005, 311; Hockey and Horrell 2018. Cf. Carr 1990, 20-23; E.A. Clark 2004.

[9] That is, 'the role hermeneutics play in any process of interpretation'—with author and reader interacting 'in the process of continual production…over the text' (Liljeström 2011, 6 n. 3; G. Allen 2000, 34). Cf. Iser 1978; Stout 1982; Green 2010, 12-14; D.B. Martin 2017, 96-99.

[10] Carney 1975, 5. Cf., e.g., Neyrey 1991, xvi; Esler 2006, 4.

[11] van Aarde and Joubert 2009, 433.

[12] Cf. Funk 1996, 309: 'The principal deficiency in biblical scholarship currently is its lack of a myth criticism'; Wyatt 2005, 153; 2008; Ballentine 2015, 8-11.

problematic portions of the Pauline corpus. Finding a natural entry point for hermeneutical engagement with Paul and 'myth' in the growing recognition of the presence of narrative elements in Paul's letters, Chapter 3 begins by identifying the primary narrative in Paul which emerges as the logical focal point of our inquiry, namely, the gospel of Christ—the 'story of Jesus'—and unpacking its basic mythic contours as a *sacred narrative*. Chapter 4 proceeds to apply insights pertaining to myth's *ritual-symbolic* propensity to what Paul relates about the rite of baptism, with special reference to the problematic of Romans 6:3-11. Chapter 5 brings the further *foundational* and *therapeutic* operative dimensions of myth to bear on two problematic passages in 2 Corinthians. Finally, Chapter 6 brings the additional *paradigmatic* functioning of myth to bear on the longstanding problem of the contextual rôle of the 'Christ-hymn' in Philippians.

PART I.

PAULINE STUDIES AND MYTH: DISORIENTATION, REORIENTATION

CHAPTER 1.

FORSCHUNGSBERICHT: THE RECEPTION OF "MYTH" IN MODERN PAUL RESEARCH

> *Huxley warns that, because of the extreme difficulty of the subject matter, the theologian should exercise great care in his use and analysis of language. Unfortunately, warnings of this type are not always heeded in theological circles and this is particularly true, I think, with respect to the word "myth."*
>
> —ROBERT H. AYERS[1]

Reception of 'myth' in modern Pauline research has passed through four main contentious phases. This chapter traces and critically appraises each one. In the evaluation of each an overview of the positions of those who have appealed to myth in interpreting Paul is followed by an assessment, first of their appeals to 'myth', then of its corresponding rejection by others, unpacking how 'myth' is being used and to what extent this has been critically informed. With all four of the dominant phases of engagement found wanting, we conclude by noting a few nascent attempts at a more nuanced approach to Paul and 'myth' in recent decades, before turning to our own expansive 'rethinking' of the concept.

1.1 Paul and the *Christusmythe* Debate, c. 1900-1914

The origins of the so-called 'Christ-myth' theory trace back to the French Enlightenment *savants* C. F. Dupuis (1742-1809) and C. F. Volney (1757-1820), both of whom sought to explain (away) much of the biblical tradition as astrological allegory rooted in pagan 'fable/mythology'.[2] Where Volney admitted of the historicity of Jesus, Dupuis rejected this. Siding with Volney on this score, D. F. Strauss, the first New Testament scholar to appeal to 'myth' substantively, concluded *Das Leben Jesu* (1835) by claiming that the miracles of the Gospel tradition had been the product of unconscious 'mythicising'.[3] The position of Dupuis on the historicity of Jesus was revived by Bruno Bauer, whose *Kritik der Evangelien* (1851-52), rejecting Strauss' appeal to unconscious 'mythising', posited that Jesus was a literary creation of Mark. Such repudiation of Jesus' historicity, largely dormant for the next fifty years, was revived at the beginning of the twentieth century, converging with earlier appeals to 'myth(ology)', and gaining notoriety as the 'Christ-myth' theory—revolving principally around three figures: J. M. Robertson, W. B. Smith and Arthur Drews. Smith is of minimal interest, for he rarely

[1] Ayers 1966, 200.
[2] Dupuis 1795; Volney 1791.
[3] Cf. Bietenholz 1994, 325-35.

used the term myth and focused little on Paul. In Robertson, however, we encounter one of the first discussions of Paul and 'myth'. And this engagement was then developed extensively by Drews, whose *Die Christusmythe* (1909) sparked a heated, and unprecedently public, 'Christ-myth' debate.

1.1.1 J. M. Robertson and Arthur Drews

In *Christianity and Mythology* (1900; 2nd ed. 1910), Robertson claimed that worship of Jesus in early Christianity was a re-emergence of an earlier Israelite veneration of 'Joshua' as a deity—a new 'Joshua/Jesus cult'.[4] Jesus' birth in Nazareth was a significantly late invention by anti-ascetics seeking to usurp an ascetic group who had attached the Old Testament title 'Nazirite' to Jesus.[5] Even the most primitive stand of the Gospel tradition, Robertson charged, is a literary patchwork 'made up of miracles and unhistorical discourses'.[6] As the decisive nail in the coffin of a historical Jesus, Robertson appealed to the 'eternal veto of the silence of the Paulinists, who know not a word of Jesuine teaching, and of whom even the later interpolators attribute to Paul at most a knowledge of the Dominical ritual of the Eucharist, itself pure myth.'[7] 'Seeing that Paul knew naught of' a historical Jesus, 'how can we consent to suppose that later Christists had any real information?'[8] '"Jesus" *not* of Nazareth figured for Paul as a mere crucified Messiah, a speechless sacrifice', and 'the cross was itself a myth element peculiarly likely to be bound up with the cult of any Saviour-God of that period'. With the earliest Jesus of Paul being sheer 'myth', Robertson concluded, 'there is no ground for ascribing any of [Christianity's] special doctrines, any sections of its gospels, to any man whose name has been preserved.'[9]

Drawing on Robertson, in *Die Christusmythe* (1909; 3rd ed. 1910), Drews claimed that Christianity arose from an amalgamation of pre-Christian Jewish 'Jesus-cults' and pagan dying and rising gods. The linchpin to Drews' argument was that Paul reflects a 'merely mythical' (*nur Mythisch*) Jesus.[10] Where Acts 11 relates Jews preaching a dying and rising redeemer before Paul this was 'in origin nothing but a Judaised and spiritualised Adonis cult.'[11] Considering this blasphemous, Paul took it and made it his own by anchoring it more firmly in Jewish conceptions, and introducing an idea alien both to Jewish and pagan notions: 'that the saviour himself should be really a man, and that the man sacrificed in God's place should be at the same time God appearing in human form'. And yet: 'No historical personality, who should…have exemplified the God-man, was in any way necessary to produce that Pauline conception'. Paul 'knew absolutely nothing of Jesus as an historical personality'.[12] His Jesus was 'not a man, but a purely divine personality, a heavenly spirit without flesh and blood', and was 'simply made by Paul, with the corresponding reinterpretation and reconstruction, the central focus of those

[4] Cf. also Robertson 1902; 1903a.
[5] Robertson 1910, 311-18.
[6] Ibid. 284.
[7] Ibid. 392.
[8] Ibid. 288.
[9] Ibid. 285, 364, 434.
[10] Drews 1910, 126.
[11] Ibid. 137; cf. 159-60.
[12] Ibid. 140-141, 157.

communities founded by him'.[13] As such 'Jesus'—further concretised by the Gospels[14]—was from the beginning a 'fiction,…a myth', and in perpetuating the figure of the God-man Jesus Christianity is said to pass off 'mythische Fiktionen' as 'historische Wahrheit'. 'As if there can still be talk of "historical foundations"', Drews declared, 'where there is absolutely no history, but sheer myth!'[15]

1.1.2 A Dismissive Appeal to "Myth"

Paul's and, therewith the Christian, figure of Jesus was, for Drews, 'myth' simply because it was not historical—and thus to be rejected.[16] Robertson too spoke of 'myth' as 'simply a false hypothesis…which once found easy credence'.[17] Robertson's and Drews' appeals to 'myth' in Paul were based on a popular, dismissive equation of 'myth' with 'falsehood'—carried over by those few who subsequently spoke up in favour of the so-called 'Christ-myth theory'.[18]

While lauding themselves as objective voices against a prejudiced academic establishment, these authors were hardly models of sound scholarship. Besides seldom reflecting on the concept of 'myth' itself, the idea of pre-Christian 'Jesus-cults' was baseless conjecture. Their treatments of Paul's letters were heavily contrived, with passages in which Paul seems naturally *to* presuppose a historical Jesus[19] being subjected to conspicuously strained interpretations or arbitrarily rejected as interpolations. Much of Robertson's *Christianity and Mythology* was inchoate, 'lacking any interpretative power',[20] and worse still was Drews' *Christusmythe*. Not only had this routinely leant on deeply anti-Semitic authors 'on the margins or completely outside the bounds of respectable scholarly discourse', but it was wholly 'indiscriminate in its use of sources and combined several mutually incompatible arguments'.[21] Furthermore, these authors had been driven by strong ideological agendas. In their attempts to dismiss its focal figure as 'myth' each sought to administer a fatal blow to the validity of Christianity.[22] Robertson's overt mission had been to dispense with all forms of religion—which 'over many books and myriad articles he attacked…as blocking progress'—in the name of rationalistic humanism.[23] Even before denying Jesus' historicity Drews saw 'in the historical determination of the Christian religion the root of all evil'.[24] And his own mission had been to replace Christianity with the philosophical principle of monistic idealism inherited from his mentor Eduard von Hartmann.[25] Championing

[13] Ibid. 131, 226.
[14] Ibid. 163-224.
[15] Ibid. 177, 232.
[16] Cf. Marchand 2010, 287-88.
[17] Robertson 1910, xviii.
[18] E.g., Jensen 1909; Steudel 1910; Zimmern 1910. Cf. also Couchoud 1923.
[19] E.g., Rom 1:3; 1 Cor 2:8; 7:10, 25; 9:5, 14; 11:23-25 (his last supper); Gal 1:19; 4:4 ('born of a woman'); Phil 2:7-8; 1 Thess 2:14-15.
[20] Weaver 1999, 62.
[21] Williamson 2017, 752, 730.
[22] 'Basically, Drews, Smith and Robertson are no less interested in denying the existence of Jesus philosophically and historically than their opponents are in affirming it' (Schweitzer 2000, 399; cf. 363, 396).
[23] Weintraub 2000, 110. Cf. Robertson 1903b, 53.
[24] Drews 1906, 173.
[25] Cf. Drews 1910, 237; Weaver 1999, 49-54; Williamson 2017, 132-35.

Hartmann's anti-Semitic desire for a German orientated, post-Christian pantheistic organic state, Drews maintained fervently that 'true religion' concerns only 'the union of self-consciousness with the [impersonal] divine',[26] and that the supersession of Christianity by this pantheistic principle was part of the much needed 'solution' for the future of Germany.[27] A step forward though it was from Jewish theism, Drews urged, in its idea of *the* God-man of *history*, Christianity was a repugnant mingling of Semitic theism and the higher 'Aryan' inclination towards pantheism.[28]

Far from constituting reasoned and informed interpretative engagements with Paul and the concept of 'myth', these proponents of the so-called 'Christ-myth' theory had merely appropriated a popular, dismissive notion of 'myth' as 'falsehood', in works of questionable scholarship, with an overt desire to further their own anti-Christian, philosophical, and/or racial agendas.[29]

1.1.3 The Rejection of "Myth"

Naturally, the 'Christ-myth' theory was immediately denounced by the mainstream theological establishment.[30] Dismissed by the academy, Drews delivered his message to lay people in a series of public debates, and the *Christusmythe* controversy that ensued—swallowed up though it would be by the First World War—was so great that Schweitzer was prompted to produce a second edition of his *Geschichte der Leben-Jesu-Forschung* of 1906 principally to take this controversy into account.[31] Roused by the public stir, many theologians now felt compelled to provide refutations of Drews' thesis, which meant in almost every instance asserting the 'non-mythical' nature of Paul's thought. Thus, Johannes Weiss framed the issue as one of *Jesus von Nazareth: Mythus oder Geschichte?*—upholding the latter against the former.[32] Surveying those instances in which Paul presupposes a historical Jesus, Heinrich Holtzmann sought to invoke 'Paul as a witness against the Christ-myth' view.[33] Herbert Rossington set about demonstrating the historicity of Jesus for Paul and the Gospel tradition in order to debunk a 'mythical explanation'.[34] Shirley Jackson Case published a string of works maintaining that Paul (along with other New Testament authors) was no 'myth-maker',[35] for he presupposed the historicity of Jesus, who is by no means the 'product of mythological fancy'.[36] F. C. Conybeare focused at length on demonstrating the historicity of Paul's Jesus, 'that Jesus really lived' and was not associated with any form of 'myth'.[37] Far from involving informed critical engagement with the category they

[26] Williamson 2017, 746. Cf. Drews 1904, 21.
[27] Drews 1906, vi.
[28] Cf., poignantly, Drews 1906, 362. Drews even blamed the academy's hostility towards him on its increasing 'Jewification' (*Verjüdelung*) (Mutter and Pilick 1995, 413).
[29] On the anti-Christian agendas of Smith, Dupuis and Volney, cf. Schweitzer 2000, 399; C.J. Murray 2004, 2:777.
[30] It is disreputable 'Fanatismus', urged Harnack (1911, 168-69). Between himself and Drews exists the gulf 'zwischen Wissenschaft und Dilettantismus', exclaimed Gunkel (1910, 521).
[31] Schweitzer 1913, 451-560. See further Carleton Paget 2006.
[32] Weiss 1910. Cf. also Dunkmann 1911.
[33] Holtzmann 1910.
[34] Rossington 1911, 15, 32, 59; see esp. 35-44.
[35] Case 1912, 198; see further 178-201.
[36] Case 1911, 24.
[37] Conybeare 1914, 223; see esp. 125-53. See also Goguel 1925.

were rejecting, however, this widespread rejection of 'myth' was rooted in little more than a prereflexive equation of 'myth' with 'unhistorical'. As Schweitzer noted, such engagements were 'not so much the result of conscious intention, as a rather lively and expedient reflex…triggered off by the excitement caused by the denial of the historicity of Jesus.'[38] Rooted in the view 'that all the doctrines of modern Christianity went back to [Jesus] and were upheld by him', early-twentieth century theology had in this regard simply been

> too inclined to see itself as the vanquisher of heresy and protector of the masses.… The mentality of many free-thinking theologians began to reveal a strange and bitter resemblance to that of the fathers who battled against heresy… [O]n both sides, as in the Gnostic struggles, only the most superficial…aspects of the problem…[were] considered.[39]

Where the 'mythicists' evidenced a superficial, ideologically driven *appropriation* of 'myth' as sheer 'falsehood', then, those *rejecting* the category in this debate exhibited a no less superficial, ideologically driven engagement. With each side rooting their religious and philosophical beliefs in what they felt they could prove historically about Jesus, *myth*, taken on all sides as synonymous with *falsity*, was but an uncritically adopted pawn either advanced, or taken *en passant*, in accord with the respective agenda.

Even as Drews' *Christusmythe* was being roundly denounced, the seeds were being sown for a somewhat more scholarly approach to Paul and 'myth' within one infamous branch of German biblical scholarship to which we now turn: the so-called *religionsgeschichtliche Schule*.

1.2 Enter the *Religionsgeschichtliche Schule,* c. 1910-1930

For the *religionsgeschichtliche Schule*—a group of primarily biblical scholars associated with the University of Göttingen in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century—the wealth of data emerging on ancient non-European religions rendered the old Higher Criticism's exclusivist treatment of the Judaeo-Christian religion untenable. Influenced by use of 'myth' in the new oriental scholarship,[40] this group sought, without denying Jesus' historicity, to deepen understanding of early Christianity in relation to oriental-Hellenistic 'myth'. The bell that assembled the *Schule* was Gunkel's *Schöpfung und Chaos* (1895) which, utilising his new *formgeschichtliche Methode*, proposed that Genesis 1 and Revelation 12 were dependent on Babylonian 'myth'. Where a few early proponents of the new method posited a minimal influence of such 'myth' on the New Testament,[41] this gave way to theories of maximal dependence. One of the first to posit Paul's dependence on oriental 'myth' was Gunkel himself. In 1903 Gunkel published a short study claiming that Paul's Christology and mystical doctrine of baptism were not dependent on Jewish conceptions but on oriental myths and cults that had existed for thousands of years in Egypt and were later aligned with other gods.[42] The same year Wilhelm Heitmüller

[38] Schweitzer 2000, 411.
[39] Ibid. 401, 395-96.
[40] E.g., Gruppe 1887; Dieterich 1891; Hepding 1903.
[41] E.g., Anrich 1894; Wobbermin 1886.
[42] Gunkel 1903, 83-85, 89-96.

also posited Paul's dependence on oriental syncretism in his view of the sacraments.[43] Heitmüller, however, rarely used language of 'myth', and in a subsequent response to Drews he insisted that: 'The preaching of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ is *not* a product of myth'.[44] Shortly following Drews' *Christusmythe*, seminal works by two of the School's leading figures, Richard Reitzenstein and Wilhelm Bousset, however, saw extensive discussions of Paul and 'myth'.

1.2.1 Richard Reitzenstein and Wilhelm Bousset

On the basis of themes shared by later Hellenistic texts, in *Poimandres* (1904), Reitzenstein posited a pre-Christian 'Gnosticism' which adhered to an originally Iranian Redeemer 'Mythos vom Menschen', involving a divine figure who sinks down into the natural world but by a saving revelation reascends to the heavenly realm.[45] In *hellenistische Mysterienreligionen* (1910; 3rd ed. 1927) Reitzenstein developed this thesis with reference to Paul. Reitzenstein began by sketching the 'Gentile-Hellenistic' environment of Paul and infant Christianity. Claimed to have been dominated by 'nature myths of a dying and rising god' with whom one could be 'connected…by means of magic' and an orientally-conditioned 'myth' of a Redeeming Anthropos, these are proffered as the primary influencers of nascent Christianity.[46] As in other works, Reitzenstein concerned himself mainly with his reconstructed myth of a divine Anthropos, which, held to be a central tenet of pre-Christian Hellenistic Gnostic circles, was believed to have taught its adherents the death of their old self and rebirth to a higher 'pneumatic' life via special revelation. Without denying Jesus' historicity, or that Paul continued to perceive certain things 'Jewishly' (*jüdisch*),[47] Reitzenstein concluded that most of Paul's theological terms and thought-forms were dependent on this pre-Christian Hellenistic Gnosticism with its redeemer myth of a divine Anthropos.[48]

Seconding Reitzenstein, in *Hauptprobleme der Gnosis* (1907), Bousset also espoused a pre-Christian Gnosticism with an oriental-syncretistic 'myth' of a Redeeming Anthropos. In *Kyrios Christos* (1913), Bousset then set out to demonstrate that Pauline-Hellenistic Christianity was indebted to oriental-syncretistic 'myth'. Claiming that veneration of Jesus as κύριος was 'foreign to the gospel tradition and therewithin to the *Palestinian* primitive community', Bousset distilled what Paul inherited 'as basic conviction in the Hellenistic congregations, by separating what is his special and personal property.'[49] Positing his indebtedness to these groups' cultic worship and appropriation of Jesus as κύριος via the influence of oriental-Hellenistic 'kurios-cults',[50] Bousset deduced that, while these pre-Pauline circles cultivated a form of cultic mysticism apropos their κύριος, in 'the Christ piety of Paul there now sounds one entirely new note, and it becomes the dominant: the intense feeling of personal

[43] Heitmüller 1903.
[44] Heitmüller 1912, 335.
[45] Cf. also Brückner 1908. Reitzenstein further pursued this posited 'myth' in Reitzenstein 1917; 1919; 1921.
[46] Reitzenstein 1927, 7, 9ff., 17.
[47] Ibid, 88.
[48] Ibid. 423. See further, ibid. 66-67, 75-76, 84-89, 333-93.
[49] Bousset 1970 [1913], 200-1; cf. 69-118.
[50] Ibid. 121-31, 136-47; also Bousset 1914, 155-56. Cf. Heitmüller 1912, 333.

belonging and of spiritual relationship with the exalted Lord.' Out of the Hellenistic cultic mysticism Paul developed a 'personal', 'spiritual-ethical' Christ-mysticism of superior value, in which the believer encounters an individual union with the risen Lord.[51] Moreover, out of their 'simple and naïve' view of Spirit as a 'power which seizes man in ecstasy and makes him capable of miracles', Paul interwove this with a radical new *Pneuma*-mysticism. Paul's 'Spirit', beyond all earthly human nature (σάρξ), becomes 'the element of the *entire* new Christian life', rendering one—as seen in his two 'Anthropoi' theology (1 Cor 15:45ff.)—wholly divorced from their prior natural state.[52] This twofold Pauline development is explicable neither by way of Judaism nor the teachings of Jesus. Rather, Paul's development of Christianity depended on two oriental-Hellenistic myths which, Bousset held, were by Paul's time already joined in the 'Hellenistic, purely Gentile "Gnosticism"' reflected in the *Corpus Hermeticum* and *Oracula Chaldaica*, namely, the 'myth of the suffering, dying, and rising god', and the 'myth of the Primal Man' who 'sinks down into matter and is again liberated from it'.[53]

1.2.2 A Conflicted Appeal to "Myth"

The *religionsgeschichtliche* school's appeal to 'myth' in interpreting Paul was of a specifically literary-historical nature. It denoted an oriental-syncretistic tradition of a divine, dying and rising redeeming Anthropos, posited as Pauline-Hellenistic Christianity's conceptual antecedent.[54] Though in many ways seminal feats of scholarship,[55] the reconstructions of Reitzenstein and Bousset were methodologically flawed. Dismissing non-contemporaneous Jewish sources, both posited pagan-'mythic' influences on nascent Christianity ideas and practices attested only in much later sources. From these late, often fragmentary, sources, both placed as central to understanding Paul a *hypothetically reconstructed* oriental-Hellenistic 'myth' which was largely 'imagined on the basis of the features in early Christianity that had supposedly been influenced by these sources.'[56] Behind this one-sided approach was the socio-historical 'escape from Semitism' underway in Germany since the infamous grouping of the Germanic and Indo-Iranian languages under the category of Aryan in the early-nineteenth century, an 'escape' that had been religious and racial.[57] By the time of the *Schule* the Germanic *Volk* was increasingly regarded as belonging to a superior Aryan race genealogically 'purer' than, and categorically distinct from, the Semitic race (à la Drews).[58] Informed by this, those seeking to open up a more multicultural ancient Orient found it 'convenient and more appealing to emphasize the narrowness and the inauthenticity of Semitic cultures' and the 'originality, universality, and purity of Aryan ones'.[59] While many nineteenth century German theologians had sought to distance the historical

[51] Bousset 1970 [1913], 153, 157.
[52] Ibid. 161-63, 174.
[53] Ibid. 186, 188, 178, 190.
[54] Cf. R.A. Johnson 1974, 94.
[55] Cf. Masuzawa 2005, 309-38; Marchand 2010, 262.
[56] Hurtado 2015, 21.
[57] Marchand 2010, 254. Cf. Heschel 2008, 225-32.
[58] See Figueira 2002.
[59] Marchand 2010, 255.

Jesus from Judaism, with this proving increasingly difficult attention turned in this regard to Luther's great hero and the 'zweite Stifter des Christentums'.[60] Denoting in oriental scholarship traditions of 'pagan' origin, then, the School's nominal recourse to 'myth' in understanding Paul came simply as part and parcel of its spurious, racially motivated attempt to 'orientalise', and thereby *de-Semitise*, Paul.[61]

Alongside this superficial, racially motivated appropriation of 'myth' there had been a curious inconsistency in Reitzenstein's and Bousset's appeal to 'myth'. Rooting Paul's conceptual heritage in oriental-Hellenistic 'myth', neither was then willing to speak of Paul's thought *itself* as in any way 'mythic'.[62] Reitzenstein's work never uses the word 'myth' with direct reference to Paul's thought and concludes by stating emphatically that, 'in spite of the borrowing, his religion remains new and his own'.[63] Paul's Christ for Reitzenstein fundamentally 'differs from the divine *mythological* Anthropos in that it dies for our sins'.[64] Again, having severed Paul's influence from Judaism in favour of oriental-Hellenistic 'myth', Bousset simultaneously distanced 'Paulinism in all its utter sublimity' from 'myth', maintaining 'the incomparably greater moral-religious power and the spiritual originality of the apostle'.[65] In Christian Gnosticism's later 'distorting' of Paul's '*historical* redemption' Bousset spoke of 'myth' now 'seiz[ing] the Christian religion and…overrun[ing] and chok[ing] the historical gospel'.[66] The *religionsgeschichtliche* appeal to 'myth' in interpreting Paul was inherently conflicted. On the one hand proffered as the primary locus of Paul's theology, 'myth' somehow remained wholly inapplicable to it: 'everywhere the apostle pushes out above and beyond [that]…which surrounds and envelops him…'[67] Where the School's appeal to oriental 'myth' vis-à-vis Paul had been racially motivated, this counterintuitive rejection of 'myth' to Paul's thought itself would appear to have been the product of a second, competing agenda: Christian apologetic. Despite its comparative nature, '*Religionsgeschichte* was still chiefly about the West and especially about the future of Christianity'. The aim was to a create a non-Jewish form of Christian belief 'without allowing the "light of Asia" to blind one to Christianity's superiority'.[68] It is this second agenda that explains the School's counterintuitive rejection of 'myth' to Paul's thought itself; a dynamic which, as confirmed by Bousset's remarks about Christian Gnosticism, betrays the retention ultimately of a popular, dismissive equation of 'myth' with 'falsehood'.

The narrow *religionsgeschichtliche* engagement with Paul and 'myth' was but an incoherent by-product of two competing, racial and apologetic agendas which resulted in 'myth', at base prereflexively equated with 'pagan *fiction*', being proffered as the principal origin of, and yet alien to, Paul's thought.

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[60] Wrede 1907, 104.

[61] The result of Reitzenstein's and Bousset's works is a Paul divested of any fundamental Jewish influence or heritage, as both were wont to emphasise. Cf., e.g., Reitzenstein 1927, 91; Bousset 1970 [1913], 198, 207.

[62] Cf. R.A. Johnson 1974, 30.

[63] Reitzenstein 1927, 423.

[64] Dyer 2018, 123. See Reitzenstein 1927, 423.

[65] Bousset 1970 [1913], 200, 194; cf. 166.

[66] Ibid. 280, 199.

[67] Ibid. 160.

[68] Marchand 2010, 253, 262. Cf. Gunkel 1903, 12.

1.2.3 The Rejection of "Myth"

While Reitzenstein and Bousset had supporters, their appeals to oriental-syncretistic 'myth' in interpreting Paul was criticised from the beginning. Echoing the *Christusmythe* debate, this criticism saw widespread rejection of 'myth' apropos Paul. For example, Harry Kennedy declared that there was no 'real comparison possible' between Paul's Jewish historical Jesus and that of pagan 'mythical divine persons' such as Osiris or Attis, whose death and rebirth 'is embodied in grotesque myths'.[69] Paul Wernle rejected Bousset's 'detour by way of those Hellenistic myths and mysteries', and insisted that Jesus became the historical centre of Christian faith apart 'from the influence of any myth'.[70] J. Gresham Machen insisted that the 'historicity of the crucifixion of Jesus…stands too firm to be shaken by any theory of dependence upon pagan myth', that the 'Pauline conception [of Christ] is totally different', and that the New Testament Jesus 'is certainly not the product of invention or of myth; He is rooted too deep in historical conditions'.[71] In his Jewish-eschatological reading of Paul, Albert Schweitzer asserted that Paul's theology had 'nothing to do with the primal-man of the Iranian, Persian, or Hellenistic myths', and that it was categorically 'eschatological *not mythical*', for Paul's 'mysticism' is '*historico*-cosmic'.[72] Bar Schweitzer's remarking that contra Paul's historical-eschatological mysticism, 'mythical mysticism' concerns 'a *past* event' which 'acquires universal significance and efficacy', being 'in a sense re-experienced',[73] such rejections of 'myth' invariably proceeded without any informed reflection on the concept, and even Schweitzer's passing remark seems a peculiarly contrived reason for the wholesale rejection of it apropos Paul. Informing these rejections of 'myth' was the very dismissive attitude to it evidenced in the *Schule* they were critiquing. It was a 'pagan' phenomenon prereflexively equated with 'unhistorical', and as such rejected so as to—contra the *Schule*—both *de-paganise and* historicise Paul's theology. With all sides equating it with 'pagan fiction', the concept of 'myth' in the *religionsgeschichtliche* controversy again emerges as an uncritically adopted ideological pawn.

With the demise of the *Schule* in the 1920s, discussion of Paul and 'myth' entered a period of stagnation in the decade leading up to the Second World War. The dust would not settle long, however. It was destined to resurface in its most extensive form to date in the works of Rudolf Bultmann.

1.3 Bultmann and the *Entmythologisierung* Controversy, c. 1941-1977

Endorsing the works of Reitzenstein and Bousset, Bultmann's early work used 'myth' chiefly in their narrow literary-historical manner. Intimations of an existential aspect to his notion of myth were present in such early work but relegated to the periphery, and with the *Schule*, when it came to Paul's own thought Bultmann initially rejected the category.[74] From the mid-1930s, however, a growing

[69] Kennedy 1913, 213-14.
[70] Wernle 1915, 88.
[71] Machen 1921, 313, 315, 155.
[72] Schweitzer 1930, 165, 23.
[73] Ibid. 23.
[74] Bultmann 1930.

indebtedness to idealist-Lutheran theology and existentialism brought 'myth' in Bultmann to the fore, until, in his programmatic essay, 'Neues Testament und Mythologie' (1941), Bultmann declared *Entmythologisierung* to be the chief task facing modern New Testament exegetes.[75]

1.3.1 Bultmann, the "Problem" of Myth, and the "Demythologisation" of Paul

Bultmann opened his 1941 essay with a point he would repeatedly return to: the New Testament reflects a defunct 'mythological' *Weltbild* in which the cosmos is a three-tiered structure, the earth is the scene of supernatural activity, and the 'end-times' have come, to culminate in Christ's coming 'again on the clouds of heaven'.[76] Finding echoes in Jewish apocalyptic and Gnostic 'myths' there is nothing specifically Christian about this mythical *Weltbild*: it is the '*Weltbild* of a by-gone, pre-scientific age'. By contrast ours is informed by modern science whereby humanity and the cosmos form a 'closed system impervious to the intervention of supranatural powers'.[77] 'It is impossible to use electric light and the wireless, and in illness avail ourselves of modern medical and surgical methods, and at the same time to believe in the New Testament world of spirits and miracles.' Similarly nullified is 'the expectation of the "Son of Man" coming with the clouds of heaven'. 'The course of history has refuted mythology.'[78] The issue, Bultmann posed, was whether the New Testament contains 'truth which is independent of the mythical worldview', and if so 'theology must undertake the task of demythologising the Christian Kerygma.'[79] At the same time Bultmann claimed that myth demands demythologising. For its 'actual meaning' and 'aim', its 'original intention'[80] is concerned not with an *objektives Weltbild* but expressing existentially 'wie sich der Mensch selbst in seiner Welt versteht'. Its 'actual aim' is 'to speak of a transcendent power to which the world and man are subject', an intent 'obscured by the *objektivierenden Charakter* of its statements.'[81] New Testament 'myth' thus 'speaks of *jenseitige* powers or persons as if they were actually *diesseitige*—against its original intention'. As such it is incumbent on exegetes to clarify this original meaning 'without recourse to mythological terms.'[82]

At the forefront of Bultmann's programme was Paul. Every one of Paul's theological statements, Bultmann held, 'is simultaneously an assertion about man and vice versa. For this reason and in this sense Paul's theology is, at the same time, anthropology.'[83] At its core this was said to concern 'inauthentic' versus 'authentic' existence, and so to 'de-mythologise' Paul meant to deconstruct any 'mythical' elements in his thinking to lay bare this theological-existential dichotomy. In practice this meant deconstructing Paul's idea of 'supernatural' intervention in the natural order. While in terms that

[75] Bultmann 1948 [1941]. This initially appeared in the second half of Bultmann's *Offenbarung und Heilsgeschehen* (1941, 27-69); the first half of which, on 'natural revelation', later published as Bultmann 1952a.
[76] Bultmann 1948 [1941], 15-16. Cf. Bultmann 1958, 15.
[77] Bultmann 1948 [1941], 16, 20.
[78] Ibid. 17-18; Bultmann 1958, 14.
[79] Bultmann 1948 [1941], 16.
[80] Ibid. 23; Bultmann, Bornkamm, and Schumann 1954, 26.
[81] Bultmann 1948 [1941], 22-24. Cf. Bultmann 1958, 19.
[82] Bultmann 1952b, 183; 1958, 68. Cf. Bultmann 1952b, 186.
[83] Bultmann 1951, 191.

evidently 'go back to a myth' Paul speaks of creation being 'involuntarily subjected to "futility"' (Rom 8:20), Paul appropriates the 'cosmological mythology of Gnosticism' chiefly 'because it enables him to express the fact that the perishable "creation" becomes a destructive power whenever man…bases his life upon it rather than upon God'.[84] The existential intent of Paul imaging cosmic powers as 'mythological entities'[85] is confirmed by 'Paul's *mythological statements* about these powers' themselves: for it 'is clear…that the "existence" of these powers has significance only for those who let it be an existence "for us"'.[86] Conversely, while he shared the ancient belief in 'Spirit' as a 'supernatural' agent, what Paul deems life in 'the Spirit' is better rendered an 'authentic life based on that which is unseen and intangible': a 'radical surrender to God', thereby securing 'detachment from the world (*Entweltlichung*), freedom'.[87] Where, as seen in his 'mythological' teaching on the σῶμα πνευματικόν (1 Cor 15), Paul viewed the Spirit as a 'supernatural *material*',[88] this was the product of his 'mythological', pre-scientific mentality—his lacking in the 'capacity for abstract thinking'. 'In distinction from this mythology', the 'real intention of Paul must be made clear.' 'Rightly interpreted' σῶμα πνευματικόν 'does not in the end mean a body formed of an ethereal substance' but the self wholly 'determined by the power of God'.[89] 'It is clear that' Paul means 'by "Spirit" the possibility of a new life which is opened up by faith'. This possibility of a 'new life', of transferal from an inauthentic *Weltlichkeit* of self-*assertion* to an authentic *Entweltlichung* of self-*surrender* was what had been achieved by God in Jesus.[90] Through faithful submission to the core gospel *Kerygma* one is freed from this inauthentic life by 'the very fact that *the believer*, as one "ransomed," *no longer "belongs to himself"*' (1 Cor 6:20).[91] Since this kerygma would be a form of 'self-assertion' if the product of 'wishful thinking', Jesus' death and resurrection is no 'mythological remnant to be eliminated' but a historico-salvific '*act of God by which surrender,...by which authentic life* is made possible'.[92] Granted this death acquires mythological *accretions* 'no longer tenable for us', and while itself verifiable *Historie*, its saving efficacy and the resurrection are *Geschichte* perceivable only through *Glaubensaugen*.[93] Still, 'the cross of Christ is no mythical event, but an historic fact originating in the historical event of the crucifixion of Jesus of Nazareth.'[94]

1.3.2 A Confused Appeal to "Myth"

Bultmann's programme elicited one of the most heated debates in biblical scholarship. While a few were sympathetic to it, most scholars decried it. Many attacks rested on widespread misunderstanding

[84] Ibid. 230.
[85] Cf. Bultmann 1948 [1941], 29-30.
[86] Bultmann 1951, 257-58. Cf. 1 Cor 8:5-6.
[87] Bultmann 1948 [1941], 30-31. Cf. Bultmann 1951, 207, 337.
[88] Bultmann 1948 [1941], 30-31. Cf. Bultmann 1951, 333.
[89] Ibid. 198-99.
[90] Bultmann 1948 [1941], 31, 42.
[91] Bultmann 1951, 331; cf. 297-98; Bultmann 1958, 29, 31, 77-78.
[92] Bultmann 1948 [1941], 43, 33, 43. Cf. Bultmann 1951, 301.
[93] Bultmann 1948 [1941], 45; 1952b, 196. Cf. Bultmann 1958, 80.
[94] Bultmann 1948 [1941], 47.

of Bultmann's position. He was unfairly charged with reducing theology to psychologism, gnosticism, or Heideggerian existentialism, to setting an arbitrary limit to demythologising when it came to God's revelation in Jesus.[95] He was also widely charged with rendering modern scientific rationalism the norm for theology, while himself holding that the *Kerygma* calls one to the God 'beyond the world and beyond scientific thinking'; that faith 'demands to be freed from any world-view produced by man's thought, whether mythological or scientific'; and even that the *Kerygma* could offer a critique of the modern *Weltbild*.[96] The modern *Weltbild* was for Bultmann simply the present setting in which the kerygma had to find adequate expression.[97]

There was one core problem with Bultmann's programme which accounts for this widespread confusion: his understanding of *myth*. What did Bultmann mean by 'myth'? What did the *Ent* of *Ent-mythologisierung* actually qualify? While not equating the kerygma with the modern *Weltbild*, Bultmann undeniably identified myth with a 'pre-modern' *Weltbild*, for he repeatedly located the need for demythologising in the New Testament's defunct 'mythological' cosmology.[98] The task of demythologising, Bultmann claimed, is 'to destroy the old mythical meaning' and inquire as to what, 'after the overcoming of the destruction of the mythical imagery, is still an abiding and actual possibility'.[99] Sometimes this ancient-mythical/modern-non-mythical dichotomy was framed as myth being a defunct 'primitive science'.[100] Others times, as in his evaluation of Paul's σῶμα πνευματικόν, myth was deemed the result of a *pre*-scientific mentality incapable of abstract thought.[101] Besides these being two distinct formulations, this already confused view of 'myth' as essentially 'time-conditioned, pre-scientific error' needing to be eliminated by the interpreter,[102] was juxtaposed with the claim that myth demands demythologising *in accord with its original intent*. For the actual intention of 'myth' is not in fact concerned with an *objektives Weltbild* but addressing existentially the situation of man, so the task of demythologising 'is not to eliminate the mythological statements but to interpret them'.[103] Bultmann can be seen to have conflated two quite distinct programmes of *Ent-mythologisierung*, tied to two very different notions of 'myth' (defunct *cosmology*; *not* cosmology), which are logically independent. Confusion, then, was intrinsic to Bultmann's programme, for he approached myth 'in two or three different ways, which are not…fully compatible'.[104] Little wonder that in 1952 the theology faculty at the University of Tübingen concluded that Bultmann's programme has led to 'confusion and misunderstanding' because 'the concept of "myth" contained within it is unexplained.'[105] That Bultmann was insouciant about *defining* myth is seen in his 1941 essay attempting this in a single

[95] Contrast, respectively, Bultmann 1958, 70; 1957, 461; 1952b, 207; 1958, 83-84; R.A. Johnson 1974, 35, 18.
[96] Bultmann 1958, 40, 83. Cf. Bultmann 1952b, 197.
[97] See Congdon 2015, 572-73, 669.
[98] Bultmann 1948 [1941], 15; 1952b, 181, 207; 1958, 15, 35-36.
[99] Bultmann, Bornkamm, and Schumann 1954, 50-51.
[100] Bultmann 1958, 18-19; see also Bultmann 1952b, 183.
[101] See also Bultmann 1958, 20, 38.
[102] Wilder 1950, 125-26. Cf. C.S. Evans 1996, 64.
[103] Bultmann 1958, 18.
[104] Thiselton 1980, 252. Cf. Henderson 1952, 46; Macquarrie 1955, 166-67; Owen 1957, 5; Ayers 1966, 206.
[105] Evangelisch-Theologische Fakultät der Universität Tübingen 1952, 27. Cf. Congdon 2015, 595.

footnote, and this is clumsy and unclear: 'Myth is here used in the sense in which the *religionsgeschichtliche Schule* understands it. Mythology is the mode of representation in which the unworldly, divine, appears as the worldly, the human'.[106] He certainly did not derive this definition from the *religionsgeschichtliche Schule*,[107] and it is so broad as to include 'all pictorial, analogical, and symbolic speech whatever' and make de-mythologising in the realm of theology 'a logically impossible task.'[108] Bultmann was 'largely uninterested in general anthropological or semiotic theories' of myth, and whenever pressed on what he meant by myth he 'resolutely abandoned the subject',[109] admitting that he, in fact, had little to no interest in understanding the concept:

> I do not consider the question concerning the concept of myth to be among the most important questions. Indeed, it seems to me that discussion of this question leads away from what the problem of demythologising is really about. If, therefore, anyone considers my notion of myth to be questionable, and wishes to understand by myth something else, he may do so.[110]

Bultmann ultimately proposed a programme of de-mythologising in which the decisive concept of myth was 'judged to be so peripheral as to be of no substantive concern.'[111]

The real issue for Bultmann was not an informed understanding of 'myth', but 'de*objectifying*' or 'de*constantinizing*' the gospel.[112] One of the chief purposes of his programme was to combat the Nazi propaganda of Alfred Rosenberg's *Der Mythus des 20. Jahrhunderts* (1930), which, claiming that 'myth and faith are identical' and bound to 'the mystery of one's own race', had sought to recover an originally 'Aryan' Jesus who had been Judaised, and so falsified by Paul.[113] While a prominent factor in the *Christusmythe* and *religionsgeschichtliche* school's appeals to 'myth' had been a burgeoning German anti-Semitism, as an opponent of Nazism Bultmann's two-pronged critique of 'natural revelation' and a 'mythologised' kerygma in his original *Offenbarung und Heilsgeschehen* (1941) had been 'directed especially against the ideology in the "Third Reich" that views the history of the *Volk* as the revelation of God.'[114] In distancing the Christian kerygma from any specific culture Bultmann's programme sought to precluded this cultural cooptation.[115] While such a hermeneutic has something important to contribute,[116] when it comes to Bultmann's appropriation of 'myth' in this endeavour, Dunn is surely right: it 'is inadequate because the questions, What kind of myth? Myth in what sense? have not been subjected to a sufficiently thorough examination.'[117]

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[106] Bultmann 1948 [1941], 22 n. 2. Cf. also Bultmann 1952b, 180.
[107] Cf. R.A. Johnson 1974, 125; Congdon 2015, 611; 2017, 6.
[108] Hepburn 1955, 229. Cf. Oepke 1952, 170; Miegge 1960, 91.
[109] Congdon 2015, 588; R.A. Johnson 1974, 14. Cf., e.g., Bultmann, Bornkamm, and Schumann 1954, 48-49.
[110] Bultmann 1952b, 180.
[111] R.A. Johnson 1974, 14.
[112] Owen 1957, 15; Congdon 2015, 609.
[113] Cited ibid. 580; see ibid. 576-86; Taubes 1983, 469; Jaspert 1992, 128; Meding 1997, 201-6; Standhartinger 2014. For an earlier direct exegetical response by Bultmann to Rosenberg, see Bultmann 1936a.
[114] Dinkler 1977, 29.
[115] Cf. Hammann 2009, 309; Congdon 2015, 584.
[116] Cf. Hege 2009, 175 n. 20; Congdon 2015, 684.
[117] Dunn 1977, 298.

1.3.3 The Rejection of "Myth"

Unsurprisingly, Bultmann's detractors also spoke of *myth* and *demythologising* 'without any clear knowledge of the conceptual content'.[118] For example, declaring that the New Testament 'has nothing to do with mythology', Anders Nygren simply asserted: 'If the Gospel is taken as something mythological, that in itself proves that it has been…falsely understood. We should not allow ourselves to be satisfied with…an interpretation of the Gospel which presents it—what it is not—a myth.'[119] Oscar Cullmann insisted that what Bultmann termed New Testament 'myth' was rather 'historical facts…interpreted prophetically as holy history'—adding, rather confusingly, that: 'by incorporating…elements of profane history into the "redemptive history," the first Christians in reality "demythologized" them, but not in order to set off a nontemporal truth, but in order to put them in agreement with the events of the history of Christ. We might say they "historized" them in the sense of "redemptive history" so that they cease to be myths in the New Testament.'[120] Julius Schniewind opaquely responded that the New Testament kerygma 'is neither a piece of end-of-the-world mythology nor a mythological expression of timelessness; rather, it is the message concerning the world to come that in the words and deeds of Jesus has become a present reality.… Only in him…does the message concerning Satan and demons become…abstracted from the obscure realm of mythology.' [121] Schweitzer simply rejected Bultmann's recourse to *Mythus* and *Entmythologisierung* because there 'is no mythologisation of a historical figure',[122] as did F. F. Bruce who opined that 'myth' was applicable only to statements that suggested there was 'something vaguely "unreal" about [Jesus'] manhood'. 'Any demythologizing which is called for', Bruce insisted, 'had been done by Paul…[in] the service of the truth as it is in Jesus.'[123] All such rejections of 'myth' again reflect little more than a vaguely conceived equation of 'myth' with 'unhistorical'. And while these widespread rejections of 'myth' in Paul and the New Testament were cast in terms of opposition to Bultmann, such a dismissive attitude to 'myth' was not far removed from Bultmann's own position—as evidenced by the way he ultimately felt compelled to distinguish Jesus' *historic(al)* death and resurrection and the *truth* of the Pauline kerygma categorically from 'myth'. After concluding that it simply 'confronts one as the Word of God, of which we cannot ask the question of legitimacy', Bultmann ended his 1941 essay by insisting: 'It is precisely its immunity from proof that secures the Christian proclamation against the charge of being mythological. The transcendence of God is not reduced to immanence as in myth; rather, the paradox of a transcendent God present in history is maintained.'[124] At the centre of Bultmann's confused programme was, ultimately, a rejection of myth. The real contribution of Paul, the actual *content* of his message was not to be found in any outward 'mythical' facade but in the 'kerygmatic' core: the

[118] R.A. Johnson 1974, 6.
[119] Nygren 1952, 148-49.
[120] Cullmann 1956, 21, 23.
[121] Schniewind 1948, 131; cf. also Barrett 1957, 361.
[122] Schweitzer (1957), in Mähl 1997, 108. Cf. Schweitzer 2006 [1953], 461-62.
[123] Bruce 1976, 95; 1966, 15.
[124] Bultmann 1948 [1941], 50, 53.

proclamation of Jesus' death and resurrection as the eschatological event opening up 'the possibility of self-understanding'—a core kerygma vis-à-vis which 'myth' was wholly inapplicable. Accordingly, even those few who endorsed Bultmann's programme spoke disparagingly of 'myth' as an alien other to, indeed as 'the *enemy* of', the gospel'.[125] The Bultmannian debate over Paul and 'myth' emerges as a confused, critically uninformed grappling in the dark on all sides.

1.3.4 Dissenting Voices: James D. G. Dunn

Amid this confused debate there were a few, notably philosopher Karl Jaspers, who questioned Bultmann's very premise of '*de*-mythologising', namely, the 'possibility of religion without myth'.[126] Of those who did so as theologians, a 1977 essay by James Dunn warrants singling out both for coming from an eminent Pauline scholar and its spotlighting the need for critical reflection on the concept of myth. While Enlightenment sentiments may have been derisive, Dunn noted, in 'the 19th and 20th centuries however the concept of myth has been thrown back into the melting pot', such that one might speak of the *sui generis* 'truth of myth'. Anthropologists, philosophers, psychologists and comparative religionists have spoken of myth as 'archetypal history' providing a 'basis for the present world'; as 'original revelations of the preconscious psyche'; a core part of 'the workings of the human mind', expressing '(universal) values and truths, that can only be presented in symbolic language': the *sui generis* 'expression of distinctively religious experience'.[127] Noting his 'arbitrary', 'overly-simplified and confusing' engagement with the concept, and how the 'real problem for Bultmann is…language which *objectifies* God', Dunn thus asked: can one really 'equate the problem of myth in the NT…with the problem of objectifying God?' 'If demythologizing…is addressed to the problem of objectifying God does it really answer the problem of myth?'[128] Bultmann, Dunn suggested, 'fails to realize how much NT myth cannot be demythologized because it is saying something fundamental to the Christian gospel [that] cannot be expressed in other than mythological terms'. Rather post-haste, however, Dunn then concluded his essay, stating: 'Space forbids the fuller discussion which the subject deserves'.[129]

By the time of Dunn's contribution the *Entmythologisierung* controversy was already giving way to what was destined to become the modern resurgence of the old *Christusmythe* debate, a debate that persists to the present day in which, bearing an uncanny resemblance to its earlier counterpart, discussion of Paul and 'myth' has been tied directly to issues of historicity.

1.4 The Return of the "Christ-Myth" Debate, c. 1971-Present

Beginning with *The Jesus of the Early Christians* (1971), G. A. Wells is usually credited with reviving what would again gain notoriety as the 'Christ-myth' (or 'mythicist') debate (though in later

[125] Fuchs 1954, 167-68. Cf. also, e.g., Käsemann 1950, 354, 357; Schneidau 1976, 12.
[126] Jaspers and Bultmann 1958. Cf. also, e.g., Bonhoeffer 1971 [1944], 329; Goldammer 1953; Reid 1963, 64.
[127] Dunn 1977, 286-87.
[128] Ibid. 295-98.
[129] Ibid. 299-300.

works Wells would modify his initial position). Another notable instigator of this shift in discussion of Paul and 'myth', though not strictly a 'mythicist' in the sense this has come to signify, was Hyam Maccoby. And amid a proliferation of subsequent, largely sensationalist 'Christ-myth' works that have emerged in the late-twentieth and twenty-first century,[130] the most prominent and Pauline-orientated of these have been publications by Earl Doherty and Richard Carrier.

1.4.1 G. A. Wells, Hyam Maccoby, Earl Doherty and Richard Carrier

Wells initially argued that Jesus was a fictional person, claiming that throughout the early Christian record 'Jesus is a myth'.[131] Later conceding that the Q source may reflect the 'career of an itinerant Galilean preacher of the opening decades of the first century', and was thus 'not all mythical', Wells consistently held that Paul's letters, the earliest and 'most substantial body of early Christian doctrine'[132] reflect a purely 'mythical' Jesus. Paul reflects no acquaintance with anyone having met his crucified 'Jesus'; has no knowledge of Jesus' life and teaching; and 'does not give his crucifixion even a setting in time or place, nor mention any of its attendant circumstances'.[133] Whenever his Jesus 'had lived obscurely and died, he had for Paul returned promptly after death to heaven', and was 'fundamentally a supernatural personage'[134] derived from pagan dying and rising gods and 'ancient Wisdom myth'.[135] If Paul's dying and rising Jesus was 'the revelation of God in human form, then clearly', Wells concluded, 'if there was no human form, there was no revelation of God'.[136]

Conceding *a* historical Jesus, in *The Mythmaker: Paul and the Invention of Christianity* (1986), Maccoby claimed that Paul's theology was rooted neither in Judaism nor a historical Jesus, but 'mythmaking'. Contra his own claims, Maccoby's thesis runs, Paul was really a Gentile proselyte. The main reliable sources on Paul are fragmentary second-fourth century Ebionite traditions, claimed to reveal that 'Paul had no Pharisaic background … was the son of Gentiles, converted to Judaism…and attached himself to the High Priest as a henchman. Disappointed in his hopes of advancement, he broke with the High Priest and sought fame by founding a new religion.'[137] To this end he hijacked an originally Pharisaic Jesus-movement, merged this with pagan myths of dying and rising gods and, concocting 'new and heretical views about the divine status of Jesus and the abrogation of the Torah', created 'a myth about Jesus that had no roots either in Judaism or…historical circumstances'.[138] Having 'invented' this anti-Jewish religion he 'misrepresented his own biography' to 'enhance his status'.[139]

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[130] E.g., Leidner 1999; D.M. Murdock 1999; Price 2003; 2011; T.L. Thompson 2005; Atwill 2005; D. Fitzgerald 2010; Brodie 2012. Cf. Ehrman 2012, 3: 'Some of them rival *The Da Vinci Code* in their passion for conspiracy and the shallowness of their historical knowledge'.

[131] Wells 1986, 65. See also, e.g., Wells 1971; 1982; 1989.

[132] Wells 1999, 95; 2004, 50, 24.

[133] Wells 1999, 55; cf. 52-64; also, e.g., Wells 1986, 25-29; 2004, 34-41.

[134] Wells 2004, 34; 1999, 49.

[135] Ibid. 95-99. Cf. Wells 1996, xxv-xxvii; 2004, 17-24.

[136] Wells 1986, 9.

[137] Maccoby 1986, 17; cf. 172-83.

[138] Ibid. 88, 72.

[139] Ibid. 15, 6.

With his 'myth' influencing all subsequent Christianity,[140] Paul was 'the personal begetter of the Christian myth' in a 'compound of both sincerity and charlatanry'.[141]

The latter deeming Doherty 'the most credible defense[] of mythicism' and Drews 'the very best outdated defense of the Jesus myth concept',[142] the contentions of Doherty's *Neither God nor Man: The Case for a Mythical Jesus* (2009) and Carrier's *On the Historicity of Jesus: Why We Might Have Reason for Doubt* (2014) follow similar lines. Echoing arguments of Wells and Maccoby, each seeks to negate Jesus' historicity, and a core part of this endeavour is the claim that the earliest attested Jesus of Paul is 'mythical'. With Wells they claim that Paul reflects no acquaintance with anyone that met Jesus, has no knowledge of his life and teaching nor of any historical circumstances surrounding his death. Doherty claims that, supported by a purported earlier form of part of the second century CE *AscIsa*: 'Paul's Christ Jesus is an entirely supernatural figure, crucified in the lower heavens at the hands of the demon spirits'[143]—at times said to be derived from pagan 'dying and rising gods',[144] at other times 'entirely derived from the Hebrew bible'.[145] Such is typical of ancient 'mythological thinking', which was not 'determined by what we would think of as "science" (which is why it was so wrong)'.[146] Again appealing to a supposed 'original' form of part of *AscIsa*,[147] Carrier similarly claims that Paul's Jesus is a 'mythic Christ…living and dying and rising in outer space'[148]—now claimed to be the combined product of pagan 'dying and rising gods', Jewish scripture and 'schizotypal hallucinations'.[149] Subsequent to Paul's fictional-celestial Jesus, Carrier avers, the Gospels were written depicting him 'in overtly historical narratives' until finally 'at least one Christian sect … started to believe the myths they contain were real'. Christianity began as 'a visionary cult prone to hallucinating fantastical things' and 'all later tales of a historical Jesus…need to be seen as legendary, mythical and propagandistic inventions'.[150] Maintaining that even the Gospel authors did not see Jesus as historical, Doherty similarly avers that Christians have completely 'misread Paul' and other early Christian sources, seeing in their purely 'mythical', fictional Jesus 'the human man they now believe[] in.'[151]

1.4.2 A Dismissive Appeal to "Myth"

The application of 'myth' to Paul's gospel for these authors is bound up with 'non-historical'—and therewith something to reject. In Maccoby one finds an overtly dismissive use of 'myth' as sheer (disingenuous) falsehood, with no critical reflection on the concept whatsoever. The same goes for

[140] Ibid. 16; cf. 129, 205.
[141] Ibid. 17.
[142] Carrier 2014, 49-50.
[143] Doherty 2009, 101; cf. 119-26.
[144] Ibid. 102, 127ff.
[145] Ibid. 90; cf. 83ff.
[146] Ibid. 98, 111.
[147] Carrier 2014, 45.
[148] Ibid. 522.
[149] Ibid. 168, 516-17, 124ff., 536.
[150] Ibid. 607-8, 612, 606.
[151] Doherty 2009, 502; cf. xii.

Wells who openly professed being uninterested in social-scientific theories of 'myth', and that for him 'myth' is 'fiction'.[152] Despite a curious endnote claiming, '"mythological"…in New Testament studies can have a more specific meaning than the popular sense',[153] as the title, tone and thesis of Doherty's work betray the appeal to 'myth' that prevails is precisely the 'popular', dismissive usage: 'myth in its entirety is fictional.'[154] With his chapter on 'the hypothesis of myth' lacking a single theoretical remark about 'myth',[155] the same applies to Carrier's work: 'myth consists of factually untrue stories…' 'Are the Gospels fictional', Carrier asks: 'In other words, are they just myths?'[156] Like their earlier counterparts, informing these authors' appeals to 'myth' in Paul is but a popular 'historical or mythical' dichotomy[157]—representative of the entire modern 'mythicist' enterprise. Pre-empting the 'superfluous' criticism of 'mythicists not understanding what "myth" means', as Jesus 'ahistoricist' Raphael Lataster clarifies: 'in this context, to call something "mythical" is to say that it is not literally true'.[158]

Further mirroring their earlier counterparts, these works have scarcely been beacons of sound scholarship. Besides failing to critically engage the concept of 'myth', all four considered appeal to pagan 'dying and rising gods', despite the fact that this generic pre-Christian category is now widely rejected.[159] Maccoby's unsound *Mythmaker* consists largely of *ex hypothesi* assertions lacking 'a shred of positive evidence in favor'.[160] Wells' method was one of selecting 'from the range of New Testament studies those extreme positions which best suit his thesis, and then weav[ing] them together into a total account with which none of those from whom he quoted would agree'.[161] Both his, Doherty's and Carrier's attempts to depict Paul preaching an ahistorical, non-human Jesus again involve those passages where Paul seems clearly *to* presuppose an earthly Jesus being subjected to conspicuously strained interpretations and/or arbitrarily rejected as interpolations.[162] Doherty's and Carrier's appeals to the post-Paul *AscIsa* are themselves methodologically suspect, and necessitate portions of *this* text which do not fit their argument being arbitrarily omitted.[163] Furthermore, these authors have been driven by strong ideological agendas. Maccoby's work was a piece of overtly anti-Christian Jewish polemic.[164] Wells, Doherty, Carrier and other 'mythicists' have been 'apologists for a kind of dogmatic atheism.'[165] Wells denounced religious people as 'deluded' and sought to prove that 'there was no revelation of God' in Jesus.[166] Doherty advances his claims with a view to 'debunking' historical Christianity.[167] The same

[152] Wells 1986, 6.
[153] Doherty 2009, 715 n. to p. 21.
[154] Ibid. 411.
[155] Carrier 2014, 36-55.
[156] Ibid. 390, 388.
[157] Ibid. 389.
[158] Lataster 2019, 2 n. 6.
[159] Cf. J.Z. Smith 1990, 88-115; 2005; M.S. Smith 1998.
[160] Gager 1988, 249.
[161] France 1982, 12.
[162] Cf. Ehrman 2012, 247-58; Casey 2014, 151-201; Gullotta 2017, 326-36; Gathercole 2018.
[163] Cf. Casey 2014, 195-99; Gathercole 2018, 203 n. 68, 212 n. 101.
[164] Cf. A.F. Segal 1990, 307 n. 5; Gager 1988, 250; Moore 2017, 385.
[165] Gullotta 2017, 346. Cf. Van Voorst 2000, 16; Casey 2014, 36.
[166] Wells 1986, 9.
[167] Doherty 2009, 10; cf. 155.

goes for Carrier, whose other works include, *Why I Am Not a Christian: Four Conclusive Reasons to Reject the Faith*:[168] 'Most of what Christians wrote were lies. We therefore should approach everything they wrote with distrust.'[169]

Far from constituting reasoned and informed interpretative engagements with Paul and the concept of 'myth', contemporary 'mythicist' readings of Paul have, as with their earlier counterparts, merely appropriated a popular, dismissive equation of 'myth' with 'falsehood', in works of questionable scholarship, with an overt desire to further their own anti-Christian agendas.

1.4.3 The Rejection of "Myth"

The 'Christ-myth'-redivivus readings of Paul and early Christianity have been dismissed by virtually all biblical critics and historians.[170] Where Drews had sought solace in this regard by bypassing the academy and appealing to lay people, contemporary 'mythicists' have followed suit—aided by the rise in self-publishing opportunities and online means of self-promotion. Given their vocal lay following, biblical scholars have increasingly felt the need to provide historical refutations of their claims. Mirroring the earlier *Christusmythe* debate, these have in the majority of cases meant asserting the 'non-mythical' nature of Paul's thought. In no sense, we read, is Jesus even 'a semi-mythical figure' in the New Testament.[171] Paul gives 'the clearest reference to the actual, and not mythical death of Jesus'.[172] Paul's gospel 'is no myth', for he 'grounds his belief in history.'[173] The 'Jesus that Paul proclaimed was not a legendary figure from a distant "mythological" past, but a recent contemporary Jew.'[174] Rom 1:3-4 and Gal 4:4 make 'it quite clear that Jesus was not a mythical figure'.[175] A 'mythical understanding of Jesus in Paul is entirely implausible.'[176] Analogous claims in popular-level works abound: '*the real myth is that the story of Christ was borrowed from other ancient myths*. Christ's story is unique and rooted in history, not mythology'.[177] All such rejections of 'myth' have again been rooted in a prereflexive adoption of the popular, dismissive use of the category employed by those they are refuting.[178] And as Gullotta has highlighted, where 'mythicists' can be charged with harbouring strong anti-Christian agendas, many—though not all—of their opponents have, in their rejections of 'myth', been driven by a readily identifiable Christian apologetic undercurrent.[179] While the contemporary 'mythicists' evidence a superficial, ideologically driven *appropriation* of 'myth' as mere 'fiction', then,

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[168] Carrier 2011.
[169] Carrier 2014, 222.
[170] 'Virtually no scholar working in the field of New Testament studies or early Christian history doubts the historical existence of Jesus of Nazareth…' (Meggitt 2019, 443). Cf. Ehrman 2012, 220.
[171] France 1982, 165.
[172] Redford 1986, 16.
[173] Komoszewski, Sawyer, and Wallace 2006, 250.
[174] Eddy and Boyd 2007, 208; see 201-33.
[175] Casey 2014, 135.
[176] Gathercole 2018, 211.
[177] Broocks 2013, 150. See also, e.g., Holding 2008; D. Marshall 2016.
[178] Cf. also, e.g., Byrskog 2010, 2190. One of the only interlocutors to touch on the so-called mythicists' reductive and unformed use of 'myth' is Meggitt 2019, 449-50.
[179] Gullotta 2017, 312.

those *rejecting* the category have reflected a no less superficial and, often ideologically driven, engagement. 'Myth' in the modern 'Christ-myth' debate emerges again as an uncritically adopted pawn, wielded/rejected simply to deny or affirm the 'historicity' of Paul's Jesus.

1.4.4 Addendum: Burton L. Mack

Acknowledging Jesus' historicity, for Burton Mack this figure bore little relation to the Christian Jesus, and over many works Mack sought to lay bare Christianity's 'mythic' origins. Contra Christ 'mythicism', Mack's work was professedly sociological. According to Mack myths are stories of an 'imaginary world' with 'fantastic features' and 'powerful agents', created 'to maintain and manipulate social interest'.[180] In an avowed departure from most scholars myth and religion are held not to be concerned with transcendent realities at all.[181] They are *solely* the product of 'social interests'. As such, while noting multidisciplinary myth theory,[182] Mack concerned himself only with what is claimed to be 'the small number of studies interested in the relation of myth to social structures': chiefly Jonathan Smith's idea of religion creating a world distinct from reality to facilitate social discourse.[183] Mack first sought to expose 'the extravagant myth of origins Mark imagined', claiming that by fusing and transforming elements from previously discrete Jesus-groups Mark rewrote 'the Christ myth as history' to condemn Judaism.[184] Initially locating Paul in a Hellenistic 'Christ cult', in his later work Mack dispensed with this cult and, focusing primarily on the 'traditions' in 1 Cor 11 and 15 posited a Pauline 'double disjunction'. Firstly, between Paul and *prior Jesus-groups*, arguing that Paul invented the 'myth' of a Christ who 'died for our sins' and was 'buried…raised…and appeared' (1 Cor 15:3ff.), introducing a new apocalyptic and cosmic significance to Jesus' death, to further his personal preoccupation with how to 'invite and enable Gentiles to become "Israel" without having strictly to become Jews', such that Paul's gospel was the product of his own 'intellectual effort invested in the interest of justifying a social experiment by means of a mythic fiction'.[185] Secondly, between Paul and *his addressees*, arguing that his Corinthian addressees were resettled non-Christians wishing to 'compare notes' with one 'talking about the spirit of a [man] at a distance from his tomb', and that in 1 Cor 11:23ff. Paul transformed an already invented tradition into a 'full-blown mythology of Jesus Christ as Lord' presiding over a memorial meal to coerce them into thinking that his *christological* framing of their meal markers was a locus of divine judgement. Far from reflecting a real ritual, much less an event that 'actually happened', this 'tradition' was another invention serving Paul's personal agenda.[186]

In that he sought to engage in myth theorising from a sociological perspective Mack's work might be deemed a step forward in critical interaction with myth in Pauline studies. However, there are clear

[180] Mack 2001, 91, 84.
[181] Ibid. 83; Mack 2008, 87.
[182] E.g., Mack 2001, 14-17.
[183] Mack 2008, 49; cf. 48-81; J.Z. Smith 1978.
[184] Mack 1988, 319, 310, 355-56; cf. 299, 376.
[185] Mack 2011, 59 (see 38-51, 59-62); 2001, 116.
[186] Mack 2011, 51-58, 63-65.

deficiencies in his attempt at this. Besides restricting himself to an avowedly narrow and rather idiosyncratic notion of myth, while noting that theorists have 'found it possible to set aside the truth-fiction problem by observing other features of myths', Mack's appeal to 'myth' ultimately amounts to what he himself relates as the 'popular definition and use of the term myth': 'stories or constructions upon social practices and ideas *that are not true*.'[187] A linear view of early Christianity is to be regarded 'as mythic—that is, as not "historical"'.[188] In theory he differentiated 'myths from other imaginative fictions insofar as myths relate directly to a *social* need'.[189] Yet he evidences a notable preoccupation with demonstrating that Christian 'myth' is 'fiction'. This is seen in his complete 'elimination of the religious mode of experience as a valid dimension of human life',[190] and in that his 'sociological' approach notwithstanding, Paul and other New Testament authors emerge as independent inventors of arbitrary fictions almost wholly beyond social influence. Mack was so concerned with finding 'intentional intellectual production' that one is left with a Paul who is 'disconnected, unique, insensible, largely incomprehensible in any but self-referential terms'. Having severed Paul from existing beliefs and his addressees he appears 'too idiosyncratic, and thus essentially decontextualized.'[191] That Mack's reading of Paul's 'Christ myth' is sociologically weak betrays that his overriding concern was *not* myth's sociality, but its *fictitiousness*. The reason for this is found in his recurrent insistence on the need for the modern world to reject Christianity.[192] 'Myth' was wielded not so much as an interpretative tool but as a weapon to discredit the 'acceptance of such myths': 'Mack is determined to expose and reject…the gospel.'[193] Given this agenda and, at base popular appeal to 'myth' as 'not true', Mack's engagement with Paul and myth ultimately advances minimally beyond the 'mythicists'.

1.5 Recent Attempts at a Paradigm Shift

There have, however, been some attempts at a more promising engagement with Paul and the concept of 'myth' in recent decades.[194]

1.5.1 Gerhard Sellin

In a 1988 essay Gerhard Sellin sought to explore some of the 'mythical features of Pauline theology'. Noting the more nuanced approaches to 'myth' in other disciplines, 'on the basis of the hermeneutic [philosophical] variant of the…myth-tradition', particularly Kurt Hübner's *Die Wahrheit des Mythos* (1985), Sellin identified its following features.[195] It is a *narrativer Referenzrahmen* or

[187] Mack 2008, 48. Cf. A.Y. Collins 1989a, 728.
[188] Mack 2011, 49.
[189] Brown 2016, 16.
[190] A.Y. Collins 1989a, 727.
[191] Arnal 2011, 77 n. 6, 81, 88. Cf. the modified, though still broadly 'Mackian', discussion in Stowers 2011.
[192] E.g., Mack 1988, 373, 375-76; 2001, 197; 2017, 100. He tied this to his fundamentalist upbringing (ibid. 1ff.).
[193] Walsh 2001, 115, 119.
[194] In terms of New Testament studies more broadly, beyond those discussed below cf. also, e.g., the nuanced considerations of myth in Caird 1980, 219ff.; Theissen 1999; Riches 2001; Litwa 2019, 209-22.
[195] Sellin 1988, 209-10.

Basiserzählung lacking 'a separation between "narrated time" and "narration time"', 'material and ideal…coincide', things 'spatially separate' can be 'connected' and '"times" can recur'. It relates to *heilige Archai* and involves *korporativ* and *typisch* thinking: the deeds of ancestors are the 'type' of which descendants are corporately the 'image'. It serves as a kind of *Sprechakt* 'in which the semantic content itself is realised pragmatically'.[196] Turning to Paul, Sellin noted how Paul's gospel is the *Christusgeschehen* (1 Cor 15:1ff.), and the very δύναμις θεοῦ (Rom 1:16). In this capacity it serves as a *Sprechakt* whereby 'semantic content and pragmatic realisation coincide': 'The preaching of the gospel has as its content the death and resurrection of Jesus, and at the same time makes the addressees dead and alive'. The *Christusgeschehen* for Paul can be seen as a *narrativer Basistext* serving as 'eine mythische ἀρχή'. As a 'mythical statement' the resurrection 'presupposes the identity of past *Urgeschehen* and present representation', this 'mythische Zusammenfallen' extending also to the future resurrection.[197] Moreover, Paul 'refers the sacramental to the holistic-somatic existence of Christians' as the 'body' of Christ, and such *korporativ Denken* also manifests in language of τύπος and μιμητής (Phil 3:17; 1 Cor 4:16; 11:1). Paul considers himself 'an objective demonstration of his message'. While he can frame this μιμεῖσθαι as an imperative, Sellin added, there is a peculiar interrelation of indicative and imperative in Paul 'which may be related to mythical ontology': 'The event related in the aorist tense is the *Urwirklichkeit*, and yet one is required to implement this reality again and again'. As with myth 'the actions of human beings are replicas of a type.' Another case of 'τύπος-Denken' is found in 1 Cor 10 where an historic event is 'mythified to a kind of primeval time' (indicating '*Mythos* and *Geschichte* are not mutually exclusive') and appeal is made to the 'Fathers' (10:1)—establishing a tribal connection 'intrinsic to mythical *Korporativdenkens*.' Moreover, that 'Christ was already there' among the wilderness generation (10:4) reflects 'the mythical principle of the identity of temporally separate events'. In a similar vein Sellin noted Paul's Adam-Christ typology: 'Adam's fall is the enduring ἀρχή for the sin and death of all people (Rom 5:12).' This 'mythical pattern of corporate thinking' is then applied to Christ the 'antitype', who 'overrides the doom of the old and establishes a new reality.'[198]

Although brief and tentative, Sellin's essay departs significantly from the superficial and polemical engagement with 'myth' that pervades Pauline studies. By engaging aspects of philosophical myth *theory*, 'myth' is approached not as something to reject as 'inadequate…or theologically objectional'[199] but as a potentially fruitful concept in interpreting Paul. Alas, Sellin's essay has largely been ignored. An exception to this is Richard Bell.

1.5.2 Richard H. Bell

In a 2002 essay on Rom 5:12-21, Bell suggested that 'if the mythical nature of the text is taken seriously' problems associated with it 'can to some extent be solved.'[200] Principally, he draws on

[196] Ibid. 210-14.
[197] Ibid. 217, 221.
[198] Ibid. 217-20.
[199] Ibid. 222.
[200] Bell 2002, 21.

Hübner's idea of the 'unity of subject and object' in myth, and Johannes Fischer's elaboration of this in terms of its merging two forms of knowing: *theoretische Erkenntnis* which 'localises the known in relation to the reality of the knower' and *praktische Erkenntnis* which 'localises the knower in relation to the reality of the known'.[201] This, Bell notes, is what we find in the case of Adam in Rom 5: 'the subject…participates in Adam's sin. He is localized in the reality of Adam (practical knowing). But at the same time Adam is localized in the subject's own situation (theoretical knowing). Therefore Adam's sin corresponds to the sin of many different people at different times. This is an example of identical repetition found in many myths.'[202] Where scholars have puzzled over the competing causality vis-à-vis sin here, by reading Paul's conception of Adam's sin as 'mythic' a certain cohesion is brought to the text.[203] Turning to Christ, however, Bell argues that 'myth' is 'not entirely the appropriate category for understanding the Christ event.' Christ 'does not belong to the category of the ἀρχαὶ' but is 'localized both in time…and in space.' There are 'dangers in using myth for the Christ event', for—leaning on Bultmann's formulation—myth 'mixes the human and divine', yet 'Christ became human precisely to distinguish between the human and the divine'. While the 'Adam-myth is…valid for *all* … union with Christ is gained through faith.' And 'whereas Adam's sin is repeated in the lives of sinners', 'Christ's…sacrificial death cannot be seen as repeated in the lives of Christians.'[204] But Bell continues: 'Myth is nevertheless a concept I use to understand the Christ event.' For it is received as a 'heilige Erzählung' having 'a determinative influence upon our existence.' And in 'the Christ-myth…Christians have participated in an event that occurred at least before they came to believe in Christ. Even though many will not come to faith until the last day, they will have participated in Christ's…death.'[205]

In a 2007 book Bell situates his view of myth in a 'quasi-Kantian-Schopenhauerian framework', which together with a view of the human soul as a 'non-temporal', 'noumenal entity' is proffered as a way of further gauging how 'we participate in…Adam and in Christ'.[206] While Kant was ambivalent about the relation of the phenomenal to the noumenal, Schopenhauer saw 'representations acting like a veil between' them and believed two ways of penetrating this veil were self-knowledge and art.[207] Bell 'suggest[s] that in myth we are also dealing with this immediate knowledge'. While usually 'figures of myths are not themselves in the noumenal realm', he proposes that 'in "Christian revelation"…they have a reality themselves in the noumenal.' Combining this with a noumenal human soul, he argues that for 'myths in Christian theology' the 'system of practical and theoretical knowing…can be retained so long as one realizes that they…also have some sort of correspondence on the level of the "soul"':[208]

> as Paul's "subject of knowing" participates in the Adam of the narrative…, so on the noumenal level, his soul participates in the noumenal Adam.…In encountering the myth of Adam we come to

[201] Hübner 1985; Fischer 1989, 25; cf. Fischer 1988, 308.
[202] Bell 2002, 24.
[203] Ibid. 28-29. Cf. Sellin 1988, 213.
[204] Bell 2002, 30-35.
[205] Ibid. 34-35.
[206] Bell 2007, 207, 215, 227.
[207] Ibid. 137-38, 152ff.
[208] Ibid. 162, 220-21, 252-53.

> *understand* that we are in Adam. … [Conversely, on] the level of the "soul", Adam's sinful being is projected into our being….This…can then manifest itself on the level of the subject…[209]

'Our relationship with Christ can be analysed in a similar way.' However, 'participation in Adam is "mythical" in a sense that our participation in Christ is not.' In 'the myth of Christ' we have something 'not fully mythical in that the pattern of identical repetition breaks down'.[210] Contra Rom 6:3-4 or 1 Cor 10:16 entailing a present actualising of the Christ event these entail our noumenal soul's union with Christ in AD 30. 'The ritual of Christ's atoning death is the fundamental ritual for Paul'; baptism and eucharist are secondary derivatives. It is 'because of the "ritual" of Christ's death' that Paul's view of Christ is 'not fully mythical', for while myth is 'often defined as having an integral relationship to ritual' it is 'a repeated ritual', but 'in the case of Christ, we have a ritual done once for all'.[211]

Bell's work stands out for its nuanced engagement with myth. That said, it is not beyond criticism. The weight he later places on a noumenal 'soul' is exegetically questionable. Furthermore, his subsequent appeal to Kant and Schopenhauer is not strictly dealing with myth theorists, and his idea of the collapsing of subject and object at the level of the noumenal 'soul' in the myths of Adam and Christ is developed for these particular myths. Bell ultimately constructs his own avowedly idiosyncratic view of myth that applies *only* to 'Christian myth': 'this analysis is only valid for this unique myth of Christ (and the associated myth of Adam). Such analysis is crucial for the truth claim of these myths. … Why this is restricted to *Christian* myths is related to the truth claims of these myths.'[212] This idiosyncrasy reflects a Christian apologetic undercurrent to Bell's engagement,[213] which may be linked to a final critical observation. Having focused concisely on how Paul's 'myth of Adam' *is* mythic, and how this actually aids interpretation, Bell is notably ambivalent when it comes to Paul's 'myth of Christ', placing more emphasis on how this is *not* (fully) 'mythical' than on the ways it *is*. That this preoccupation is apologetic is seen in Bell's repeated emphasis on the centrality of 'the most concrete of all realities, the reality of Christ',[214] the power of which 'depends on the fact that it relates to *God's* word and not on any general theory of the power of myth': 'There may be some sense in which…"pagan myths" are "true" for, as I argued…, they are a means of approaching the noumenon. But they do not have the fundamental status of the redemption through Christ.'[215] This ambivalence at times results in an air of unintelligibility similar to Bultmann: 'Christian revelation comes to us primarily *via myth* although it is not contained *in it*'.[216] But, like Sellin, Bell's primary achievement, despite its shortcomings, is to see myth as exegetically illuminating on the basis of a nuanced understanding of the concept. Like Sellin, too, his engagement with Paul and 'myth' has been largely ignored.

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[209] Ibid. 221, 253.
[210] Ibid. 257, 214, 262.
[211] Ibid. 263-80 (263-64).
[212] Ibid. 251 n. 92, 253 n. 95.
[213] Cf. Bell 2002, 36; 2007, 338-40.
[214] Bell 2002, 36; 2007, 284.
[215] Ibid. 180, 351; cf. 284-85.
[216] Ibid. 220; cf. 4.

1.5.3 David G. Horrell

Given Sellin's identification of myth as a *narrativer Referenzrahmen* one area of scholarship to which one might turn in search of informed engagement with Paul and 'myth' is among those who have, following Hays' *The Narrative Substructure of Galatians 3:1-4:11* (1983) observed that certain 'narrative elements' appear to undergird Paul's theological and ethical deliberation.[217] Most of this scholarship, however, has not engaged with 'myth'—following the precedent of Hays who, not wishing to find himself 'wading into the quagmire of "myth" studies', argued: 'it is most doubtful whether…"myth" is a helpful tool for understanding Paul's thinking.'[218] One exception is David Horrell.

Concluding in a 2002 essay that Paul's letters are rooted in a 'fundamental *story*',[219] in *Solidarity and Difference* (2005) Horrell—unaware of Sellin or Bell—sought 'to make the claim more precise and to suggest that Paul's letters are shaped and informed by a "myth".' Drawing on Indologist Wendy Doniger he suggests the need for a 'positive retrieval' of 'myth' both from its 'popular connotation…as essentially a lie' and 'the shadow cast by Bultmann's hermeneutical programme'. For in 'the study of religion…myth has been more positively used to refer to a means by which "truth" is conveyed':

> Wendy Doniger describes myths as "one discrete subdivision of the broader category of "story". Similarly, Gerd Theissen…states that "*[m]yths* explain in narrative form what fundamentally determines the world and life". Doniger's description continues: "a myth is above all a story that is *believed*, believed to be true…a story that is sacred to and shared by a group of people who find their most important meanings in it…"[220]

Horrell then focuses on how such a view of 'myth', in conjunction with Tajfellian social identity theory, is apposite for construing Paul's ethics, for a 'narrative myth…which undergirds the identity of a particular social group, both establishes a view of the way the world is and shapes the moral values and practices of its adherents.'[221] At 'the centre of Paul's myth', Horrell suggests, is the 'coming, dying and rising of Christ, sent by God as a human being to die on the cross for the sins of humanity'; preceded by 'God's creation and the "fall" of Adam', the promise to Abraham and giving of the Law. The 'various elements of this story provide the theological basis and motivational framework for Pauline ethics', held to consist of two 'metanorms'.[222] The first is 'corporate solidarity', reinforced by baptism and the Lord's Supper which derive their 'significance from the story of Christ's self-giving death', and the designation of community members as brothers 'grounded, once again, in the Christian myth' and having 'moral implications'.[223] The second is 'other-regard', 'a christologically patterned imperative for other-regard which should…determine ethical practice'.[224] Enmeshed 'within a narrative myth that shapes the ethos of particular communities', 'Paul's ethics exemplify the notion that moral virtue is

[217] Hays 2002 [1983], 6.
[218] Ibid. 15, 17.
[219] Horrell 2002, 168.
[220] Horrell 2005, 85-86; citing Doniger 1998, 1-3; Theissen 1999, 3.
[221] Horrell 2005, 93.
[222] Ibid. 87-88.
[223] Ibid. 99, 106-7, 113-14.
[224] Ibid. 181 n. 53; see 166-245.

formed and motivated through participation in a story-formed community'.[225] In demonstrating this, Horrell's concern is how this may inform 'contemporary approaches to (political) ethics'—concluding: 'We might therefore take from our reading of Paul's ethics the idea that human solidarity requires some shared myth…that narrates and forms that solidarity, and which may at the same time provide strong grounds for the treasuring of difference'.[226]

Horrell's discussion of Paul and 'myth' stands out for its theoretical and exegetical nuance. A theoretically informed notion of 'myth' is proffered as something capable of illuminating Paul's ethics. At the same time, Horrell's focus is rather restricted in theoretical engagement and application—briefly engaging only with a single myth theorist outside of biblical studies and with a view to the specific issue of Paul's ethics in relation to modern ethical theories. That Horrell appears unaware of the contributions of Sellin and Bell, moreover, reveals the extent to which critical engagement with myth theory in Pauline scholarship persists in failing to gain traction, a reality reinforced by reviewers of Horrell's book. While in a forward to its second edition, N. T. Wright appears tentatively to entertain its appeal to 'myth'—calling for 'a deeper consideration of the ways in which Paul's underlying theology is…following through…a larger Jewish narrative ('myth'?)'[227]—most reviewers have completely ignored this.[228] One of the only reviewers to engage Horrell's appeal to 'myth' at all is Morna Hooker, who, noting that Christ's self-giving is 'the basis for our own because it *creates* the community of those who belong to one another in him', asks if it is really 'possible for Paul's "model" for solidarity and difference to be detached from the Christian "myth"'.[229]

1.5.4 Luke Timothy Johnson

Seeking to 'celebrate' rather than 'deprecate' myth—though unaware of Sellin, Bell or Horrell in this regard—Johnson contributed an essay in *Myth and Scripture* (2014) on 'the mythic character of…2 Cor 5:19': ὡς ὅτι θεὸς ἦν ἐν Χριστῷ κόσμον καταλλάσσων ἑαυτῷ, μὴ λογιζόμενος αὐτοῖς τὰ παραπτώματα αὐτῶν καὶ θέμενος ἐν ἡμῖν τὸν λόγον τῆς καταλλαγῆς. Referencing a few 'sample discussions' on 'myth' he defines it 'as first-order statements, often but not necessarily in the form of narrative, that place human and divine persons in situations of mutual agency. Because human agency is involved, such statements can appear to be talking about the empirical world….But because divine agency is also…involved, such statements are also impervious to empirical verification.' Noting that 2 Cor is 'without question…the hardest of Paul's letters to read and understand', a major difficulty is 'such interconnections of divine and human persons and power'. Turning to 2 Cor 5:19, Johnson notes that ὡς ὅτι suggests an appeal to 'something written or at least traditional', and that while the prior verse speaks of God reconciling 'us' to himself διά Χριστοῦ, 5:19 speaks of his reconciling 'a world' to

[225] Ibid. 98, 284.
[226] Ibid. 273, 289-90.
[227] "Forward" to Horrell 2015, xxi-xiv.
[228] Hadsell 2006; Wilson 2006; Ehrensperger 2006; Asano 2006; Samra 2006; Harvey 2007; Sandnes 2008.
[229] Hooker 2007.

himself more ambiguously ἐν Χριστῷ. Whether construed locatively or instrumentally, this 'does not fundamentally alter the mythic character of both statements':

> God is still the subject of a narrative fragment concerning the past, and *kosmos* is an object of such generality as to be intrinsically nonverifiable. … "God through Christ was reconciling the world to himself," is just as mythic as "God was in Christ as he reconciled the world to himself"; it is a narrative fragment that speaks of God's agency within the realm of human activity.[230]

In the immediate context some statements refer 'to human actions and dispositions'. Some place 'the empirical "we" in realms that are beyond the empirical'. Some are 'explicitly cognitive in character': 'we know that we have been given a heavenly dwelling (5:1) … that "one died for all…" (5:14)'. Others concern nonempirical entities: the 'judgement seat before which we stand is Christ's (5:10); Christ's love constrains us (5:14)'. Finally, there are 'statements in which agency is ascribed directly to *ho theos*'.[231] Given this 'it is impossible to avoid the conclusion that Paul's language about himself and his readers, God and Christ, in 2 Cor 5 is "mythic"'.[232] Though mythic 'in the way I have defined', Johnson adds, it is unlike that 'we associate with, say, *Enuma Elish* or Gen 6:1-4'. Paul speaks of 'a man who died violently within the lifetime of Paul and his readers … express[es] convictions concerning what is happening in the empirical realm…grounded in a historical reality but…not completely defined by it.' He offers an analogy of a widow whose husband rushed the pilot's compartment on 9/11 telling her son:

> "Your daddy was a great patriot. He died for his country." There is…historical basis for her declaration…[but it] does not rely…on the determination of such things. It is instead based on her experience of and knowledge of her deceased husband…[and] places his action within the symbolic framework…in which "patriotism"…is most fully expressed by "dying for one's country."

Johnson then notes how the experience of God's resurrection Spirit in Christ 'grounds the judgment that Paul shares with his readers concerning Jesus' shameful death by crucifixion'. 'My analysis has not made Paul's language any easier to understand', Johnson closes with: 'I hope that it has at least pointed to the importance of the resurrection experience…[in] Paul's mythic language.'[233]

Albeit attempting critically to engage the concept of 'myth', Johnson's essay is notable for its sheer brevity and limited scope—paling in comparison even to the somewhat limited purviews of Sellin, Bell and Horrell—and for failing to engage with these previous engagements. That this comparatively recent essay is, moreover, the only essay on Paul of the eighteen in SBL's *Myth and Scripture* indicates the general lack of critical, constructive engagement with 'myth' and myth theory in Pauline studies.

Conclusions

The main phases of engagement with 'myth' in Pauline studies have been almost farcical in their level of ideological determination, confusion and superficiality, failing to rise above the indeterminate

[230] L.T. Johnson 2014, 201-4.
[231] Ibid. 205-6.
[232] Ibid. 202.
[233] Ibid. 206-9.

popular equation of myth with falsehood. In the first *Christusmythe* debate those invoking 'myth' in Paul proffered it as a vaguely conceived synonym for 'unhistorical' as part of their efforts to reject the historicity of Jesus and therewith the validity of Christianity. Those rejecting the applicability of the concept to Paul in this debate denounced it as synonymous with 'unhistorical' as part of their efforts to uphold the historicity of Jesus and therewith the validity of Christianity. In the *religionsgeschichtliche* phase of engagement those invoking 'myth' in interpreting Paul at base equated it with 'pagan fiction', and presented it as the intellectual locus of, yet something fundamentally alien to, Paul's historical gospel in accordance with their competing ideological commitments. Those rejecting the applicability of the concept to Paul denounced it as synonymous with 'pagan fiction' in their efforts to re-Semitise and historicise Pauline-Gentile Christianity. In the *Entmythologisierung* controversy Bultmann sought to 'de-mythologise' Paul's thought without being clear about, or even interested in, what 'myth' actually was—on one hand equating it with proto-/pre-scientific error, on the other something uninterested in the objective world—as part of his anti-Nazi effort to 'de-objectify' or 'de-constantinize' the Christian faith. He added further confusion to his programme when he ultimately rejected the applicability of myth to the historical Christian kerygma. Unwittingly evidencing an affinity with their opponent, those rejecting the applicability of the concept to Paul denounced it as synonymous with 'unhistorical' as part of their efforts to defend the uniqueness and truth of Christianity. With the contemporary resurgence of the 'Christ-myth' debate we have come full circle—'myth', vaguely equated on all sides with 'unhistorical', being invoked or rejected in the study of Paul with a view simply to deny or affirm the historicity of Jesus and therewith the validity of Christianity. The overarching factor in all of this is a total absence of informed critical engagement with the concept of 'myth'.

There have been some exceptions to this tale of wanton disregard of a nuanced understanding of myth. In 1977 Dunn attempted, albeit unsuccessfully, to reorient the discussion by indicating some of the ways in which myth has been approached in other disciplines. Mack attempted to engage the concept sociologically, though alas his appeal to 'myth' in Paul is reductive, problematic, and advances minimally beyond its popular polemical equation with 'falsehood' that has characterised the 'Christ-myth' debates. Amid the ongoing 'Christ-myth' debate attention has been drawn to a few anomalous voices that have sought to engage more nuanced approaches to myth apropos Paul. While promising, these have been notably limited in theoretical engagement and application, at times problematic and idiosyncratic, and appear as distinctive, even eccentric, studies, which fail to reference each other and have been generally ignored in Pauline studies. All of this makes clear why a more expansive and ambitious engagement with the concept of myth in Pauline research is necessary and urgent.

CHAPTER 2.

RETHINKING "MYTH": MODELLING CURRENTS IN CROSSDISCIPLINARY MYTH THEORY

> *The subject of myth is a vast and complex one. To do it justice one would require an all-embracing competence in such diverse fields as early Greek literature and drama, the comparative study of religion, anthropology, psychoanalysis and the philosophy of history. … [The question] of myth in the NT…should not be tackled on too narrow a front, but rather should be set in the wider context of the investigation and treatment of myth in other disciplines.*
>
> —James D. G. Dunn[1]

'Myth', Doniger helpfully notes, is one of a small group of words that have, 'usually for reasons of historical conflation', come to be used of both one thing and its opposite.[2] In 'popular parlance…regard as synonymous with falsehood … a lie whose aim is to deceive', it is 'the sacred word, the archetypal truth, of the phenomenologist of religion', a 'traditional story commanding special respect'.[3] While the former use reflects popular idiom, the latter is grounded in a vast crossdisciplinary history of theoretical analysis. In this chapter I will unpack this latter scholarly and non-pejorative usage.

The colloquial usage means that myth is a 'tainted' term. There is no purity in language,[4] and the way to avoid misuse is through 'diligence, not searching for some term that is pure or untainted.'[5] Academic endeavour depends on constructing concepts, and insofar as 'rashly constructed neologisms quickly turn into insufferable oddities', it is safer to explore the possibilities embedded in existing concepts lying 'closest to the projected realm and to give them an extended meaning', being cautious of 'meanings which are smuggled even subconsciously into the classification…in colloquial speech.'[6] This has rarely been the modus operandi in Pauline studies as regards 'myth', and this problem is not confined to Pauline studies: 'in spite of a rich intellectual background in the study of myth, there is vast misunderstanding and ignorance of what myths are, and what people do with them.'[7] Before launching into the insights of myth theory, I offer some context for the development of the scholarly study of myth.

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[1] Dunn 1977, 285.

[2] Doniger 1998, 79.

[3] Cho 2019, 3; Wyatt 2005, 175; Von Hendy 2002, 278.

[4] This is especially true of terms used in the study of religion. Think of any number of key terms as tradition, sect, cult, pagan, Pharisee, mysticism, ritual, faith, evangelism, dogma; indeed *religion* itself—all susceptible to colloquial pejorative use, yet having non-pejorative, useful, nuanced imports in reflective and academic discourse.

[5] D.B. Martin 2017, 85.

[6] Kolakowski 1989, x.

[7] Thompson and Schrempp 2020, 3.

Introduction

A. Methodology: A Modern Analytical Concept. First it must be clarified that 'myth' as an object of scholarly inquiry is chiefly a *modern analytical construct*, functioning in the way that all ethnographic-folkloristic taxonomies are generally used within the modern academy: as 'analytical concepts which can be meaningfully applied cross-culturally', 'even when other systems of "native categories" are locally recognized'.[8] Accordingly, rather than asking whether Paul engaged in something he or others would have labelled 'myth', in what follows I shall be drawing on the concept as it has been theorised in other disciplines as a *modern heuristic tool* for the interpretation of Paul.[9] The approach thus accords with the growing engagement of biblical scholars in social-scientific interpretation, drawing on modern perspectives from social science and related fields to illuminate biblical texts,[10] with its attendant use of models as heuristic tools, 'loosely defined as a simplification and accentuation of certain empirical phenomena structured in such a way as to serve as an instrument for organizing and interpreting a complex body of data.'[11] As not themselves theories but 'essentially simplifications, exemplifications, and systematizations of data used for comparative processes',[12] heuristic models 'employ one or more theories' as the 'stepping stones' on which the elements of the model are built to provide a 'generalized…framework that can be brought to bear on some pertinent data.'[13] Proceeding in this manner, the various myth theorists and disciplinary vantage points engaged will serve to establish and 'flesh out' a given mythic property which is, in its heuristic utility, not tied to any one theorist's methodology or mode of analysis. The modus operandi will be to tease out and explore (by a sort of principle of multiple attestation) some of the main overarching currents in modern myth theory as these recur across significant analysts of the concept, drawn from various cross-disciplinary compendiums on myth, and which can be applied in an illuminating way to Paul's letters.[14]

B. Prehistory. The preceding caveat notwithstanding, the modern world 'inherits the word and, in some sense therefore, the concept' of myth from ancient Greece.[15] Denoting in its earliest attestations 'divinely inspired…utterances',[16] throughout antiquity μῦθος came to name Graeco-Roman stories

[8] Bascom 1965, 5. Cf. Thompson and Schrempp 2020, 26. On the legitimacy and inescapabilty of a comparative, generalising, cross-cultural purview when it comes to theorising myth, see R.A. Segal 2021, 2-9.

[9] Use of the Greek term μῦθος in 1-2 Tim, Tit and 2 Pet is thus irrelevant to the present study.

[10] For 'we cannot open a single biblical text without encountering issues relating to how human beings live together in social groups. The Bible is not a work of abstract or abstruse theologizing, for the theological issues found within it have a social embodiment' (Esler 2007, 337).

[11] Ibid. 338-39.

[12] Esler 2006, 3.

[13] Carney 1975, 8. Nb. Esler 2006, 3-4: 'It is senseless, therefore, to ask if models are "true" or "false"… Rather, one must judge a model by whether or not it is helpful. … Models are not used for deduction or induction, but in what [the philosopher C.S. Peirce] has called "abduction"—the process of shuttling back and forth between model and data'.

[14] As opposed to engaging at length in, say, questions of the presence, extent, mediums and vitality of myth in the modern West. In other words, the model will not exhaust every possible avenue in the study of myth, but map some of the most basic elements and major points of convergence arising from the crossdisciplinary theoretical literature on myth with a view to a particular hermeneutical end: the interpretation of Paul's letters.

[15] Von Hendy 2002, 1. Cf. Thompson and Schrempp 2020, 41.

[16] Leonard and McClure 2004, 2. Cf., e.g., Hes. *Theog.* 24; Hom. *Il.* 7.43-53.

about the divine (ὁ θεός), gods (θεοί) and heroes (ἥρωες).[17] Nuanced discussions of μῦθος are found in various ancient Greek philosophers, but a strain of ambivalence emerged via Plato, the rise of allegorical interpretation, and non-Grecians such as Philo. Whereas pre-Platonic philosophers reserved μῦθος for stories that disclosed 'sacred truths' of 'transcendent importance', were 'reverent in their attitude, and socially beneficial', Plato denounced poets' μῦθοι as deceptive.[18] Yet he regularly cited μῦθοι in support of arguments, labelled Socrates' and others' most decisive discourses μῦθος and was himself thoroughly mythopoeic.[19] The nub of this ambivalence was a polemic against Greek poets, known for their (for Plato mis-)use of μῦθοι,[20] not against μῦθος *per se*, to which otherwise Plato ascribed a profound epistemological value.[21] While that of early Stoics concerned the gods themselves apropos cosmic forces, 'allegoresis' increasingly sought to reduce μῦθοι to other purely conceptual or earthly content. This intersects with the final muddying of the waters via non-Grecians such as Philo, whose ambivalence about μῦθος was due mainly to its ties with *Greek* stories of the divine. Taken at face value Greek μῦθοι were incompatible with Philo's Jewish sensibilities, whence they were considered ψεύδη.[22] Yet reduced to allegorical meanings they could be reconcilable with Scripture and 'as such tell the truth'.[23] The above is symptomatic of an issue that leads many to limit the relevance of Greek μῦθος itself to modern 'myth' *analysis*: scarcely 'a single Greek myth has come down to us in its cult context.' [24] An exception was Plutarch who, rejecting those that 'forcibly distort μῦθοι through…ἀλληγορίαι', took as his reference point in discussing μῦθος and the divine the realm of lived religion.[25] Also atypical was his cross-cultural purview, considering Graeco-Roman μῦθοι with Zoroastrian and Ἰουδαϊκός μῦθος,[26] and analysing Egyptian stories and associated customs concerning the divine, also termed μῦθος and μυθολογία.[27] Such traditions, though differing from people to people, Plutarch intimated, may be considered a single type of discourse (εἷς λόγος) making 'use of sacred symbols (συμβόλοις καθιερωμένοις)…in guiding thought to things divine', its ultimate end being 'participation in the divine' (μετουσία τοῦ θεοῦ).[28] Such a cross-cultural view of μῦθος failed to gain traction. And while non-reductive discussions of Greek μῦθος appear in Plotinus and Porphyry,[29] by the rise of imperial Christianity allegorising dominated the intelligentsia.[30] Though Greek was largely lost to the West with the decline of Rome, during the Middle Ages Greek *mythoi*, now subsumed under

[17] Cf. Plat. *Rep.* 379a, 392a; Diod. *Bib.* 4.25.3ff.; Plut. *Is.* 20.358f-359a; Phot. *Bibl.* 70, 186; Mbuvi 2015, 92.
[18] B. Lincoln 1999, 28-32, 38-39.
[19] Cf. P. Murray 1999, 259; Clay 2007, 211-12.
[20] Cf. *Phaedo* 61b.
[21] Edelstein 1949, 465; Doniger 1998, 3; Brisson 2004, 26; Clay 2007, 212-13.
[22] Cf. Phil. *Post.* 52; *Spec.* 1.28; 2.164-65; *Aet.* 56; *Det.* 124-25.
[23] Roskam 2019a, 30-32 (32). In a few instances, Philo links Jewish stories with the μυθώδης (*Conf.* 9, 14-15; *Agr.* 96-97; *Leg.* 2.19-24). In these instances it is with a view to applying the Greek allegorical method to them.
[24] Eliade 1963, 158. Cf. G.S. Kirk 1970, 1, 8-9; Doniger 1988, 25-26; Thompson and Schrempp 2020, 41.
[25] Plut. *Poet.* 4.19e. Cf. Hirsch-Luipold 2014, 163-65.
[26] Plut. *Is.* 31.363d; cf. 46.369d-47.370c; *QConv.* 4.6.1.671c-2.672c.
[27] Plut. *Is.* 11.355b, 20.359a.
[28] Plut. *Is.*. 67.377f-378a, 78.382f; cf. 20.358f-359a.
[29] Cf. Brisson 2004, 74-86.
[30] Cf. Lamberton 1989, 140-232; Brisson 2004, 90-106.

the Latin *fābulae*, and the practice of allegorising them survived. However, medieval *fābula* lacked the dignity and theoretical underpinnings of μῦθος, considered at best 'moral teaching…under a bait of fantasy'.[31] Medieval allegorising of such *fābulae*—retained as secondary texts for education which required substantial reformulating for the Christian world—became an overtly contrived intellectual exercise: that by which a contemporary reader 'encodes a formulaic, one-to-one correspondence between each character and some concept, abstract principle, or element of the physical world'.[32]

C. From Fable to Myth. While mythologist, mythology, mythographer and mythologise arose early in the vernaculars, cognates of 'myth' did not, for until the eighteenth century μῦθ- terms denoted the long-established activity of *allegorising* Graeco-Roman texts, while the vernaculars initially resorted to Latin *fābula*, whence arose analogues of 'fable', to name the traditions themselves.[33] Precipitated by an increasingly felt arbitrariness to the practice, by a shift from degenerative to developmental views of history, and by newly documented traditions of some preliterate 'savages' in Africa and the New World resembling Greek 'fable',[34] the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries saw a widescale rejection of allegoresis. In this 'Enlightenment' climate, 'fable' came to be deemed not only un-allegorical, but un-*enlightened*. The *philosophes* derided both 'fable' and 'religion' as but the product of *pauvres sauvages* lacking the 'power of reason': 'Let us not seek for anything in fables other than the history of the errors of the human mind.'[35] The eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, however, would see explosions in knowledge of comparable narrative traditions across all history and cultures.[36] With this ever-amassing wealth of data rendering tenuous the dismissal of 'fables' as meaningless, the seriousness of such phenomena taken on their own terms became increasingly accepted as scholars began genuinely seeking to understand the rôle of such materials in their cultural settings. With fable tied to 'the kind of foolish, idle, and often scabrous tale' that demanded face-saving by allegorists, analogues of 'myth' arose, a linguistic displacement indicative of a felt need to 'discriminate something fresh in experience; new "myth" is not a mere synonym for old "fable"':[37] 'The new name implied a new understanding of the material as an object of serious study.'[38] This was set in motion by Italian philosopher Giambattista Vico's *La Scienza Nuova* (1725; 3rd ed. 1744) which, contending that 'no true human science is possible or worthy unless it can account for why human society necessarily involved' this,[39] and assigning to 'fable' an important epistemological function, aligned a nuance conception of it as a form of collective 'poetic truth' that was 'metaphysical truth' with the Greek term *mythos*.[40] The Chevalier Andrew Ramsay (1686-1743) introduced a distinction between mythology and fable, 'the latter being only idle invention, while the former conveys serious and important concepts having to do with sacred

[31] Von Hendy 2002, 2.
[32] Struck 2004, 3 n. 1. Cf. Brisson 2004, 114-36 (esp. 134).
[33] Von Hendy 2002, 2.
[34] Cf. Feldman and Richardson 1972, 41-49.
[35] Fontenelle 1932 [1724], 24, 39. Cf. Voltaire 1765, 32; Feldman and Richardson 1972, 19-40.
[36] See Feldman and Richardson 1972, 165-66, 199-214, 267-75, 297; Von Hendy 2002, 16-17.
[37] Von Hendy 2002, 2.
[38] E. Cook 2018, 117.
[39] Feldman and Richardson 1972, 51.
[40] Vico 1948 [1744], §§205, 401, 808, 814.

subjects';[41] seconded by classicist Thomas Blackwell (1701-1757).[42] The coining of 'myth' then came with classical philologist C. G. Heyne (1729-1812) who, adopting into the German language the Neo-Latin *Mythus*, 'meant his new noun *mythus* to stand in contrast to the Latin word *fabula*', with its longstanding 'element of both absurdity and falsehood that he wished to avoid'.[43] With Heyne's nascent studies heralding the linguistic shift, the definitive theoretical shift, setting the 'foundations for much of the research on myth in the modern era'[44] came with philosopher, theologian, and forerunner of cultural anthropology and hermeneutics Johann Gottfried Herder (1744-1803). Immersed more than any predecessor in the sociohistorical contexts of myriad cultural traditions, *myth* emerged for Herder as an inherently religious phenomenon,[45] present across all cultures, which—grounded in a quasi-empiricist epistemology and philosophy of Being—was 'the natural way of humans and cultures to create themselves a human world',[46] part of 'the theoretical and practical functioning of a whole society.'[47] Making 'distinct and cohesive what had been half formulated or only partially implied' in early thinkers, Herder was the 'first to reshape these possibilities into a theory forceful enough to provide a decisive challenge to the dominant *philosophe* mythologizing.'[48] Herder's scholarship ushered in the demise of the Enlightenment and rise of the Romantic era of European intellectual thought (c. 1800-1850) with which, opposed to reductive Enlightenment rationalism and aided by archaeological and ethnographic advances, the study of 'myth' became increasingly sophisticated and central to the study of humanity. Headed by such philosophers, pioneering Indologists, ethnologists, and folklorists as the Schlegel brothers, Creuzer, Schelling, K. O. Müller, Thomas Keightley and the Grimm brothers, this period saw wide acceptance of Herder's view that myth was no archaic anomaly, but something constitutive of human culture and identity. It saw bourgeoning interest in the emerging concept of the 'unconscious' apropos myth. It saw extensive interest in the semiotics of myth. Finally, myth's connection with religion was settled.[49] Theorists began articulating 'myth' as a God-oriented 'heilige Sage' tied 'by sacred tradition with religious, cultural belief',[50] comprised of potent 'religious Symbols…as men stood in this stage of culture or the other, and…bod[ied] forth the Godlike';[51] that which buttressed a culture's 'religious consciousness',[52] encapsulating 'persuasions about humanity, nature, and God as the objects of a sacred faith'.[53] As the early-nineteenth century progressed, 'myth' as constructively articulated by these early theorists became increasingly reified and normative: 'The

[41] Feldman and Richardson 1972, 63.
[42] Cf. Blackwell 1735, 142-43, 314-15; 1748, 70.
[43] Johnston 2018, 5-6. Cf. Heyne 1783, 914.
[44] Thompson and Schrempp 2020, 47.
[45] Feldman and Richardson 1972, 227; E. Cook 2018, 120-21.
[46] Steinby 2009, 60.
[47] Gaier 2003, 304.
[48] Feldman and Richardson 1972, 224.
[49] Cf. Grimm 1844, xvi: 'den Kern aller Mythologie bilden die Gottheiten'.
[50] Schlegel 1809-1811, 1:120, 2.1:131; cf. 1:119-20, 2.1:135.
[51] Carlyle 1838, 232.
[52] Dupré 2007, 3.
[53] Creuzer 1810, 105. Cf. K.O. Müller 1825, 256-57; Keightley 1838, 1-2.

introduction of a truly philosophic spirit into the study of mythology', hailed George Eliot, 'is a great step in advance of the superficial…ridicule adopted by many authors of the eighteenth century'.[54]

D. A Brief Revival of Rationalism. The latter part of the nineteenth century, however, saw a brief 'revival of rationalism, a second Enlightenment that…gave myth back to the not very highly esteemed "savage mind"',[55] precipitated by such figures as Max Müller, E. B. Tylor and James Frazer. Approaches during this period have been roundly denounced. They are, however, informative as to the subsequent emergence of the popular use of 'myth'. The German-born philologist Max Müller (1823-1900) traced all languages to a hypothetical 'Aryan' language 'spoken in Asia…by a small family living under one and the same roof', incapable of abstraction and preoccupied almost exclusively with poetically signifying 'sunrise' and 'sunset', and claimed that all mythologies arose as clumsy attempts to explain these old solar terms, retained yet no longer understood, and so misrepresented as gods. Ergo, myth was a 'disease of language'.[56] Though gaining currency in popular Victorian thought, Müller and his followers were quickly relegated to a discredited chapter in the history of myth theory. Following Müller, Victorian anthropologists E. B. Tylor (1832-1917) and James Frazer (1854-1941) claimed that 'myth' and 'religion' (used interchangeably) were 'limited science based on ignorance and misapprehension',[57] constitutive of an earlier stage of human evolution: 'In short, religion…is displaced by science.'[58] 'Humans have myth…until they discover science.'[59] Insofar as myths persisted among 'savages' they represented an earlier stage of human evolution: the unabashed premise being that contemporary 'primitive' cultures comprised a lower form of *Homo sapiens* than found in Western culture.[60] The agenda behind such postures, hailing from the hub of the colonial empire, need scarcely be spelt out. While Frazer's *Golden Bough* had a strong cultural impact, by the twentieth century Tylor and Frazer were spurned on numerous counts: their 'armchair anthropology'; inconsistency on what 'myth' actually was; and fundamental failure to explain the widespread presence of religion *alongside* science in modernity.[61] A final group from this period, comprising Ricoeur's 'masters of suspicion'—Marx, Nietzsche and Freud—scarcely concerned themselves with theorising myth, but their occasional remarks about 'myth' arguably, alongside the likes of Müller, Tylor and Frazer, contributed to the rise of the popular equation of myth and 'falsehood'. Marx dismissed 'all thinking prior to his own' as 'ideology',[62] meaning in at least one strand of his usage something like 'false (bourgeois) conceptions of social reality'; and occasionally allied religious 'myths' with ideology as part of his insistence that

[54] Eliot 1851, 359.
[55] Feldman and Richardson 1972, 301.
[56] Ibid. 481.
[57] Doty 2000, 93.
[58] Frazer 1922 [1890], 712.
[59] R.A. Segal 1999, 10. Cf. ibid. 17.
[60] Cf., e.g., Tylor 1871, 1:257; Frazer 1910, 4:14.
[61] Cf. R.A. Segal 1999, 153 n. 6; 2015, 22; Ackerman 2002, 53-54; Von Hendy 2002, 94. Note that subsequent scholarship would see increasing interest in the relational affinities and complementarity of myth and (modern) science, with even the hard-nosed philosopher of science Karl Popper being prepared to root science *in* myth (Popper 1974, 127; noted in R.A. Segal 2021, 158).
[62] Drucker 1972, 157. Cf. Feldman and Richardson 1972, 489.

the social revolution needed to destroy all past 'superstructures'.[63] Initially viewing 'myth' as an 'expression of true notions and as the emblem of a healthy humankind',[64] Nietzsche later deemed both myth and truth 'socially constructed illusion'.[65] Finally, with his desire to locate almost all psychosocial phenomena in his neurotic 'Oedipal complex', Freud opined in an isolated yet oft-related remark: it seems 'probable that myths…are distorted vestiges of the [Oedipal] wish-phantasies of whole nations'.[66] With Nietzsche and Freud bolstering Marxism's conflation of myth and deceptive ideology, it is telling that according to the OED use of 'myth' in the popular sense of 'lie' arose only toward the beginning of the twentieth century: 'at just about the same time as the Marxian concept of "ideology" comes in for general recognition'.[67] If such merging of 'myth' with deceptive ideology may have left a mark on popular parlance, subsequent scholarship on myth and ideology have remained largely separate entities. And those who have critically engaged with both have generally concluded that they are not to be equated.[68]

E. The Reclaiming and Dispersion of Myth. Following this brief decline in scholarly discussion of 'myth', the early-twentieth century saw its widescale reclaiming and dispersion as an object of serious inquiry across the modern academy, whose elaborations continue to prove influential to the present day. Among social anthropologists, folklorists and ethnographers, the 'decades of sedentary speculation based upon the likes of Frazer'[69] yielded to a stream of detailed analyses of 'myth' based on first-hand participatory fieldwork across cultures—seminal theorists having heralded this shift including William Rivers (1864-1922), Franz Boas (1858-1942), A. R. Radcliffe-Brown (1881-1955), and especially Bronisław Malinowski (1884-1942):[70]

> While early scholars had to rely on distant and dubious accounts of exotic mythologies from foreign lands or ancient civilizations, modern ethnographic research has continued to flourish in many parts of the world, providing for an increasingly rich collection of finely detailed mythographic case studies, helping us to understand myths in their performative contexts.[71]

In the budding field of psychology, Carl Jung (1875-1961) breathed new life and depth into the analysis of myth in relation to the unconscious mind[72]—birthing in turn constructive psychological analyses of myth across the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Within philosophy, Ernst Cassirer (1874-1945)

[63] At times Marx spoke of capitalism as a 'religious myth' to reject (Marx 1936 [1871], 128; 1867, 35, 774).
[64] Grottanelli 1997, 6.
[65] Von Hendy 2002, 74. Cf., e.g., Nietzsche 1896 [1873], 168; 1886, 27.
[66] Freud 1958 [1908], 53; cf. Freud 1914 [1901], 106.
[67] Von Hendy 2002, 301.
[68] Cf. Eagleton 1991, 188; and esp. Doniger 1998, 80-107 (unpacking how myth itself is too multivalent to be equated with ideology, with the same myth capable of being utilised for diametrically opposed political purposes). A partial exception to this is B. Lincoln 1999, who despite stressing that 'in the pages that follow I will not attempt to identify the thing myth "is"', then seeks to 'develop a view of myth as *ideology in narrative form*', concluding with the contention that as such 'scholarship is myth with footnotes' (ix, xii, 209). For criticism, cf. Ballentine 2015, 7. Nb. also Barthes' *Mythologies* (1957), consisting of brief *exposés* of ideologies in French mass culture, whose 'conflation of myth with ideology' had 'built frankly on [the] popular sense of "myth"' (Von Hendy 2002, 290).
[69] Von Hendy 2002, 202.
[70] Cf. G.S. Kirk 1970, 4; Von Hendy 2002, 204, 212.
[71] Thompson and Schrempp 2020, 5-6.
[72] Cf. Graf 1993, 36-38.

reinaugurated the study of myth as an object of wide-reaching epistemological and phenomenological importance, resulting in a steady stream ever since of refined philosophical analyses. Classicists and scholars of antiquity began exploring the communal ritual side of myth. And while classics has been less involved than other disciplines in theorising myth cross-culturally, key classical theorists of myth have not been in short supply. Within the budding field and subdisciplines of religious studies, such figures as Rudolf Otto (1869-1937) and Gerardus van der Leeuw (1890-1950) pioneered phenomenological analyses of myth from the perspective of lived religious experience and praxis, something taken up and expanded by a host of phenomenological and comparative scholars of religion. And recent decades have seen numerous mythographic compendiums cataloguing and exploring the various approaches and insights pertaining to 'myth' that have marked its rich theoretical history.[73]

A resounding point arising from theses crossdisciplinary endeavours is that myth is a multifaceted, extremely complex cultural phenomenon. 'Myth is about life, and life is not about one thing or reducible to one analytical approach.'[74] It thus 'needs to be explained to the fullest possible extent of its multiformity'—one ought progressively 'to examine the nature of myths in different aspects'.[75] Having contextualised the modern study of 'myth', we can proceed to the insights of the theoretical literature itself, which the various disciplinary perspectives notwithstanding, converge around a set of core intersecting themes, which will contribute cumulatively to our own broad and informed model of 'myth'.

2.1 Myth as Sacred Narrative

> *The word myth is used…in two contradictory ways. In one it refers to a narrative…of religious significance; a sacred story, enshrining a special body of beliefs… In the other it has the meaning of false… This is confusing because people hearing the term myth in any context are likely to be influenced by the second usage and attach to it the label "not true"… But in this discussion "myth" is used in the first sense only. It is believed to be true, and of vital significance…*
>
> —R. M. AND C. H. BERNDT[76]

That 'myth' is a narrative, a 'communicative genre in which a series of temporally linked events are connected in a diachronic, causal syntax';[77] that it involves 'die erzählte Welt', not merely 'die besprochene Welt',[78] has undergirded the entirety of myth scholarship: 'the primary shaping of the materials is *narrative*. A story is implied, whether or not the outward shape is prose or poetry, formalized dialogue, or other conventionalized format'.[79] In this preliminary section, I extract from the literature on myth the basic characteristics of *mythic* narrative as such.

[73] Among the most expansive and informative are Doty 2000; Thompson and Schrempp 2020.
[74] Thompson and Schrempp 2020, 95. Cf. Goebs 2002, 59.
[75] Nagy 2002, 240; G.S. Kirk 1970, 7.
[76] Berndt and Berndt 1977, 241.
[77] Thompson and Schrempp 2020, 8.
[78] Fischer 1988, 309-11.
[79] Doty 2000, 42. Cf. R.A. Segal 2015, 3-4.

2.1.1 A Tripartite Starting Point: Traditional, Sincere, Divine Narrative

Most theorists begin by defining myth as a species of *collective*, *traditional* narrative.[80] In other words, it is a story which 'takes hold in a society and is found important enough to be passed on',[81] without 'anyone knowing who created' it;[82] and often forming 'part of a larger group' of such stories: 'The author of a myth is a tradition'—'myths appear on the scene not as authored by individuals, but derived from collaborative social experience'.[83] This is not to deny that the narrative tradition can encompass recent events in its early years. 'There can be myths about recent events': 'traditional' is 'a symptom of their function of transmitting something of collective importance'.[84]

Placed alongside other modern categories of traditional story such as legend and folktale, one of the core means by which scholars have differentiated these genres has been in terms of 'truthiness': 'the notion of "truth" in myth plays a key role in understanding the distinctions.'[85] Positioned at the opposite end of the spectrum from fictitious 'folktale'—and with 'legend' occupying somewhere in the middle—one of the crucial properties of 'myth' for theorists is that it is considered *valid and truthful* 'by the community in whose tradition it has taken shape': 'myths are by definition regarded as true in the society in which they are told. They are regarded as fact, rather than fiction'.[86]

With truthiness distinguishing myth from folktale, the traditional way theorists have specified myth over legend has been that myths are marked by the presence of *divine beings*. According to the traditional starting point for defining 'myth', then, we arrive at something like that offered by Northrop Frye in 1963: a traditional story 'in which some of the chief characters are gods or other beings larger in power than humanity … in a special category of seriousness'.[87] This formulation has a long-standing history. Prefigured in ancient Greek conceptions of μῦθος, it became a standard conception among early pioneers of the concept of 'myth'—culminating in J. Grimm's taxonomy whereby *Märchen* draw 'freely from the fulness' of fiction; *Sagen* are earthly stories commanding 'almost the authority of history'; *Mythen* are stories with 'divinities', revered as sacred truth.[88] While some continue to hold that myths

[80] E.g., Ricoeur 1969, 5; Burkert 1983, 31; Graf 1993, 1; Ellwood 2008, 3; Powell 2015, 24.

[81] Hatab 1990, 18.

[82] Graf 1993, 2.

[83] Doniger 1998, 2, 135; Doty 2004, 19. Cf. Csapo 2005, 134: 'we can never identify any individual creator of a myth. So long as myth is a collective narrative by definition, the only relevant consideration are the mentality and purposes of the society for which the myth is a myth.'

[84] Csapo 2005, 9. Cf. Doty 2000, 14: myths 'need not be chronologically distant'. Stories *become* traditional incrementally as generations *hand them on* (*trādō*); hence in the earliest years of a myth's propagation one might speak of their possessing 'certain special qualities' that render them 'more than transitory', enabling 'their preservation over the vital first two generations—more broadly, up to the point at which they became firmly traditional' (G.S. Kirk 1970, 282).

[85] Thompson and Schrempp 2020, 13.

[86] Graf 1993, 4; Bascom 1957, 114. This has prevailed throughout modern myth studies since its inception: 'Of course we…abandon a common meaning of the term "myth," namely, something false or fictional. That…is not indicative of its original meaning … [M]yths…involve sincere beliefs and commitments' (Hatab 1990, 3, 18). Cf. Cassirer 1944, 75; Pettazzoni 1954, 13-16; Eliade 1963, 18; Townsend 1972, 197; Oring 1986, 124; Doniger 1998, 2; Doty 2000, 40; Csapo 2005, 2; Goody 2010, 56.

[87] Frye 1963, 30-31.

[88] Grimm 1844, xiv, xvi. *Mythus* was for Grimm a 'narrative of sacred events, hence commanding even more emphatically than "legend" belief in its truth' (Von Hendy 2002, 63).

involve divinities *ipso facto*,[89] many subsequent theorists construe myth more broadly as incorporating 'a language of transcendence', *frequently* in the form of divine beings.[90] And most theorists on all sides have settled on the *sacred* as that which encapsulates mythic narrative, under the auspices especially of Rudolf Otto's 1917 phenomenological exposition of the *Heilige* in terms of the *Numinöse*.

2.1.2 The Twofold Sacredness of Mythic Narrative

Coined from the Latin *numen* as a means of disambiguating the religio-experiential phenomenon of 'sacrality/holiness' over against its modern associations with mere moral goodness,[91] Rudolf Otto delineated the *Numinöse*, identified as the heart of all religious experiences of the 'sacred', as both a 'category of value' and a 'state of mind' oriented toward a *mysterium tremendum et fascinans*.[92] As a *mysterium* it is (1) marked by the presence of the *ganz andere*, 'that which is quite beyond the sphere of the usual, the intelligible, and the familiar'.[93] As *tremendum et fascinans* it is marked by this *ganz andere* (2) eliciting a complex emotional response comprising an awe-ful mystery 'which bewilders and confounds', and an awe-inspiring 'fascination' that captivates:

> the resultant dual character of the numinous consciousness…is at once the strangest and most noteworthy phenomenon in the whole history of religion….[A]n object of horror and dread,…it is no less something that allures … and the creature, who trembles before it,…has always at the same time the impulse to turn to it, nay even to make it somehow his own. The "mystery" is for him not merely something to be wondered at but something that entrances him…[94]

Otto deemed myth 'the vestibule at the threshold of the real religious feeling, an earliest stirring of the numinous consciousness'.[95] And, maintaining basic terminological and conceptual accord with earlier scholarship, the classification of 'myth' as a 'sacred narrative' both in terms of its *transcendent content* and *culturally revered reception*, as 'a narrative which discloses a sacred world … of such power as to compel a community to devotion',[96] emerges as the most all-encompassing and enduring scholarly base designator of 'myth': 'A myth is a sacred narrative… The critical adjective *sacred* distinguishes myth from other forms of narrative such as folktales, which are ordinarily secular and fictional. … That myths are sacred means that all forms of religion incorporate myths of some kind.'[97]

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[89] With Frye (ad loc.), cf. G.H. Davies 1956, 88; Fontenrose 1966, 54-55; M.V. Adams 2008, 81; Goody 2010, 55.

[90] Wyatt 2005, 162. Cf. Rivers 1912, 309-10, 314, 328; Eliade 1963, 10; G.S. Kirk 1970, 268-69, 283-84; Hatab 1990, 23, 40-41; Golsan 1993, 63; Doniger 1998, 1-2; Doty 2000, 74-75.

[91] Cf. Pedersen 2008, 214-17.

[92] R. Otto 1923 [1917], 7, 12ff.

[93] Ibid. 26; cf. 113.

[94] Ibid. 31; cf. 13-24.

[95] Ibid. 122.

[96] Hatab 1990, 19, 21.

[97] Dundes 1984, 1. Cf., e.g., Malinowski 1948 [1926], 84-86; van der Leeuw 1938, 413; Urban 1939, 574-79, 588-92; Kluckhohn 1942, 47; Pettazzoni 1954, 15; Altizer 1962, 93-94; Loemker 1962, 122; Eliade 1963, 6; J. Campbell 1964, 519; Bascom 1965, 4; Ricoeur 1969, 5; Girard 1977, 258; Berndt and Berndt 1977, 240-41; Oring 1986, 124; Smart 1989, 15; Doniger 1998, 2; Doty 2000, 14-15, 74-76, 103, 451; Armstrong 2005, 4, 35, 69, 89; Goody 2010, 91; Thompson and Schrempp 2020, 7, 16, 22.

2.2 Myth and Ritual

> *Myth … though it deals in cosmological matters … is in some ways the most localized of genres, the most embedded in cultural action, sometimes being tied in a rather precise way to ritual activity…*
>
> —JACK GOODY[98]

Understanding 'myth' as a sacred narrative, we turn to the relation of such sacred narratives to communal *rituals*: defined generally along the lines of ceremonial, stereotypical performances connected (emically) with a certain (etically) non-intrinsic functional context.[99]

2.2.1 The Myth and Ritual School

While the close association of myth(os) and ritual was noted among both ancient Greeks such as Plutarch,[100] and early pioneers of the modern concept of myth,[101] 'myth and ritual' became a pervasive focus of scholarly inquiry toward the beginning of the twentieth century, precipitated by a 'ritualist' school of thought headed by orientalist and Old Testament scholar William Robertson Smith (1846-1894), and promulgated by the so-called 'Cambridge ritualists' or 'myth-and-ritual school',[102] which initially sought to explain myths as secondary justifications for pre-existing rituals. In other words, 'in creating myths, the ancients sought to explain religious rites that they did not understand'.[103] This monolithic derivation of myth from ritual, however, was beset with problems and it was not difficult to find flaws in this 'extreme form of the myth-and-ritual theory'.[104] Aside from the illogicality of cultures 'as a rule'[105] undertaking rituals without rhyme or reason and *then* articulating myths to explain to themselves why they were doing them,[106] the reconstructions proffered were largely dubious conjecture. Many instances could be marshalled in which the evidence pointed unequivocally in the direction of 'myths…giv[ing] rise to ritual';[107] and insofar as their primary sources tended to be classical myths—of which comparatively little is documented about their ritual contexts—there were many myths 'whose connection with any rite' remained 'a thing to be proved, not assumed'.[108] 'Once this version had been

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[98] Goody 2010, 52.

[99] Many would add further characteristics. For present purposes, this captures what most scholars mean *minimally* by 'rituals' (I include 'emically' and 'etically' to hone the implicit perspectives involved). Cf., e.g., Firth 1951, 222; Nadel 1954, 99; Goody 1961, 159; Turner 1967, 19; La Fontaine 1985, 11; Tambiah 1985, 128; Kertzer 1988, 9; Kapferer 1991, 3; Parkin 1992, 18; B.C. Alexander 1997, 139; Bendlin 2001.

[100] E.g., Plut. *Is.* 11.355c-d. Cf. Hani 1976, 126.

[101] E.g., Blackwell 1748, 189; Schlegel 1809-1811, 1:119; Welcker 1824, 159, 249-50; K.O. Müller 1825, 257.

[102] A group of early-twentieth century, primarily Cambridge based classical scholars comprising such figures as Jane Ellen Harrison, A. B. Cook, F. M. Cornford, Gilbert Murray and S. H. Hooke.

[103] Graf 1993, 40. Cf. Robertson Smith 1889, 16-18; Harrison 1890, iii, xxxiii; 1903, 494 and, more hesitantly (in light of criticism), 1912, 13; A.B. Cook 1914-1940; Thomson 1914, 54; Cornford 1950 [1941].

[104] Graf 1993, 50, 42. See Kluckhohn 1942; Bascom 1957; Fontenrose 1966.

[105] Robertson Smith 1889, 16.

[106] Cf. Herskovits and Herskovits 1958, 106-7; Doty 2000, 343; Csapo 2005, 157.

[107] Kluckhohn 1942, 50; cf. 56.

[108] Rose 1936, 69.

rejected', theorists 'decided to dispense with the question of the origins of myth entirely and to concentrate on the relation of myth and ritual in historical times.'[109]

2.2.2 The Myth-Ritual Complex: Myth as Ritually Embodied

The latter track was already taken by certain members of the myth-ritual school such as S. H. Hooke, who saw myths as always linked with rituals. And despite the shortcomings of the school, much subsequent scholarship on myth and ritual can be seen as qualifying and refining insights of these ritualists: 'it was the absolute character of the supposed derivation of materials from specific ritual contexts that was most suspect.'[110] A myriad of diverse subsequent studies have identified a close connection between myth and ritual. Some hold that myth is always accompanied by ritual,[111] but the more common stance is that myth and ritual *typically* come together to form an affective 'myth-ritual complex':[112] 'Generally speaking, we…find rich ritualism and a rich mythology together. … [T]he only uniformity which can be posited is that there is a strong tendency for…interrelationship between myth and ceremony'.[113]

As for the manner in which myths are connected with rituals, the defining characteristics of the myth-ritual complex, numerous theorists have, though avoiding the 'trap of the ritual-dominant approach',[114] affirmed and substantiated one of the basic observations of the myth-and-ritual school which had facilitated its positing myths as 'explanations' of ritual in the first place: that when myths are allied with rituals, these take the form of a perceived *embodiment*, *reactualisation* and *reenactment* of the events narrated in the myth: 'Der Mythus ist eine Erzählung…deren Bestandteile sich in gleicher Sequenz durch…Riten äussern.'[115] The myth is 'the spoken correlative of the acted rite'; 'the story whose outlines [are] enacted in the ritual'—'the original situation which is…re-enacted in the ritual'.[116] Thus, in his seminal socio-anthropological analysis of myth vis-à-vis Melanesian beliefs and practices, Malinowski early concluded:

> Psychologists…, sociologists…, anthropologists…, classical scholars…have all understood the intimate association between myth and ritual. … The union is very intimate, for myth is not only looked upon as a commentary of additional information, but it is a warrant, a charter, and often even a practical guide to the activities with which it is connected….The cultural fact [of ritual] is a monument in which the myth is embodied. … [T]he ideas, emotions, and desires associated with a given [myth] are experienced not only when the story is told, but also when in certain customs…or ritual proceedings, the counterpart of the story is enacted.[117]

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[109] Graf 1993, 42. Cf. Burkert 1983, 31.

[110] Doty 2000, 339.

[111] Cf. Leach 1954, 13: 'myth implies ritual, ritual implies myth'; Hyman 1955, 468; Fontenrose 1959, 434; Ricoeur 1969, 5; Bonnefoy 1991, 1:xxv.

[112] Buonanno 2018, 177.

[113] Kluckhohn 1942, 48, 57. Cf. G.S. Kirk 1970, vii, 12: Burkert 1979, 56-58; 1983, 31-32; Doniger 1988, 132; Scarborough 1994, 97; Armstrong 2005, 3; Thompson and Schrempp 2020, 180.

[114] Doty 2000, 319.

[115] van Gennep 1910, 1174.

[116] Harrison 1912, 328; Hooke 1935, v; 1933, 3.

[117] Malinowski 1948 [1926], 76, 85, 122. Cf. also Lévy-Bruhl 1965 [1910], 24.

Leach observed apropos northern Burmese social structures: 'Myth…is the counterpart of ritual … myth regarded as a statement in words "says" the same thing as ritual regarded as a statement in action'.[118] In his structural analysis of myth vis-à-vis Indigenous American cultures, Lévi-Strauss observed: 'Regardless of whether the myth or the ritual is the original, they replicate each other; the myth exists on the conceptual level and the ritual on the level of action.'[119] In their pioneering study of Aboriginal Australian myth, R. M. and C. H. Berndt documented how, while 'not all myths are acted out in ritual', in 'Aboriginal Australia all ritual action[s]…are mythologically based': 'Rituals (rites) [are] the expression of mythological…features through organized action… Ritual is an acting out of events…incorporated in myth'.[120] From the perspective of the phenomenology of myth and religion across numerous traditional societies, Eliade concluded:

> For religious man…there are the intervals of a sacred time, the time of [rites]…; on the other there is profane time… One essential difference between these two qualities of time strikes us immediately: *by its very nature sacred time is reversible* in the sense that, properly speaking, it is *a primordial mythical time made present*. Every religious festival, any liturgical time, represents the reactualization of a sacred event that took place in a mythical past… With each…the participants find the same sacred time…as it appeared *ab origine* … a sort of eternal mythical present…reintegrated by means of rites.[121]

This core principle of 'mythic reenactment'[122] undergirding the cross-cultural tendency to form myth-ritual complexes has been documented and affirmed by many socio-anthropological theorists and phenomenologists of religion: 'Historically, myth and ritual have been central in human beings' concern with the sacred … religious life centred on the narration of sacred stories and their ritual reenactment'.[123] The same goes for classical myth theorists—when combined, myth and ritual are the 'mirror image of the other', the myth 'names that which…is directly experienced in the ritual'[124]—together equally with folkloristic,[125] philosophical,[126] and psychological theorists: 'Rituals are physical expressions of the myths…. The myth is the narration, and the ritual…expresses the myth in bodily action.'[127] Accordingly, in his magnum opus, *Mythography: The Study of Myths and Rituals*, Doty concludes: 'The insight of the ritual-dominant school…needs to be reaffirmed,…without being forced to accept the whole theoretical framework of that school. Myth and ritual [are]…complimentary, perhaps necessarily complementary, and we ignore the performance contexts, the *somatic realizations of myths in ritual form*, only at the very real peril of mistaking a particular part for the whole.'[128]

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[118] Leach 1954, 13-14.
[119] Lévi-Strauss 1963-1976, 1:232.
[120] Berndt and Berndt 1977, 265, 264, 240. Cf. also Radcliffe-Brown 1931, 79.
[121] Eliade 1959, 68-70. Cf. Eliade 1963, 19.
[122] Buonanno 2018, 177.
[123] Nielsen 1993, 36. Cf. also, e.g., Connerton 1989, 65.
[124] W.F. Otto 1965, 17; Burkert 1983, 34. Cf. also, e.g., G.S. Kirk 1970, 253-55.
[125] Cf., e.g., Oring 1986, 124; Thompson and Schrempp 2020, 9, 61-62.
[126] E.g., Townsend 1972, 193; Scarborough 1994, 96-97: myth is 'frequently connected to ritual' in the 'sense of being alive experienced' in it—a 'ceremonial in which traditional myths are reenacted.'
[127] May 1991, 50-51. Cf. D'Aquili 1993, 65.
[128] Doty 2000, 312 (emphasis added).

The early ritualists further reverberate in those who stress that a key component of myth-ritual complexes is *sacrifice*, 'with its tension between encountering death and affirming life, its external form consisting of preparations, a frightening central moment, and restitution'[129]—championed by many members of the myth-and-ritual school, who identified a common sacrificial mythic pattern of '(1) conflict, (2) disaster or death, (3) lamentation, and (4) rebirth.'[130] Thus, Cassirer concluded that myth 'represents in the form of a narrative what is present as immediate reality in the sacred action', and that the 'more determinate the form they assume, the more clearly the *sacrifice* appears at their center. It may take the most diverse forms … but in all these forms it constitutes a solid core around which the cult action clusters.'[131] Girard located the origins of culture itself in (human) sacrifice, held that generative sacrificial violence is 'the heart and secret of the sacred', and that 'the mythic and ritualistic imaginations are using the same model': an 'original, generative act of violence', narrated in the myth, and affectively 'reexperienced' in ritual. 'The ritualistic imagination strives to repeat the original generative process', the community 'feels the constant need to reexperience' it; 'myth offers a prescription for the correct performance of a sacrifice.'[132]

We are now on firm ground in adding to myth's character as a sacred narrative the attendant socio-phenomenological integrant that 'myths are often enacted in rituals': 'While further research has tempered some of the extreme examples of the earlier writers, the idea that myths are often performed in the heightened context of rituals remains valid … [M]yths and rituals are not always found together. Yet the acknowledgement that myths are often expressed via ritual retains a good deal of utility in many cases, providing one more tool for the mythographer's toolkit.'[133] Further insight into the dynamics underpinning such reactualisations emerges in the next aspect to be considered.

2.3 Myth and Symbolism

> *[M]ythic narrative…cannot tell one thing without telling a hundred others. The symbols are an endlessly inter-marrying family. They give life to what…appears only a cold truism, by hinting how the apparent simplicity of the statement is…connected with all the infinity of truths by living fibres.*
>
> —W. B. YEATS[134]

As a third dimension to 'myth' we turn to a more complex matter woven throughout the history of theoretical engagement with myth, namely, that for their adherents myths convey a 'superplus of meaning'—acting as 'a reservoir of meanings which is available for possible use again in other structures'.[135] Immediately indicative of this have been the creative and diverse means by which

[129] Burkert 1983, 83.
[130] Oden 1987, 65.
[131] Cassirer 1955 [1925], 219, 221.
[132] Girard 1977, 31, 106, 103, 144, 99, 100. See also, e.g., Burkert 1983, 3, 33.
[133] Thompson and Schrempp 2020, 9, 61-62.
[134] Ellis and Yeats 1893, 1:382-83.
[135] Doty 2004, 30; Connerton 1989, 56.

cultures embody their myths in rites and rituals—often involving things that appear 'totally dissimilar from the standpoint of immediate perception'.[136] Thus, in widely attested 'rites of passage',[137] often patterned on the 'mythic model' of a cosmogonic passage from primordial formlessness to cosmic creation, or a hero's 'flesh-and-blood' descent to an underworld and rebirth,[138] such dynamics may be expressed via any number of distinct actions or occurrences,[139] and ultimately entail a 'social rebirth, conferring upon a novice a new status and opening the way to a whole new world of religious thinking and acting'.[140] 'In other words, we here have acts oriented toward the values of Spirit, not behavior from the realm of psycho-physiological activity.'[141] Equally indicative of the dynamism to mythic imagery has been the sheer extent to which myths are 'constantly…given new, more profound interpretations' by their adherents, their dramas routinely being 'transparent to a variety of constructions of meaning', and a 'plurality of applications', 'greater than the partial, literal story it tells', eliciting 'experimentation and play with images, ideas, and concepts … that resound with many different voices and meanings.'[142]

2.3.1 The Semiotics of Myth: A Dialectic of Dynamic, Polyvalent Unity

Certain ancient writers from the late-fourth century BCE endeavoured to read Greek μῦθοι allegorically: seeking to extract one-to-one correspondences between their surface themes and some other theoretical, physical, moral or earthly-historical content—a practice that became the norm among Medieval and Renaissance treatments of Graeco-Roman *fābula*. The vast majority of modern 'myth' scholarship since Heyne, however, has seen a rejection of 'allegory' as the primary medium of myth—the consensus being that 'although allegorical aspects cannot be discounted, they are secondary, not part of the mythical imagination as such.'[143]

In the first instance, most theorists agree that a 'myth, when it is powerful, is…multivalent in meaning', that it elicits a *plurality* of meanings and applications: 'we might single this out as one of the defining characteristics of a myth…: a myth is a much-retold narrative that is transparent to a variety of constructions of meaning … The…elements of myths have inherent meanings, to which other, successive layers of meanings are attracted.'[144] Moreover, in accordance with its 'truth' component, while myth may be 'creative of a whole meaning greater than the…literal story it tells',[145] as Doty notes,

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[136] Cassirer 1955 [1925], 181; cf. 38; Hatab 1990, 32.

[137] A now normative category coined by Arnold van Gennep to denote the ubiquitous phenomenon of 'ceremonies whose essential purpose is to enable the individual to pass from one defined position to another', from 'one situation to another or from one cosmic or social world to another': identifying therein a core pattern of *preliminal separation → liminal transition → postliminal incorporation* (van Gennep 1960 [1909], 3, 10-11).

[138] Eliade 1963, 81.

[139] Cf. van Gennep 1960 [1909], 75-110, 159-60; Eliade 1959, 189-91; 1965; Berndt and Berndt 1977, 185.

[140] Berndt and Berndt 1977, 220; cf. 167, 177, 476; van der Leeuw 1938, 191-205.

[141] Eliade 1963, 81. A participant's 'ritual identification' with a myth, then, is not based on 'empirical similarity but rather on affective, situational, and functional identification' (Hatab 1990, 32).

[142] Eliade 1963, 147; Doniger 1998, 80; Burkert 1979, 5; Deutsch 1993, 47; Doty 2000, 50, 52.

[143] G.S. Kirk 1970, 266. Cf. Bietenholz 1994, 287.

[144] Deutsch 1993, 47; Doniger 1998, 80, 83; cf. 100-1.

[145] Deutsch 1993, 47.

the 'participant in the mythical cosmos' does not, as a rule, 'perceive the represented events, persons, times, and so on as primarily unreal or imaginary, but sees them as reflections of what actually transpires (on some level). In general, mythical personages are believed really to have existed, or really to exist…'[146] Theorists early observed that a 'mythic figure has a concreteness that separates it from a mere disguise for conceptual content', that what 'it related was meant to be factual', and hence:

> To interpret myths as no more than elaborate [allegories] portraying abstract general principles seemed to overlook the concrete and affective character that is the hallmark of mythical narratives. If myths were only figuratively expressed ideas, one would expect the figurative elements to lose their power to charm once people grasped the true principles they had been used to express. Yet mythological narratives continued to exercise an artistic vitality and expressive intensity far in excess of their ostensible doctrinal meanings.[147]

As a corollary of this dialectic of multivalency ↔ affective concreteness, numerous theorists have noted how the 'supra'-meanings and applications cultures derive from their myths, far from supplanting their manifest content, partake of that reality, are perceived in and through it, as an extension of it. While observable at 'all stages of mythical thinking', this is 'nowhere expressed so clearly as in mythical *action*.' For while from an etic perspective one might see distinguishable, 'allegorical' correspondence between the content of myths and their ritual enactments, from an emic perspective the two planes are routinely homologised. Whatever the outward form, the ritual undertakings are valorised as actual manifestations of the transcendent dynamics of the myth. There is a fundamental 'sense of identity, of identification… What happens in these rites…is no mere imitative portrayal of an event but is the event itself'.[148] Mythical relations and identities, then, 'allow empirically different things to merge or intermingle if they exhibit affective, functional, or situational similarities'; they involve 'fusions of categories and identities normally held discrete'[149]—something Lévy-Bruhl and Cassirer early termed an affective 'law of participation',[150] unbound 'by the law of contradiction', wherein 'objects, beings, phenomena can be…both themselves and something other than themselves'.[151] 'Mythical consciousness' entails living entirely in the presence of its object, without 'any fixed dividing line…between image and thing':

> all reality is smelted down into concrete unifying images.…The relations it postulates are such that the elements which enter into them…become positively identical…Things which come into contact with one another in a mythical sense…have fundamentally ceased to be a multiplicity: they have acquired a substantial unity. … [T]here is no mere sign which suggests something distant and absent…, because for mythical consciousness there is no such thing as…*mere* signification…—myth binds particulars together in the unity of an image, a mythical figure.[152]

[146] Doty 2000, 61.
[147] Steinby 2009, 56; Bietenholz 1994, 287; Beach 1994, 34 (on Herder, Heyne and Schelling, respectively).
[148] Cassirer 1955 [1925], 38-39. Cf. Eliade 1959, 195-96; 1963, 19; Berndt and Berndt 1977, 239; Hatab 1990, 32-33; Lorencova, Trnka, and Travel 2018, 201-3.
[149] Hatab 1990, 38-39; Goodmann 1993, 56.
[150] E.g., Lévy-Bruhl 1965 [1910], 332; Cassirer 1955 [1925], 64.
[151] Lévy-Bruhl 1965 [1910], 364, 61.
[152] Cassirer 1955 [1925], 35-36, 62-63, 68-69.

To capture these dynamics, theorists classify myth as *symbolic*, a 'species of symbols…developed in the form narrations',[153] in accord with the semiotics of linguistic symbolism that emerged in the late-eighteenth and nineteenth century, whereby *symbolic* discourse came to be distinguished from *allegory* as follows. Whereas allegory involves one-to-one correspondence between representation and actual referent, its meaning being 'finite,…completed, ended … understood without "remainder"', 'standing in exact relation to meaning and exhausted by it';[154] *symbolism* evokes myriad associations: the 'constellation of meanings emerging out of the symbol's polyvalent unity is inexhaustible, it cannot be reduced to a single allegorical interpretation'.[155] And whereas allegory is dispensable, 'transitive, arbitrary, pure signification', its 'actual' meaning translatable, abstractable from its artificial representational adornment;[156] *symbols* remain 'permanent representatives of the meanings they express'. The meanings are given in and through the symbol, which 'achieves the fusion of contraries; it is and it signifies at the same time': 'symbols do not merely "stand for"…; they…participate in that which they signify … *present* rather than represent their content. As such, they have a special integrity of their own.'[157] Symbolism is thus fundamentally *bound*—'bound to its content and, through its primary content, to its secondary content'. Not given 'otherwise than in it … the symbolic meaning is constituted in and by the literal meaning'.[158] To use Coleridge's term, symbolism is *taute*gorical, a 'self-referential category that eludes exhaustive allegorical explanation':[159] its various *signifiés* 'expressing the *same* subject but with a *difference* … in contra-distinction from…*alle*gorical (i.e., expressing a *different* subject…)'.[160] As an accompanying means of classifying mythic imagery theorists also speak of *(root) metaphor*, insofar as theories of root metaphor have in many respects proved to be 'synonymous with [the] symbolic':[161] 'Metaphors and symbols touch upon, but do not exhaust, the sensual and affective … calling forth images…in order to seed new appropriations of meaning and allow them to become embodied and spoken realities….Embodying metaphoric and symbolic meanings, [myths] allow experimentation and play with images, ideas, and concepts that otherwise would remain too incorporeal to be engaged … supplying the root metaphors, the ruling images, of a society'.[162]

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[153] Ricoeur 1969, 18; cf., e.g., Schlegel 1809-1811, 1:153-54; Schelling 1859 [1802-3], 410; Kluckhohn 1942, 58; Herskovits and Herskovits 1958, 81-82; Townsend 1972, 196; Berndt and Berndt 1977, 296; C. Segal 1983, 174; Kolakowski 1989, 131; Deutsch 1993, 47; Nielsen 1993, 37; Neville 1996, 41; Goebs 2002, 33; Midgley 2003, 1; Doty 2004, 30; Huskinson 2008, 9.

[154] Todorov 1982, 206; Gadamer 2004, 65.

[155] Beach 1994, 35. Cf. Horkheimer and Adorno 1944, 28-29; Cassirer 1944, 56-57; Jung 1956, 124; Altizer 1962, 88; Lonergan 1972, 66; Todorov 1982, 206; Dulles 1983, 132; Deutsch 1993, 47; Gadamer 2004, 65.

[156] Todorov 1982, 206. Cf. Coleridge 1816, 36-37; Ricoeur 1969, 16.

[157] Beach 1994, 32; Todorov 1982, 206; Deutsch 1993, 47. Cf. Beach 1994, 35; Coleridge 1816, 37; K.O. Müller 1825, 257-58; Eliade 1959, 131-32, 167: 'it is the symbolism…that valorizes the various significations … adds…new value[s] to an object or action'; Loemker 1962, 122; Moss 1993, 12, 40: Gadamer 2004, 67.

[158] Ricoeur 1969, 15-17.

[159] Von Hendy 2002, 36.

[160] Coleridge 1825, 199; cf. Schelling 1856 [1842], 195-96; 1857 [1842], 139-40.

[161] Malan 2016, 3-4 (3).

[162] Doty 2000, 50-51. Cf. Blackwell 1735, 316; Slotkin 1973, 6, 8; Burkert 1979, 28; Midgley 2003, 1-4; Malan 2016, 5.

2.3.2 Situating Myth's Symbolic Character: Hierophany, Archetypes and the Unconscious

Many locate myth's propensity for symbolism in the very nature of mythic discourse. Where with all symbolism images are taken 'from the narrower, more intuitable fields of experience and used for expressions of more universal and ideal relations', this is so with myth in the highest degree, as the values thus achieved and expressed have a numinous, transcendent quality.[163] Yet to be accessible it must mediate this transcendence 'through and to the immanent'—via images and phenomena drawn from everyday human experience.[164] In myth 'the Infinite is made to blend itself with the Finite'—marrying 'the infinite and finite, the spiritual and transient, in indivisible unity'. At the same time orienting the finite toward infinity, this effects a numinous 'transfiguration of a given part of concrete reality', obliges that 'the most mundane in the created order can manifest Mystery … [be] full of sacred presence', yielding to an inexhaustive multiplicity of meanings precisely because of the 'ineffability of the Symbolized whose reality it mediates'.[165] Myth 'reads the sacred on the world, on some elements or aspects of the world … [as] hierophanies, where the sacred is shown in a fragment of the cosmos, which, in return, loses its concrete limits, gets charged with innumerable meanings, integrates and unifies the greatest possible number of the sectors of anthropocosmic experience.'[166]

Theorists have observed striking similarities in images and symbols across disparate cultures which are not always accountable for by cross-cultural diffusion[167]—particularly prevalent being the recurrent pattern of the 'hero', condensed by Campbell as one of 'separation—initiation—return:…A hero ventures forth from the world of common day into a region of supernatural wonder: fabulous [and hostile] forces are there encountered and a decisive victory is won: the hero comes back from this mysterious adventure with the power to bestow boons on his fellow man'.[168] Jung argued that 'all human beings possess similar inborn tendencies to form certain general symbols, and that these symbols manifest themselves through the unconscious mind in myths';[169] that mythic symbolism is partly[170] conditioned by innate 'archetypes' of the collective unconscious—defined as '*a priori* inborn forms of intuition': 'The archetype is a tendency to form…representations of a motif—representations that can vary a great deal in detail without losing their basic pattern… They are, indeed, an instinctive *trend*, as marked as the impulse of birds to build nests, or ants to form organised colonies.' As such, humankind 'does not *invent* myths, it *experiences* them. Myths are original revelations of the preconscious psyche'.[171] Although most associated with Jung, similar conclusions were drawn by nineteenth century myth theorists.[172] And the concept of mythic 'archetypes' has proved highly influential in subsequent

[163] Urban 1939, 586-87; cf. 582-84; Altizer 1962, 87.
[164] Schaab 2009, 68. Cf. Eliade 1959, 10; Tillich 1971, 344.
[165] Carlyle 1838, 228; Feldman and Richardson 1972, 388; A. Olson 1980, 44; Schaab 2009, 70, 67.
[166] Ricoeur 1969, 10-11.
[167] Cf. already, Ramsay 1728, 2(Part II):58, 64; also, e.g., Lévi-Strauss 1955, 429; Kluckhohn 1959, 269; G.S. Kirk 1970, 278: it 'is a proved phenomenon' that 'certain motifs…recur in the myths…of quite separate societies'.
[168] J. Campbell 1949, 30. Cf. Leeming 1981, 7-8; Dundes 1990, 188-89.
[169] G.S. Kirk 1970, 275.
[170] Cf. Jung 1956, 232; R.A. Segal 1999, 93.
[171] Jung 1972 [1919], 133; 1964, 67, 69; 1968 [1940], 154. Cf. Jung 1968 [1944], 25.
[172] Cf. Beach 1994, 10-11, 38, 184-85; Schlegel 1884 [1801-3], 1:330; K.O. Müller 1825, 257-58.

analyses of myth. While not all subscribe to Jung's *a prior* conception of archetypes,[173] all theorists agree there is an element of unconscious functioning to the emergence and vitality of mythic symbolism—an inevitable corollary given that, as with all symbolism, it involves not rational allegorical contrivance pertaining to preconceived notions, but actually brings about its myriad meanings 'that would remain absent and inaccessible without the symbols'.[174]

It emerges from the literature that, in conjunction with its sacred and ritual dimensions, *symbolic multivalency* is another of the 'chief characteristics of myth'. As 'narratives of particularly profound, symbolic importance', myths have a way of 'absorbing into themselves more and more intensive meanings'; in and through their immediate content 'many meanings may be concentrated, many ideas telescoped and interfused'.[175] To this we may only add Kirk's point about the dynamism of mythic symbolism as narrative symbolism. While 'certain myths do contain static symbols', many have a dynamic 'symbolic reference or set of references', involving 'the transposition of whole episodes…on to different semantic and emotional levels'.[176]

2.4 Myth as Foundational Lens

> *Myths are not lies. Nor are they detached stories. They are…networks of powerful symbols that suggest particular ways of interpreting the world. They shape its meaning. … [P]owerful myths…shape the mental maps that we refer to when we want to place something.…They are the matrix of thought….They provide the tools with which we organise the mass of incoming data.*
>
> —MARY MIDGLEY[177]

A fourth, more wide-reaching factor we turn to is that myths are 'culturally important in a *foundational* manner', that they are formative stories which, constitutive of a cultural worldview, take on 'a special character as a way of orienting people to reality … to the quintessence of human experience'—a 'formative nature that gives myths their symbolic power.'[178]

2.4.1 Initial Considerations: Thematic, Sociocultural, Historical, Phenomenological

We must note firstly the factors which have underpinned scholarly appraisals of myth's foundational character. Theorists have identified foundations as a pervasive *thematic* trait of myth. For most, myths always concern transcendent origination, ranging from accounts of cosmic creation to manifestations in the material, social or psychological orders. They narrate 'how something came into

[173] Cf. G.S. Kirk 1970, 276-77; Doty 2000, 202.
[174] Avis 1999, 110. Cf. Tillich 1955, 109; Ricoeur 1969, 163, 165; Altizer 1962, 88; May 1991, 72, 86; Doty 2000, 101. Hence it came as part of the modern establishment of linguistic symbolism that 'the symbol is produced unconsciously' (Todorov 1982, 206-7). The same applies to contemporary metaphor theory (Malan 2016, 3).
[175] Cohen 1969, 337; Thompson and Schrempp 2020, 7; Langer 1949, 388, 395-96.
[176] G.S. Kirk 1970, 280.
[177] Midgley 2003, 1, 4.
[178] Doty 2004, 11; May 1991, 26; Thompson and Schrempp 2020, 17.

existence, or how a pattern of behaviour, an institution, a manner of working were established'; a 'prodigious, "sacred" time when something *new, strong,* and *significant* was manifested': 'Myth, then, is always an account of a "creation"'.[179] This is also seen to encompass the widely-attested 'mythical theme of the End of the World', insofar as this involves not an annihilation of reality but a decisive *re*-creation of the perfect state of being present at the beginning of creation: 'even in eschatologies, the essential thing is not the fact of the *End*, but the certainty of a *new beginning* … [and] this rebeginning is, properly speaking, the counterpart to the absolute beginning, the cosmogony.'[180]

Social anthropologists have detailed how the content of specific cultures' myths are *socioculturally* foundational to the lives of their participants. Thus, Malinowski documented the extent to which, among the Trobriand Islanders, myth was no 'aimless outpouring of vain imaginings' but a living, 'extremely important cultural force': 'Myth as it exists in a [their] community…is a living reality, believed to have once happened…and continuing ever since to influence the world and human destinies.…[It] codifies belief; it safeguards and enforces morality; it vouches for the efficiency of ritual and contains practical rules for the guidance of man.'[181] In his fieldwork research among Southeast Asian Andamanese and Aboriginal Australian societies, Radcliffe-Brown documented how Andamanesian myths 'have for their function to express the social values of different objects—to express in general the system of social values that is characteristic of the Andaman social organisation'. Likewise in Australia the 'function of much of the myth and ritual is to maintain or create' the 'social structure…by and in which that structure functions'.[182] In his study of myth among the Navajo, Kluckhohn detailed how their myths are abiding 'cultural forms defining…the society', enshrining 'its ultimate value attitudes…—thus protecting cultural continuity and stabilizing the society': 'In the words of a Navaho informant: "…A myth is just like a big stone foundation…."'[183] In his study of the Ndembu, Turner observed how, instilling 'in symbolic form certain key values and cultural orientations', their myth-ritual complex 'actually creates…the categories through which [they] perceive reality'; offers 'a set of templates…of reality and [their] relationship to society, nature, and culture.'[184]

It has been established that, *historically*, myths 'mark the beginnings of human culture'.[185] 'It is indisputable that in all areas of human culture mythologies have…constituted an important form of communication and that there is hardly an area in culture where myth has not been employed as an instrument of organizing human communal existence.'[186] There is no society 'which does not disclose some kind of [mythic] imprint; and society itself can be regarded as a determinate form only if we

[179] Eliade 1963, 18-19, 6. Cf. Rivers 1912, 309; Cassirer 1955 [1925], 105; Pettazzoni 1954, 13; Bascom 1965, 4; Ricoeur 1976, 86; Oring 1986, 124; Hatab 1990, 19-20; Thompson and Schrempp 2020, 17, 24, 109.

[180] Eliade 1963, 75-76. Cf. Malinowski 1948 [1926], 103; Thompson and Schrempp 2020, 110. Nb. Kolakowski 1989, 95-96: 'the simultaneous presence of both' past- and future-oriented aspects of myth 'in a single, mythologically self-determined community is not only possible but common'.

[181] Malinowski 1948 [1926], 75, 78-79.

[182] Radcliffe-Brown 1922, 377 (cf. 405); 1931, 32 (cf. 63).

[183] Kluckhohn 1942, 65, 74. Cf. also, of Native American cultures more broadly, Champagne 1994, 446-47.

[184] Turner 1968, 6-7; 1969, 128-29.

[185] Hatab 1990, 17; cf. 39-40.

[186] Kolakowski 1989, 122-23.

tacitly presuppose the mode and direction of this imprint … even where we suppose that we have a society before us in its empirically earliest…form, it is…something spiritually conditioned and mediated.'[187] Historically, the emergence and sustaining of all cultures have involved living 'as much as possible *in* the sacred … equivalent to a *power*, and, in the last analysis, to *reality*': 'It is the irruption of the sacred into the world, an irruption narrated in the myths, that *establishes* the world as a reality.'[188]

Unpacking myth's *socio-historical* precedence, theorists assign a *phenomenological* precedence to myth, concluding that myths are a prerequisite for the establishment of a sociocultural 'world'. A case in point is Kolakowski. Identifying two *sui generis* sources of energy active in humanity's conscious relation to the world, (a) the technological, that involving discursive analysis and the manipulation of finite data, and (b) the mythical, that which orients experience to a primary sacred order that both transcends finite experience and relativises every possible experience,[189] Kolakowski allies myth with three societal needs which purely discursive, scientific, technological modes of operation fail to address. Firstly, embedding *meaning* in the world—a sense of cosmic purpose and significance to the elements of experience—which transcends the universe of objects and 'cannot therefore enter within the horizon of a scientifically valid communication but rests within the property of myth.' Supplying a transcendent point of reference myth addresses the need to make empirical realities meaningful by relating them to an 'unconditioned reality which binds phenomena teleologically'—thus giving a first-order cultural 'meaning to empirical realities and practical activities via relativization.'[190] Secondly, establishing and sustaining *values*, which must be grounded in some transcendent, unconditioned order, for if one's empirical surroundings, 'the stream of coming-to-be and perishing of qualities are self-sufficient and not related to Being which preserves the nontemporal foundation of temporality', values are an impossibility.[191] Finally, fortifying a sense of the world's *continuity*: 'A transcendence capable of choice satisfies the need to see the world as continuous. The presence of transcendence does not therefore become a hypothesis, since scientific thought does not establish any necessities for continuities…—it motivates conviction.' These amount to three facets of the same cultural need: avoiding an ephemeral, contingent world which expends itself on each occasion, and allowing a culture 'to judge that in what passes there grows and is preserved something which does not pass away'. This culturally requisite 'conquest of temporality is achieved in myths … where what is past and is passing is capable of survival as far as its nonempirical normative layer'.[192] And for most theorists myth's disclosing this culturally normative layer of transcendence through a story is a key part of its phenomenological primacy.[193]

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[187] Cassirer 1955 [1925], 193-94. Cf. K.O. Müller 1840, 1:11.

[188] Eliade 1959, 12, 97; cf. 201-9.

[189] Kolakowski 1989, 2, 26.

[190] Ibid. 54, 2; cf. 65: also, e.g., Hatab 1990, esp. 4-10.

[191] Kolakowski 1989, 56-57; see 19-33. Cf. Monod 1972, 160: true science 'is ignorant of values'.

[192] Kolakowski 1989, 4-5; cf. 64-65.

[193] E.g., Urban 1939, 593; Hatab 1990, 26-28, 32; Scarborough 1994, 87-88. Note that most theorists concur that even 'the modern man who feels and claims that he is nonreligious still retains a large stock of camouflaged myths and degenerated rituals': 'This does not mean that they represent "survivals" of an archaic mentality. But certain aspects and functions of mythical thought are constituents of the human being' (Eliade 1959, 204-5; 1963,

2.4.2 Distilling Myth's Applied Foundational Functioning: A Fixed Perceptual Model

Turning to the specific functional contours of myth's foundational character and usage encountered across the disciplines, Herder's insights set the tone for most modern myth scholarship. Myth serves as the 'collective…cultural imagery' through which a group 'defines itself and its world';[194] its imagery mediates its participants' overall *Denkart*, becomes the lens through which one's social world 'is given its whole shape and direction'[195]—thus serving as the enduring 'bedrock for their understanding of the world'.[196] The underlying factor is that myths 'bring about and sustain the social worlds of their performers': 'myth is a narrative structure whose sign- and symbol-systems are closely correlated with the central values of a culture'.[197] Myths are 'narrations by which [a] society is unified', its 'foundation of values and ethics', and which give their participants their 'sense of personal identity': 'crucial to having a present identity … myth…is a point of reference which [they] can revere.'[198] As Cassirer early noted, it is 'characteristic of the direction of myth' that it establishes the 'fundamental forms of social consciousness in general', that its symbolism 'articulates both the world and the community.'[199] The psychosocial functioning of a myth, notes Bond, is thus the 'crystallization of a functional relationship of the psyche to the environment', a 'cultural pattern' defining 'the society itself'.[200] Supporting 'cultural and social values by grounding them in a transcendent realm', myths become the 'primary stories of a culture…that shape and expose its most important framing images and self-conceptions'.[201]

As an 'apodictic' locus of ultimate '*reality*, *truth*, and *significance*', myth serves as a 'core narrative for meaning construction in societies'.[202] Supplying 'a lens…used to see human identity in its social and cultural context', it functions as a culture's basal 'predisposition toward meaning, a verbal *prima materia* where narrative and order, drama and metaphysics…[come] together'—ever at work 'in the business of making the world transform into further meaning'.[203] Expressing what 'cannot be expressed in rational or scientific language', disclosing the '*presence* of a sacred meaning through a narrative which depicts its emergence', Hatab elaborates, myth shapes the 'existential meaning *within which* things can…be located', where 'meaning and value [are] to be found' in the world. It is 'the "worlding" of the world, its unconcealment'; a narration of 'the world's story through living imagery': a 'first telling of the human story in a world situation, where existential meaning is embedded in the world.'[204] As foundational, then, myth fundamentally 'configures an understanding of the world'. Emically speaking,

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181-82). Cf. Malinowski 1948 [1926], 122; Urban 1939, 593; Cassirer 1946, 280; Sproul 1979, 1-2; Ricoeur 1978, 237; Kolakowski 1989, 25-32, 64-68, 124, 130; D'Aquili 1993, 62; Thompson and Schrempp 2020, 33, 177.

[194] Steinby 2009, 60.

[195] Herder 1994 [1778], 358; cf. Herder 1985 [1767], 435, 440; 1989 [1784-91], 301.

[196] Denby 2005, 59. See further Gaier 2003; 2009; Steinby 2009; Czobor-Lupp 2017; Hampton 2018.

[197] Doty 2000, 137; C. Segal 1983, 175.

[198] May 1991, 20, 29-30, 48-49.

[199] Cassirer 1955 [1925], 177-78; see 175-218. Cf. also, e.g., Schelling 1856 [1842], 62-63; Jung 1968 [1940], 154; Kluckhohn 1942, 57-58, 65, 78; W.F. Otto 1965, 30-31; J. Campbell 1964, 520; 1972, 215; Hatab 1990, 28.

[200] D.S. Bond 1993, 37-38.

[201] Doty 2000, 130, 58.

[202] Eliade 1963, 139; Thompson and Schrempp 2020, 31. Cf. Rowland 2008, 73.

[203] Warner 1994, 14; McConnell 1975, 285; E. Gould 1981, 180.

[204] Hatab 1990, 12, 22, 40, 35, 40; cf. 21, 28-29, 34.

it becomes 'the vehicle through which we find meaning', a core 'narrative pattern that gives significance to our existence':[205] 'We do not just think *about* myths, but *through* them.'[206] The 'symbolic (macro)' models embodied therein 'serve to establish paradigms for understanding', a 'constellation of metaphors' that 'comprise our worldview': 'They organize the way we perceive facts and understand ourselves and the world. … Myth…proclaims a central reality and then builds a structure of valuation around and in relation to it.'[207] Myths become 'archetypal patterns in human consciousness', providing 'the overarching conceptualities of a society by structuring its symbolic representations of reality.'[208] This results in two correlative attributes of mythic narrative in its operatively foundational constitution.

Firstly, it acquires the status of an *eternal truth*, a transcendent plane of '*absolute realities*…capable of guiding man and giving a meaning to human existence': 'Like a Kantian apriori, myth is presumptively universal.'[209] What 'gives the myth an operative value is that the specific pattern described is everlasting; it explains the present and the past as well as the future.'[210] In a 'spiritual, or non-material fashion, [it] and all that is associated with [it] are as much alive today, and will be in the indefinite future, as they were.'[211] Speaking to the 'quintessence of human experience', it operates as an 'eternal truth in contrast to an empirical truth': 'the myth transcends time.'[212] The 'event becomes "eternal"', something 'timeless in its applicability', such that:

> The stages of time—past, present, future—do not remain distinct; over and over again the mythical consciousness…level[s] the differences and ultimately transform[s] them into pure identity.… Instead of living in the present as an isolated point—or in a series of such points, a simple sequence of separate phases of action—it turns more and more to the contemplation of the eternal cycle of events … an everywhere recurring measure is felt in the world process as a whole.[213]

Accordingly, myths 'supply fixed points' in the world.[214] As 'a statement of primeval reality which still lives in present-day life and as a justification by precedent, [myth] supplies a retrospective pattern of…sociological order'; a 'retrospective, ever-present, live actuality', perennially binding the 'present to the traditionally and divinely sanctioned regularity of the past': 'Things are accepted because…they are related to the mythical time when everything was placed in order and achieved once and for all its proper nature'.[215] Revealing the underlying '*modalities of the sacred in the very structure of the world*', the myth establishes a 'central axis for all future orientation' in the universal flux. It 'places the experience of man in a whole that receives orientation and meaning from the narration. Thus, an understanding of human reality as a whole operates through the myth.'[216]

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[205] Huskinson 2008, 10, 3.
[206] Doty 2000, 100.
[207] Nielsen 1993, 37; Buonanno 2018, 42; Sproul 1979, 1, 5.
[208] May 1991, 37; Doty 2000, 51.
[209] Eliade 1963, 139; Scarborough 1994, 94.
[210] Lévi-Strauss 1955, 430.
[211] Berndt and Berndt 1977, 229.
[212] May 1991, 26-27.
[213] van der Leeuw 1938, 414; Huskinson 2008, 6; Cassirer 1955 [1925], 110-11.
[214] Kluckhohn 1942, 68.
[215] Malinowski 1948 [1926], 122, 102; G.S. Kirk 1970, 258, 257.
[216] Eliade 1959, 116, 21; Ricoeur 1969, 6.

Finally, when people are '"thinking mythically" they are *interpreting things*, perhaps even the meanings of their own lives, *within the coded contours of the narrative*; they take themselves to inhabit the myth … using the mythic system itself…to interpret reality.'[217] Conversely, 'the myths themselves seem to inhabit every fibre of [their] being.'[218] As 'a special kind of discourse that grounds and organizes human experiences', one reads throughout the theoretical literature, with myth 'one sees the world and organizes one's experience in terms of the story'[219]—'shaping and articulating their own experience by means of mythic expression, for this is an important quality of myth'.[220] 'The individual is contained, or better yet sustained, in the myth', such that it supplies the context of one's 'own development … the meanings that structure [their] lives … the story that takes each individual moment of a life and places it in a *context*, a *plot*, a *cohesive movement*.'[221] Endowing one's experience 'with a perspective…that goes far beyond their limited existence', a fixed point of reference 'to illuminate the present from the standpoint of its origins', [222] the myth affords its participants an overarching perceptual framework, an interpretative 'perspective on what is happening' in the present: they 'see its relevance to something happening in [their] own life'.[223] As literary critic Mark Schorer put it:

> Myths are the instruments by which we continually struggle to make our experience intelligible to ourselves. A myth is a large, controlling image that gives…meaning to the facts of ordinary life; that is, which has organizing value for experience. … Without such images, experience is chaotic, fragmentary and merely phenomenal.[224]

Being culturally core 'networks of *powerful symbols* that suggest particular ways of interpreting the world'—a 'mythic means, that is, of *establishing* meaning'—this use of myth 'proceeds inferentially not from "reality" to the picture, but rather from the picture to reality.'[225] The myth is 'used to shape the very foundational categories of the world itself'—for valorising, 'categorizing and understanding the world': [226] 'Since it is original presentation, mythical disclosure must be seen to be essentially receptive…Receptivity may be the most illuminating characteristic of mythical thought in that it shapes both the form of the world and the human response to it.'[227] In their foundational use, then, myths operate for their adherents as a meaning-*giving* 'pattern or blueprint or structure upon which [they] hang the…incidents of [their] lives.'[228] As 'a communicative means through which persons find meaningful systems of symbols for identifying their experiences … they become resources for identifying, labelling, and relating to the forces experienced as active within one's environment.'[229]

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[217] Neville 1996, 39, 41 (emphasis added). Cf. Baeten 1996, 38.
[218] Buonanno 2018, 141.
[219] Deutsch 1993, 48, 44.
[220] Wyatt 2005, 156.
[221] D.S. Bond 1993, 37-39, 57.
[222] Jung 1964, 76; Assmann 2011, 38.
[223] M. Murdock 2000, 132.
[224] Schorer 1959, 360.
[225] Midgley 2003, 1; Buonanno 2018, 75-76; van der Leeuw 1938, 414.
[226] Thompson and Schrempp 2020, 14, 16.
[227] Hatab 1990, 34.
[228] M. Murdock 2000, 133.
[229] Doty 2000, 331.

And so, another defining feature of myth arising from the crossdisciplinary literature is that myths are culturally *foundational* stories which help establish their participants' 'symbolic sense of the ultimate shape and meaning of existence'.[230] Anchoring the contours of social reality in a primary, originary sacred event—a generative 'inbreaking of Eternity into history' which 'fixes the limits and establishes the order of the world'[231]—the mythic narrative acquires the status of an eternal, absolute truth within and undergirding the stream of contingent truths, and as such operates as a macro-symbolic *foundational lens*, a fixed perceptual model used to impart meaning, value and directionality onto one's own experiences and the world process as a whole. For its participants it 'proclaims an absolute reality that is both transcendent (true for all times and places) and immanent (true in the here and now).'[232] That said, culture is not static. In this regard Doty delineates a three-part continuum in 'the *relative vitality* of a myth' in its foundational functioning, though adding, these are not 'necessarily *progressive* stages in the history of every myth', nor do they 'coincide with the advance of societies': (A) *Primary Myth*—the 'period of initial formation', of 'compelling commitment', where 'the appeal of the protomyth is precisely its newly discerned ability to explain how the world got the way it is and how the parts of the experienced universe fit together.' (B) *Implicit Myth*—the 'story becomes widespread and accepted…Now the myth tends…to support an orthodoxy antagonistic to other competing worldviews … is so much a part of the culture that its terms seem to be the only "natural" way of conceiving the world'. (C) *Rationalised Myth*—apparent when 'new competing myths…threaten the views of reality presented by the myth in its primary and secondary stages', where concern 'is to preserve the originating myth by…showing that the original terms of the myth can be rewritten'.[233]

2.5 Myth as Paradigmatic Model

> *[L]ives have been guided and shaped by myths … [they are] something lived … reflect a form of life that is followed … Myth is therefore nontheoretical in the sense that it is not detached from praxis; it is originally a lived reality.… The most fruitful use of the myth-ritual correlation would be to understand myths in the broader sense of the coincidence of thought and action, or "lived world." … In myth, [both] human thought and action…[are] placed in a larger context…*
>
> —LAWRENCE HATAB[234]

As a fifth aspect of myth we turn to an extension of the propensity for myth's *ritual* embodiment, and the active correlate to its foundational rôle as an *interpretative* axis around which its participants' perceptual and affective world revolves—the *Lebensweise* accompanying the *Denkart* of a cultural worldview. Beyond ritual contexts, myths manifest a 'more general, paradigmatic function' as 'exemplary models for human life'.[235] In their capacity as a central 'story that is sacred to and shared

[230] Thompson and Schrempp 2020, 7.
[231] Shipp 2002, 31; Eliade 1959, 30.
[232] Sproul 1979, 6.
[233] Doty 2000, 138-39.
[234] Hatab 1990, 18, 20, 43.
[235] Castriota 1992, 8; Lule 2001, 15.

by a group of people who find their most important meanings in it', they become not only constitutive *of*, but also 'paradigmatic *for* human existence'.[236]

2.5.1 Myth's Exemplary Dimension across Disciplines

This functional aspect was associated with Greek μῦθος in antiquity. In its earliest Homeric-Hesiodic attestations the authoritative, divine proclamations of μῦθος were invariably associated with a call to action—corresponding to illocutionary, commissive or directive speech-acts. Such writers gave guidance to 'the behavior of the public they were addressing by presenting the beings evoked as models.'[237] With the rise of Greek tragedy μῦθοι were 'not just narrated as past events: they were actualised as present happenings … simultaneously extreme and representative – just as the chorus of *Oedipus Tyrannus* can characterize the utterly extraordinary events surrounding Oedipus as a "paradigm" of human existence (*OT* 1193).'[238] For Plato and Aristotle μῦθος led people 'to adopt or modify their…behavior as a function of the model proposed', played 'the role of a paradigm'.[239] Plutarch considered μῦθος that which provided 'man with the point of reference for a responsible life … a companion in ethical matters as well as in all aspects of daily life'.[240] Even Philo frequently took to Greek μῦθοι as enduring paradigms for human behaviour, as when in *Prob.* 120 Heracles is regarded as a 'positive paradigm of a hero who bravely endured the tasks imposed by Eurystheus and can as such be imitated by those suffering from adverse circumstances'—albeit they often appear as negative exemplars ('His heroes are Abraham or Jacob rather than Achilles or Odysseus').[241] Turning to modern myth studies it is unsurprising to find classical theorists noting the 'iterative' aspect to myth as a cultural 'model or charter';[242] the 'use of myth as paradigm', as a 'pattern to be imitated', or else a 'cautionary example': 'as an exemplum…valid for the here and now'.[243] As 'exemplary' networks of 'interrelated symbols, patterns, and structures which encode the values of the culture', details Segal in 'Greek Myth as a Semiotic and Structural System': 'A society's myths are the imaginative distillation of its descriptions *and prescriptions* about what life is and/or should be.'[244] As such a formulation suggests, however, this functional aspect has not been confined to the realm of classical myth.

Based on his immersion in an array of cultural systems, Herder concluded that myth *per se* mediated a cultural 'worldview', and so gave both their participants' 'manner of thinking' (*Denkart*) and '*way of life*' (*Lebensweise*) its 'whole shape and direction'.[245] 'Within the framework of his philosophy of identity' Schelling identified myth *qua* myth as a 'mode of representing concretely…ideal

[236] Doniger 1998, 2; Batto 1992, 11.
[237] Brisson 2004, 6. Cf. R.P. Martin 1989; B. Lincoln 1999, 3-25; Nesselrath 1999; 1-6; Fowler 2011, 53.
[238] Buxton 2007, 166, 172.
[239] Brisson 2004, 19, 27; see 30-31.
[240] Hirsch-Luipold 2014, 167, 170. Cf. Roskam 2019b, 224-25.
[241] Roskam 2019a, 33; nb. 36, on Phil. *Prob.* 127-30.
[242] G.S. Kirk 1970, 256.
[243] Graf 1993, 148-49, 151. Cf. already, Blackwell 1735, 314-16; 1748, 70.
[244] C. Segal 1983, 176, 174.
[245] Herder 1994 [1778], 358.

principles of paradigmatic human values and experiences', that which presented participants with 'intense, experiential motifs' ever 'to be lived through and inwardly reenacted.'[246] Cassirer concluded that insofar as myth 'condenses into lasting configuration', it serves to mediate both a 'mythical form of *thought*', a 'passive contemplation of things', and a 'mythical…form of *life*': 'its order is apprehended as universal and inviolable, but on the other hand, this order seems to be decreed … there prevails the idea of an order which is not only governed by the gods, but in which man himself must unremittingly participate.'[247] Such has been a standard insight among philosophical myth theorists. Myth is 'a traditional narration…which has the purpose of providing grounds for the ritual actions of men of today and, in a general manner, establishing all the forms of action and thought by which man understands himself in his world'—'"man" is manifested as a concrete universal … in the myth the human type is recapitulated, summed up.'[248] As fixed cultural reference points transcending empirical realities, myths both 'give them [empirical realities] a coherent meaning and create a nontemporal *paradigm* … which it is necessary in real becoming…*to emulate*', for a 'value-creating myth…imposes a ready-made model…[situated] in an unconditionally primary dimension': 'What we know and what obliges us is there everywhere embraced in the same act'.[249] The '"inner logic" of a myth is that it makes a claim…upon our responsiveness' to the world.[250] The narrative pattern affords a bedrock of existential meanings, and shapes the 'cultural life of a society', giving its 'goals and purposes their…shape'. Inherent to myths is the ongoing 'reenacting of a sacred origin': 'Gods and humans come together and behavior is "archaized."'[251] They become 'ongoing dramas inside which we live our lives.'[252]

Within psychology, Otto Rank concluded in his early study of world hero myths (1909) that 'myths become…templates of how to move through life'.[253] Jung concluded that myths, quintessentially in embodying the Hero archetype serve as paradigms for behaviour, manifesting an exemplary function along the lines of 'such and such a hero had done so and so, and this is your model'.[254] Successive psychological myth studies speak with one accord on this score. As culturally core 'narrative patterns that give significance to our existence', myths act as a 'life-pattern' or 'national prototype': that 'around which we pattern our lives'.[255] They become 'enduring patterns of behavior or archetypal themes in an individual's life'—the guiding, 'underlying pattern of our lives'.[256] Myth is 'a narrative that shapes and affects us, it is the order in which we make sense of ourselves and it reveals to us, through this ordering, how we might develop… Myth is…a collective narrative of basic human behavioural patterns.'[257]

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[246] Beach 1994, 33, 231.
[247] Cassirer 1955 [1925], 69-70, 118, 127-28.
[248] Ricoeur 1969, 5, 162.
[249] Kolakowski 1989, 95, 19-20, 129.
[250] Deutsch 1993, 44.
[251] Hatab 1990, 20-21.
[252] Midgley 2003, 4.
[253] Thompson and Schrempp 2020, 74.
[254] Jung 1977 [1957], 293; cf. Jung 1966 [1943], 69-70.
[255] May 1991, 15, 168-69, 33; cf. 53-54, 58.
[256] M. Murdock 2000, 30-31.
[257] Huskinson 2008, 2, 4.

In the sphere of cultural anthropology, Malinowski documented, based on his fieldwork among the Trobriand Islanders, how deeply myths shape their adherent's overall 'pursuits' and 'social behavior'—'their ritual acts, their moral deeds, their social organization, and even their practical activities': 'Myth…is not merely a story told but a reality lived…a pragmatic charter … These stories live not by idle interest…; but are to the [participant] a statement of a primeval, greater, and more relevant reality, by which the present life, fates, and activities of mankind are determined … [T]he really important thing about the myth is its character of a retrospective, ever-present, live actuality … its precedent…rule[s] social life'.[258] Apropos the Navajo, Kluckhohn documented how myths serve as fixed 'cultural forms defining individual behaviors', as 'sanctified repetitive ways of behavior' in all spheres of life: 'in both sacred and secular spheres myths give…fixity to the ideal patterns of cultures'.[259] Across Aboriginal Australian cultures R. M. and C. H. Berndt documented how, whether or not acted out in ritual, myth is both 'believed to be true, and of vital significance to human action' in general: 'The overt stress is…on continuity, and on the requirement that what happens in the present should duplicate, in all essential features, what happened in the past…when foundations of human life were established once and for all.…[The myth] is regarded as setting a precedent for all human behaviour from that time on.' As with ritual, 'almost every important action in everyday life, can be referred back to [the] myth'.[260] In accordance with these and countless other ethnographic studies, anthropologists Thompson and Shrempp detail in their recent compendium that myths function in general to 'lay out the fundamental categories that define a particular way of life': they form 'the core, guiding principles of particular societies' engagements of the cosmos and life within it', and in this capacity serve as both 'formative stories, and as charters for everyday life.'[261]

In his pioneering comparative phenomenology of religion, van der Leeuw observed: 'the discovery of the close relationship between myth and rite has…also elucidated…the essence of myth as such.…It is the reiterated presentation of some event replete with power … the event becomes "eternal": it happens now and always, and operates as a type…[to] be repeated…The mythical occurrence, then, is typical and eternal'.[262] Eliade detailed in myriad studies the pervasive manner in which, across traditional societies, myths function as 'paradigmatic models established by Supernatural Beings'.[263] The myth has a 'paradigmatic value and function; that is why man seeks to reactualize it periodically by means of appropriate rituals.' Ultimately, however, even outside of rituals 'his acts and gestures imitate the paradigmatic models established by the gods and the mythical ancestors': it is 'not simply a question of a paradigm for ritual, but for other religious and metaphysical experiences as well … archetypes which man labours to re-enact, often quite outside religious life properly so called.'[264]

[258] Malinowski 1948 [1926], 74, 78-79, 86, 102-3.
[259] Kluckhohn 1942, 65, 76, 61.
[260] Berndt and Berndt 1977, 241, 229-30, 268.
[261] Thompson and Schrempp 2020, 175, viii, 16; cf. 36.
[262] van der Leeuw 1938, 413-14.
[263] Eliade 1963, 125.
[264] Eliade 1959, 85, 87; 1958, 425.

Because myth 'relates the *gesta* of Supernatural Beings and the manifestation of their sacred powers, it becomes the exemplary model *for all significant human activities*'—it is 'in the myth that the principles and paradigms for all conduct must be sought': 'An individual life becomes, and remains, a fully human, responsible, and significant life to the extent to which it is inspired by this stock of acts already performed'.[265] Similar conclusions have been drawn across subsequent phenomenologists, philosophers and comparative scholars of religion—hence Ancient Near Eastern scholar Nick Wyatt's speaking 'naturally' of myth conveying 'religious values, doctrines, convictions and paradigms'.[266] As a sacred narrative one 'participates in', the myth orients individuals to the overall 'aims and ideals of their various social groups'; promotes a 'mode of encounter with sacred' which provokes 'the continuous re-presentation, or re-evocation of a primal sacred event.'[267] It 'functions to provide an orientation for human existence', 'comprehensive of the life-world': an 'orientation to that most comprehensive context which guides and gives meaning to the panoply of activities taking place in that context or world.'[268] As 'enacted (performantial) narrative', myths '*coalesce values or projections that have been found worthy of repetition and replication*'; they serve as 'guiding models for modes of attitudes and behaviors that can be helpful—or correspondingly, harmful.'[269] Concerning '*repeated (archetypal) themes* that humans face over and over again', 'myths continue to be models *of* [a] society and models *for* [a] society.'[270]

2.5.2 Myth as Paradigm and Its Attendant Operative Dimensions

Another constituent property of myth arising from the theoretical literature, then, is that it functions as a *paradigmatic model* for the overall life orientation of its participants, a guiding template for how to move through life meaningfully. It serves as an exemplary narrative pattern which participants are propelled to seek out, conform to, or otherwise actively implement in their own lives. The myth 'provides a *model*, whenever there is a question of *doing something*'.[271] As 'exemplary actions aiming at a unified sense of our existence', myths operate as 'models *of* social life and models *for* social life.'[272]

This use of myth works in tandem with other functional dimensions, since myths are profoundly symbolic in their cultural reception. Their operative nature is that of a polyvalent 'reservoir of meanings which is available for possible use again in other structures', such that wherever a relation is posited 'it causes the members of this relation to flow together and merge': 'myth binds particulars together in the unity of an image, a mythical figure.'[273] This means that the *ways* in which the exemplary dynamics of a myth are affectively, experientially 'lived out' in their participants' lives often entail, as in the case of

[265] Eliade 1963, 6; 1959, 102; 1963, 125. Cf. D. Allen 1998, 262 n. 23.
[266] Wyatt 2005, 158.
[267] J. Campbell 1972, 215; 1970, 141; Altizer 1962, 93.
[268] Scarborough 1994, 84, 94.
[269] Doty 2004, 18-20.
[270] Doty 2000, 15, 454.
[271] Eliade 1958, 411.
[272] Dion 2016, 257; Lule 2001, 15; also Doty 2000, 454.
[273] Connerton 1989, 56; Cassirer 1955 [1925], 110, 69.

ritual, diverse and creative applications. Involving the use of 'different scales of words, different verbal lenses, to link theology with daily reality',[274] the 'student of mythology should be ready to encounter, in creative and unexpected applications, the full range of forms of connection':

> One should…be aware that the things of the cosmos can be subject to multiple classificatory schemes: in some cases, these amount to overlapping taxonomies constructed for different purposes or from different points of view…That is, one may encounter grids that take already-classified entities and arrange these under one or more levels of supervening macro-categories…[275]

As functionally symbolic, the 'possibilities for applying the mythical model are endless.'[276] Myth as paradigm works alongside myths' foundational character and usage as overarching, macro-symbolic 'systems of interpretation', as core perceptual frameworks 'for signifying meanings…among the elements of the world at hand':[277] 'Anything that…fulfils any function in it has thereby entered the sphere of the sacred … any action at all…can [participate in myth] as soon as it enters into the specifically religious "perspective" and is determined by it.'[278] In their paradigmatic capacity, then, myths operate as overarching symbolic frameworks within which diverse activities and experiences are valorised—assigned their constitutive meaning, ontological value and sacred character—and which are as such pursued. A further operative dimension to myth's paradigmatic (and foundational) functioning is to be found in the next aspect to be considered.

2.6 Myth as Therapeutic

> *In the face of want and death and destruction all humans have a fundamental insecurity. … Myths…give men…fixed points in a world of bewildering change and disappointment … they reduce the anticipation of disaster … produce some lessening of emotional tension – in technical terms, some reduction of anxiety.*
>
> – CLYDE KLUCKHOHN[279]

A final property of myth to be considered concerns the rôle it plays at the psychological level, what participants inwardly get from venerating the sacred, eternal realities of myth; what motivates them, what benefits they experience. One aspect that can scarcely be ignored is concern with transcendence as 'something attractive for its own sake', affording a 'more luminous view of the world'.[280] On a deeper level, however, the most oft-encountered insight throughout the crossdisciplinary literature is that myths serve a core *therapeutic* function in enabling their adherents to navigate and 'adjust to the polarities of personal existence.'[281] This therapeutic dimension to myth falls into two interrelated components. Firstly, the therapeutic character of myths as such: how myths themselves 'confront the angst of

[274] Doniger 1998, 18.
[275] Thompson and Schrempp 2020, 132, 129-30.
[276] Eliade 1963, 141.
[277] Doty 2000, 69-70.
[278] Cassirer 1955 [1925], 226.
[279] Kluckhohn 1942, 66, 68-70.
[280] G.S. Kirk 1970, 283, 285.
[281] Doty 2000, 331.

existence', are a 'tension-reduction tool'.[282] Secondly, the therapeutic character of myths in their applications: their serving 'as models for members of a society, *especially in times of crisis*.'[283]

2.6.1 Myth Itself as Therapeutic: Providence and the Coincidentia Oppositorum

Inasmuch as they concern foundational events that help cultures address the 'big questions' of life and human existence—'Why are we here? What happens to us when we die?'; 'What is [one's] place in the greater schemes of history, and of the cosmos itself? … Why is the world shaped in the way it is?' [284] —myths deal with the extremities of human experience, 'extremes consonant with the polarizations which occur during any crisis'.[285] They concern 'matters in which human beings are most vulnerable', those sectors of experience 'which do not seem amenable to rational control and hence where human beings can least tolerate insecurity'.[286] They speak to 'limit conditions in life', 'want and death and destruction', 'existential and spiritual human issues', 'the nature of the human situation', 'persistent problems of human experience'.[287] As core narratives for meaning construction aiming at a unified sense of existence, myths imbue those areas with 'overarching pragmatic crystals of meaning',[288] sense of a *purposeful transcendent order*, 'hidden in the steam of experience'.[289] In this one sees a general way myths confront the angst of existence. They reveal 'that the world is neither mute nor opaque, that it is not an inert thing without purpose or significance', thus abating one of the basal elements of suffering dispersed in all negatives of life: a sense of cosmic indifference.[290] They establish 'that the world and the powers that hold sway in it are not abandoned to pure arbitrariness.' With myth is 'das Fundament gelegt, das *die Sinnhaftigkeit aller Wirklichkeit* garantiert.'[291]

Theorists have noted an innate propensity for myth to embody an ultimate resolution of the 'aporias of existence': 'fundamentally, the myth tries to *get at* the enigma[s] of human existence'.[292] Unwittingly driving home the extent and contours of this existential dimension was the pioneering structuralism of Lévi-Strauss—unwitting insofar as Lévi-Strauss was not so much concerned with the ways that myths have psychological significance as with the 'structurational patterns', the 'network of more or less subconscious patterns, or deep structures…from which…myths are generated, visible to us through comparative analysis of a large body of myths'.[293] As Doty summarises, in Lévi-Strauss's structural analysis: 'mythological narratives are "decomposed" by identifying and charting their most elementary constituent units, termed *mythemes* … [By] charting the mythemes horizontally across a series of

[282] Doty 2000, 148; Freilich 1975, 210.
[283] Powell 2015, 25 (emphasis added).
[284] Doniger 1998, 54; Thompson and Schrempp 2020, 13-14, 171.
[285] Golsan 1993, 64.
[286] Berndt and Berndt 1977, 240; Kluckhohn 1942, 68.
[287] Hatab 1990, 22; Kluckhohn 1942, 66; Krippner 1990, 137; Shelburne 1988, 50; Lauter 1984, 208.
[288] Doty 2000, 104; cf. Hatab 1990, 22.
[289] Kolakowski 1989, 5.
[290] Eliade 1959, 165. See Kolakowski 1989, 69-82.
[291] Blumenberg 1985, 42; Sellin 1988, 214.
[292] Ricoeur 1976, 87; 1969, 163. Cf. G.S. Kirk 1970, 258-59.
[293] Doty 2000, 278; C. Segal 1986, 52.

columns … [t]he vertical columns represent the "paradigm" or "deep structure" of the material'.[294] Having analysed thousands of myths and their variations the common bedrock, paradigm, or deep structure undergirding diverse myths emerged for Lévi-Strauss as the symbolic mediation of binary oppositions; successive functional syntheses of conflicting states, conditions or forces (chaos↔order, weakness↔strength, destructive↔constructive, poor↔rich, mortal↔divine, adversity↔victory, death↔life, etc.).[295] This structural insight, prefigured by Schelling, has been affirmed by numerous subsequent theorists: 'Typical for a myth, cruel facts are welded together with beneficent facts into a pattern'—a '*coincidentia oppositorum*…in which all contraries are reconciled (or rather, transcended)'.[296] Hence the core theme of *sacrifice*, a generative act of violence; the 'hero' pattern of boon-bestowing victory through arduous ordeals; the core '*passage from chaos to cosmos*' of cosmogonic myths,[297] etc.: myths 'embody ideas of wholeness, of order replacing chaos.'[298] While Lévi-Strauss remained largely at the structural level, over a century prior Schelling conceived myths' propensity for functionally synthesising conflicting conditions in terms of its resolving 'deep *existential anxieties* by means of fusing highly valued spiritual qualities that are perceived as vulnerable with precisely those forces that appear to threaten them.'[299] And most subsequent theorists follow Ricoeur in considering the structural insight a preliminary step toward recognising myth's nature as that which creates a 'possible world', a 'sacred universe' in which core 'existential conflicts', 'boundary situations' and 'aporias of existence' are mitigated, rendered existentially bearable and supportable.[300]

However, myth 'does not merely affirm an abstract truth as an idle comfort… Through the revealed truth, and on its foundations, [it] tells man how to behave'. Its '*coincidentia oppositorum* becomes…an archetypal model', providing the perceptual 'principles and the paradigms for all the conduct of life'.[301]

2.6.2 The Therapeutic Element to Myths as Models: Relativisation, Regularity, Resilience

With myth, 'every human experience is capable of being transfigured'. Available to the adherent is the ability to 'transform a particular situation into a situation that is paradigmatic';[302] to valorise it as the broader outworking of the macro-structures revealed in the myth. Given that at its core 'myth unites the antinomies of life' and embodies 'ideas of wholeness',[303] it is not hard to see wherein theorists locate myths as models functioning especially in times of crisis—as 'the discourse we need in extremity.'[304]

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[294] Doty 2000, 276, 280-81.
[295] Lévi-Strauss 1955, 440. See Lévi-Strauss 1963-1976; 1969-1981.
[296] May 1991, 49; Eliade 1958, 419. Cf. Watts 1963; Vidal-Naquet 1968; Turner 1969, 47; ten Raa 1971; Freilich 1975; Vernant 1991; D'Aquili 1993; Doniger 1998, 9; Doty 2000, 330-31. On Schelling, see Beach 1994, 9-10.
[297] Eliade 1959, 77.
[298] Doty 2000, 60.
[299] Beach 1994, 203.
[300] Ricoeur 1976, 61-63, 86-88. Cf. Dalferth 1987, 278; D'Aquili 1993; Doniger 1998, 147; Doty 2000, 277, 330; Csapo 2005, 226: Lévi-Strauss' structural insight 'may be regarded as a mechanism for relieving anxiety.' See also Malinowski 1936, 27-28; Cassirer 1946, 47-49.
[301] Malinowski 1936, 28; Eliade 1958, 419; 1960, 46.
[302] Eliade 1959, 171, 211.
[303] May 1991, 26; Doty 2000, 60.
[304] Armstrong 2005, 35.

In their foundational capacity as fixed *perceptual models* for the 'mapping and understanding of experience', for giving a 'meaning to empirical realities…via relativization',[305] myths furnish a broader frame of reference for existentially relativising, transmuting and orienting personal extremities. As foundational resources for placing one's experiences 'in a larger setting … an underlying pattern',[306] they supply a means of meaningfully referring one's microcosmic experiences of plight or chaos back to the universal dialectical configuration of the myth, which speaks precisely 'to human limits through sacred meanings':[307] 'In supplying the root metaphors, the ruling images, of a society, mythological language provides a coding mechanism by means of which the existentially apparent randomness of the cosmos can be stabilized.'[308] The myth affords an overarching, meaning-giving perspective for 'working out the problem on a higher level of integration', for myths are 'roads to universals beyond one's concrete experience.'[309] One takes 'heart from a myth that mirrors their situation', thus *valorised*, and gives 'a larger meaning to their struggle': 'The person now grasps something and sees through to a truth.'[310] The mythic pattern 'enables individuals to grasp the meaning of their situation in its more than personal aspect.'[311] Hence, in the face of personal adversities myths become 'an important means of *living through one's life experiences* when they become resources for identifying, labeling, and relating to the forces experienced as active within one's environment'.[312] Through this 'man finds his way out of his particular situation and "opens himself" to the general and the universal', to 'values that are no longer contingent or particular, thus enabling man to transcend personal situations':[313] 'By means of a time that represents all times … experience escapes its singularity; it is transmuted in its own "archetype" … no longer reduced to a present experience'.[314]

In their paradigmatic capacity as *exemplary models*, myths actively prompt one to 'transcend [their] limitations', to take their 'place with the Gods and the mythical Heroes' so that they can perform their supreme acts of 'strength, superabundance, and creativity.'[315] And thus consciously conforming one's life pattern to the fixed *coincidentia oppositorum* of the myth affords a way of actively engaging and 'depotentiating' threatening forces by connecting them with 'experiences already recognized as safe'.[316] It offers positive assurance that the productive end of one's labours is a *fait accompli*, for they are thereby simply reproducing on a microcosmic scale the myth's *given* dialectical 'system of rhythmic and reciprocal conditioning influences that characterized and constitutes' one's 'world'—the 'modalities of the sacred in the very structure of the world'. 'There is no reason to hesitate…because

[305] J. Gould 2001, 141; Kolakowski 1989, 2.
[306] Armstrong 2005, 2.
[307] Hatab 1990, 25.
[308] Doty 2000, 51.
[309] May 1991, 86-87. Cf. Jackson 1979, 97.
[310] Bolen 1984, 6. Cf. Plut. *Is.* 27.361d-e, on adherents of the Isis μῦθος.
[311] Shelburne 1988, 61.
[312] Doty 2000, 331 (emphasis added).
[313] Eliade 1959, 210-11.
[314] Ricoeur 1969, 162-63.
[315] Eliade 1963, 145; 1959, 80.
[316] Doty 2000, 70.

the mythical Hero has already made it…All that is needed is to follow his example.…[T]here is no reason to fear…because one knows what one has to do. One has merely to repeat the cosmogonic [myth], whereupon…"Chaos" is transformed into "Cosmos"', etc.[317] Hence, in the face of any difficult or potentially precarious circumstances, it becomes a way of imbuing everything that one pursues and undergoes with a fixed 'simulacrum of safety by making activity *repetitive, expective*'; making their constructive end 'predictable by making it conform to the past'—thereby producing a 'lessening of emotional tension' and allaying any 'anticipation of disaster.'[318] Accordingly, we read, myths provide 'the paradigmatic solution for every existential crisis'. As paradigms, they play an especially 'therapeutic', 'regenerative function'—an 'important role in healing, when what is sought is the *regeneration* of the human being':[319] 'An important religious function of mythic expression is that it reaffirms…that the primal stories are the most perfect and the most potent, that "salvation" is attained by reconnecting with the spiritual energies that first were given expression in the myths'. Via mythic models one learns how to 'identify "the powers" that surround one, and how to assemble a storehouse of responses to their presence or absence'.[320] As in each case a means of 'binding the volatile present to traditionally and divinely sanctioned regularity of the past',[321] in their dual capacities as 'models *of* social life and models *for* social life', myths ultimately enable their participants securely and resiliently to 'engage with, appreciate, and understand the complex joys and sorrows of human life'[322]—guiding them 'stage by stage, in health, strength, and harmony of spirit, through the whole foreseeable course of a useful life'.[323] Amid the polarities of existence cruel and beneficent, the participant 'finds a religious meaning in everything around [them] and in everything that [one] does.'[324]

It comes as little surprise to find Ricoeur approving numerous theorists who 'have attributed to the myth a biological role of protection against anxiety.'[325] It furnishes the means for 'a concentration and shift of anxiety…to a symbolic sphere'; a unified 'system of coordinates to cope with the present…[and] the future'.[326] Indeed, psychologist Rollo May is scarcely a lone voice when he concludes: 'Myth…is essential in gaining mental health…[T]he very birth and proliferation of psychotherapy in our contemporary age were called forth by the disintegration of our myths. Through its myths a healthy society gives its members relief from…excessive anxiety … a fixed spot in an otherwise chaotic universe.'[327] 'Myth is therapy', writes Huskinson, 'insofar as it enables us to function according to new structures of meaning'; in its 'capacity to heal and transform impotent, unworkable life experiences into

[317] Eliade 1959, 173, 116; 1963, 141.
[318] Kluckhohn 1942, 66, 69-70.
[319] Eliade 1959, 210, 82-83.
[320] Doty 2000, 59-60.
[321] G.S. Kirk 1970, 258.
[322] Lule 2001, 15.
[323] J. Campbell 1972, 215.
[324] Eliade 1963, 139, 144.
[325] Ricoeur 1969, 167.
[326] Burkert 1979, 50, 25.
[327] May 1991, 15-16, 53; cf. 9-16, 19-24; also, e.g., Chase 1949, 113; Gallus 1972, 552-55; Freilich 1975, 210; Rowland 2008, 76.

ones that are productive and enriched.'[328] For those who live by them, then, mythic models ultimately offer 'the security and inner strength not to be crushed by the monstrousness of the universe'. By endowing one's life 'with a *perspective* (and a *goal*) that goes far beyond their limited existence', they operate 'as a sort of mental therapy for the sufferings and anxieties of mankind.'[329]

2.7 Myth and History

> *[I]n the context of the modern study of religion there is no implication that a myth is false. The seminal stories of a religion may be rooted in history or they may not. Stories of creation are before history, as are myths which indicate how death and suffering came into the world. Others are about historical events… Historians have sometimes cast doubt on some aspects of these historical stories, but from the standpoint of the student of religion this question is secondary to the meaning and function of the myth…*
>
> —NINIAN SMART[330]

Having mapped six core positive currents in myth scholarship, one additional matter calls for consideration due to its having played a considerable part in Pauline scholarship: whether myth *ipso facto* never involves historical figures and events.

Thompson and Schrempp note that most nineteenth and twentieth century myth studies have been 'less concerned with "what actually happened" than with what mythic narratives tell us about human nature, psychology, and society.'[331] While this is undoubtedly the case,[332] the positive claim that myth is definitionally 'unhistorical' has been virtually non-existent. On the contrary, most serious scholarship on myth from its inception has, even if tangentially, affirmed that myths *can* be rooted in historical figures and events—that myths 'may well contain elements of history'.[333] Heyne distinguished two basic kinds of *Mythus*: (1) those expressing a 'philosopheme' derived solely from the imagination; and (2) those having 'some genuine historical event at their core'.[334] Schelling followed suit.[335] While noting that 'imagination is powerfully involved' in myth, Herder stressed that 'the elements with which the imagination works in producing these stories are still drawn from the…actual world of a people', such that 'mythological characters and regions may be extrapolated from real people and places.'[336] K. O. Müller 'held that the cause of myth was sometimes to be sought in history'.[337] J. Grimm considered the potential 'historicity of myth a fundamental given'—even defining myth as 'the synthesis of historical events and divine revelation'.[338] Rivers' early sociological study held that myth and history

[328] Huskinson 2008, 5.
[329] Jung 1956, 231; 1964, 76, 68.
[330] Smart 1989, 15-16.
[331] Thompson and Schrempp 2020, 152.
[332] Cf., e.g., Munz 1956, 15; Burkert 1979, 25.
[333] Wyatt 2005, 155.
[334] Law 2012, 50. See Heyne 1807, 301.
[335] See Beach 1994, 30; adding, 'this was standard practice in the nineteenth century and remains so today'.
[336] Sikka 2011, 168; Greineder 2007, 73.
[337] Graf 1993, 23. Cf. Feldman and Richardson 1972, 417.
[338] Baumgartner 2009, 42-43.

were not mutually exclusive, as did that of Malinowski.[339] Kolakowski affirmed that myth can involve historical figures; that when absolute faith, hope and devotion are 'directed towards a person, it draws that person into a mythical reality'.[340] Kirk noted that myth can contain 'elements drawn from life': a real event can be 'given a poetical and symbolic value … become myth by a secondary process of development, acquiring…the essential involvement of supernatural powers.'[341] According to Biderman and Scharfstein: 'Mythology, symbolic explanations and literal truth cross over into one another in many ways.'[342] Graf affirms that myths can 'reflect historically real events': 'By *mythical* we do not mean simply "nonhistorical," "fictional."'[343] Csapo stresses: 'There can be myths about recent events, contemporary personalities'.[344] Even in the realm of psychology, we read in May that a myth can be 'a drama which begins as a historical event and takes on its special character as a way of orienting people to reality': the 'creation of the myth around an event—real or imagined—is the significant issue.'[345]

If in earlier generations 'the issue of what myths tell us about "what really happened" was not a dominant issue', recent decades have seen a stream of studies presenting historical, archaeological and geological evidence for the factual bases of myriad myths from around the world.[346] One example is E. W. and P. T. Barbers' *When They Severed Earth from Sky: How the Human Mind Shapes Myth* (2004): 'During two dozen years of empirical research on myths from all over the world, we found that many…myths developed out of actual events … Not all myths are of this type, of course, but many…of them turn out to stem from actual events'.[347] Accordingly, in their recent compendium on myth Thompson and Schrempp take the potential for 'reflection of historical facts in myth' as a given and demonstrable fact. That said, they add the caveat naturally found in most theorists that:

> If myths relate what happened, they…do so in a different way and in a different spirit than the history written by academic historians. While the latter normally seek [simply] to discover "what really happened," myths create a powerful story, taking what happened and imbuing it with meaning. In the end, the symbolic aspects become the focus…[348]

Myth, when it has a historical core, we read, 'is not narrowly historical'. It is not 'dispassionate history';[349] not 'history-as-chronicle' but '*meaningful history*': 'facts reshaped by the transforming power of myth'.[350] It is a 'story about the inbreaking of Eternity into history with implications for the future'; transferring 'the participator into a shadowy, only partly understood realm of *deeper* reality'.[351]

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[339] Rivers 1912, 311-12; Malinowski 1948 [1926], 76, 102.
[340] Kolakowski 1989, 45; see 44-50; also Eliade 1963, 184-85.
[341] G.S. Kirk 1970, 33-34.
[342] Biderman and Scharfstein 1993, 12.
[343] Graf 1993, 31, 74.
[344] Csapo 2005, 9.
[345] May 1991, 26, 65.
[346] Thompson and Schrempp 2020, 154ff.
[347] Barber and Barber 2004, 3. Cf. also, e.g., Vitaliano 1973; Munz 1973; Firth 1984; Greene 1992; Raftery 1994; Vine 1995; Israeli 2001; Toelken 2002; Piccardi and Masse 2007; Mayor 2000; 2005; 2014.
[348] Thompson and Schrempp 2020, 158, 154.
[349] Champagne 1994, 446; Malinowski 1948 [1926], 102. Cf. Wyatt 2005, 155.
[350] Doty 2000, 43; Malinowski 1993 [1904-5], 86.
[351] Shipp 2002, 31; Townsend 1972, 194.

'The *why* is always implied in the *how*'.[352] Myth thus addresses the 'ontological gap between event and meaning', uncovering therein 'some sense of the numinous.'[353] In so doing 'myths do not attempt to replace empirical explanations but to add to their lot', are 'a higher-order treatment of fact'.[354] Wyatt further notes that whereas detached academic historiography is provisional, mythically valorised history is held, 'at least implicitly, to be immutable….Indeed, it is this quality of myth which is perhaps its primary function, since it appeals to, and remains, as an archetype or yardstick by which all other realities are to be evaluated…The myth is never questioned. It establishes the paradigm.'[355] Hence, what 'distinguishes mythical time' from the narrowly 'historical…is that for mythical time there is an absolute past'.[356] Myth is always, *functionally*, 'a primordial exemplary history'.[357] In this regard Malinowski early noted: 'Myth is a basic *category of reference* to the historical past. In contrast with pure history, which is satisfied with the reconstruction of facts,…myth searches the past for the embodiment of ideals…which colour the present.'[358] More recently, this insight has been developed in terms of the interrelation of 'myth' and 'cultural memory'. According to Egyptologist and cultural memory theorist Jan Assmann, 'cultural memory'—deemed the 'handing down of meaning', the 'cultural sphere that combines tradition, awareness of history, myth in action, and self-definition'—by its very nature 'focuses on fixed points in the past … tends to be condensed into symbolic figures to which memory attaches itself', and 'is imbued with an element of the sacred.' And here, Assmann concludes: 'any distinction between myth and history is eliminated. … One might even say that cultural memory transforms factual into remembered history, thus turning it into myth.'[359]

All that emerges from serious myth scholarship is that myth may or may not involve historical figures and events, but that in the former case it is never dispassionate history, always more than history. As Buonanno observes: 'whereas myth often means something that is untrue in everyday parlance, in the study of mythology, it means a sacred story with no assessment as to its literal truth.'[360] This non-dogmatic stance as to myth's historical referent among theorists may be considered a natural product of something implicit in much of what has been documented about 'myth' in this chapter: that it refers less to something 'intrinsic in any story in its own right', to the 'forms of narrative' but more to 'the attitude of the community towards them.'[361] To capture this nuance some theorists speak of 'myth' less as a noun than as a verb—a 'culture *"myths-out"* its social fabric as it is *"mythed/molded* by it'.[362] Or, in an analogous key, they hold that 'myths work in adverbial style':[363] involve events venerated 'mythically'.

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[352] Eliade 1959, 97. Cf. Cassirer 1955 [1925], 47-48; 1944, 102-3.
[353] E. Gould 1981, 6.
[354] Doty 2000, 446, 449.
[355] Wyatt 2008, 164. Cf. Hillman 1989, 221.
[356] Cassirer 1955 [1925], 106.
[357] Eliade 1963, 89. 'The metaphors of myth condense past and present together' (Hillman 1975, 155).
[358] Malinowski 1993 [1904-1905], 69-70. Cf. Jackson Knight 1936, 91: 'Myth…is used as a mental container to hold the facts of some new event. The container can be called an archetypal pattern…'
[359] Assmann 2011, 6, 10, 37-38.
[360] Buonanno 2018, 17.
[361] Ellwood 1999, 175; Oring 1986, 124. Cf. Burkert 1979, 22-23.
[362] Doty 2000, xiv. Cf. Walsh 2001, 10-11.
[363] Hillman 1990, 235.

From this perspective, whether myths revolve around historical figures and events is neither here nor there: '"mythic" never means "unreal" so much as it names recurrently real patterns by which *Homo sapiens* knits together the ways life has ultra- and super- meanings'.[364] Mythic events are simply

> those imbued with an aura of specialness: they are privileged, exemplary, larger-than-life phenomena which distil in peculiarly pure form some collective meaning … which elevate[] certain meanings to numinous status… [M]yth need not involve falsity… Nor need myths…breed[] deceptive effects…[365]

With this, of course, the vast majority of engagements with 'myth' in Pauline studies seem irrelevant insofar as they focus on a crude binary called 'myth and history'.

Conclusions

Having explored seven main currents in crossdisciplinary myth scholarship almost completely overlooked in Pauline studies, we arrive at the following core components which will be fundamental to our reappraisal of the concept's relevance for the interpretation of Paul. (1) Myth is a sacred narrative tradition of collective importance: 'sacred' both in its transcendent (hierophanic) content and culturally revered reception. (2) Myth is often affectively embodied and reexperienced in rites and rituals by its participants. (3) Myth is profoundly symbolic in character and so its applications: a particular species of symbols in narrative form, operating as a generative, polyvalent matrix of meaning bound to its content. (4) Myth is foundational in content and social function. It anchors its participants' social world in an unconditionally primary, foundational event by which existential meaning is embedded in the world, acquires the status of an eternal truth within and undergirding the stream of contingent truths, and so operates as a fixed foundational lens used to impart first-order meaning, value and directionality onto one's own experiences and the world process as a whole. (5) Myth is paradigmatic for the overall bearing, aims and life orientation of its participants. It affords them a paradigmatic model for how to move through life meaningfully, and so serves as an exemplary narrative pattern whose contours participants are propelled to seek out, conform to or otherwise actively implement in their daily lives. (6) Myth is fundamentally therapeutic in nature and its applications. It establishes a purposeful order to the world and all that holds sway in it, embodies a *coincidentia oppositorum* in which core existential polarities are functionally integrated, and so serves as a macro-symbolic perceptual and/or paradigmatic model especially in times of crisis: affording participants universals beyond their concrete experience with which to meaningfully relativise and orient, regulate and direct the polarities of personal existence. (7) Myth may or may not involve historical figures and events. From the perspective of myth theory, it is the sacred overtones, cultural reception and functionality of the material that is key, rendering a binary like myth and history irrelevant.

[364] Doty 2000, 75.
[365] Eagleton 1991, 189.

Part II.

Paul and Myth: Applying the Model

CHAPTER 3.

SACRED NARRATIVE IN PAUL: THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST

While an earlier generation of scholars may have considered Paul a man of 'the argument and the dialogue, not a man of the parable or story',[1] recent decades have seen several commentators noting the narrative dimension of Paul's writings. This turn to 'narrative' has been far from consistent and univocal,[2] and issues have been raised over methodology, application and aims.[3] However, the growing recognition of the 'centrality' of 'narrative elements' in Paul[4] provides a natural entry point for our inquiry into the heuristic potential of 'myth' in interpreting Paul.

Scholars have disagreed over whether narrative elements in Paul reflect a linear 'salvation history',[5] an array of (discrete) narratives,[6] or a punctiliar Christ event singularly undercutting all other stories.[7] Their agreement about the centrality of the 'story of Jesus'[8] supplies a focal point for engagement with Paul and 'myth'. There has been broad recognition that all other (sub)stories present in Paul are ultimately subservient to and fashioned by the 'story of Jesus', which emerges as the 'controlling narrative' in Paul's letters.[9]

While there are dangers in attempting to present a synthetic story of Jesus from Paul's various statements,[10] guided by Thompson and Schrempp's basic delineation of narrative as 'a series of temporally linked events…connected in a diachronic, causal syntax',[11] a number of coalescing passages reveal an overall narrative dynamic to the 'gospel of Christ'—the 'good news of God's son' (Rom 1:9). If there are issues with a linear *Heilsgeschichte* approach to Paul,[12] it still would seem necessary to acknowledge that the 'Christ event' for Paul did not exist in a vacuum. Even if *ex post facto* read in light of that event—working back from 'solution' to 'plight'[13]—it appears to gain meaning from certain 'pre-gospel' elements from Jewish tradition. How does this relate to the story of Jesus as the controlling

[1] Beker 1980, 353.
[2] Barclay 2002, 133.
[3] Matlock 2002, 47-50; B.W. Longenecker 2002, 82-83; Dunn 2002, 217-22; Stegman 2005, 82-84.
[4] Hays 2002 [1983], 6.
[5] Witherington 1994, 2, 5, 38, 66.
[6] E. Adams 2002, 42.
[7] Barclay 2002, 146. Cf. Martyn 1994.
[8] Constantineanu 2010, 13.
[9] J. Kirk 2011, 4; cf. Hays 2002 [1983], 197-98; 2004, 224, 237; Witherington 1994, 3, 5, 207; 2016, 2:150; E. Adams 2002, 33; D.A. Campbell 2002, 98, 107 n. 14; Barclay 2002, 144; A.T. Lincoln 2002, 198; Wright 2013, 1:517.
[10] More so with—as has often been pursued—some larger, implicit story.
[11] Thompson and Schrempp 2020, 8. Contra those who have sought to fit a more elaborate (and problematic) Greimesian-actantial model of 'narrative' onto Paul (e.g., Hays, Wright, Adams).
[12] Cf. Barrett 1962, 4-5; J. Davies 2021, 205-8.
[13] E.P. Sanders 1977, 434ff.

narrative? Horrell seems most illuminating in 'distinguishing two different senses in which the gospel story has a beginning':

> Arranged chronologically, its beginning is the creation, Adam, and so on; in this sense the coming of Christ is a subsequent event within this temporal narrative. But…the Christ event is…the generative beginning … the Christ event *gives* meaning to the temporal narrative… We can perhaps say that the Christ event (as generative beginning) gives meaning to a temporal narrative of God's creative and saving purposes, and then, seen within it, gains meaning from that narrative.[14]

This dialectic noted, on surveying intersecting narrative segments pertaining to Jesus in the undisputed epistles, the following emerges as an overall outline of the story of Jesus:

> Chronologically arranged, it presupposes the eternal God's creation of the cosmos and of man in 'the image and glory of God';[15] that 'in Adam', the 'πρῶτος human' and his 'going astray' there was some form of cosmic fall whereby human life came to be dominated by destructive forces;[16] and that 'in Moses' Israel entered a relationship of election with God via the Jewish law,[17] yet this was unable to address the fundamental human condition.[18]
>
> God however promised Abraham that in him and his 'seed' he would bless 'all peoples'.[19] And turning to the story's *generative beginning*: 'when the fullness of time had come, God sent his son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem' humanity (and all creation) 'that we might receive adoption as sons'/children of God;[20] 'to rescue us from the present evil aeon', 'having sent his own son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and to deal with sin'.[21] This son was the recent Jewish person of Jesus (Christ),[22] though prior to 'being born in human form' his essence already existed 'in the form of God'.[23] Being betrayed at his last supper, Jesus accomplished this liberation by suffering a shameful and torturous death at the hands of 'Jews' and 'rulers of this age': 'death on a cross'.[24] He was ultimately 'delivered over' to this death by God: 'sacrificed' 'according to the will of our God and Father', 'who did not spare his own son but gave him over for us all'[25]—as the supreme expression of his 'love'.[26] At the same time Jesus 'abased himself' and was 'obedient unto death': willingly 'gave himself over' for us[27]—a supreme expression of *his* 'love'.[28]
>
> Having died and been buried Jesus was 'raised on the third day', 'raised from the dead through the glory of the Father', unto a 'body of glory':[29] appearing 'to Cephas then the Twelve', to 'more than five hundred' people, 'to James then all the apostles.'[30] 'God the Father…raised him from the dead',[31] declaring him 'son of God with power according to the spirit of sanctity by resurrection from the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord';[32] who 'having died and been raised up' is 'at God's right

[14] Horrell 2002, 167 n. 18.

[15] Rom 1:20, 25; 11:36; 16:26-27; 1 Cor 8:6a; 10:26; 11:7-12; 2 Cor 4:6a.

[16] Rom 5:12-21; 8:20-21; 1 Cor 15:21-22, 45—'falling short of God's glory' (Rom 3:23; cf. *ApocMos* 21.6). Given 1 Cor 15:45-49, Paul was certainly aware that אָדָם, 'before it ever might be considered a personal name, meant human being or earth creature' (Witherington 1994, 12).

[17] Rom 2:17-20; 5:14; 9:4; 1 Cor 9:20; 10:2.

[18] Cf. Rom 3:9-30; 4:13-17; 5:20; 6:14; 7:1-24; 8:3-8; 9:31-32; 10:1-21; 1 Cor 15:56; 2 Cor 3:6-17; Gal 2:15-16; 3:6-24; 5:4; Phil 3:2-9; Barrett 1962, 64.

[19] Gal 3:8, 16; cf. Rom 4:13-17; Gen 12:1-3; 22:18.

[20] Gal 4:4-5; cf. Rom 5:6; 8:14-29; Gal 3:26; Phil 2:15.

[21] Gal 1:4; Rom 8:3; cf. 2 Cor 5:21.

[22] Rom 1:3-4, 5:10-11; 8:1-4; 9:4-5; 15:8-12; 1 Cor 1:9; 9:5; 2 Cor 1:19; Gal 1:15-19; 4:4-5.

[23] Phil 2:5-7; cf. Rom 8:3; 9:5; 1 Cor 1:24, 30; 8:6; 10:4; 15:47; 2 Cor 5:18-19; Gal 4:4; also Col 1:15ff.; 2:9.

[24] 1 Cor 11:23; 1 Thess 2:14-15; 1 Cor 2:8; Phil 2:8; cf. Rom 5:10; 1 Cor 1:13, 17-18, 23; 2:2, 8; 11:26; Gal 3:1; 5:11; 6:12, 14; 2 Cor 13:4.

[25] Rom 4:25; 1 Cor 5:7; Gal 1:4; Rom 8:32; cf. Rom 3:25; 8:3; 2 Cor 5:21.

[26] Rom 5:8; cf. 8:39.

[27] Phil 2:8; Gal 1:4; 2:20; cf. Rom 5:18-19.

[28] Rom 8:34-35a, 37; Gal 2:20; 2 Cor 5:14; cf. Phil 1:8; 2:1.

[29] 1 Cor 15:3-4; Rom 6:4; Phil 3:21; cf. 1 Cor 2:8; 15:43; 2 Cor 3:18; 4:4; 13:4; Phil 2:11; 4:19.

[30] 1 Cor 15:5-7.

[31] Gal 1:1; cf. Rom 4:24; 10:9; 1 Cor 15:12, 15, 20; 2 Cor 5:15; Phil 2:9; 1 Thess 1:10; 4:14.

[32] Rom 1:4; cf. 14:9; Phil 2:9-11.

hand and intercedes for us', as 'Lord of both the dead and the living'[33] until the end: the final bodily resurrection and judgement[34] at the παρουσία/ἡμέρα of the Lord Jesus Christ,[35] when having subdued all things 'he hands over the kingdom to the God and Father…that God may be all in all.'[36]

Insofar as 'God was in Christ reconciling a world to himself', his dying and rising inaugurated a 'new creation',[37] wherein set free from the tyranny of destructive forces[38] those receiving this gospel with faith (the ἐκκλησία of Christ/God) have been reconciled with God[39]—'redeemed', 'saved', 'sanctified', 'glorified'.[40] They experience the guiding spirit of God/Christ;[41] receive the gift of '(eternal) life'[42] and, assured of having an abode with God 'eternal in the heavens', await confidently at the end from there their saviour Jesus Christ,[43] who as 'the first-fruits of those who have fallen asleep'[44] shall 'transform our body of abasement conformable to his body of glory'.[45]

It is clear that several aspects of this story conform to the phenomenon of 'myth'. Clearly it is, at base, a *collective*, *traditional narrative*. Thus, Paul assumes among his readers 'a shared knowledge of this basic "story pattern" about Jesus', including those at Rome whom he had never met.[46] He refers to hundreds of others before him who had directly experienced the risen Christ (1 Cor 15:5-8; cf. Rom 16:7; Gal 1:17). Prior to his world-reorientating revelatory experience, he had initially persecuted (1 Cor 15:9; Gal 1:13; Phil 3:6) an established Christian ἐκκλησία: an 'assembly' or 'community' of 'people with shared belief'—used both of 'Christians living and meeting in a particular locality', and of the wider 'global community of Christians'.[47] In Paul's summary statement of the gospel in Rom 1:3-4, numerous linguistic and thematic factors have demonstrated to virtually all scholars that Paul is drawing on 'something traditional that he expects will resonate with the Roman Christians'.[48] The same goes for Rom 3:24-25 and 4:25,[49] Gal 1:4(-5)[50]—to say nothing of 1 Cor 15:3-7 and Phil 2:6-11—while in 1 Cor Paul speaks explicitly of 'receiving' (παραλαβεῖν) and 'passing on' (παραδιδόναι) 'tradition' (παράδοσις) vis-à-vis Jesus (11:2, 23; 15:3ff.). Indeed the majority of narrative-shaped passages in Paul are held 'by most scholars to be "traditional" texts…of early Christianity incorporated into short confessions of faith, summaries of the gospel, and hymns.'[51]

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[33] Rom 8:34; 14:9; cf. Rom 5:1-2, 11, 21; 1 Cor 15:57; 2 Cor 3:14-16; Phil 2:9-11; 1 Thess 5:9.
[34] Rom 2:16; 8:23; 1 Cor 15:21-23, 42-54; 2 Cor 5:10; Phil 3:21.
[35] 1 Cor 1:8; 5:5; 15:23; 2 Cor 1:14; Phil 1:6, 10; 2:16; 1 Thess 2:19; 3:13; 4:15-17; 5:2, 23.
[36] 1 Cor 15:24-28.
[37] 2 Cor 5:19, 17; Gal 6:14-15; cf. Rom 5:12-21; 7:6; 1 Cor 5:7-8; 10:11; 11:25; 2 Cor 3:6; 6:2; Gal 3:23-28.
[38] Rom 5:1-21; 6:9-23; 8:1-3; 2 Cor 6:1-2; 8:9; Gal 1:3-4; 5:1, 13; 1 Thess 1:10.
[39] Rom 3:21-30; 4:24-25; 5:1, 9-11; 2 Cor 5:18-21; Gal 2:16-21; Phil 3:9 et al.
[40] Gal 3:13; 1 Cor 15:1-2; 1 Cor 1:2; Rom 8:30 et al.
[41] Rom 7:6; 8:1-16; 1 Cor 2:10-16; 6:19-20; 2 Cor 11:4; Gal 3:2-14; 4:4-6; Phil 1:19; 3:3; 1 Thess 1:5-6; 4:8 et al.
[42] Rom 5:17-21; 6:22-23; 1 Cor 15:45; 2 Cor 5:15; Gal 6:8; Phil 2:16 et al.
[43] 2 Cor 5:1-2; Phil 3:20; 1 Thess 1:10; 4:16; cf. Phil 1:23.
[44] 1 Cor 15:20; cf. Rom 8:29.
[45] Phil 3:21; cf. 1 Cor 15:21-23; 2 Cor 4:17.
[46] L.T. Johnson 1996, 158; cf. 120.
[47] BDAG, 303-4. Nb. Meeks 1983, 75. On Paul's claim to revelation in Gal 1, cf. Witherington 1994, 151.
[48] Fitzmyer 1993, 230. Cf. Käsemann 1980, 10ff.; Jewett 1985; Dunn 1988, 1:5-6; Byrne 1996, 43-44; Lee 2005, 262ff.; R.N. Longenecker 2016, 63ff.
[49] Bultmann 1936b, 11-12; Wegenast 1962, 80-82; Reumann 1966, 433-43; Schlier 1977, 135-37; Käsemann 1980, 100-1, 128; van der Minde 1982; B.F. Meyer 1983; Dunn 1988, 1:163-64, 198, 224-25; Fitzmyer 1993, 343-44; Furnish 1993, 109-10; Martyn 1997a, 142-43; Hurtado 2003, 128-29; Jewett 2007, 267-71; R.N. Longenecker 2016, 394-98, 417-25, 483, 535-37.
[50] Popkes 1967, 196-97, 273-74; Bovon 1978; Schütz 1975, 115; Betz 1979, 41; Bruce 1982, 75; Mußner 1988, 50; Breytenbach 1993, 67-73; Martyn 1997b, 88-89; de Boer 2011, 29; Tuckett 2019, 330-31.
[51] Gorman 2001, 77. See Sumney 2017.

This collective narrative is *sacred* in the twofold sense characteristic of 'myth'; i.e., it relates a dramatic breakthrough 'of the sacred (or the "supernatural") into the World', and it is venerated as a 'sacred story…deal[ing] with realities'.[52] It is the 'story of a "divine rescue mission"', revered by its community of followers as 'the revelation of a mystery…now disclosed…by the command of the eternal God, eliciting the obedience of faith'[53]—'the word of truth, the gospel of our salvation',[54] revealing the 'power and wisdom of God' (1 Cor 1:24). Indeed, Paul's letters themselves are littered with references to the 'sacred' (ἅγιος) vis-à-vis the gospel and its community. Christ was 'declared son of God in power according to the spirit of ἁγιωσύνη by resurrection from the dead' (Rom 1:4). Community members—'ἡγιασμένοι in Christ Jesus', 'in the ἅγιος spirit'[55]—experience ἁγιασμός therein;[56] self-identify as ἅγιοι.[57] Paul saw himself to be ministering the 'sacred service (ἱερουργοῦντα) of the gospel' of 'Christ Jesus to the Gentiles' (Rom 15:16).

Also noteworthy is the theme of *creation*, of a decisive, originary event which is another hallmark of mythic narrative.[58] It is the 'narrative of a new creation…inaugurat[ed] in the death and resurrection of Jesus', concerning 'decisive events that changed the human situation', that terminated 'the old age and usher[ed] in a new one, in such a way that the very structure of reality [was] transformed'.[59]

In its focus on a life-giving death, we encounter two further themes identified as key characteristics of myth: those of *sacrifice* and the *coincidentia oppositorum*—the reconciling and functional integration of existential polarities.[60] The gospel narrative reflected in Paul's letters thus manifests every one of the core thematic traits of myth encountered in the previous chapter.

One additional feature of this gospel which has puzzled scholars may be illuminated by the insights of myth theory, namely, its brevity, especially when compared with the later written Gospels.[61] While there are indications that Paul was aware of additional information about Jesus' life,[62] other than his last supper (1 Cor 11:23-25) these lack context within an integrative narrative form. The usual explanation carries some weight, 'the genre in which Paul actually writes: the hortatory pastoral letter'. 'Rather than

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[52] Eliade 1963, 6. For attempts to redress the oft-neglected dimension of communal religious experience in the formation of early Christianity, see Dunn 1975; L.T. Johnson 1998; Hurtado 2000.

[53] Constantineanu 2010, 140; Rom 16:25-26; cf. 1 Cor 2:7-9; Meeks 1983, 92-93.

[54] Eph 1:13; cf. Gal 2:5, 14; Col 1:5.

[55] 1 Cor 1:2; Rom 15:16; cf. 5:5; 9:1; 15:13; 1 Cor 6:11, 19; 12:3; 2 Cor 6:6; 13:14; 1 Thess 1:6; 4:8; 5:23.

[56] Rom 6:19, 22; 1 Cor 1:30; 1 Thess 4:3-4, 7.

[57] Rom 1:7; 8:27; 12:13; 15:25-26, 31; 16:2, 15-16; 1 Cor 1:2; 6:1-2; 7:14; 14:33; 16:1, 15 et al.

[58] See pp. 50-51, above.

[59] J. Kirk 2011, 27; Witherington 1994, 88; Hays 1991, 239. Cf. W. Bowers, *DPL*, 617; Boyce 2017, 27. Many unwittingly see in early Christian eschatology (as in wider Jewish thought) the *mythic* dynamic of a rebeginning as 'the counterpart to the…cosmogony' (Eliade 1963, 76). Cf. Witherington 1994, 275, 311; E. Adams 2002, 25-29.

[60] See pp. 45, 62-63, above.

[61] 'If the Gospels have been called passion narratives with a long introduction, Paul's telling of the story of Christ may be called a passion narrative with a short introduction' (Witherington 1994, 205). Cf. Meeks 1993, 196.

[62] E.g., Rom 8:15-16 and Gal 4:6 make it 'highly likely that Paul and his readers shared the tradition that Jesus prayed to God with the diminutive Aramaic form of *Abba* [Mk 14:36]' (L.T. Johnson 1996, 119). Again, we read of Jesus' poverty, meekness and selflessness (Rom 15:3; 2 Cor 8:9; 10:1); and encounter various echoes of Jesus' teaching later found in the Gospels (cf., e.g., Rom 14:14 [with Mk 7:15/Mt 15:11/*GosThom* 14]; 1 Cor 7:10 [with Mk 10:11-12 parr.]; 1 Cor 9:14 [with Mt 10:10/Lk 10:7]; 1 Cor 11:23-25 [with Mk 14:22ff. parr.]; 1 Thess 4:15).

re-narrating…Paul…alludes, summarizes or reflects.'[63] Yet, 1 Cor 11:23-25 demonstrates that Paul was not averse to citing traditions pertaining to Jesus' pre-crucifixion life in a narrative context when this was at hand, even if that context was of no particular relevance to his hortatory aims. Recalling Doty's three-part continuum in the 'relative vitality of a myth',[64] specifically the phase of initial, 'primary myth' (as opposed to status-quo-supporting 'implicit myth' and threatened 'rationalised myth'), the whole issue emerges in a new light. To cite more expansively what Doty writes of this primary phase or level of operational vitality—in language arrestingly evocative of Paul:

> Here the myth addresses itself directly to the need of the culture to have answers concerning significant questions and problems of human existence. We do not find developed mythic narratives in this phase, simply because it is the period of initial formation … the period when a new cultural model and a new mode of self-understanding begin to be assimilated. This is the period of compelling commitment, the time when the appeal of the protomyth is precisely its newly discerned ability to explain how the world got the way it is and how the parts of the experienced universe fit together. Think of someone undergoing conversion to a new religious or political theory at the point where the person has just begun to think it explains most of human history…[65]

This insight into the phase of 'initial formation' or 'primary myth', of 'compelling commitment' to a 'new cultural model' or 'protomyth' may then be correlated with the conclusion of Lévi-Strauss that 'the strongest myths are not the most aesthetically rich or culturally complex, but those that display most cleanly their paradigmatic structure'—'myth actually degenerates as it accumulates complexities deleterious to its structural message.'[66]

In terms of the core structure of the gospel found in Paul's letters, it focuses on the 'progress of Jesus through death to resurrection, since it is at this point that the Christian is reconstituted'. It exhibits a 'clear narrative structure in two complementary parts', two 'movements or trajectories; one from "sending", through suffering, to death; and the other from death, through resurrection, to heavenly glorification'.[67] Having established this core narrative structure as a logical and promising focal point for mythic analysis of Paul, I proceed in the following chapters to test the heuristic potential of the wider phenomenology of myth as this bears on exegesis of its functioning in problematic portions of the Pauline corpus. We turn firstly to the matter of early Christian *ritual* reflected in Paul.

[63] Hays 2004, 221.
[64] See p. 56, above.
[65] Doty 2000, 138.
[66] As summarised by Von Hendy 2002, 236.
[67] D.A. Campbell 2002, 118, 113, 106-7; cf. Witherington 1994, 89.

CHAPTER 4.

TESTING THE WATERS: BAPTISM, WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO THE PROBLEMATIC OF ROM 6:3-11

Numerous theorists have explored how myths are characteristically allied with rituals, in such a way that one is emically valorised as the mirror image of the other (§§2.2-3). Paul attests to two primary rituals: baptism and the Lord's supper, each connected with the content of the gospel. This chapter takes what Paul says about the ritual of baptism as a way of exploring the hermeneutical potential of 'myth'.

References in Paul to baptism or believers being baptized occur in five passages across three letters: Gal 3:27f.; 1 Cor 1:13ff.; 12:13; 15:29; and Rom 6:3ff.[1] There is broad agreement on two basic aspects of this ritual at the time of Paul. Firstly, as widely attested elsewhere in the New Testament and indicated by the terms βαπτίζειν and βάπτισμα themselves (to '*dip, plunge*...—in Pass., *to be drowned*'; 'put or go under water', a '*plunging*, *dipping*, *washing*'),[2] it involved some form of water immersion/ablution. 1 Cor 1:13-17 and the consistent passive form of the verb indicate that this was officiated by another. Many infer that it would have been accompanied by christological affirmations; and, reflecting later practice, by de-robing and re-robing,[3] though this is less certain. Scholars agree that the heart of the ritual centred on the water bath. Secondly, there is broad recognition that at the time of Paul, baptism served as an initiatory 'rite of passage' into the Christian ἐκκλησία. Hence, Paul takes it for granted that all of his believing audiences—including those unknown to him (Rom 6:3ff.)—have undergone baptism, treats it as a single event tied to the beginnings of Christian life, and refers to it in terms of transference from one (inferior) realm or position to another.[4] Beyond these two points, however, there has been no consensus or clarity on the overall picture of baptism Paul reflects, and this is nowhere as true as Paul's most substantial appeal to baptism in Rom 6:3-11. The difficulty of this passage is often affirmed: 'To listen to the varied interpretations…is to be confronted with a veritable Babel of voices'.[5] Presenting 'problems of extraordinary complexity for New Testament scholarship', what 'Paul meant in this passage is a puzzle'.[6] 'What it means to be "baptized into Christ Jesus" and to be "baptized into his death" is difficult to understand'.[7] 'It is difficult to fully understand and thus to describe the precise

[1] Also Col 2:12; Eph 4:5; cf. 1 Cor 10:2.

[2] LSJ, 1:305; BDAG, 164-65. Cf. Mk 7:4; Lk 11:38.

[3] Apropos the 'clothing' imagery of Gal 3:27 and Col 2:11-12 (cf. Col 3:9-10). E.g., Meeks 1983, 88, 151; R.N. Longenecker 1990, 156; Witherington 1994, 315; Kim 2004, 96-101, 150. Cf. Hipp. *Trad.* 21.3, 20.

[4] N. Taylor 2016, 117; on such rites, see p. 46, above. That said Paul nowhere deems this necessary for salvation *per se* (cf. 1 Cor 1:14-17).

[5] Beasley-Murray 1962, 130.

[6] Betz 2004, 84; Weltin 1960, 76 n. 6.

[7] Kruse 2012, 260.

nature of this participation.'[8] From the perspective of myth theory it does not at all 'seem odd'[9] that baptism should be connected with Christ's death, and since the baptismal dynamics of Rom 6:3ff. have proved so problematic, this key passage warrants special attention in terms of the hermeneutical potential of 'myth'.

4.1 The Context and Significance of Rom 6:3-11

Although Rom 6:3-11 has routinely been approached as 'unusual', 'peculiarly Pauline' theology,[10] there are significant indications that Paul is here reflecting something widely known and believed about baptism among early Christians. Stylistically, the opening ἢ ἀγνοεῖτε ὅτι formula (6:3) implies an appeal to common knowledge.[11] Moreover, the whole passage, set almost entirely in the first person plural, is littered with constructions analogous in function to ἢ ἀγνοεῖτε ὅτι: propositions being taken for granted (6:5, 7, 8), appeals to what 'we know' (6:6, 9), what 'we believe' (6:8). Most decisive is the *raison d'être* of this appeal to baptism. After all, baptism itself is not the 'subject' of Rom 6. Paul is using the practice of baptism 'as the point of reference for answering the question' of 6:1:[12] 'What then shall we say? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound?' (cf. 6:15). In 3:8 Paul indicated that some were 'slanderously' claiming that he promoted such a deviant, antinomian gospel of libertinism, and the charge has naturally resurfaced given what he has just stated in 5:20. In 6:2 Paul rejects such a charge by affirming: 'Absolutely not! How shall we who died to sin still live in it?' In the ensuing verses the dynamics of baptism are marshalled to *corroborate* this assertion—'nicht *die Bedeutung der Taufe* erklären, sondern *mit Hilfe der Taufe* erklären, warum die christlichen Wir der Sünde gestorben sind und nicht mehr in ihr leben (V. 2)'.[13] It would thus be a misunderstanding to suppose that here Paul is presenting a novel doctrine of baptism 'instead of realizing that he is arguing his case, in which the practice and the doctrine of baptism function as…*proofs*'.[14] Passages elsewhere suggest that Paul did not have to invoke baptism to affirm the proposition of 6:2.[15] The fact that he *does*, in the context, style

[8] Arnold 2010, 135.

[9] Wagner 1967, 5.

[10] Betz 2004, 111-12. Cf. Beasley-Murray 1962, 127-28; Schnackenburg 1964, 33-34; Brandon 1965, 26 n. 2; Wagner 1967, 5, 278-79; Frankemölle 1970, 40; Jewett 2007, 396; Kuo-Yu Tsui 2012, 400-1.

[11] Lietzmann 1933, 67; Schnackenburg 1955, 42; Braumann 1962, 54-55; Beasley-Murray 1962, 126; Gäumann 1967, 72-73; Ridderbos 1977, 397; Halter 1977, 41; Kaye 1979, 60; G. Barth 1981, 95; Wedderburn 1987, 40-42; Fitzmyer 1993, 433; Hartman 1997, 70; Ferguson 2009, 155; Matera 2010, 148; Kruse 2012, 260; Schreiner 2018, 308; Moo 2018, 384. Given that it indicates Paul 'thinks that Christians in Rome are likely to know at least the truth stated in the rest of this verse' (Cranfield 1975, 330), claims that '[p]erhaps the Roman Christians were familiar with…ἐβαπτίσθημεν εἰς Χριστὸν Ἰησοῦν,…but baptism "into his death" seems to be something unusual' (Betz 2004, 111; also Dunn 1988, 1:327; Penna 1996, 1:141) fail. 6:3 refers squarely to the fact, not *that* we were baptized into Christ, but that those 'baptized into Christ Jesus *were baptized into his death*'.

[12] Furnish 2009, 172.

[13] Wolter 2011, 142 (emphasis added). Cf. Lietzmann 1933, 65; Michel 1966, 148-49, 152-53; G. Barth 1981, 98-99; Frid 1986, 188; Lüdemann 1989, 109-11; Guerra 1995, 132; Byrne 1996, 189; Hartman 1997, 69-70; Esler 2003, 202-3; Debanné 2006, 181; Hellholm 2011, 459-62; R.N. Longenecker 2016, 604, 610-12.

[14] Hellholm 2004, 142; see 119-79. This is true of all of Paul's appeals to baptism: 'nirgends wird dabei die Taufe selbst zum Thema. Immer bleibt sie ein Mittel, um das auszusagen, was für Paulus das eigentliche Thema ist' (G. Barth 1981, 193; cf. Meeks 1983, 154; Ferguson 2009, 146).

[15] E.g., Rom 7:4-6; Gal 2:19-20; 5:24. Cf. C.H. Dodd 1932, 87.

and manner that he does, and here alone of his appeals to baptism to a congregation he has had no prior connection with, indicates strongly that 'Paul, in Romans 6, is not contributing a unique doctrine of baptism, as is already clear from ἢ ἀγνοεῖτε, but rather is making reference to the understanding of baptism prevalent in Christian communities'.[16] Where the Pauline corpus as a whole constitutes the primary source for any careful reconstruction of baptismal praxis 'in the most ancient strata of the early church',[17] then, the baptismal dynamics of Rom 6 emerge as '[f]oremost among the motifs that Paul takes for granted, known not only to members of groups he founded'.[18]

4.2 Interpreting Baptism in Rom 6:3-11 as a Myth-Ritual Complex

With the above in mind, let us turn to an analysis of the text itself and its various *cruces*, in light of insights already gleaned into the contours of a myth-ritual complex.

4.2.1 Dying and Rising in Baptism (6:3-4)

Paul introduces his baptismal proof in 6:3-4 with the following statement: 'or, are you unaware that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus (εἰς Χριστὸν Ἰησοῦν) were baptized into his death (εἰς τὸν θάνατον αὐτοῦ ἐβαπτίσθημεν)? That is, we were co-buried with him (συνετάφημεν αὐτῷ) through baptism into death (διὰ βαπτίσματος εἰς τὸν θάνατον), in order that (ἵνα) just as Christ (ὥσπερ…Χριστὸς) was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too (οὕτως καὶ ἡμεῖς) might walk in newness of life (ἐν καινότητι ζωῆς περιπατήσωμεν).' Similar *themes* have been detected in many New Testament texts—Mk 10:33-39;[19] Jn 3:3-5; 19:34;[20] Col 2:12-13; 3:1-3; Eph 2:5-6; 5:14;[21] 1 Pet 1:3, 23; 3:18-21;[22] 2 Tim 2:11; Tit 3:5-7—and are found across the early Fathers.[23] How such motifs, and what Paul here actually writes, are to be sufficiently explained specifically in relation *to baptism* has proved remarkably difficult to establish, not least because, particularly in reaction to older theories of dependence on pagan mystery cults, commentators have resisted any idea of a 'mystical union' with or 're-enactment' of Christ and his fate in baptism. While interpretations differ greatly, a few dominant trends in the literature may be grouped, and insofar as each presents difficulties, they serve as a point of departure for our analysis.

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[16] Guerra 1995, 132. Cf. also Orig. *CommRom* 5.8.8 (Scheck, 357); Lietzmann 1933, 67; C.H. Dodd 1932, 84-87; Bultmann 1951, 141; Schneider 1952, 43 n. 70; Gäumann 1967, 46; Tannehill 1967, 12-14; Michel 1966, 149-56; Cranfield 1975, 300; Käsemann 1980, 161-67; G. Barth 1981, 94; Morris 1988, 246-48; Barrett 1991, 112-13; Fitzmyer 1993, 431; Hartman 1997, 89; Standhartinger 1999, 139; Furnish 2009, 172; Hellholm 2011, 468; Wright 2015, 449; R.N. Longenecker 2016, 613; Thielman 2018, 303.

[17] Hellholm 2011, 471.

[18] Meeks 1983, 154.

[19] Scroggs and Groff 1973, 536-57; A.Y. Collins 1989b, 41; Donahue and Harrington 2002, 311; Marcus 2009, 754.

[20] Bultmann 1951, 142.

[21] A.T. Lincoln 1990, 91, 319, 331-32; Schnackenburg 1991, 94-95, 227-29.

[22] Michaels 1988, 201, 218.

[23] E.g., GregNaz *Or.* 40.9; Bas. *Spir.* 15.35; ConstApost 7.43; CyrJ *Cat.* 20.4-7; GregNyss *Cat.* 35; Ambr. *Sacr.* 2.19, 6.7-8; August. *Serm.* 229A.1; PaulNol *Ep.* 23.18; cf. also Barn. 11 (arguing that [baptismal] 'water' and 'cross' belong together).

A. One angle has been to latch onto the Hebraic ethical associations of the verb περιπατεῖν (6:4c), and/or the application Paul later arrives at as furnishing a purely *moral* import: 'Rom. 6 amounts to the eminently ethical idea that baptism…bring[s] us to a moral way of life—ἵνα περιπατήσωμεν'; in baptism one 'chooses the new ethical constitution of life … in principle given in the resurrection of Jesus'. Contra the 'efficacious' rites of the 'mystery-cults', then, 'everything is based on the moral idea of self-decision, any magical *Vermittlung* is completely excluded'.[24] In this vein, Wassermann reads Rom 6 as reflecting 'Platonic moral psychology', and suggests that baptism is a kind of 'analogy for a moral-psychological transformation brought about by God's work in Christ': 'In 6.4 baptism into Christ's death…is an analogy, not an equalization of the experience of the believer with Christ's death and resurrection. Paul's final reflection on the meaning of baptism also supports this interpretation: "therefore, *think of yourselves* as dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus" (6.11).' Read otherwise, Wasserman claims, Paul's statements are 'nonsensical'.[25] Again, Miller suggests that the imagery refers to 'virtuous practice' in the church: 'Paul does not say that the church is mystically joined to Christ in [baptism]. The participation with Christ is by means of new practices.'[26] The problem with such readings is that they are largely oriented to interpreting the way Paul later *applies* the dynamics of baptism related in 6:3-4 *to* the believers' 'death to sin' (6:2)—'for the one having died is freed from sin' (6:7)—at the expense of engaging the baptismal dynamics themselves, the *ritual* on which this appeal is based: 'I take it that baptism functions primarily as an analogy', writes Wasserman, and 'that little if anything about the practice of baptism can be inferred'.[27] It is not the case that Paul speaks here simply of 'putting to death *certain parts* of the person',[28] nor does he say baptism brings one to a 'moral *way* of life' given '*in principle* in the resurrection of Jesus'—much less that 'participation with Christ *is by means of new practices*'. Those *baptized* into Christ Jesus, Paul relates consistently in the aorist, 'were baptized *into his death…co-buried* with him through baptism into *death*, in order that *just as Christ* was raised from the dead…*so we too* might walk in newness of life.'

B. Many seek to place the emphasis squarely on the Christ event and *its* significance. According to Tannehill, baptism 'cannot be understood as a repetition of Christ's death and resurrection,…or in any other way which seeks to supplement the death and resurrection of Christ as particular events in the past'. 'There is no clear analogy between the act of entering the water and Christ's death, for Christ was not drowned. Nor is there a clear analogy between entering the water and burial, for burial at sea is not the normal means of burial.' Rather, Paul here refers

> to Christ's death and resurrection as eschatological events…Through this death and resurrection the believers are freed from the old aeon…Time does not separate the believer from Christ's death and resurrection because the new dominion as a whole participates in these events. … Thus baptism does not have an independent significance…When Paul speaks of baptism into Christ as baptism

[24] Rendtorff 1905, 36, 30 n. 2, 31. Similarly, e.g., Kittel 1914, 46. Cf. also Cranfield 1975, 305: 'The reference is to the moral life…This newness of life is the moral aspect of that life'.
[25] Wasserman 2008a, 403, 411.
[26] Miller 2014, 110-11.
[27] Wasserman 2008b, 131 n. 28.
[28] Wasserman 2008a, 403 n. 21.

> into his death…he does not mean that Christ and his death…are made present through baptism. Rather, this formulation presupposes that, quite apart from the baptism of any particular individual, Christ and his death are continuing realities within the new dominion…[29]

Similarly Käsemann, for whom 'only pious imagination' could link 'burial with Christ to going under the water', maintains that the 'historical and theological priority of the cross is not contested. Baptism…is not made its repetition'. Nor is there any 'mystical union' with or 'sacramental experience of the death of Jesus' on the believer's part. Rather, 'the concept of vicariousness controls and interprets here that of the fellowship in his fate. Otherwise the cross of Jesus loses its fundamental significance… Christ alone died on the cross. Only inasmuch as he died for us are we too brought into his death'.[30] Despite noting that 6:4b characterises the action denoted 'as in some way analogous to Christ's being raised from the dead', Cranfield opines, contra the 'union of the postulant with the god' effected in 'pagan mystery cult' rites: 'Not that [baptism] actually relates the person concerned to Christ's death…; but that it points to…that death which the person concerned has already died'.[31] Wedderburn holds that here baptism 'is not outwardly a re-enactment of Christ's death', 'for Christ did not die by drowning but by crucifixion': 'rather [his followers] are related to that single past death … God's final, decisive act that can be neither repeated nor superseded'.[32] Seconding the above, Moo concludes:

> It is not, then, that baptism…is the place at which we die and rise with Christ. Dying and rising with Christ refers to the participation of the believer in the redemptive events themselves; and the ultimate basis for Paul's appeal in this chapter is not what happened when we were baptized, but what happened when Christ died and rose again.[33]

Analogous readings could be multiplied.[34] Yet, though they differ in detail, such readings exhibit one fundamental deficiency. Baptism itself is left with no intrinsic, instrumental function or effect, no 'independent significance', which hardly accords with the text: those '*baptized* into Christ Jesus were *baptized* into his death … co-buried with him *through baptism* into death, *in order that* just as Christ…we too might walk in newness of life.'

C. A third angle has been to add an *ὄνομα* to εἰς Χριστὸν as furnishing a 'less mystical than realist' notion of baptism into Christ and his death. Thus, contra the idea that 'baptism as a dying and rising with Christ was adopted…from the Greek Mystery Religions', Beasley-Murray suggests that εἰς Χριστὸν is an 'abbreviation of the common εἰς τὸ ὄνομα τοῦ Χριστοῦ…and therefore has the meaning of baptism with reference to Christ, for dedication to…Christ', so that one may then 'interpret "we were baptized to his death" as also possessing [this] vaguer meaning'.[35] Again, Barrett takes εἰς Χριστὸν as 'probably an abbreviated form of the fuller "into the name of Christ Jesus", and [which] will therefore

[29] Tannehill 1967, 30, 34, 39-40, 42.
[30] Käsemann 1980, 164, 168, 165-66.
[31] Cranfield 1975, 301-4.
[32] Wedderburn 1987, 343, 389-90.
[33] Moo 2018, 380.
[34] E.g., Best 1955, 47: 'for Paul men are concerned in Christ's death even before baptism; … emphasis is therefore not on…the rite…but on the act of God in Christ'; Matera 2010, 149.
[35] Beasley-Murray 1962, 127, 147, 130; cf. 129.

have a meaning less mystical than realist. "Into the name of" means "so as to become the property of"… Baptized Christians are thus the adherents, the property, of one whose death, resurrection, and ascension marked the dawn of the Age to Come.'[36] The problem with this is that even *were* one to imagine that εἰς *τὸ ὄνομα* τοῦ Χριστοῦ was 'the common' baptismal formula at the time of Paul, and that he is using a 'simplifying abbreviation' of it,[37] it remains unclear what baptism into someone's ὄνομα means—much less that it *ipso facto* means, in a so-called 'less mystical than realist' sense, 'for dedication to' or 'to become the property of'. Noting that the phrase is basically un-Septuagintal and un-Greek, on surveying the uses of לְשֵׁם in Jewish literature, Hartman concludes that all one may infer is that baptism 'into Christ's ὄνομα' implies his standing 'for facts and circumstances that were basic to the rite and its meaning'.[38] Further complicating such readings is the broad semantic import of שֵׁם/ὄνομα in biblical (and wider ancient) thought, which extended beyond formal reference to encompass that person's very essence, their defining characteristics, achievements, abilities, constitution[39]—whether by association or (as often in the Hebrew Bible) the principle of *nomen est omen*.[40] In other words, a 'name' in biblical thought is intrinsically *evocative* or *connotative*. Thus, Song 1:3: 'your anointing oils are fragrant, your name (שֵׁם/ὄνομα) is ointment poured out'. Again, Prov 18:10: 'the name (שֵׁם/ὄνομα) of the LORD is a strong tower to which the righteous run up and are safe (LXX: raised up).' As Surls notes, it would be 'absurd to think this refers to a person running up into YHWH's name in a literal…sense. Rather, it refers to a person who takes refuge in what he or she *associates* with the name…'[41] Ultimately, then, imposing an ὄνομα onto 6:3a does little to furnish a 'less mystical than realist' reading in the above senses even of εἰς Χριστὸν—much less the graphic imagery of the wider passage.

D. Without relying on an implied ὄνομα, a host of others nonetheless suggest that 'the foundational theme is allegiance' to Christ, a 'transfer of ownership to the Lord' or being drawn into his 'sphere of influence…in a communal sense'[42]—often alongside one or more of the previous cluster of readings. Thus, Furnish suggests both that baptism is 'into *his* death for *us* … priority here is with what God has accomplished through Christ', and that 'baptism into Christ's death means one's *committal* to him as Lord': thus there is no '"mystical union" with Christ … [one's] being is not merged with Christ's but rather belongs to Christ.'[43] Failing to see any correlation between baptism and Christ's death and resurrection—the significance of the water 'is that it purifies, not that one can sink down into it and

[36] Barrett 1991, 114.

[37] Beasley-Murray 1962, 129. Such phraseology is *implied* in 1 Cor 1:13ff., but serves a specific rhetorical function there (cf. 1:10). Elsewhere in the New Testament variants of it appear only in Mt 28:19 (a manifestly later development); and in a few different forms in Acts (2:28; 8:16; 10:48; 19:5; contrast 19:3)—at least two forms of which arguably being a literary creation (cf. Hartman 1997, 38-39).

[38] Hartman 1997, 45, insofar as in many cultic contexts לְשֵׁם 'refers to a deity which is the presupposition of the rite; its deeds and power…belong to the referential frame which dictates [its] meaning' (44; see 39-49).

[39] Cf. *b. Yeb.* 45b: 'If one purchased a slave from a Gentile, and [they] pre-empted him and ritually immersed (טָבַל) into the name of a son of freedom (לְשֵׁם בֶּן חוֹרִין), he himself acquires [the status of] a son of freedom.'

[40] Hence, the naming/renaming of many Old Testament figures etymologically encapsulates that person's status, rôle or fate in the narrative. See, e.g., Sasson 2015.

[41] Surls 2017, 20-21.

[42] Badke 1988, 29; Schnackenburg 1955, 42; Byrne 1996, 190.

[43] Furnish 2009, 174, 176.

drown', and to equate immersion with burial is 'entirely absurd', for one is 'not buried in water'—Ridderbos holds that these verses refer to the idea that 'baptism unites the one baptized with Christ' in a 'corporate sense', and to the substitutional nature of Jesus' death: 'Baptism…rests on the fact that he has died for us…substitutionally and representatively comprehended and united the many in himself.…[T]o have died and been buried with Christ neither comes about in baptism…nor becomes an actual occurrence in baptism'.[44] Seeing 'no self-evident link' between immersion and death ('baptism is hardly like Jesus' death'), Dunn opines that (a) 'it is not so much that [the baptized] have…reexperienced…Christ's death and resurrection as that they have been caught up in the Christ whose death ended the old epoch'; (b) these verse 'could include the idea of baptism as a person's…commitment to…the last Adam'; and that (c) the aorist περιπατήσωμεν 'presumably implies that conversion means a decisive transition to a new lifestyle'.[45] Again, Thielman sees 'no correlation between plunging beneath the water in baptism and Christ's burial beneath the earth', and avers that these verses allude to 'the placement of the believer, at his or her conversion, into the sphere of Christ's power'—'the dramatic change that occurs…when one is united to Christ by faith'.[46]

Despite their prevalence, none of these approaches does justice to the overall dynamics of 6:3-4. Most naturally we are dealing here with the dynamics of a myth-ritual complex—the sacred narrative of Christ crucified and risen itself being affectively embodied and reexperienced in the rite of baptism. This makes more complete sense of everything in the text.

Thus, ἐβαπτίσθημεν εἰς Χριστὸν Ἰησοῦν (6:3) can hardly denote being 'booked into the ledger to the account of Christ',[47] or anything of the sort, for it is immediately qualified by εἰς *τὸν θάνατον αὐτοῦ*, baptism being 'into' Christ and his *fate*, in seemingly as concrete and locative a sense as John had baptized *εἰς* τὸν Ἰορδάνην (Mk 1:9), as baptism involves going *εἰς* τὸ ὕδωρ (Acts 8:38). Paul continues: συνετάφημεν οὖν αὐτῷ διὰ τοῦ βαπτίσματος εἰς τὸν θάνατον (6:4a). Many, anxious to distance baptism from an actual 'event' of death insist on supplying a reference to 'his' (αὐτοῦ) death here.[48] That Christ's death is in view is, given 6:3, obvious without such an addition. Sticking to what is actually written, however, it presupposes that a 'death' has occurred, not simply 'vicariously' on Christ's part *but on the part of the baptized*: a 'dying' with Christ on their part διὰ τοῦ βαπτίσματος, such that while baptism is indeed εἰς τὸν θάνατον *αὐτοῦ* (6:3), it is coordinately *itself* 'into death' (εἰς τὸν *θάνατον*). Moreover, it does not merely involve a vicarious 'burial' for us on Christ's part but *our* being *συν*ετάφημεν…αὐτῷ—'*co*-buried with him' (6:4a). Christ's death and burial are thus reactualised and co-undergone by the participant *in* the rite of baptism. The same thought is carried over in 6:4bc apropos Christ's being raised from the dead: '…in order that *just as* (ὥσπερ) Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, *so we too* (οὕτως καὶ ἡμεῖς) ἐν καινότητι ζωῆς περιπατήσωμεν.' This 'walking *in newness of life*' can hardly be reduced to something as prosaic as pursuing a 'new

[44] Ridderbos 1977, 402-3, 407-9. See also Kruse 2012, 261.
[45] Dunn 1988, 1:312, 317, 313-14, 316.
[46] Thielman 2018, 304-5.
[47] Fitzmyer 1993, 433.
[48] E.g., Barrett 1991, 112; Moo 2018, 386.

lifestyle',[49] for it is directly conjoined with and patterned on (ὥσπερ) Christ's being 'raised from the dead'. In accordance with this, while περιπατεῖν alone can arguably take on a purely 'moral' connotation[50]—perhaps here relating to the exhortation of 6:12-14—the καινότης/καινός domain is intrinsically bound up with *eschatology* in Paul, that which is ontically and eschatologically 'new',[51] as it is throughout the New Testament.[52] Accordingly, καινότης ζωῆς here 'undoubtedly denotes that which is eschatologically new.'[53] Where Christ's *death* and *burial* are reactualised by participants in baptism, then, this would appear equally to be the case with his being eschatologically *raised* from the dead. That in accordance with the widely attested character of myth the gospel is here 'the story whose outlines [are] enacted in the ritual', 'the original situation which is…re-enacted in the ritual'[54] makes sense of everything Paul writes in 6:3-4. Death → burial → rising to new life parallels precisely the core outline of the gospel story in the tradition Paul cites in 1 Cor 15:3-4. This insight also makes sense of the hitherto neglected purposive construction of 6:4: 'we were co-buried with [Christ] through baptism into death, *in order that* (ἵνα) just as Christ was raised…we too might walk in newness of life.' Here it is not that death is 'the antecedent, existential experience from which we have been liberated'[55] but that 'death' is the *prerequisite* to new 'life', the *means* by which a higher mode of being is attained. And in precise accordance with this, the instrumentality of Christ's death in bringing about a higher mode of life, not only for others but for *himself* is part and parcel of the gospel narrative: 'to this end Christ died and lived, *in order that* (ἵνα) he might be Lord of both the dead and the living' (Rom 14:9); 'becoming obedient unto death' Christ was '*therefore* (διό)…loftily raised' (Phil 2:8-9).[56] If locating 6:3-4 within the phenomenology of a myth-ritual complex helps to explain the baptismal dynamics at play here, this is significantly reinforced by, and extends to, Paul's ensuing statements in 6:5-11.

4.2.2 United with the Likeness of His Death and Resurrection (6:5)

In 6:5 Paul continues: εἰ γὰρ σύμφυτοι γεγόναμεν τῷ ὁμοιώματι τοῦ θανάτου αὐτοῦ, ἀλλὰ καὶ τῆς ἀναστάσεως ἐσόμεθα. While some have proffered that with 6:5ff. Paul drops the subject of baptism, 'never to resume it in this chapter'—thereby sidestepping the need to relate what Paul hereafter writes to any concrete occurrence in baptism[57]—this is to 'ignore the close syntactical, lexical, and thematic connections between these verses and the rest of the passage'. Syntactically it is clear that 6:3-4 is 'meant to explain *how* believers initially die to sin', yet on such a reading

> one wonders why Paul did not simply move from the rhetorical question of v. 2 to the imagery of being joined to the likeness of Christ's death in v. 5. [Such] readings…fail to acknowledge that, in

[49] Dunn 1988, 1:316; followed by Jewett 2007, 399.
[50] Cf. Rom 13:13; 14:15; 1 Cor 3:3; 2 Cor 4:2; 1 Thess 2:12; 4:1, 12.
[51] Rom 7:6; 12:2; 1 Cor 11:25; 2 Cor 3:6; 5:17; Gal 6:15.
[52] Cranfield 1975, 305.
[53] Käsemann 1980, 166.
[54] Hooke 1935, v; 1933, 3.
[55] C.C. Black 1984, 424.
[56] Cf. Rom 1:4; 6:9-10; 8:34; also, e.g., Jn 10:17.
[57] Moo 2018, 388; also, e.g., Tannehill 1967, 9, 38-39; Dunn 1988, 1:308, 317; Jewett 2007, 400-1.

> Romans, the notion of…"dying with" Christ is first introduced…in the baptismal references of vv. 3-4…[B]aptism…provides the *basis* for imagery of death to sin, as well as the notion of dying (and rising) with Christ that pervades the rest of this brief section.[58]

Adding that the γάρ of 6:5—introducing no less an inferential protasis-apodosis (εἰ-καὶ; cf. 6:8)—ties what follows to the preceding utterance, as a strengthening or explicating of its rationale,[59] we can affirm that: 'Obwohl in V. 5ff. spezifische Taufeterminologie nicht mehr verwendet wird, bleibt doch der Sache nach der Bezug auf die Taufe im Blick'.[60]

Returning to 6:5, then, the initial protasis, one's having been 'united' or 'joined together' (σύμφυτοι) *τῷ ὁμοιώματι τοῦ θανάτου αὐτοῦ* (6:5a) obviously has in view the believers' aforementioned baptism εἰς τὸν θάνατον αὐτοῦ (6:3), εἰς τὸν θάνατον (6:4a). But what is the import of ὁμοίωμα? Several commentators claim that by ὁμοίωμα Paul introduces a 'difference and a distance' between Christ's death and the believer's (baptismal) 'death': it 'hints that the similarity between Jesus' death and resurrection and the believer's conversion and new life goes only so far. Jesus's historical death and resurrection were unique, epoch-changing events. Although the believer's conversion, new life,…are analogous to them, then, they are events of a different order.'[61] Yet, while it could be said—insofar as it is the believing 'we' who *in baptism* are σύμφυτοι…τῷ *ὁμοιώματι* τοῦ θανάτου αὐτοῦ—that here the 'death of Christ is temporally separated from the baptismal death', it goes far beyond the text to claim that by ὁμοίωμα the latter is 'assigned a qualitatively different significance.'[62] Paul has already used ὁμοίωμα twice in this letter (1:23; 5:14), and in both instances it 'refers to something that conforms to the pattern of something else, or that takes on the appearance of something else by imitating it.'[63] Moreover, the only other occurrences of ὁμοίωμα in Paul, Rom 8:3 and Phil 2:7, refer to the very incarnational 'form' of Christ—and it is wrong to say that in the former case God's sending Christ ἐν ὁμοιώματι σαρκὸς ἁμαρτίας does not mean that Christ actual took on the 'identity' of sinful flesh. It was by means of this very identification that Christ 'condemned sin in the flesh' (Rom 8:3; cf. 2 Cor 5:21; Gal 3:13). Dunn notes that the 'key to the biblical usage' almost certainly lies in the fact that in both Hellenistic literature and the LXX ὁμοίωμα usually denotes 'the form of transcendent reality perceptible to man.' While he fails to see how this can relate to baptism, for 'baptism is hardly like Jesus' death', our mythic perspective on the dynamics at play here, those of a myth-ritual complex, interpretatively integrates all the above factors: that 6:5a speaks of the baptismal death with Christ; before this ὁμοίωμα has denoted that which conforms to a pattern or imitates something; ὁμοίωμα typically refers to that which 'gives concrete representation to spiritual and transcendental realities'.[64]

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[58] Morales 2021, 467-68.

[59] Cf. Casson 2020, 117.

[60] Lohse 2003, 190. Cf. Flemington 1957, 61; Kuss 1957, 302; Larsson 1962, 59; Schnackenburg 1964, 36; Michel 1966, 154ff.; Frankemölle 1970, 61; M. Black 1973, 93; Ridderbos 1977, 207; Schlier 1977, 195-96; Frid 1986; Barrett 1991, 115ff.; Fitzmyer 1993, 430, 435; Petersen 1998, 17; Schnelle 2005, 479-80; Hultgren 2011, 248; Kuo-Yu Tsui 2012, 398-99; Kruse 2012, 262ff.; Siikavirta 2015, 110-11; Wright 2015, 449ff.

[61] Agersnap 1999, 287; Thielman 2018, 206; cf. also, e.g., Ridderbos 1977, 207; Wilckens 1980, 14.

[62] Petersen 1998, 17.

[63] Rodriguez 2014, 112.

[64] Dunn 1988, 1:316-17.

Turning to the apodosis of 6:5b, it has been claimed that with the future tense ἐσόμεθα (cf. συζήσομεν in 6:8) Paul is 'correcting the tradition of the community here', setting himself against an 'enthusiastic', 'cultic-mystical' association of baptism with the death and resurrection life of Christ. According to such a reading: (a) 'In the background stand the groups from Corinth and elsewhere which…imagine[d] that baptism has already set them in an angelic state'; (b) 'Col 2:11ff.; Eph 2:4ff.; 5:14 show that originally baptism itself was understood as translation into the world of the resurrection', 'was celebrated as a Christian cultic mystery'; and (c) by 'the eschatological futures [*sic*] in vv. 5b and 8b' Paul is championing a 'Christianity directed against such enthusiasm'.[65] Such readings owe more to the perceptual filter of Reformation polemic against a Catholic *ex opere operato* view of the sacraments than anything found in Rom 6.[66] To invoke a supposed issue with baptism in Corinth (itself far from evident) in interpreting Rom 6 is manifestly suspect—to say nothing of later deutero-Paulines somehow reflecting the 'more primitive form of this baptismal motif' Paul had in fact denounced.[67] As such appeals indicate there is nothing in Rom 6 that points to any issue with baptismal practice in Rome Paul is striving to correct. Nor does this accord with the recognition even on the part of those espousing such a reading that 'in Rom 6:1-11 Paul is not concerned with teaching about baptism.'[68] Furthermore, such a reading makes 'a shallow travesty of Paul's argument, which turns from first to last on the…life which the believer is to live now.'[69] Given this fundamental purview, the inherent connection (γάρ) and parallelism of 6:5 with 6:3-4, and the very nature of 6:5 as a conditional (εἰ-καὶ) sentence, we are clearly confronted here, as in the surrounding context (e.g., 6:2, 14), with a *gnomic* or 'logical' use of the future tense: that which is future only insofar as it is future to the protasis; an apodosis issuing forth 'logically' *given the fulfilment of the protasis*.[70] This is not to deny that for Paul the general resurrection also falls under the logic of the *omnitemporal* protasis-apodosis construction of 6:5,[71] but simply that this is of no immediate relevance to the present passage. Certainly 6:5b 'does not immediately relate to the future bodily resurrection…; it indicates…a logical consequence of the dying that has been spoken of'.[72] Applied to the dynamics of 6:4 this verse is continuing—the 'newness of life' that issues forth as a consequence (ἵνα) of the baptismal 'death'—then, Paul is saying: For '*if* we have become vitally one with the likeness of his death;…*then* we shall have a corresponding experience of resurrection'.[73] With

[65] Käsemann 1980, 161-62, 166; see also, e.g., Jervell 1960, 257; Lohse 1965, 314 n. 19, 317; Gäumann 1967, 46-49; Tannehill 1967, 10-12; Wengst 1972, 47; Conzelmann 1979, 91; G. Barth 1981, 95-97; Walter 1985, 345.

[66] Petersen 1998, 3-7.

[67] Tannehill 1967, 10.

[68] G. Barth 1981, 94.

[69] Caird 1994, 188; cf. Caird 1976, 194.

[70] See Kuo-Yu Tsui 2009; also, e.g., Percy 1942, 31-32; Schneider 1952, 47; Leenhardt 1957, 141; Ridderbos 1959, 129, 131; Beasley-Murray 1962, 138-40; Frankemölle 1970, 61, 81-82; Cranfield 1975, 308, 312-13; Caird 1976, 194; Frid 1986, 198-200; Porter 1989, 422-23; Mounce 1995, 150-51; Maximilian and Mary 1996, 471; Eckstein 1997, 19-23; Wright 2015, 451-52; Schreiner 2018, 314, 320-21.

[71] Hence some entertain a 'logical' *and* 'eschatological' sense here: inclusive of an eschatological perspective but referring (also) to the baptizand's present experience. E.g., Kuss 1957, 303-5; Schlier 1977, 195, 199; Maillot 1984, 157; Wedderburn 1987, 44; Morris 1988, 250, 254; Stuhlmacher 1989, 86; Petersen 1998, 17-19.

[72] Schnackenburg 1964, 38. Cf. Fitzmyer 1993, 435; Kruse 2012, 262; Morales 2021, 470-71.

[73] Denney 1904, 2:633.

this, of course, the *resurrection* component of the baptismal rite unearthed in 6:4c finds direct expression. As a myth-ritual complex, believers are in baptism 'united' with the 'likeness' of—conform to the *pattern* of—the core sacred drama of Christ's 'death' and resultant 'resurrection'.

4.2.3 Our Old Person was Co-Crucified (6:6-7)

In 6:6-7 Paul continues: τοῦτο γινώσκοντες, ὅτι ὁ παλαιὸς ἡμῶν ἄνθρωπος συνεσταυρώθη, ἵνα καταργηθῇ τὸ σῶμα τῆς ἁμαρτίας, τοῦ μηκέτι δουλεύειν ἡμᾶς τῇ ἁμαρτίᾳ· ὁ γὰρ ἀποθανὼν δεδικαίωται ἀπὸ τῆς ἁμαρτίας. Here the Christ-shaped 'death' pole of the baptismal experience reaches its logical and graphic conclusion, something which Paul and others baptized 'know': 'that our old person was *co-crucified*' (συνεσταυρώθη; 6:6a). The ritualised 'death' of the baptized is, in other words, so patterned on the dynamics of the gospel that an actual 'crucifixion' is felt to have taken place. Touching here for the first time on the believer's 'death to sin' invoked in 6:2, this *co*-crucifixion of the believer's 'old *person* (ἄνθρωπος)' is said to have had the effective purpose that the very '*body* (σῶμα) of sin'—'not *part* of the self, but the *whole* self ruled by sin'[74]—'might be *annihilated* (καταργηθῇ)' (6:6; cf. Col 2:11-12; 3:9-10): 'for the one having died is freed from sin' (6:7). That is, 'when a human being die[s] physically he or she [is] no longer subject to sin's power'.[75] Given such concreteness, we cannot be dealing with an imaginative analogical or allegorical figure of speech. Seeley captures the full force of the graphic dynamics at play here—although he is at a loss to *explain* it:

> this is not merely an imaginative re-enactment, but one with the sort of objective effect that pertains to the literal re-enactment of…death. … Paul seems to think that the act of "dying with" Christ ritually creates virtually the same sort of disjunction customarily associated with literal death. One is no longer ruled by Sin because one is no longer that person, exactly. … Precisely how he conceived all this is not spelled out in his letters. Perhaps such a strange and perplexing event could not be fully explicated.[76]

The insights of myth theory on the fundamental character of a myth-ritual complex—the sacred realities of a group's myth being affectively 'experienced…when in certain…ritual proceedings…the story is enacted'; valorised as genuine 'somatic realizations' of the myth, which is 'directly experienced in the ritual'[77]—furnish an eminently illuminative framework within which to phenomenologically situate and explain 'such a strange and perplexing' phenomenon.

4.2.4 Dying and Co-Living with Christ (6:8)

In 6:8, in a conditional sentence mirroring 6:5, Paul turns from the death in baptism to reemphasise the believer's consequent new life, the ensuing καινότης ζωῆς 'just as Christ was raised' (6:4)—the ἀνάστασις experience that follows being 'united in likeness of his death' (6:5): 'Now if we died with

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[74] Keck 2005, 162.

[75] Thielman 2018, 307. Cf. 1 Pet 4:1; *b. Šabb.* 151b; *SipreNum.* 112 on 15:31; C.H. Dodd 1932, 91; Michel 1966, 155; M. Black 1973, 96; Käsemann 1980, 170; Dunn 1988, 1:320-21; Byrne 1996, 197; Moo 2018, 401.

[76] Seeley 1990, 148.

[77] Malinowski 1948 [1926], 122; Doty 2000, 312; Burkert 1983, 34.

Christ (εἰ δὲ ἀπεθάνομεν σὺν Χριστῷ) we believe we shall also co-live with him (καὶ συζήσομεν αὐτῷ).' As in 6:5, συζήσομεν here is, given the καινότης ζωῆς already ascribed to the baptismal experience in 6:4, *gnomic*. To read this as a yet unfilled hope of future life 'would be to miss the whole thrust of Romans 6, which is concerned with the *present* effect of union with Christ in a Christian's life.'[78] From the perspective of early Christian baptismal ritual, then, 'we believe' that, *given* 'we died with Christ', *then* 'we shall also co-live with him'—as a bipartite logical sequence patterned on the gospel.

4.2.5 Christ's and the Baptizand's Death to Sin and Life to God (6:9-11)

In 6:9-10 Paul returns to, and provides a thoroughgoing christological link between, the believer's 'death to sin' and their having been 'co-crucified': 'knowing on our part (εἰδότες) that Christ, having been raised from dead, dies no longer, death no longer rules over him. For that which he died he died to sin (τῇ ἁμαρτίᾳ ἀπέθανεν) once for all, and that which he lives he lives to God (ζῇ τῷ θεῷ).' Far from the believer's baptismal 'death', 'co-crucifixion', 'co-burial', their being 'united in the likeness of [Christ's] death' being assigned a 'qualitatively different significance'[79] to Christ's death, it is here assigned precisely the same significance. Believers have concretely 'died *to sin*' (6:2), 'annihilated the body of sin' (6:6), because in baptism they have partaken of, reactualised and embodied the very death of Christ whose death was a death '*to sin* once for all'—and who 'having been raised from the dead' now 'lives to God'. His death 'was no victory for sin, but, on the contrary, the triumphant moment of his release from its power to hurt him.'[80] According to the very exigency addressed by that sacred event, Christ was 'sacrificed' as an 'expiation' (ἱλαστήριον) for sins; given over to death 'for us all', to 'rescue us from the present evil aeon'; 'given over for our trespasses and raised for our being put right'.[81] In all this we are confronted with the prominent motif theorists such Cassirer, Girard and Burkert have considered to be intrinsic to myth-ritual complexes, their revolving around the theme of *sacrifice*, 'with its tension between encountering death and affirming life': the 'more determinate the form they assume, the more clearly the *sacrifice* appears at their center. It may take the most diverse forms … but in all these forms it constitutes a solid core around which the cult action clusters.'[82] What was encountered in §2.2 in this regard could well speak to the dynamics at play here.[83] As Penna puts it: 'baptism is understood as the privileged moment when the believing sinner comes to participate through an objective and ritualized manner in the decisive event of Christ's death to sin, that is, in his expiatory sacrifice'.[84]

Confirming this, Paul concludes his appeal to baptism, bringing it to bear directly on his counter-thesis of 6:2, by directly equating the experience of the baptized both with Christ's death 'to sin' and

[78] Knight 1992, 404.
[79] Petersen 1998, 17.
[80] Robinson 1952, 42.
[81] 1 Cor 5:7; Rom 3:25; 8;32; Gal 1:4; Rom 4:25. Cf. Rom 5:6; 8:3; Gal 1:4; 2:20; 4:3-4; 2 Cor 5:21.
[82] Burkert 1983, 83; Cassirer 1955 [1925], 221.
[83] See p. 45, above.
[84] Penna 1996, 1:141. Cf. C.H. Dodd 1932, 90.

ensuing life 'to God': '*So you also* (οὕτως καὶ ὑμεῖς) consider yourselves dead indeed to sin (νεκροὺς μὲν τῇ ἁμαρτίᾳ), and alive to God (ζῶντας δὲ τῷ θεῷ), in Christ Jesus.' In other words, just as Christ died *to* sin rather than 'through sin' (Rom 5:12), so believers are those who in baptism died *to* sin.[85] Corresponding, just as Christ was then raised unto a life 'to God', so believers are those who at baptism were then made 'alive to God'. On reaching this conclusion Paul has, by way of his appeal to baptism, now substantiated all the elements of his affirmation in 6:2. *Death* to sin and an ensuing *life* freed from it is part and parcel of this initiation rite of baptism, in which Christ's own death and resurrection are embodied by the participant. In 6:12-14 Paul *then* proceeds to draw out the moral consequences of this baptismal proof: 'Let not, therefore, sin reign in your mortal body…, nor yield your members as instruments of unrighteousness to sin, but yield yourselves as those *living out from the dead* (ἐκ νεκρῶν ζῶντας), and your members as instruments of righteous to God…'; before turning in 6:15ff. 'to another series of arguments for the same thesis, now using the imagery of the slave-market.'[86]

Our model of 'myth', then, in its ritual component furnishes an illuminating heuristic tool with which to navigate exegetically the 'puzzle' of Rom 6:3-11. Explaining far more than other readings the dynamics at play, it has provided a firm theoretical basis and hermeneutical framework for establishing the persistently resisted fact that in Rom 6 baptism is depicted as some kind of 'reenactment of the death and resurrection of Jesus'—as 'in some way a re-enactment of Jesus' death'.[87] The main scholarly objections to and difficulties with such a reading are addressed by this heuristic framework.

4.3 Further Insights from Myth Theory on Problems Posed by Rom 6:3-11

Arguably, one of *the* preeminent reasons for resistance to the idea that early Christians considered baptism a 'union' with or 're-enactment' of God's action in Christ's death and resurrection has been the prevalent assumption that such a view of baptism depends on the theory that it was 'borrowed' from analogous practices in pagan mystery religions.[88] Wedderburn is almost certainly correct: had early Christians 'felt it to be peculiarly at home in, or the possession of, the mysteries, the evidence suggests that they would have avoided it'.[89] But the purview of New Testament scholarship has been far too limited. Bringing participants into union with the divine figures and events of myths is hardly peculiar to Hellenistic mystery rites, about which little is really known. It is a perennial theme trans-historically and cross-culturally: 'Historically, myth and ritual have been central in human beings' concern with the sacred … religious life centred on the narration of sacred stories and their ritual reenactment'.[90] 'Myths

[85] Robinson 1952, 44.
[86] Hartman 1997, 75.
[87] A.Y. Collins 1989b, 42; Wright 2015, 450.
[88] Moo's comment on Rom 6:3-4 is characteristic of commentators of the past eighty or so years: 'others suggest that Paul's conception is related to ideas of union with a dying and rising god that were popular in Hellenistic mystery religions.…Under the impulse of the history-of-religions movement in the early 1900s, many scholars attributed various doctrines of Paul to dependence on these religions…But [this]…is now widely discounted' (Moo 2018, 387 n. 358).
[89] Wedderburn 1987, 391.
[90] Nielsen 1993, 36.

are frequently performed in a ritual or ceremonial context', and 'we ignore the performance contexts, the somatic realizations of myths in ritual form, only at the very real peril of mistaking a particular part for the whole.'[91] Alongside the various cultural attestations of this phenomenon noted in Chapter 2, such a dynamic is found within Judaism itself. The Sabbath is patterned on and valorised as a participation in God's act of cosmic creation (Ex 20:8-11), while the Passover ritual reactualises God's decisive deliverance from Egypt.[92] Of course, if one *were* to posit any 'borrowing' of early Christianity here, the latter would be a more plausible candidate. Understood as but one manifestation of the ritual tendency of myth, however, no genealogical derivation or 'borrowing' *need* be posited: *it is simply a core part of the way humans have historically and cross-culturally engaged with and appropriated the sacred*. Noting that, in accord with the structure of such rites (preliminal-liminal-postliminal), '[d]eath and restoration to life are metaphors frequently used in rites of initiation and other rites of passage the world over', Wedderburn made a similar case regarding the death → life motifs of Rom 6: 'Thus it is true that "life through death" is attested in the mystery-rites…But its presence in the mysteries would be only one analogy among several and, moreover,…lay near to hand in any rite of passage…'[93] By recourse to the phenomenon of myth, the same may be extended to the fact that it is here specifically the 'death and restoration to life' *of Christ*, the divine protagonist of the gospel story, that the neophyte reactualises in the ritual.[94] This takes its place among, and finds its phenomenological backdrop in, the 'universality of the myth-ritual complex'.[95]

The insights of myth theory also address the theological difficulty of those who consider that baptism as a reactualisation of the death and resurrection of Christ undermines their decisive character as 'once-for-all events of the past'.[96] From the perspective of the phenomenology of myth-ritual complexes those wanting to place the emphasis of Rom 6 squarely on the Christ event itself, 'a real sharing in which the distinction in time is somehow beside the point',[97] is itself methodologically insightful. Yet, this need *not* be at the expense of the rite of baptism constituting a specific reactualisation and embodiment of that sacred event *in its own right*—which is clearly the sentiment expressed in the text. It is not a matter of either-or; either reenactment *or* transtemporal participation. On the contrary, the two exist in a relation of mutual reciprocity, are really two sides of the same coin:

> by its very nature sacred time is reversible in the sense that, properly speaking, it is a primordial mythical time made present. Every religious festival, any liturgical time,…implies emerging from ordinary temporal duration and *reintegration of the mythical time* reactualized *by the festival itself*.… With each [rite]…the participants find the same sacred time—…created and sanctified by the gods at the period of their gesta, of which *the festival is precisely a reactualization*. In other words the participants…meet *in it* the first appearance of sacred time, as it appeared ab origine, in

[91] Oring 1986, 124; Doty 2000, 312.
[92] Cf. Ex 12:27; 13:8-9, 14-16; Deut 16:3; *m. Pesaḥ.* 10.5.
[93] Wedderburn 1987, 391, 379-80.
[94] It is bewildering how this point has gone so unnoticed in scholarship on Paul and baptism. Cf., however, Hartman 1997, 68.
[95] Buonanno 2018, 287.
[96] Tannehill 1967, 4. Cf. pp. 78-79, above.
[97] Proudfoot 1963, 153; cf. Tannehill 1967, 40; Moo 2018, 389.

> illo tempore.… By creating the various realities that today constitute the world, the gods also founded sacred time … a sort of *eternal mythical present* that is…*reintegrated by means of rites*.[98]

As Berndt and Berndt pertinently observed vis-à-vis Indigenous Australian myth-ritual complexes:

> The overt stress is…on the requirement that *what happens in the present* should duplicate, in all essential features, *what happened in the past*…when foundations of human life were established *once and for all*. … By acting…in accordance with the…mythical characters…who dominated that period, human beings can keep in touch with…the power which they continue to exercise. … In a spiritual, or non-material fashion, they and all that is associated with them are as much alive today…as they were. … This was the…sacred past; but…not the past in the sense of something that is over and done with … [it] *can be drawn on by people who repeat those actions*…[99]

Finally, we may turn to the difficulty modern interpreters have in perceiving a rite of water baptism being aligned with Christ's death/burial and resurrection. Informed by the profound symbolism at play in both myth and myth-ritual complexes the world over (§2.3), such frequent claims as the following are conspicuously facile: 'There is no clear analogy between the act of entering the water and Christ's death, for Christ was not drowned. Nor is there a clear analogy between entering the water and burial, for burial at sea is not the normal means of burial.'[100] On the contrary, a participant's 'ritual identification' with a myth 'is not based on…empirical similarity but rather on affective, situational, and functional similarities'; 'mythical relations and identities allow empirically different things to merge or intermingle if they exhibit affective, functional, or situational similarities': 'any similarity of sensuous manifestation suffices to group the entities in which it appears into a single mythical "genus."'[101] In search of affective, sensuous, truly symbolic associations between baptism, death and resurrection, several possibilities present themselves. An affective, situational and functional association of water with 'death'—beyond 'drowning' in it—may be found in the fact that as in myriad other cultures, perhaps also ancient Judaism (cf. *m. Šabb.* 23.5), water bathing was part of funerary rites in the Graeco-Roman world.[102] *If* derobing and rerobing were considered part of the ritual at the time of Paul, perhaps these carried the symbolic significance—the removal of clothing signifying a 'taking off the body', the putting on of a new robe 'the new person'.[103] More likely, despite scholarly resistance to this, is the sensuous, spatial contiguity of death/burial↘↗resurrection and baptism as a descent into and ascent from the water, the spacio-somatic ↓-↑ motion.[104] Virtually all scholars agree that baptism in earliest Christianity involved an act of full water immersion, and the ↓-↑ directionality of the act is readily seen elsewhere in the New Testament. Jesus is baptized 'into the Jordan' river and then 'rises up' (ἀναβαίνειν) 'out from the water' (Mk 1:9-10; also Mt 3:16). The baptism of a convert involves their 'going down' (καταβαίνειν) 'into the water' and then 'rising up' (ἀναβαίνειν) 'out from the water'

[98] Eliade 1959, 68-70 (emphasis altered).
[99] Berndt and Berndt 1977, 229-30 (emphasis added).
[100] Tannehill 1967, 34.
[101] Hatab 1990, 32, 38-39; Cassirer 1955 [1925], 67.
[102] Cf. R. Garland 1985, 24.
[103] Meeks 1983, 155; Witherington 1994, 280. Meeks suggests this because for him: 'Descent into the water obviously did not mime Jesus' death' (ad loc.).
[104] Cf. Tappenden 2016, 140-42.

(Acts 8:38-39; cf. Barn. 11.11). Certainly claims of modern interpreters that this is 'absurd' must reckon with the fact that this is precisely how baptism is detailed in later witnesses: 'The immersion/descent (κατάδυσις) is to co-die (συναποθανεῖν), the emersion/ascent (ἀνάδυσις) is to co-rise (συναναστῆναι)' (ConstApost 3.17). While there is no reason that this dynamic correspondence could not already lie behind Rom 6, from a myth-ritual perspective this is not necessary for construing the waters of baptism as a participation in Christ's dying-and-rising, for a single symbol/symbolic act containing two antithetical poles within itself is a widely attested phenomenon of rites of passage: 'logically antithetical processes…may be represented by the same tokens…This coincidence of opposite processes and notions in a single representation characterizes the peculiar unity of the liminal'.[105] The liminal-symbolic potency of the baptismal 'water' in this regard is borne out in Tertullian, who ties its significance to its primordial ambiguity *in principio*: both preceding the created order in an undifferentiated state of voidness and being 'in a sense the regulative' means 'by which God established the world', that which was 'first commanded to bring forth life'.[106] The principal point is that in ritual reactualisations of myth one is not confronted with a point-by-point logical or objective correspondence but a symbolic matrix of experiential, affective *alterity*.[107] Mythic ontology 'brings about a coincidence of whatever elements it combines'—'*whatever* things it may seize upon undergo a characteristic concretion; they grow together'.[108] Thus it is that in 'ritual identification' with myth one routinely, from an emic perspective, '*becomes* the deity … an overall function complex creates connections'.[109] There is a 'basic sense of identity, of identification': 'performing the ritual … in one way or another one "lives" the myth … is seized by the sacred, exalting power of the events … ceases to exist in the everyday world and enters a transfigured, auroral world… The protagonists of the myth are made present'.[110] This all makes perfect sense of what we find in the notorious 'puzzle' of Rom 6:3-11.

4.4 Appeals to Baptism Elsewhere in Paul

The heuristic fit and utility of reading the baptismal dynamics in Rom 6 as a myth-ritual complex also extends to Paul's brief references to baptism elsewhere.

Within an appeal for communal unity in the face of factions at Corinth (1 Cor 1:10-11), in 1 Cor 1:13 the common baptism believers have undergone is paralleled with Christ's crucifixion as a matter of course.[111] In 1 Cor 12:13 this appeal for unity is supported by another allusion to baptism, in which Paul appeals to the fact that 'in one spirit we were all baptized into one body (εἰς ἓν σῶμα ἐβαπτίσθημεν), whether Jews or Greek, whether slave or free'. The preceding verse which this is

[105] Turner 1967, 99.

[106] Tert. *Bapt.* 3; see Gen 1:1-20. Cf. CyrJ *Cat.* 20.4: 'at the same moment you were both dying and being born; that water of salvation was at once your grave and mother'.

[107] Cf. Lorencova, Trnka, and Travel 2018, 202-3.

[108] Cassirer 1955 [1925], 63-64.

[109] Hatab 1990, 32-33.

[110] Cassirer 1955 [1925], 39; Eliade 1963, 19.

[111] Cf. Cullmann 1950, 15; T.M. Taylor 1958, 67: Paul 'virtually equates Baptism with crucifixion…in the parallelism of 1 Cor. 1.13'; Hartman 1997, 68-69, 89; Ferguson 2009, 149.

continuing (γάρ) makes it clear that the one 'body' *into* which believers were baptized refers to the figure of Christ himself: 'For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so also Christ' (1 Cor 12:12). Forming part of a rebuttal to some in Corinth ostensibly claiming, 'there is no resurrection of the dead' (15:12), in 1 Cor 15:29 Paul makes a passing appeal to baptism ὑπὲρ τῶν νεκρῶν. While the precise nature of this remains unclear, the logic of the argument is that baptism itself is inherently tied to *rising from the dead*:[112] 'Otherwise, what shall they who are baptized for the dead accomplish? If the dead are not at all raised (εἰ ὅλως νεκροὶ οὐκ ἐγείρονται), why are they even baptized for them?' Finally, in Gal 3:26-29 Paul supports an argument that believers are legitimate descendants of Abraham by appealing to the fact that believers—'before whose eyes Jesus Christ was publicly portrayed as crucified' (Gal 3:1)—are 'all sons of God': for 'as many as were baptized into Christ, ἐνεδύσασθε Christ' (Gal 3:26-27). In the few instances of ἐνδύεσθαι (lit. 'to put on') with reference to a person elsewhere in antiquity (cf. also Rom 13:14; Col 3:9-10; Eph 4:22-24; *GosPhil* 75.21-25), it means to assume the part, character or rôle of someone.[113] This is then intensified in Gal 3:28 by a reference to what most consider a pre-Pauline baptismal tradition, that therein (ἔνι)[114] distinctions pertaining to initiates' own identity markers are dissolved, for they all become 'one in Christ Jesus'. Given such dynamics, baptism here clearly 'goes beyond the dimension of merely social and ethical inclusion in a religious community; it suggests an event of divine transformation.'[115] In baptism 'the Christian is assuming the part of Christ'.[116] In fact, this appeal to baptism makes sense only if baptism involves precisely what Χριστὸν ἐνεδύσασθε suggests. For where Paul infers that believers are thereby 'Abraham's seed (σπέρμα), heirs according to the promise' (Gal 3:29), he has just argued that God's promise to Abraham referred not to collective 'seeds' of Abraham but to a singular σπέρμα 'who is *Christ*' (3:16). Hence believers are *ipso facto* 'Abraham's seed, heirs according to the promise'—'sons of God'—because *in baptism* they have 'assumed the part' *of Christ*.

Conclusions

Each of Paul's appeals to baptism amount to the same presupposition: an operative unity of the initiatory rite of baptism and those baptized with the very protagonist(s), realities and dynamics of the gospel narrative. 'Myth' clearly provides an illuminating heuristic framework within which to locate and explicate this fundamental linkage. Interpreting the dynamics of this rite appealed to in Paul from the perspective of a myth-ritual complex has shed a cohesive light on the longstanding problematic of Rom 6:3-11, clarifying everything Paul writes here and addressing all of the difficulties commentators have faced, and in a way that brings coherency to and explains Paul's references to baptism *in toto*.

[112] Cf. Gardner 2018, 694.
[113] Cf. DionHal *Ant.* 11.5.2; Lib. *Ep.* 968; Burton 1921, 204; Dunn 1998, 194.
[114] Contr. for ἔνεστιν (ἔνειμι)—'to be or exist in a certain context' (BDAG, 336).
[115] Betz 1979, 187.
[116] Nock 1964, 54. Cf. Burton 1921, 203; Kuo-Yu Tsui 2012, 406-7; Macaskill 2013, 196.

CHAPTER 5.

BROADENING THE HORIZON: THE PROBLEM OF PAUL'S SELF-PRESENTATION IN 2 COR 1 AND 4

Having explored the hermeneutical utility of 'myth' apropos the gospel in its ritual-symbolic dimension as reflected principally in Rom 6:3-11, we now turn to 2 Corinthians, the 'most personal and also the most perplexing' of his letters.[1] 'Without question' 2 Cor has proved to be 'the hardest of Paul's letters to read and understand.'[2] It 'heads the list' in being 'unquestionably the most difficult of Paul's letters',[3] 'the most difficult to understand',[4] 'the most obscure…of all his letters':[5] 'At every moment the reader is stopped by allusions…which constitute genuine enigmas.'[6] As 'one of the most difficult letters in the Pauline corpus for modern interpreters', this letter is 'notorious for its obscurities'.[7] Unfortunately, it has therefore received 'less critical attention on the whole than many of the other letters in the Pauline corpus'[8]—generally being 'overshadowed by 1 Corinthians, which is better known, more clearly structured, and generally easier to comprehend.'[9] Serving further to obscure its interpretation is its having been subjected to an array of partition theories in the light of supposed tensions, difficulties and contradictions.[10] However, with most recent scholarship we shall accept the text's literary integrity.[11] In this chapter, attention is directed to two related complex passages, 2 Cor 1:1-14 and 4:7:18, in which sustained appeals are made to the dynamics of the gospel. They present a number of *cruces* for commentators, which I believe yield their meaning to the operatively foundational and therapeutic components of myth modelled in Chapter 2. Initially we consider, as a requisite backdrop, the letter's *Sitz im Leben*.

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[1] Fallon 1980, 1.
[2] L.T. Johnson 2014, 201.
[3] Stockhausen 1989, 2
[4] Munck 1959, 168.
[5] Hanson 1967, 5.
[6] Collange 1972, 1.
[7] Nguyen 2008, 139; Collange 1972, 1.
[8] Stockhausen 1989, 2.
[9] Matera 2003, 3.
[10] On which one may consult Bieringer 1994; Chang 2002; Hall 2003, 86-128; Matera 2003, 26-32; Stegman 2005, 5-25, 43-62; Harris 2005, 8-51; Vegge 2008, 12-34; Ensor 2022, 3-15.
[11] There is no manuscript evidence that 2 Cor ever existed in a form other than the one we have (the oldest textual witness, $\mathfrak{P}^{46}$, contains the complete text). The sheer constraint on ancient scribes to 'cut-and-paste' papyrus scrolls in ways many partition theories have entertained has also been highlighted (Stewart-Sykes 1996); as has the lack of any intelligible *rationale*, in any case, behind such as a scissors-and-paste operation in the first place (cf. Seifrid 2014, xxx; and esp. Esler 2021, 16).

5.1 The Situational Context of 2 Cor

The deeply personal character of 2 Cor is striking. Revealing he has previously written to the Corinthians 'out of much affliction and anguish of heart with many tears' (2:4), and recently been 'crushed so excessively beyond measure as to despair of living' (1:8), Paul speaks throughout of the adversity that surrounds him. He is 'continually afflicted', 'persecuted', 'struck down';[12] 'base', 'weak', 'contemptible';[13] 'pained', 'poor';[14] held in 'dishonour' and 'disrepute';[15] facing 'conflict', 'crises',[16] 'insults',[17] 'riots', 'imprisonments' and 'countless floggings'[18]—fleeing arrests, 'thrice shipwrecked', subjected to stoning, to the 'forty lashes minus one five times' by Jewish authorities, 'three times beaten with rods' by the Romans.[19] Paul's extensive adversities obviously form a crucial backdrop to this letter. He is writing from intense pain and turmoil: 'conflicts without and fears within' (7:5). A core factor occasioning Paul's writing are personal attacks on his ministerial integrity, legitimacy and competency, tied to the arrival of self-styled 'superior apostles' by whom he was being measured 'inferior' (11:5; 12:11). As Paul presents them such rivals are cunningly and shamefully peddling the gospel in a spirit alien to it (2:17; 4:2; 11:3-4, 7, 12-15; 12:13-14), claiming foolishly to be ministers of Christ while prizing outward appearance, self-aggrandization, authority and boasting (3:1; 5:12; 10:12-18; 11:12-23). There are signs of Paul and the Corinthians' relationship waning in 1 Cor, and between 1 and 2 Cor, exacerbated by a painful interim visit and letter from him (2:1-4; 7:8), it is clear that some '"bad blood" had developed between Paul and this church.'[20] Throughout this letter, it seems clear that the Corinthian congregation have lost confidence in Paul's competency and standing as an apostle.[21] Since this is for Paul bound up with a proclivity to values alien to the gospel, he fears that the Corinthians' minds 'might be corrupted from sincerity and integrity in Christ' (11:3), and is writing in the hope that they might realign themselves with and 'fully understand' him (1:11-14)—that having 'opened wide' his heart to them, theirs might again be opened to him (6:11-13).

Regarding the enmity toward Paul in Corinth, four main interrelated factors, rooted in the honour-shame dynamics permeating first-century Roman Corinth,[22] emerge. His failure (unlike his rivals; 3:1; 5:12; 10:12-18; 11:12-13, 18-20), his being too 'weak' (11:21a), to boast.[23] His 'unimpressive physical demeanour' (cf. 10:1, 10), 'perhaps hampered by some physical disability' (12:7).[24] His refusal (unlike

[12] 4:8-9; 7:5; see also 1:4-6, 8; 2:4; 4:16-17; 5:4; 6:4; 7:4; 11:26; 12:10.
[13] 7:6; 10:1, 10; see also 11:7, 21, 29-30; 12:5, 9, 10, 21; 13:4, 9.
[14] 6:10; see also 2:1; 6:5; 11:27; 12:11.
[15] 6:8; 11:21.
[16] 6:4; 7:5; 11:26; 12:10; cf. 11:25.
[17] 12:10; cf. 5:13; 6:8; 10:2, 7, 10; 11:16.
[18] 6:5; 11:23.
[19] 11:24-26, 32-33; cf. 14:19; Acts 16:22; 1 Thess 2:2.
[20] Fee 2014, 8. Cf. 1 Cor 1:12; 3:1-4; 4:3, 6, 18-21; 9:3; 11:29-30; 14:37.
[21] Cf. 1:12-19; 3:1-6; 4:1-3; 5:11-13, 20; 6:1-4, 11-13; 7:2; 8:20; 9:3-4; 10:1-10; 11:1-21; 12:11-20; 13:2-9; Munck 1959, 186; McClelland 1982, 85; Savage 1996, 10-11; Pickett 1997, 174-75. On 7:7, 14-16 as a rhetorical ploy idealising their relationship, cf. Vegge 2008, 32; also S.N. Olson 1985; B.G. White 2020, 156.
[22] Judge 1972, 35-36; Witherington 1995, 5-24; Savage 1996, 19-53; Thiselton 2000, 1-15; Guthrie 2015, 9-17.
[23] 11:12-21; 12:1; cf. 3:5; 4:5; 12:11; also 1 Cor 1:29; 3:21; Savage 1996, 12.
[24] Pickett 1997, 174; Witherington 1995, 21. Cf. 4:16; 7:6; 11: 21, 29; 12:11; 13:9; also 1 Cor 2:1-4; 4:10.

his rivals; 2:17; 11:7, 12) to accept patronage (11:7-15; 12:13), rather consigning himself to a life of laborious manual toil.[25] Informing all of the above is the overall extent of Paul's calamities and degradation. Hence his detailing, beyond an already extensive list of hardships, humiliations and misfortunes his several imprisonments and brushes with the law (6:5; 11:23, 32-33), and subjection to stoning and countless floggings by multiple authorities (11:23-25; cf. 6:5), fates considered throughout the Graeco-Roman world 'the archetypal mark of dishonor', making little sense to spotlight were these not already at issue. In other words, 'his abused body is already the subject of discussion and even derision in Corinth'—'he cannot avoid the topic.'[26] Paul is addressing his harrowing ordeals as a core part of the problem in Corinth. There were those in Corinth for whom their magnitude and ignominy were 'undermin[ing] his apostolic credibility', who took his 'evident misfortunes and humiliations in the pursuit of his ministry as signs of inferiority and incompetence'.[27]

The context of 2 Cor is a sorry one. On the one hand Paul is in general having to grapple with a life and ministry that continues to be fraught with an inordinate level of adversity, agony, dejection and ignominy—recently reaching an unprecedented level (1:8). On the other he is having to contend with 'an intense sense of rejection' by believers in Corinth,[28] fundamentally precipitated *by* the extent of adversity, agony, dejection, and ignominy that surrounds him. Having established this two-pronged backdrop to the letter, we can now turn to the first of the two passages that are our concern.

5.2 The Gospel as a Mythic Lens in 2 Cor 1:1-14

The importance of Paul's opening periods as 'setting the tone and themes' of a letter, giving voice 'to the concerns which have prompted him to write', is widely recognised.[29] In turning to this letter's opening period it is unsurprising, given what has been gleaned above, that in lieu of Paul's customary thanksgiving for his addressees, one finds a personal benediction to God (1:3-4), petitions *for* thanksgiving, support and understanding (1:8, 11, 13-14) and a pervasive preoccupation with *affliction*. In this latter regard the unit is marked by a series of paradoxical combinations. Themes of θλῖψις/θλίβομαι (1:4, 6, 8), πάθημα/πάσχω (1:5, 6, 7), βαρέομαι/ἐξαπορέομαι (1:8), θάνατος/νεκρός (1:9, 10) are met in equal measure with those of παράκλησις/παρακαλεῖν (1:3, 4, 5, 6, 7), σωτηρία (1:6), ἐγείρων (1:9) and ῥυόμενος (1:10). It is widely recognised that, while Paul's discussion of these themes is couched in first person plurals (though cf. the telltale ἐλπίζω in 1:13), he is speaking, as he will repeatedly throughout the letter, self-referentially.[30] We must follow closely Paul's train of thought in this opening period, with a view to the hermeneutical potential of myth in illuminating its many *cruces*.

[25] Cf. 6:5; 11:27; also 1 Cor 4:12; 9:3-18; Guthrie 2015, 43-44.
[26] Glancy 2004, 107, 135, 126; cf. 107-13, 120-26; Forbes 1986, 19; P. Marshall 1987, 351-52, 361; Savage 1996, 63; Roller 2001, 226; Schellenberg 2013, 108-9.
[27] Hubbard 2017, 3; Barnett 1997, 534; cf. D.E. Garland 1999, 73.
[28] B.G. White 2020, 159.
[29] O'Brien 1977, 263; Furnish 1984, 117.
[30] Matera 2003, 37.

5.2.1 Paul's Afflictions, Divine Comfort, and the Sufferings of Christ (1:1-5)

While Paul's opening in 1:1-2 is fairly standard, given the situation in Corinth, his reference to being an apostle διὰ θελήματος θεοῦ (1:1) takes on a poignant sense of importance: 'Paul *is* an apostle and he owes his apostolic calling to the "*will of God*" … to the sovereign, predestined call of God in his life'.[31] Developing this divine agency in his life and ministry, Paul moves into an effusive benediction to the 'God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all παράκλησις' (1:3). Turning to the particulars of this divine παράκλησις, 'speaking primarily of himself',[32] Paul introduces the first paradoxical combination of *θλῖψις* and παράκλησις. With the ἐπί + dative specifying 'the occasion on which the comfort is given',[33] God is said, strangely, to effect his 'comfort' (ὁ παρακαλῶν) specifically 'in all *τῇ θλίψει ἡμῶν*' (1:4a)—a dynamic whose effects are not intended to stop with Paul: εἰς τὸ δύνασθαι ἡμᾶς παρακαλεῖν τοὺς ἐν πάσῃ θλίψει διὰ τῆς παρακλήσεως ἧς παρακαλούμεθα αὐτοὶ ὑπὸ τοῦ θεοῦ (1:4b). Contra the generic ἐν πάσῃ θλίψει of 1:4b, the articular πάσῃ *τῇ* θλίψει ἡμῶν of 1:4a invokes actual θλίψεις—'in all the affliction we have faced'[34]—and with θλῖψις covering a broad spectrum of 'affliction', Paul's own ordeals detailed throughout the letter. According to Paul, amid all his negative experiences God is effecting a positive corollary, a divine παράκλησις. And his use of the present participle παρακαλῶν in 1:4a presupposes the 'constancy and even the predictability' of this: 'παράκλησις follows θλῖψις as surely as day follows night; *ubi θλῖψις, ibi παράκλησις*.'[35] Paul then declares in 1:5: ὅτι καθὼς περισσεύει τὰ παθήματα τοῦ Χριστοῦ εἰς ἡμᾶς, οὕτως διὰ τοῦ Χριστοῦ περισσεύει καὶ ἡ παράκλησις ἡμῶν. Here we arrive at the first 'crux': 'trying to make sense of what Paul is intimating here is not without difficulty'.[36] To what does τὰ παθήματα τοῦ Χριστοῦ refer and in what sense are these 'abounding' (περισσεύει) in Paul? One meets similar theological difficulties and sensitivities to those encountered in Rom 6:3-11. 'But to what does τὰ παθήματα τοῦ Χριστοῦ refer?', writes Harris: 'Certainly not the atoning sacrifice of Christ, which Paul regarded as a completed event (Rom. 5:8-10) that need not and could not be repeated: "the death that he died was a death in relation to sin, once and for all" (Rom. 6:10).'[37] As to what Paul means here, there have been alternative and, unsatisfactory, suggestions.

A. Some have suggested that Χριστοῦ be taken as a titular descriptive genitive referring not primarily to Jesus but to '*messianic* sufferings, based on a Jewish doctrine of חבלי המשיח…, implying not the sufferings endured by the messiah but rather sufferings associated with him…as a prelude to the coming age'.[38] Yet, aside from the late attestation to this doctrine and that 'the usual term in the LXX is not πάθημα but ὠδιν or ὠδίνω',[39] these messianic 'pangs' were conceived in cosmic terms, while

[31] Hafemann 1989, 326; cf. R.P. Martin 1986, 4-5; Barnett 1997, 59; Matera 2003, 37-38.
[32] Harris 2005, 140 n. 6; cf. Barnett 1997, 72; Lambrecht 1999, 19; Matera 2003, 40.
[33] Plummer 1915, 10.
[34] D.E. Garland 1999, 61 n. 53.
[35] Harris 2005, 144-45.
[36] R.P. Martin 1986, 9; Lim 2009, 44; cf. R.F. Collins 2013, 34.
[37] Harris 2005, 145-46.
[38] R.P. Martin 1986, 9. Cf. O'Brien 1977, 245; Allison 1985, 66; Barrett 1997, 61-62; Barnett 1997, 74.
[39] Thrall 1994, 108. Cf. W. Michaelis, *TDNT*, 5:993.

Paul's suffering in 2 Cor 'is highly personal…and does not reflect any of those universal catastrophic elements.'[40] Adding that in Paul Χρίστος is almost always a nominal designator for Jesus, and that the parallel διὰ τοῦ Χριστοῦ in 1:5*b* clearly refers to the *person* of Christ, this reading is clearly tenuous.

B. Others suggest that παθήματα τοῦ Χριστοῦ means suffering 'incurred in the service of Christ'.[41] However, it is doubtful that the genitive case alone *can* express this.[42] And, such a reading is again undermined by the structural counterpart to 1:5a in 1:5b, where Christ is the direct referent: 'The parallel structure…suggests that the τοῦ Χριστοῦ in 5a is the equivalent of the διὰ τοῦ Χριστοῦ in 5b. The genitive in 5a is a genitive *auctoris*'.[43]

C. Others suggest that the thought is one of Christ suffering in and with 'his people on earth so long as the present aeon lasts (cf. Ac. 9.4f.)'.[44] Yet, as Thrall notes, there is 'no direct evidence in Paul's own letters that he thought this way', and 'where he himself refers to his persecution of believers', he speaks of persecuting not Christ but the church (1 Cor 15:9; Gal 1:13).[45] Furthermore, this reading inverts the text's directionality: Paul does not aver that Christ is suffering in or alongside him, but that *in him* are abounding *the sufferings of Christ*.

D. Faithful to this directionality, another suggestion has been that the verse relates to a 'fellowship with Christ grounded in baptism': 'he and the Corinthians experience the sufferings *of Christ*…because they have entered by baptism into a realistic bond with Christ…The sufferings of Christ are the Christians' sharing in the historical sufferings (or death) of Jesus, as these are mediated to them' therein.[46] This is more promising, given our analysis of Rom 6:3-11. Yet, nowhere in this letter does Paul's thought move in the direction of baptism; nor does Rom 6:3-11 move in the direction of sufferings or affliction. Such a reading also shifts Paul's *situational and personal* focus in this passage to one of a generic 'Taufmysterium begründete[] Christus-Gemeinschaft'[47] ill-suited to it.

E. Others have suggested that the παθήματα τοῦ Χριστοῦ abounding in Paul evokes ideas of *imitatio* found elsewhere (e.g., 1 Cor 11:1), some sort of imitating of Christ's sufferings by Paul.[48] According to Lim: 'A major critique of this interpretation is that the sufferings of Paul simply do not resemble the sufferings of Christ.'[49] Given our mythic analysis of the dynamics of baptism this critique is deaf to the profound symbolism at play in early Christianity—and so a moot point. There is, however, a genuine problem with this position *as applied to the present passage*. Here Paul is not so much an active subject as a passive object and recipient of τὰ παθήματα κτλ and ἡ παράκλησις κτλ. Therefore, this 'interjects a volunteerism into the immediate context, which does not seem to be natural to it.'[50]

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[40] Lim 2009, 47.
[41] Strachan 1935, 48; also, e.g., Witherington 1995, 358; Harris 2005, 146; R.F. Collins 2013, 35.
[42] H. Meyer 1879, 137; Plummer 1915, 12: 'wrong as translation'; Thrall 1994, 108; D.E. Garland 1999, 65-66.
[43] Thrall 1994, 107.
[44] Bruce 1971, 178. Cf. Guthrie 2015, 71.
[45] Thrall 1994, 110.
[46] Ibid. 108 (cf. 110); Proudfoot 1963, 147. Cf. Windisch 1924, 40-41; Ahern 1960, 21; Furnish 1984, 120.
[47] Windisch 1924, 41.
[48] Tinsley 1960, 138-40; Issler 2007, 195.
[49] Lim 2009, 49.
[50] Guthrie 2015, 75.

F. Finally, dismissing other readings, Lim and others espouse that abounding in τὰ παθήματα τοῦ Χριστοῦ evokes the 'whole drama' of Jesus' earthly ministry as found in the Gospels 'rather than any specific event in Jesus' life'; that Paul has encountered the *same kinds* of sufferings and conflicts Jesus faced.[51] Yet there is little warrant elsewhere for the idea that Paul should not 'narrowly limit' his focus here to Christ's death and resurrection or 'merely the crucifixion', but be invoking other generic kinds of sufferings detailed in the later Gospels' 'passion tradition'—much less the synoptic 'Son of Man tradition'.[52] Bar the supper tradition 'on the night he was delivered over' (1 Cor 11:23ff.) all that *concerns Paul* elsewhere about particulars of Jesus' ministry are attitudes,[53] and even these tend to be tied *directly to his sacrificial death*. Furthermore, there is positive evidence against this. Paul has already expressed his desire to 'know nothing' among the Corinthians except 'Christ crucified' (1 Cor 2:2), and on the only other occasion he references Christ's παθήματα, Phil 3:10, these are aligned overtly with 'his *death*'. Of course, what Paul *does* concern himself with and emphasise throughout his letters is that this death was by crucifixion,[54] by its very nature an excruciating and drawn-out method of execution, and *this* is surely the most obvious and tenable referent of *τὰ* παθήματα τοῦ Χριστοῦ.

How, then, is Paul's declaration in 1:5 to be understood? Readings A, B, C, E and F are clearly inadequate. We would seem to be confronted with some kind of 'sharing in the historical sufferings (or death)' of Christ (D), hence the articular *τὰ* παθήματα τοῦ Χριστοῦ with the present tense περισσεύει, yet with specific reference to Paul's concrete experiences as opposed to some generic *Taufmysterium begründete Christus-Gemeinschaft*. Having established the mythic character of the gospel in Paul in its capacity as a sacred narrative, and its ritual-symbolic application, I submit that the broader foundational and therapeutic operative dimensions to myth illuminate the dynamics at play here.

As delineated in §2.4, a widely investigated component of myth is that it is foundational in content and social function. Phenomenologically anchoring its participants' social world in an unconditionally primary, founding event by which existential meaning is embedded in the world, a generative 'inbreaking of Eternity into history' that 'fixes the limits and establishes the order of the world', it takes on a 'special character as a way of orienting people to reality.'[55] It acquires the status of a fixed plane of absolute realities, an eternal truth within and undergirding the stream of contingent truths, operating as a macro-symbolic *foundational lens* used to impart meaning, value and directionality onto one's own experiences and the world process as a whole: to give an overarching 'meaning to empirical realities…via relativization.'[56] It acts as a 'retrospective, ever-present, live actuality' binding the 'volatile present to the traditionally and divinely sanctioned regularity of the past', and therewith as a core network 'of powerful symbols that suggest particular ways of interpreting the world.'[57] Hence

[51] Lim 2009, 51-52. How this chimes with Lim's early remark, that 'the sufferings of Paul simply do not resemble the sufferings of Christ' (ibid. 49), is unclear.
[52] Lim 2009, 51-52; appealing to Willert 1995, 218; Furnish 1984, 119. Cf. R.F. Collins 2013, 34.
[53] Rom 5:19; 8:34-35; 2 Cor 5:14; 8:9; 10:1, 5; Gal 2:20; Phil 2:8.
[54] Rom 6:6; 1 Cor 1:13, 17-18, 23; 2:2, 8; 2 Cor 13:4; Gal 2:20; 3:1, 13; 5:11, 24; 6:12, 14; Phil 2:8; 3:18.
[55] Shipp 2002, 31; Eliade 1959, 30; May 1991, 26.
[56] Kolakowski 1989, 2.
[57] Malinowski 1948 [1926], 102; G.S. Kirk 1970, 258; Midgley 2003, 1.

'what gives the myth an operative value is that the specific pattern described is everlasting; it *explains* the present and the past as well as the future.' One 'sees the world and organizes one's experience in terms of the story'—'shaping and articulating their own experience by means of mythic expression'.[58] In §2.6 this was expanded in terms of its affording participants key *therapeutic* resources, and so serving a core function especially in times of crisis. Establishing a fixed, purposeful order to the world in which core existential polarities are functionally integrated, the myth supplies a universal, macro-symbolic perspective beyond one's concrete experience, a 'fixed spot in an otherwise chaotic universe', [59] from which to meaningfully relativise and orient the polarities of personal existence. As an ever-present resource for placing one's experiences in a broader setting, an underlying pattern, it offers a means of referring any microcosmic experiences of plight back to the universal dialectical configuration of the myth, to realities, meanings and values 'that are no longer contingent or particular', and in so doing becomes a core means of anxiety-reduction and resilience in the face of adversity: 'Myth is therapy insofar as it enables us to function according to new structures of meaning'.[60] Myths thus serve as 'an important means of living through one's life experiences when they become resources for identifying, labeling, and relating to the forces experienced as active within one's environment.' One takes 'heart from a myth that mirrors their situation', thus valorised, and gives 'a larger meaning to their struggle.'[61]

That these mythic dynamics speak to the present passage is suggested immediately by the way in which Paul makes six allusions to experiencing *comfort* (παράκλησις/παρακαλεῖν) in 1:1-5—shortly to be followed by a further four in 1:6-7. As Bieringer notes, it 'is clear that παρακαλέω or παράκλησις implies psychological relief (ἄνεσις in 7:5) and peace of mind (cf. ἀναπέπαυται τὸ πνεῦμα αὐτοῦ in 7:13).'[62] It entails not being 'overwhelmed by excessive sorrow' (2:7). In 1:3-4 Paul has designated the 'God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ' as the ultimate source and agent of this παράκλησις; expressed the conviction that this 'Father of mercies' is effecting his παράκλησις in Paul's afflictions; and with a present participial construction that presupposes the 'constancy and even the predictability' of this paradoxical pattern: the Father's 'παράκλησις follows θλῖψις as surely as day follows night; *ubi θλῖψις, ibi παράκλησις*.'[63] Introduced with an explanatory ὅτι, Paul's statement in 1:5 is now surely giving voice to the grounds upon which such a paradoxical perspective and conviction is based: 'For *as the sufferings of Christ* are abounding in us, *so also through Christ* is abounding our παράκλησις.' The phenomenology of myth in its combined foundational and therapeutic dimensions helps make sufficient sense of this. Paul is therapeutically imbuing his afflictions with a broader, axiomatic meaning, value and directionality by placing them in the larger interpretative setting, the underlying pattern of 'the sufferings of Christ' as revealed in the gospel, whose sufferings on the cross were, paradoxically, the very *locus* of the Father's saving presence—his being raised to new life 'through the glory of the *Father*'

[58] Lévi-Strauss 1955, 430; Deutsch 1993, 44; Wyatt 2005, 156.
[59] May 1991, 53.
[60] Eliade 1959, 210; Huskinson 2008, 5.
[61] Doty 2000, 331; Bolen 1984, 6.
[62] Bieringer 2011, 4.
[63] Harris 2005, 144-45.

(Rom 6:4; cf. Gal 1:1; 1 Thess 1:10). The core trajectory of that founding event is, as a functionally mythic reality, furnishing Paul with an overarching perceptual model within which to shape the realities of his own experiences, to map a fixed meaning and instrumental value onto them—rendering them existentially bearable and supportable. Given that Paul's every affliction as *τὰ* παθήματα τοῦ Χριστοῦ has as its tacit referent the *cross*, then, it is no coincidence that with its very use in the sense of 'comfort' arising principally *via* the LXX, divine παράκλησις/παρακαλῶν (lit. a 'calling to one's side') carries a special nuance in the LXX as 'one of the elements of the eschatological hope',[64] and that as such it came in subsequent Judaism (cf. already Hos 13:14; Sir 49:10) to be associated with *resurrection*.[65]

Viewing the rôle of the gospel here against the phenomenology of myth helps strengthen position D above, the recognition that 1:5 implies some kind of 'sharing in the historical sufferings (or death)' of Christ, while dispensing with its weaknesses: imposing a baptismal setting, and paying inadequate attention to Paul's situational and personal focus. Baptism is not the *sine qua non* of Paul's self-understanding here. It is one facet of a more fundamental factor: *the mythic vitality of the gospel story*. The dynamics of baptism are one aspect and consequence of the *mythic potency of the gospel* in early Christianity: symbolically reactualising the sacred event in rituals. Now that potency is, with reference to Paul's own immediate circumstances, manifesting itself in myth's more wide-reaching foundational and therapeutic aspects, as a fixed perceptual lens for the mapping and understanding of experience *sub specie aeternitatis*, and which plays an especially key rôle in times of crisis. Faced with his own extensive afflictions, Paul is navigating them by superimposing on them a mythic character and quality, of 'the sufferings of Christ' on the cross: he is seeing the world and organising his experiences in terms of the gospel story. His every θλῖψις is the paradoxical locus of the Father's eschatological 'comforting' power and presence (1:3-4) *because* (ὅτι) their overall significance and directionality are being shaped by the absolute past, the eternal mythical present of *Christ's suffering on the cross* (1:5)—which is thereby bestowing on his every affliction a fixed, paradoxical 'simulacrum of safety by making activity repetitive, expective', making their *productive end* 'predictable by making it conform to the past'.[66] With the phenomenology of myth in its foundational and therapeutic aspects illuminating the dynamics at play in these initial verses of our passage, the utility of this vantage point extends to what follows.

5.2.2 Being Afflicted for Your Comfort and Salvation (1:6-7)

With an inferential δέ[67] Paul continues in 1:6a: 'So then, if we are being afflicted (εἴτε δὲ θλιβόμεθα), it is for your comfort and salvation (ὑπὲρ τῆς ὑμῶν παρακλήσεως καὶ σωτηρίας)'. Commentaries reveal the puzzlement of interpreters. A striking number assign this σωτηρία reference little or no interpretive comment or explanation.[68] Matera asks, yet does not really answer: 'But what

[64] J.G. Davies 1953, 37; cf. R.P. Martin 1986, 9; Thrall 1994, 103. See further, Hofius 1983.
[65] Hofius 1983, 222. Cf. Schütz 1975, 243: 'Παράκλησις is an eschatological-soteriological term'.
[66] Kluckhohn 1942, 66.
[67] Harris 2005, 147.
[68] E.g., Plummer 1915, 13; Strachan 1935, 46ff.; Bruce 1971, 178-79; Bultmann 1976, 29ff.; Witherington 1995, 358; Talbert 2002, 164; Sampley 2015, 894.

does Paul mean when he says that his affliction is *for their salvation*? He certainly does not mean that he is the one who saves them. Rather, when they participate in the sufferings of Christ as he does, then they will understand the paradoxical message of the gospel that God is at work in weakness (12:9).'[69] Contrastingly, Barrett simply glosses without explanation: 'The suffering of Jesus is redemptive; so in a subordinate degree is the suffering of the apostle'.[70] Among those who do seek to explain the reference the most common suggestions have been that (a) the addressees 'have experienced salvation because of Paul's ministry … and that ministry has involved affliction';[71] or else (b) σωτηρία must imply no more than 'general spiritual well-being'.[72] Neither of these is sufficient. Regarding (a), 1:6a is a first class conditional statement. Paul is not therefore affirming that his ministry *has* or happens to have *involved* affliction: the conditional εἴτε + present indicative passive θλιβόμεθα construction, as Harris notes, expresses a 'gnomic truth' (*if θλιβόμεθα*, *it is ὑπὲρ* τῆς ὑμῶν…). Moreover, the fact that the parallel statement in 1:6b (εἴτε παρακαλούμεθα, ὑπὲρ…) substitutes *παρακαλούμεθα* for θλιβόμεθα, of which God has been designated the agent (1:3-4), indicates that this θλιβόμεθα is no incidental statement of circumstances but a '"theological passive," with God as the implied agent'.[73] Turning to (b), it is *prima facie* unlikely that where elsewhere throughout the Pauline corpus σωτηρία/σῴζω in one way or other alludes to the divine 'salvation' wrought by God in Christ, in this single case it is devoid of this import. Furthermore, this already eschatologically-loaded domain, 'salvation', is couched in an equally eschatologically-loaded ὑπέρ construction—ὑπέρ ὑμῶν—which is throughout Paul intrinsic to the vocabulary of the gospel, to the salvific effects of Christ's death and resurrection 'for' others.[74]

That Paul did not consider himself some kind of independent, 'subordinate' saviour can be gleaned readily from 1 Cor 1:13ff. Yet we are left with the following dynamics to reckon with in 1:6a: Paul's inference is expressing a *gnomic truth*, behind which stands the *agency of God*, wherein—given the juxtaposition of two key gospel formulas (ὑπέρ + σωτηρία)—Paul *is* placing his 'being afflicted' in a context of *divine salvation for others*. How is one to makes sense of this? Our hermeneutic of myth supplies an obvious answer. Paul is following to its logical end ('So then') the mythic *transmuting* and *relativising* of his own harrowing life experiences *to* the 'gnomic truth' *of the gospel*: Christ's divinely orchestrated, salvific death and resurrection. A core component of myth's foundational-therapeutic functioning is that its absolute configurations of meaning, determinative of and undergirding reality at the macro level, supply roads to *universals beyond one's concrete experience*; fixed points for placing the latter in an underlying pattern, for *transcending* personal situations and opening oneself to realities, meanings and values that are no longer contingent or particular: 'myths…embrace mankind as a whole in one ideal history. By means of a time that represents all times…experience escapes its singularity; it is transmuted in its own "archetype" … put on the track of existential structures … no longer reduced

[69] Matera 2003, 42.
[70] Barrett 1997, 62.
[71] Guthrie 2015, 72; cf. also, e.g., Barnett 1997, 77; Thrall 1994, 110-11.
[72] Harris 2005, 147; cf. also, e.g., Windisch 1924, 43; R.P. Martin 1986, 10.
[73] Harris 2005, 147.
[74] Rom 5:6-8; 8:31-32, 34; 14:15; 1 Cor 1:13; 11:24; 15:3; 2 Cor 5:14-15, 21; Gal 1:4; 2:20; 3:13; 1 Thess 5:10.

to a present experience'.[75] In this capacity, as Townsend puts it, myths become vehicles for the 'efficacious suspension of the ordinary world itself', furnish the 'ability to transcend an ordinary situation and transfer the participant into a shadowy, only partially understood realm of *deeper* reality'—the *sacred* reality of the myth.[76] Since the gospel is functioning for Paul as just such a mythic reality, with Christ's *divinely orchestrated* deliverance to and from death *ipso facto* setting in motion *divine salvation for others*, this is the referential framework presently dis-closing the meaning, value and directionality of Paul's 'being afflicted', *as* 'the sufferings of Christ' (1:5). His experience of 'being afflicted' is being so thoroughly mediated through the lens of God's saving activity in the gospel that the former's meaning is being given in none other than that of the latter in all its significance.

Before turning in 1:8 to a specific θλῖψις, Paul adds that if he is παρακαλεῖται, it is for his addressees' παράκλησις: *τῆς ἐνεργουμένης ἐν* ὑπομονῇ τῶν αὐτῶν παθημάτων ὧν καὶ ἡμεῖς πάσχομεν (1:6b). Pace many translations the attributive participle τῆς ἐνεργουμένης means that which is 'made to work/made operative/effected' and delimits παράκλησις, while ἐν works with the ensuing clause to specify the *means* by which this παράκλησις is effected: by 'endurance of the same sufferings which we are also suffering.'[77] Paul thus speaks of a παράκλησις that is the *result* of παθήματα, specifically 'the *same* παθήματα' presently at work in him—a specificity continued in 1:7, as he expresses a conviction and 'firmly established' (βεβαία) 'hope' that: 'as you are participants in *the* παθήματα, so also (shall you be) in *the* παράκλησις.' It is unclear what is alluded to, as there 'is no indication elsewhere that the Corinthians were actually undergoing persecution or any other kind of hardship'.[78] If actual circumstances are in view, suggestions have included criticism of Paul 'directed towards the Corinthian congregation and worrying to at least some of them', some residual bitterness caused by Paul's prior visit, or 'pressure put on those who stand with him over against his opponents at Corinth, but that is not clearly indicated by the text'.[79] Another, perhaps preferable option is that Paul is invoking *prospective* sufferings—thus the indefiniteness of 1:6b and language of 'hope' in 1:7: 'that ἐνεργουμένης and ἐστε are presents must not be pressed; they are timeless and refer to what is normal.'[80] Either possibility is informed by our vantage point of myth. On the former, none of the Corinthian 'sufferings' would be in any *material* sense the same as Paul's, so '*the same* παθήματα', being 'participants in *the* παθήματα' (1:7) must evoke the *interpretative framework* within which he has just located his own afflictions: the παθήματα *of Christ* (1:5). One would then see what Paul meant in 1:4b by being equipped, via his own grappling with affliction, to 'comfort those *in any affliction* through the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God', namely, his firsthand experience of the divine comfort to be found *in any form* of suffering *when* this is (mythically) relativised, shaped and oriented through the lens of the gospel narrative, of *Christ's* παθήματα on the cross. If however he is referencing *prospective* sufferings,

[75] Ricoeur 1969, 162-63.
[76] Townsend 1972, 193-94.
[77] Cf. Guthrie 2015, 73.
[78] Thrall 1994, 111. See Barclay 1992.
[79] Thrall 1994, 113; B.G. White 2020, 162; Guthrie 2015, 73.
[80] Plummer 1915, 13.

why should Paul anticipate 'the same sufferings' abounding in him 'operating' in them at some point? Plausibly, as Garland suggests, it serves a rhetorical purpose: 'If they do not share his suffering, then they will not share his consolation. They should not, then, look upon his suffering with such a jaundiced eye.'[81] At the same time, however, Paul's language is of absolute *conviction*: a 'hope' and 'knowing' (εἰδότες) that is 'firmly established' (1:7). Why should this be? We return to the foundational character of myth. Since the dialectic of the Christ event is undergirding Paul's socio-symbolic worldview, revealing the core modalities of the sacred in the very structure of the world, he cannot fathom a setting in which the divine-eschatological παράκλησις he is experiencing 'through Christ' (1:5) can be fully realised apart from the negative counterpart of θλῖψις—the παθήματα of Christ. It is through the negative pole that the positive pole 'operates', is 'made to work' (ἐνεργουμένης): a favourite term of Paul's precisely for *God's* spiritual operating in the world.[82]

5.2.3 Paul's Ἀπόκριμα of Death, and the God Who Raises the Dead (1:8-10)

With 1:8 Paul's attention turns to a recent θλῖψις that befell him in Asia, in which he was 'crushed' (ἐβαρήθημεν) so 'excessively beyond measure' (καθ' ὑπερβολὴν ὑπὲρ δύναμιν) as to 'despair of living' (ἐξαπορηθῆναι ἡμᾶς καὶ τοῦ ζῆν), and about which he does not want the Corinthians to be 'ignorant': Οὐ γὰρ θέλομεν ὑμᾶς ἀγνοεῖν, ἀδελφοί, ὑπὲρ τῆς θλίψεως ἡμῶν… (1:8). The θλῖψις is unspecified, so we can assume that it was known and perhaps discussed in Corinth: 'it is not their ignorance *of* the affliction that concerns Paul, but rather their *perspective on* the affliction'.[83]

Turning to this matter of perspective developed in the following verses, we are met immediately in 1:9a with another crux: ἀλλ' αὐτοὶ ἐν ἑαυτοῖς τὸ ἀπόκριμα τοῦ θανάτου ἐσχήκαμεν. Most take this 'ἀπόκριμα of death' as a continuation and intensification of 1:8 and as evoking a judicial 'sentence'. Yet since there is no evidence elsewhere, and it seems intrinsically improbable that Paul had received the death sentence, they seek to render this statement intelligible by adding a 'felt (as if)' or 'seemed': 'we *felt* we had received the sentence of death' (RSV; NRSV; ESV; NIV); 'we *felt as if* the sentence of death had been passed against us' (NET); 'it *seemed* to us that we had received the death sentence';[84] it '*felt as if* [we] had received a death sentence'.[85] This is *not* what Paul says. There is no 'felt as if' or 'seemed'. Complicating such readings is that, as Hemer notes, τὸ ἀπόκριμα τοῦ θανάτου is an anomalous construction with no judicial precedent. In its extant contemporary attestations it refers to 'an official decision in answer to the petition of an embassy', and usually with reference to a *favourable* decree.[86] There is thus 'no ground in contemporary usage for seeing a judicial metaphor here'.[87] Yet

[81] D.E. Garland 1999, 70.
[82] 1 Cor 12:6, 11; 2 Cor 4:12; Gal 2:8; 3:5; Phil 2:13; 1 Thess 2:13; cf. Eph 1:11, 20; 3:20; Col 1:29.
[83] Guthrie 2015, 78; cf. Plummer 1915, 15-16.
[84] Furnish 1984, 108; R.P. Martin 1986, 12.
[85] Sampley 2015, 894. Lambrecht (1999, 21) paraphrases: 'my impression…was that a certain death awaited me'; cf. Barnett 1997, 86 n. 28: 'It was *as if* a [death] sentence had been passed against him' (referencing the NIV and RSV). The list could go on.
[86] Hemer 1972. Cf. Barrett 1997, 64: it 'seems to have been often used of a favourable imperial decision.'
[87] Hemer 1972, 103; cf. Harris 2005, 155.

Hemer's suggested reading, that Paul 'petitioned God about the *outcome*' of his affliction and the 'verdict' was death, he would not live until the Parousia is unconvincing,[88] for it 'removes v. 9 from its context, and overlooks the fact that on this occasion [physical] death did not overtake Paul.'[89] Stegman adds two further factors undermining the assumption of many[90] that 1:9a is simply a rhetorical intensification of the situation depicted in 1:8. Its opening conjunction is not usually continuative but *adversative*; and ἐσχήκαμεν is in the *perfect* tense, which could well convey something Paul 'received in the past…that has ongoing ramifications in the present'.[91] Hence, 'we received and still experience' or 'having got I continue to have'.[92] That ἐσχήκαμεν *is* a true perfect is borne out by the durative construction of the following clause (ἵνα μὴ *πεποιθότες ὦμεν*…; 1:9b), and then again in 1:10.[93]

There are thus four factors to reckon with in 1:9a. (A) It is not that Paul *felt as if* he received a death sentence, or that death 'seemed imminent':[94] his receiving the ἀπόκριμα of death is a statement of fact. (B) Ἀπόκριμα τοῦ θανάτου is not standard terminology for the death sentence or a 'death-warrant'[95] from a human law court: it suggests an authoritative 'answer' or 'decree', and at that a *favourable* one (cf. Sir 41:2). (C) The opening ἀλλά indicates that 1:9a is set over against the sorry state of affairs depicted in 1:8. (D) The perfect ἐσχήκαμεν evokes a past *continuous*, ongoing reality. Given what has been unpacked in the foregoing verses about the manner in which Paul is undertaking a meaning-giving relativisation of his *every affliction* to the overarching framework of the divinely orchestrated, paradoxically positive *sufferings of Christ on the cross*, our hermeneutic of myth furnishes a cohesive reading factoring in all the above. In 1:9a Paul is commencing his *evaluative perspective on* the especially harrowing θλῖψις referenced in 1:8 about which he does not want his addressees to be ignorant. Even faced with so unspeakable a θλῖψις as befell him in Asia, 'crushed' to an extent that seemed to negate his existence having any value, he received 'within himself' a *favourable, divine answer* to his plight (B). He discerned therein a divine 'decree' that *reoriented* it, that located it on the plane of divine agency (C); one which was even then, and continues to be operative in *all* his θλῖψις (D). It was *in fact* a divinely decreed 'death' manifesting itself therein: *that of Christ* (A).

Having arrived squarely in 1:9a—following the θλῖψις ⇒ παθήματα τοῦ Χριστοῦ pole of 1:3-7—at the *death* domain apropos his θλῖψις, Paul proceeds in 1:9b to invoke the *resurrection* domain: ἵνα μὴ πεποιθότες ὦμεν ἐφ' ἑαυτοῖς ἀλλ' ἐπὶ τῷ θεῷ *τῷ ἐγείροντι τοὺς νεκρούς*. As with the παράκλησις-in-θλῖψις of 1:3-4 the teleological activity of God is invoked. And with this statement of purpose directly continuing 1:9a, this confirms that behind the 'decree of death' is *God*: 'But we have received the (divine) decree of death in ourself (1:9a), in order that we should not be depending on ourself but *on the God who raises the dead* (1:9b)'. While echoes of the latter clause are found in synagogue liturgy,

[88] Hemer 1972, 106-7; cf. also Héring 1967, 5; R.P. Martin 1986, 14; Harris 2005, 182.
[89] Thrall 1994, 118.
[90] Plummer 1915, 17; Furnish 1984, 113; R.P. Martin 1986, 113; Lambrecht 1999, 20; D.E. Garland 1999, 78 n. 24.
[91] Stegman 2005, 259-60.
[92] Belleville 1996, 58; McKay 1972, 48; also Barrett 1997, 64; D.E. Garland 1999, 78-79; Seifrid 2014, 36-37.
[93] So BDF, 177; also, e.g., Harris 2005, 156.
[94] Guthrie 2015, 64.
[95] Stanley 1961, 129.

it is hardly debateable that for Paul 'the God who "raises the dead" derives not from his acquaintance with Jewish prayers but from…the God who raised the once-crucified Jesus to life.'[96] This has a 'specific content that has become the heartbeat of his faith; God is the one who raised the crucified Jesus from the dead'.[97] Following the NA[28] reading, however, it is striking that Paul should appeal to this dynamic with a timeless present participle (ἐγείροντι). Stegman notes that here Paul is somehow informing the present by 'recall[ing] the story of Jesus'. Yet his attempt to explain this as Paul expressing a 'commitment to embody the *faithfulness* of Jesus', that 'as Jesus…trusted in God' his experience 'has taught him to trust in God to empower him, to preserve him, and, *finally*, to raise him from the dead' is strained.[98] Paul's emphasis falls squarely on *God's raising the dead*, and 'his words imply that God through Christ is constantly bringing forth life from death.'[99] Accordingly, Paul continues his appeal to 'the God who raises the dead' in 1:10: 'who delivered us (ἐρρύσατο ἡμᾶς) from such a great death (ἐκ τηλικούτου θανάτου) and shall continue to deliver us (καὶ ῥύσεται); in whom we have hope (ἠλπίκαμεν) he will deliver us yet again (καὶ ἔτι ῥύσεται)'. As another *crux*, most try to clarify ἐκ τηλικούτου θανάτου here by paraphrasing, 'from such a deadly peril' (NIV; ESV), 'so deadly a peril' (RSV; NRSV), 'so great a danger of death' (NASB) or the like: 'Clearly it is the *danger* of death that Paul has in mind; otherwise Paul had been miraculously brought back to life'.[100] As in 1:9a, however, Paul speaks directly of death, of his being delivered by God 'from such a great death'. And with the aorist ἐρρύσατο (1:10a) Paul clearly states that he has *already* experienced divine deliverance *from death*. Yet even here Stegman avers: 'The point here is that the basis of Paul's πίστις is his reliance on and hope in God to preserve him…and to ultimately vindicate him in the resurrection.'[101] Nor is Stegman alone in confining deliverance *from death* here to the future: 'The ongoing experience of hardships has taught Paul that his only assurance of survival…is to place his complete trust in God to preserve him and to raise him from the dead at the End of Days.'[102] Since, however, 1:10 directly continues Paul's broader perspective on his Asian θλῖψις, and he has just deemed that θλῖψις a 'death', then stated that the purpose of this was his depending 'on the God who *raises the dead*' (1:9), his reference in 1:10a to God's having, in fact, *delivered* (ἐρρύσατο) him '*from* such a great *death*' clearly alludes to that Asian θλῖψις. In other words: 'He apparently viewed his deliverance from the θλῖψις as a veritable resurrection from the dead brought about by God'.[103] Moreover, given the correspondence of this past deliverance (ἐρρύσατο) from 'death' and the ensuing clauses about ongoing and future deliverances (ῥύσεται) 'yet again', and the perfect ἠλπίκαμεν of the final clause, it seems unlikely that Paul is anywhere in 1:10 appealing specifically to the general resurrection.[104]

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[96] R.P. Martin 1986, 15; cf. Wolff 1989, 26-27; Thrall 1994, 119; Sampley 2015, 894.
[97] D.E. Garland 1999, 81.
[98] Stegman 2005, 261 (emphases added).
[99] Seifrid 2014, 42.
[100] Barnett 1997, 88 n. 38; cf. Thrall 1994, 119.
[101] Stegman 2005, 262.
[102] Lim 2009, 61.
[103] Harris 2005, 158. Unfortunately, this striking dynamic is immediately downplayed when Harris adds: '…because he assumed that his death at that time was inevitable'.
[104] Rightly, Harris 2005, 158-59.

Our vantage point on the functioning of the gospel in this passage as a mythic lens affords a coherent interpretation of the dynamics present in these verses. Reinforcing our reading of Paul's affliction as a 'death' in 1:8-9a, and of everything that has preceded, Paul is mythically relativising, shaping and orienting his own extensive afflictions through the macro-symbolic lens of the gospel story: the underlying pattern of *God's raising Christ from the dead*. Behind Paul's θλῖψις as 'such a great death' (τηλικοῦτος θάνατος) is *Christ's death*.[105] Behind the pattern of divine raising/deliverance 'from such a great death' (ἐκ τηλικούτου θανάτου) that has governed and shall continue to play itself out in Paul's experiences is *Christ's ensuing resurrection from* the dead. Thus mythically 'shaped' by the dialectical modalities of the sacred mediated in the gospel, the meaning, instrumental value and directionality of Paul's afflictions are fixed, rendering them existentially supportable, indeed inevitably fruitful. Accordingly, the all-encompassing past, present and future scope of 1:9b-10 reflects the operative essence of the gospel narrative throughout this passage as a mythic, foundational-therapeutic lens: 'what gives the myth an operative value is that the specific pattern described is everlasting; it explains the present and the past as well as the future.'[106] 'The stages of time—past, present, future—do not remain distinct … an everywhere recurring measure is felt in the world process as a whole.'[107] The 'myth places the experience of man in a whole that receives orientation and meaning from the narration. Thus, an understanding of human reality as a whole operates through the myth.'[108] In 'its application, it creates a system of coordinates to cope with the present…[and] the future.'[109]

5.2.4 A Concluding Plea for Supportive Understanding (1:11-14)

The focus of the opening period has been Paul's self-understanding apropos his affliction, thereby obviously addressing the first core prong of this letter's situational backdrop: Paul's having to deal with a life and ministry fraught with an inordinate level of adversity, dejection and ignominy, recently reaching an unprecedented level. The second prong to that backdrop, however, has been glimpsed in Paul's prefacing 1:8-10 with a desire for the Corinthians not to be 'ignorant concerning [his] affliction', namely, the need to address the spurning of him in Corinth *on the basis of* that extensive level of personal adversity, dejection and ignominy. In 1:11-14 Paul can be seen to bring the introductory period to a close by relating his entire self-presentation thus far directly to that problematic in Corinth.

Thus, in 1:11 he follows the divine pattern behind his θλῖψις conveyed in 1:8-10 by 'indirectly requesting cooperation (σύν-) on the part of the Corinthians (καὶ) in petitioning God for deliverance whenever θλίψεις occur' (1:11a), that they embrace and involve themselves in the divine acts of deliverance-from-'death' at work in him,[110] and that 'many persons might give thanks for us, for the divine favour granted us' (1:11b). As Seifrid notes, the 'usual roles in the opening of the letter are thus

[105] Cf. Heb 2:3, where τηλικοῦτος invokes 'such a great salvation'; elsewhere only Jas 3:4; Rev 16:18.
[106] Lévi-Strauss 1955, 430.
[107] Cassirer 1955 [1925], 110-11. Hence, τῷ θεῷ τῷ *ἐγείροντι* τοὺς νεκρούς (1:9b).
[108] Ricoeur 1969, 6.
[109] Burkert 1979, 25.
[110] Harris 2005, 160; cf. Thrall 1994, 122.

reversed: it is not the apostle who gives thanks for God's work among the Corinthians, but the Corinthians who are to give thanks for God's work with Paul.'[111] This makes complete sense on our mythic reading of what has preceded, insofar as for Paul the 'shape' of God's work *in him*, his 'being afflicted' is none other than that of his saving work *in Christ*: 'So then, if we are being afflicted, it is for your…salvation' (1:6a; cf. 1:12f). Touching on the issue of boasting, and Paul's being too 'weak' to do so, in Corinth, he then declares that his 'boasting' is the testimony of his συνείδησις—'an inward faculty of judgement which assesses conduct in accordance with given norms';[112] that he has oriented himself (ἀνεστραμμένος) in the world not via the 'earthly' or 'material' (σαρκικός), but 'in the sacredness' (ἐν ἁγιότητι),[113] 'sincerity' and 'grace of God' (1:12). Finally, he expresses that his 'hope' in writing to the Corinthians is that, as they 'partially understood' him, they might come to 'fully understand' (1:13-14). Reading this enigmatic opening period in light of the phenomenology of myth in its foundational and therapeutic capacities, we have arrived at a cohesive vantage point for understanding what it is Paul wants the Corinthians to perceive: what the testimony of his συνείδησις *is*, and *how* he has oriented himself 'in the sacredness', 'sincerity' and 'grace of God'. Behind his own extensive afflictions, the very realities that are the butt of derision in Corinth, are the sacred realities of the gospel, the paradoxical modalities of God mediated in that foundational event: 'the God who raises the dead' (1:9b).

Let us now turn to the second passage where the phenomenology of myth continues to shed a penetrating light on Paul's logic.

5.3 The Gospel as a Mythic Lens in 2 Cor 4:7-18

Paul's discussion in 4:7-18 continues a polemical defence of his ministry initiated in 2:14. While 4:7-18 is our focus, certain mythic dynamics are also to be found in this intervening material. Paul has asserted that unlike 'the many peddling the word of God', he speaks 'out of sincerity, as one from God … standing in Christ before God' (2:17): who is 'always leading us in triumphal procession in Christ … for we are a sweet fragrance of Christ to God' (2:14-15). Against those in Corinth touting 'commendatory letters' he has positioned the Corinthians as 'a letter of Christ ministered by us' (3:1-3); expressed the profound 'confidence' he derives 'through Christ toward God' (3:4). And having compared the Mosaic ministry's veiled and passing glory with that of the unveiled and abiding (μένον) glory 'in Christ' (3:8-16), he has alluded to himself (and others), with an unveiled πρόσωπον, 'reflecting as in a mirror the Lord's glory (δόξα), being (repeatedly) transfigured into the same image (εἰκών)' (3:18)—a 'glory' and 'image' then tied directly to the figure of Christ (4:4, 6). Paul's discussion in 4:7-18, however, evidences especially close affinities with the opening period, not least in proving a notably obscure portion of text.[114]

[111] Seifrid 2014, 33.
[112] Thrall 1994, 301.
[113] On reading ἁγιότητι here, cf., e.g., Thrall 1994, 133; Harris 2005, 183.
[114] Schenck 2008, 256.

5.3.1 Continually Bearing the Life through Death of Jesus (4:7-11)

As in the opening unit Paul's discourse here moves through a series of paradoxical combinations. He begins: 'But we have this treasure (θησαυρὸν τοῦτον) in earthen vessels (ἐν ὀστρακίνοις σκεύεσιν) (4:7a). With his concern for some time now being the nature and validity of his διακονία (3:8, 9; 4:1), *this treasure* evokes Paul's overall ministry of the 'gospel of the glory of Christ' discussed in 4:1-6.[115] Yet the *earthen vessels* said to house this were renowned for being cheap, frail and readily broken.[116] As 4:8-9 will confirm, this alludes to the extensively 'afflicted', reputationally 'weak' and 'inferior' Paul himself: 'the weak and suffering apostle that people see and disparage.'[117] This seemingly contrary reality is then said to be teleologically bound to experiencing *the all-surpassing power of God.* Pace many, Paul does not say that it is 'so that it may be *evident* that'[118] or '*made clear* that this extraordinary power belongs to God' (NRSV). It is 'in order that (ἵνα) the all-surpassing power *might be* from God (ἡ ὑπερβολὴ τῆς δυνάμεως ᾖ τοῦ θεοῦ) and not ourselves' (1:7b). Turning directly to his hardships he then writes that he is 'continually being afflicted (ἐν παντὶ θλιβόμενοι), yet not crushed (ἀλλ' οὐ στενοχωρούμενοι); left perplexed (ἀπορούμενοι), yet not in despair (οὐκ ἐξαπορούμενοι; cf. 1:8); persecuted (διωκόμενοι), yet not abandoned (ἀλλ' οὐκ ἐγκαταλειπόμενοι); struck down (καταβαλλόμενοι), yet not destroyed (ἀλλ' οὐκ ἀπολλύμενοι)' (4:8-9). Continuing the same sentence, this is clearly a direct application of the combined contraries in 1:7 to Paul's various afflictions. With οὐκ ἐγκαταλειπόμενοι almost certainly, as throughout the Psalms and elsewhere in the LXX alluding to *God's* not 'abandoning' him, this indicates that behind these paradoxical dynamics stands, as in 1:7, the δύναμις of God. In other words: 'The first member of each antithesis in vv. 8-9 indicates an apostolic hardship; the second…refers…to the presence of God's power.'[119] In 4:10-11, Paul turns to a striking set of statements which have proved particularly problematic, and been the subject of many questionable readings: [10]πάντοτε τὴν νέκρωσιν τοῦ Ἰησοῦ ἐν τῷ σώματι περιφέροντες, ἵνα καὶ ἡ ζωὴ τοῦ Ἰησοῦ ἐν τῷ σώματι ἡμῶν φανερωθῇ. [11]ἀεὶ γὰρ ἡμεῖς οἱ ζῶντες εἰς θάνατον παραδιδόμεθα διὰ Ἰησοῦν, ἵνα καὶ ἡ ζωὴ τοῦ Ἰησοῦ φανερωθῇ ἐν τῇ θνητῇ σαρκὶ ἡμῶν.

Appealing to 13:4, Rissi suggested that νέκρωσις here evokes 'neither the "killing"…nor the "dying" of Jesus' but *lack of power*, and so denotes Paul's 'weakness' or 'helplessness'.[120] This seems unlikely. In 13:4 Paul does evoke Christ's weakness apropos himself, yet even there it is Christ's being 'crucified in weakness'. And on either of its possible imports, a 'putting-to-death' or 'state-of-deadness',[121] νέκρωσις conveys *death*, and that this is its import here is confirmed by the parallel reference to θάνατος in 4:11 (also 4:12). Tannehill proposed that here θάνατος evokes the 'principal powers of the old aeon'

[115] Rissi 1969, 45; Bultmann 1976, 114; R.P. Martin 1986, 84-85; Lambrecht 1999, 71; Kuschnerus 2002, 238; Matera 2003, 107-8; Lim 2009, 101; R.F. Collins 2013, 98; Tack 2015, 106.
[116] E.g., Lev 6:28; 11:33; 15:12; Ps 31:12 (LXX 30:13); Isa 30:14; Jer 19:11; Lam 4:2; Epict. *Diss.* 3.9.18.
[117] Matera 2002, 396.
[118] Ibid. 106.
[119] Lambrecht 1999, 72.
[120] Rissi 1969, 49-50.
[121] BDAG, 668. Elsewhere in the New Testament, only Rom 4:19, in which it has the latter import.

which, though not yet destroyed, have been definitively 'conquered' by the νέκρωσις of Jesus: 'Thus the fact that the believer must still await the redemption of his body and is still exposed to the powers of the old dominion does not mean that God is not yet in control of things'.[122] Such, however, is indebted to Paul's quite distinct discussion in Rom 5:12-21, and it is unclear how this relates in any way to the purview of the present passage. Equally acontextual is the suggestion of Kamlah that, in light of negative uses of σάρξ elsewhere in Paul, what is in view is the destruction of sin effected by Christ's death.[123] While σάρξ occurs in 4:11, it is used interchangeably with σῶμα (4:10), and so 'simply a periphrasis for the personal pronoun'.[124] Two of the most frequently encountered suggestions have been that the direct allusions to 'death' as regards Paul mean rather his facing the *danger* or *prospect* of death: 'experience of "deadly" trials, any one of which could deal the final blow of physical death'.[125] And/or that, as regards the νέκρωσις *of Jesus* (4:10), νέκρωσις must evoke not Jesus' 'dying' *per se*, but rather his broader ministry and the difficulties he, like Paul, faced therein—Belleville being a case in point:

> When we think of the "dying" of Jesus, we tend to think of the cross. Paul, however, has in mind the hardships, troubles and frustrations Jesus faced during his three-year ministry—the loneliness, the disappointments with his disciples, the exhaustion, the constant harassment by opponents, the crowd's continuous demands, the incredulity of his family, the mocking and jeers of his foes…[126]

If, however, when *we* think of the 'dying' of Jesus we 'think of the cross', is there any reason to imagine that Paul would *not* mean by 'the (putting to) death' of Jesus just that? Recalling our discussion of the 'sufferings of Christ' in 1:5, there is no warrant elsewhere for supposing that Paul should really have in mind something *other* than Jesus' crucifixion—especially when death is *directly invoked*—much less any of the general 'troubles and frustrations' Belleville invokes.

In 4:10a Paul speaks of his 'continually bearing the νέκρωσις of Jesus in the body'. While νέκρωσις could mean a state-of-deadness the attendant πάντοτε, present participle περιφέροντες, and 4:11's παραδιδόμεθα suggest the action of putting-to-death. And Paul's speaking directly of 'bearing *the* putting to death *of Jesus*' clearly 'suggests that the historical process of Jesus' death on the cross is indicated'.[127] Accordingly, in the structurally parallel statement of 4:11a Paul shifts from νέκρωσις to the more standard θάνατος, and from περιφέροντες to a key formula of the gospel tradition pertaining to Jesus' death, the passive παραδίδωμι: he is 'perpetually…*being delivered over* to death διὰ Ἰησοῦν'.[128] While Furnish deems it 'not necessary' to assume that Paul uses this formula to accentuate the relation between his experience and Jesus' death,[129] given his immediately antecedent appeal to

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[122] Tannehill 1967, 85-86. Cf. Savage 1996, 175, who speaks of Paul's 'sharing in the demise of the present age'.
[123] Kamlah 1963, 230-31.
[124] Robinson 1952, 29.
[125] Harris 2005, 346; cf. also, e.g., Plummer 1915, 130; Bruce 1971, 197; Murphy-O'Connor 1991, 46: Barrett 1997, 140; Guthrie 2015, 260-61.
[126] Belleville 1996, 122; cf. also, e.g., Furnish 1984, 283; Murphy-O'Connor 1991, 46; Stegman 2005, 148; Harris 2005, 345-46; Lim 2009, 110; Guthrie 2015, 260.
[127] Byrnes 2003, 63.
[128] See 1 Cor 11:23; Rom 4:25; 8:32; also, e.g., Mk 9:31; 10:33; 14:21, 41; Mt 17:22; 20:18; 26:2; Lk 9:44; 18:32; 22:22; 24:7; cf. Gal 1:4; 2:20; Eph 5:2, 25.
[129] Furnish 1984, 256.

'bearing the putting to death of Jesus', this is precisely what he is doing.[130] Indeed Paul himself places this 'being delivered over to death' in direct apposition to Jesus. It is διὰ Ἰησοῦν, which, not least given 4:10a, as Furnish himself and others note, indicates 'the cause and motivational factor' behind *Paul's* being delivered over to death.[131] Given the agency behind Jesus' 'being delivered over' (cf. Rom 8:32), in accordance with Paul's standard use of παραδίδωμι, the clear inference is that Paul is 'continually bearing the putting to death of Jesus' (4:10a), and so διὰ Ἰησοῦν 'perpetually being delivered over to death' *by God* (4:11a).[132] Paul does not, however, stop with Jesus' death. His 'continually bearing the putting to death of Jesus in the body' (4:10a), his 'being delivered over to death' (4:11a) is, Paul adds: 'in order that (ἵνα) *the ζωὴ of Jesus might also* be manifested (φανερωθῇ) in our body' (4:10b), 'in order that (ἵνα) *the ζωὴ of Jesus might also* be manifested (φανερωθῇ) in our mortal flesh' (4:11b). Since this ζωὴ follows sequentially (ἵνα καὶ), and so finds its antecedent reality in, 'the putting to death of Jesus' and 'being delivered over to death' it cannot invoke Jesus' existential constitution of 'loving God and living for him alone' during his earthly ministry.[133] As most have recognised, it must allude to the *resurrection life* of Jesus: 'the life he now lives having been raised from the dead'.[134] Furthermore, while some posit that 'the primary reference here is to future resurrection…when our natural bodies are transformed into spiritual bodies',[135] as most again recognise, a host of factors tell against this. The twofold ἵνα *καὶ* suggests something causally concurrent with the *ongoing* realities in 4:10a, 11a. The ἐν τῷ σώματι ἡμῶν of 4:10b parallels the ἐν τῷ σώματι of 4:10a, which refers to an ongoing present reality. In 4:11b Paul speaks of this resurrection life being manifested in his 'mortal flesh', which can hardly refer to receiving a 'spiritual body' at the last day. And these appeals to the 'life of Jesus' clearly stand in structural and thematic relation to the paradoxically positive counterparts conveyed in the preceding verses, the ἵνα-statement pertaining to the 'all-surpassing power' of God in 4:7b, and the paradoxical presence of this in the second of each antithesis in 4:8-9: where 'Paul speaks of his present existence in both members of each'.[136] In 4:10-11, then, Paul is invoking some present, ongoing outworking in himself of 'God's power, taking shape in the form it took in the resurrection of Jesus',[137] which depends on his 'bearing the putting to death of Jesus' and so 'being delivered over to death'.

Those who argue for some 'union', 'participation' or 'ontological oneness' with Jesus and his death here are therefore justified. A few have appealed in this regard to a baptismal context.[138] As with 1:5, however, such a *setting* seems ill-suited here. Thrall discerns that here the 'apostolate' is 'in some sense'

[130] Cf. Lambrecht 1994, 328; Thrall 1994, 336; Byrnes 2003, 74.

[131] Lim 2009, 116; cf. Furnish 1984, 257; Lambrecht 1999, 73; Barnett 1997, 237 n. 54; Byrnes 2003, 75; Seifrid 2014, 208 n. 383. See 4:5; also 1 Cor 4:10; Phil 3:7-8.

[132] Cf. Collange 1972, 158; Thrall 1994, 336; Byrnes 2003, 74; Harris 2005, 348.

[133] Pace Murphy-O'Connor 1991, 47; also idem. 1988, 545-46.

[134] Byrnes 2003, 68; cf. Lietzmann 1949, 115-16; Furnish 1984, 256; R.P. Martin 1986, 87-88; Barrett 1997, 140; Thrall 1994, 335; Matera 2003, 107; Stegman 2005, 152; Harris 2005, 347; Lim 2009, 111-12; Seifrid 2014, 208; Guthrie 2015, 260; Esler 2021, 145.

[135] Barrett 1997, 140; also, e.g., Guntermann 1932, 65; Lietzmann 1949, 116.

[136] Thrall 1994, 334.

[137] Ibid. 335.

[138] For discussion, see, e.g., Thrall 1994, 332-34.

an ‘epiphany in somatic form of the Christ who was crucified’, yet, evidently perplexed by this, she then avers: ‘Whether Paul is saying quite as much as that there is in his own person an actual epiphany of the crucified (and risen) Christ is perhaps doubtful.’[139] Byrnes detects some ‘subjective participation in the death of Jesus’, yet concedes ‘the difficulty of interpreting the dynamic described by Paul.’[140] Finally, Lambrecht opines: ‘In view of parallel texts…we have to interpret Paul’s [statements here]…in terms of participation, the natural result or effect of his union with Christ. However difficult it may be to specify that union, a kind of ontological oneness with Christ is postulated by Paul’.[141] Our hermeneutical framework of *myth* applied to the dynamics of this letter’s opening period affords an untapped analytical vantage point from which to do precisely what such commentators, who at least gesture toward the basic sense of these verses, have struggled to do.

Thus, there is clearly ‘a kind of ontological oneness with Christ’ posited in 4:10-11, but this is not static. It is a dynamic oneness with the Christ *event*: Jesus’ death and resurrection. Pace the array of scholars noted above, Paul’s ‘continually bearing the putting to death of Jesus’ is hardly referring to some other content, such that he has in mind ‘weder von der “Tötung” Jesu, noch vom “Sterben” Jesu’.[142] Nor is Paul speaking of the potential danger or prospect of death. He is appealing specifically to the death → resurrection life of Jesus, applying this narrative dynamic self-referentially, and in a present and continual way (*πάντοτε* τὴν νέκρωσιν τοῦ Ἰησοῦ…*περιφέροντες*, ἵνα *καὶ* ἡ ζωὴ τοῦ Ἰησοῦ…φανερωθῇ; *ἀεὶ*…εἰς θάνατον *παραδιδόμεθα*…, ἵνα *καὶ* ἡ ζωὴ τοῦ Ἰησοῦ φανερωθῇ). This conforms to the functioning of mythic narrative as a *foundational lens*, a fixed perceptual model for mapping meaning onto the world process as a whole: ‘what gives the myth an operative value is that the specific pattern described is everlasting; it explains the present and the past as well as the future’, such that when people are ‘“thinking mythically” they are interpreting things, perhaps even the meanings of their own lives, within the coded contours of the narrative; they take themselves to inhabit the myth’.[143] As an operatively mythic reality the dynamics of the gospel here function as an overarching lens for mapping and understanding Paul’s ongoing life experiences.

It is his afflictions that Paul is viewing through this lens. His assertion in 4:10 continues the sentence begun in 4:7; his ‘continually bearing the putting to death of Jesus in the body’ (4:10) continues the ‘earthen vessel’ imagery of 4:7, and parallels the development of this in terms of his ‘continually being afflicted…’ (4:8-9). Given the concrete exigencies behind Paul’s writing, we are confronted again with the core *therapeutic* functioning of myth as a foundational lens, and hence of the gospel here. Paul is not espousing some general theology of ‘union with Christ’ with ‘participation’ as a ‘natural result or effect’.[144] Facing a life marred by extensive suffering, humiliation, ignominy and now being spurned in Corinth on these very grounds, their shared sacred narrative of Christ crucified↘↗raised is affording

[139] Thrall 1994, 334.
[140] Byrnes 2003, 64, 66 n. 124.
[141] Lambrecht 1999, 77-78. Esler 2021, 145-46 avers that some ‘union with Christ’ is ‘possibly’ in view here.
[142] Rissi 1969, 49.
[143] Lévi-Strauss 1955, 430; Neville 1996, 39.
[144] Lambrecht 1999, 78.

Paul a fixed pattern of sacred modality within which to therapeutically situate, transmute and orient his 'continually being afflicted…perplexed…persecuted…struck down' (4:8-9); to shape these ostensibly 'impotent, unworkable life experiences into ones that are productive and enriched.'[145] As functionally *mythic*, the core *coincidentia oppositorum* of the gospel is furnishing Paul with 'certain superlative, overarching *pragmatic* crystals of meaning' within which to find his 'way out of his particular situation and "open[] himself" to the general and the universal', to give 'a larger meaning to [his] struggle' by placing it 'in a larger setting … an underlying pattern'.[146] Standing in direct relation to 4:7-9, 4:10-11 is not some adjunct '*theological interpretation of* the antitheses' of the preceding verses:[147] it is their *mythological foundation*.

The difficulty commentators have with engaging Paul's language itself in 4:10-11, the continual playing out in his circumstances of Jesus' *death → resurrection life*, is immediately clarified by the polyvalent unity of myth (§2.3) *as* a foundational-therapeutic network of 'powerful symbols' for interpreting the world.[148] By applying these to various forms of affliction and God's power, Paul is evidently speaking of 'death' and resurrection 'life' in more than a literal sense. This corresponds to the inherent 'multivalence and multivocality' of myth as a 'reservoir of meanings…available for possible use again in other structures', entailing 'fusions of categories and identities normally held discrete'.[149] At the same time Paul is speaking in concrete terms of 'death' and 'life', not of something 'analogous to the killing of Jesus':[150] his 'continually being afflicted' (4:8-9) is his continually bearing 'the putting to death of Jesus', such that he is perpetually 'being delivered over to death' by God, in order that the ensuing resurrection 'life of Jesus might also be manifested' in him (4:10-11). This corresponds to the nature of mythic symbolism as *bound*: 'bound to its content and, *through* its primary content, to its secondary content.'[151] As a vehicle for '*discovering and forging* meaningful interpretations', 'revealing a modality of the real or a structure of the world that is not evident on the level of immediate experience', the concrete imagery of the myth itself opens up and discloses a system of meanings that, 'without it, would remain closed'.[152] Thus it is not only dubious but fundamentally antithetical to the dynamics at play here to read behind Paul's appeals to 'death' in 4:10-11 some *other* meaning. The very meaning of his afflictions is being given *in* and regulated precisely *by* that of Jesus' 'life'-ensuing 'death'.

Evidently finding the idea unpalatable, Tack insists:

> Paul does not say here that death equals life. He says that God's power and Jesus' life are revealed in the midst of mortality and weakness. It is the discernment of this power of life, which eventually negates death, that counts for Paul. *Suffering is not used as an instrument to attain this*.[153]

[145] Huskinson 2008, 5.
[146] Doty 2000, 104; Eliade 1959, 211; Bolen 1984, 6; Armstrong 2005, 2.
[147] Harris 2005, 345.
[148] Midgley 2003, 1.
[149] Doniger 1998, 80; Connerton 1989, 56; Goodmann 1993, 56.
[150] Barrett 1997, 140.
[151] Ricoeur 1969, 17.
[152] Doty 2000, 101; Altizer 1962, 88; Ricoeur 1969, 165. Cf. May 1991, 72, 86.
[153] Tack 2015, 107 (emphasis added); appealing to Lambrecht 1994, 320.

Is this not, however, precisely what Paul is saying? If, by continually being afflicted, Paul is continually bearing the death of Jesus and, mirroring the initial purpose statement of 4:7, this is claimed to be '*in order that* (ἵνα) the life of Jesus *might also be* manifested' in him, the clear implication is that the former is the instrument used by God to attain the latter. And afforded our mythic vantage point on these verses this makes complete sense. To miss that for Paul here suffering *is* ever used as the purposive instrument for God's power and Jesus' life is to miss the point of Paul's self-presentation in 4:7-11 entirely: 'to *transform impotent, unworkable* life experiences into ones that are *productive and enriched*.'[154] It is the ability *to imbue suffering with* an instrumental value that is underpinning Paul's mythic relocation *of* his extensive afflictions *to* the causally connected, paradoxical pattern of the νέκρωσις τοῦ Ἰησοῦ → ζωὴ τοῦ Ἰησοῦ in the first place. Thus mythically transfigured Paul's sufferings are never a *terminus*, but a *transitus*, a divinely requisite and inevitable transitus *through* 'death' *to* 'life'. Approaching the 'union with Christ' postulated in these verses from the vantage point of the gospel as a functionally *mythic lens* has enabled us to fully engage, specify and unpack this dynamic.

5.3.2 The Θάνατος in Us and the Ζωή in You (4:12)

Paul continues in 4:12: ὥστε ὁ θάνατος ἐν ἡμῖν ἐνεργεῖται, ἡ δὲ ζωὴ ἐν ὑμῖν. Again, commentators have struggled with its meaning: 'In some strange way, while death is at work in Paul, life is at work in the Corinthians.'[155] Calvin and Godet were so shocked by this claim that they dismissed it as insincere irony, while Plummer considered it but a tactful aside stating in a roundabout way: 'You are now in the way that leads to life.'[156] This is, however, clearly a direct, actual inference (ὥστε) from the prior verses, and in such a way that this 'life' in the Corinthians is tied specifically to Paul's 'death'. Barrett follows Dodd in suggesting that this 'may mean that Paul himself expected to die before the [Parousia] but that his readers would survive to experience it as living men.'[157] However, as in 4:10-11 Paul's 'death' here is no future prospect but an ongoing reality (ἐνεργεῖται). Proudfoot suggests that Paul means the Corinthians share his experience of the 'resurrection-power of Christ…because of the corporate nature of the Christian community.'[158] Yet, the dynamic here is not corporate but unilateral: ὁ θάνατος *ἐν ἡμῖν*, ἡ ζωὴ *ἐν ὑμῖν*. Martin opines: 'Maybe there is a side-glance at the blessings of the new covenant (3:6) in contradistinction to the old order that spells death (3:6-11).'[159] This hardly elucidates the θάνατος ἐν ἡμῖν:ζωὴ ἐν ὑμῖν dynamic. Echoing readings of 1:6a, others suggest that 4:12 alludes to 'the new life in Christ…which has reached the Corinthians as a result of Paul's preaching': 'his ministry functions as the means by which the Corinthians have experienced the gospel life of Jesus.'[160] While true for Paul this hardly explains the present, ongoing reality and 'effecting' (ἐνεργεῖται) specifically of 'death' in

[154] Huskinson 2008, 5.
[155] Witherington 1995, 389.
[156] Plummer 1915, 132.
[157] Barrett 1997, 141-42; also C.H. Dodd 1953, 110-11.
[158] Proudfoot 1963, 156.
[159] R.P. Martin 1986, 89.
[160] Thrall 1994, 337; Guthrie 2015, 261; cf. also, e.g., R.P. Martin 1986, 89.

Paul and therewith life in the Corinthians. Witherington invokes the idea of 'messianic woes' already shown to be inadequate in our analysis of 1:5: 'Paul probably means…he is absorbing some of the messianic sufferings with the result that the Corinthians do not have to endure them.' Witherington further gives voice to the underlying theological difficulty many face with this verse when he stresses that, while Paul seems to suggest that his suffering/death 'has some sort of "life" benefit' for others', he 'did not see his suffering as exactly the same as Christ's, nor indeed as having the same salvific value': for this would be 'to cross over the line…to acting as one's own Christ or savior, something Paul would certainly repudiate.'[161] Thus, Barnett avers that whereas 'life' in the preceding verses referred to Jesus' divine-eschatological life, in 4:12 it 'is now to be understood differently, namely, as the "grace" of God that has reached the Corinthians through Paul's apostolic ministry', such that Paul's 'sufferings, while real and serving the purposes of the gospel, are nonetheless of a different order from those of Christ and for a different purpose.'[162] Yet the fact that 4:12 is drawing a direct inference from the preceding verses (ὥστε) indicates that the θάνατος and ζωὴ spoken of *here* recall those he has just applied self-referentially *there*, namely, the death and resurrection life *of Jesus* (4:10-11). This is confirmed by the accompanying articles: 'So then, *the* death (ὁ θάνατος) in us ἐνεργεῖται, and *the* life (ἡ ζωὴ) in you.' Given that Paul has aligned this death with his being afflicted; tied this causally to his also experiencing Jesus' resurrection life (4:7-11), and is now clearly assigning this death 'at work/being effected' (ἐνεργεῖται; cf. 1:6) *in him* a vicarious potency in mediating 'life' *to others* (4:12),[163] it is hard to see how Paul is in any way implying that his suffering is of a 'different order' or 'for a different purpose' than Christ's death, that it does not have 'the same salvific value'. Precisely *as* Jesus' death spelt eschatological life for himself and others, so it is with Paul's ongoing experience(s) of 'death'.

Our interpretation of 1:6 clearly extends to 4:12. Since the gospel is functioning for Paul as a mythic lens dis-closing the meaning, instrumental value and directionality of his afflictions via relativisation, insofar as Jesus' death spelt life for himself and others, so it is with Paul's 'continually being afflicted', *as* his 'continually bearing the putting to death of Jesus' (4:7-11). He is following to its logical end ('So then') the *transmuting* and *relativising* of his own experiences to the overarching pattern of the gospel. Due to the way he is thinking mythically, interpreting things 'within the coded contours of the narrative', 'using the mythic system itself…to interpret reality',[164] Paul's experiences of 'being afflicted' are being so thoroughly mediated through the lens of God's saving activity in the gospel that the former's meaning is being given in none other than that of the latter in all its significance.

5.3.3 Believing and so Speaking of Being Raised with Jesus (4:13-15)

Before returning in 4:15 to the vicarious thought of 4:12, Paul continues in 4:13-14: 'Having however the same spirit of faith κατὰ τὸ γεγραμμένον: "I believed therefore I spoke", we also believe

[161] Witherington 1995, 389; 1994, 277, 168.
[162] Barnett 1997, 238.
[163] Cf. Lambrecht 1999, 74.
[164] Neville 1996, 39, 41.

therefore also speak; [14]knowing that the one having raised the Lord Jesus shall also raise us with Jesus and present us with you.' Relating this to the surrounding material has proved difficult. Where the purview has thus far been Paul's affliction and an ongoing manifesting of θάνατος and ζωὴ, many now see an aside about Paul's preaching (4:13) and belief in the general resurrection (4:14)—with the result that, despite the connective δέ and 4:15 returning to the thought of 4:12, the 'logical connection with what precedes is not evident.'[165] Our mythic hermeneutic can lead us to a more satisfactory solution.

While many see in Paul's citation of LXX Ps 115:1 in 4:13 a desultory affirmation of his faithful preaching,[166] its being introduced 'with some ceremony, with a formula' (κατὰ τὸ γεγραμμένον) suggests that this psalm-verse has particular significance.[167] The import of 4:13a is that Paul has 'the same spirit of faith' as the psalmist. And with ἔχοντες δὲ tying Paul's thought to what has preceded,[168] the suggestion that the 'broader context of the psalm perhaps illuminates why Paul's mind was drawn here', its reflecting on 'the Lord's deliverance out of difficulties and death' is surely correct.[169] This broader context of LXX Ps 115:1 reveals striking echoes of Paul's self-presentation in the present chapter; and, as Stegman notes, with the Christ event, particularly as found in Phil 2:6-11.[170] Reading in its entirety, 'I believed therefore I spoke, though I was greatly afflicted', it is at the centre of a two-part psalm (114-115), originally one in the MT (Ps 116), in which the psalmist, God's δοῦλος (115:7; cf. 2 Cor 4:5; Phil 2:7), speaks of being 'abased' (ταπεινόομαι, 114:6; 115:1; cf. 2 Cor 4:9; Phil 2:8), meeting with 'θλῖψις and sorrow' and being engulfed by 'the throes of θάνατος' (114:3). Depending on the Lord (114:1-2, 9; 115:1, 7-10; cf. 2 Cor 4:7b), however, to deliver him (114:4; cf. 2 Cor 1:9-10), God has mercy (114:5; cf. 2 Cor 4:1), tears his bonds asunder (115:7; cf. 2 Cor 4:8-9) and delivers his 'soul ἐκ θανάτου' (114:8), 'saving' and 'rewarding' him (114:6; 115:3): for 'the death of his sanctified ones is of great value in the sight of God' (115:6). That what this psalmist believed and spoke of should echo Paul's self-presentation apropos his affliction and the dynamics of the gospel accords with our mythic reading of all Paul has expressed thus far in 4:7-12. And the final factor tying 4:13 to Paul's broader discussion in this regard is the recognition that Paul's 'speaking' (λαλεῖν) in a manner echoing this psalmist alludes not to his general preaching but, as Murphy-O'Connor has been virtually alone in suggesting, to what he is presently 'saying' to the Corinthians in this section of the letter.[171]

Turning to 4:14, which continues the same sentence/thought, whereas most commentators assume that Paul here affirms his belief in the general resurrection (ἐγερεῖ), Murphy-O'Connor notes an oft-overlooked factor that tells conspicuously against this: 'The "resurrection" here concerns Paul alone; the Corinthians are not involved' (*καὶ ἡμᾶς* σὺν Ἰησοῦ ἐγερεῖ καὶ *παραστήσει σὺν ὑμῖν*). While his suggesting some link to the ζωή 'already at work' among the Corinthians in 4:12 appears promising,[172]

[165] Lambrecht 1999, 74.
[166] E.g., Barrett 1997, 143; Lambrecht 1999, 74.
[167] Thrall 1994, 340.
[168] Harris 2005, 351.
[169] Guthrie 2015, 263; cf. Thrall 1994, 340-41; Barnett 1997, 241 n. 11; Matera 2003, 112.
[170] Stegman 2005, 256-57.
[171] Murphy-O'Connor 1988, 547.
[172] Ibid. 543, 548.

the way Murphy-O'Connor arrives at a 'non-eschatological' reading of 4:14 is tenuous, viz.: (a) nowhere in 4:14 are beliefs about the general resurrection; (b) ζωή in 4:10-11 invoked Jesus' devotion to God in his ministry; as such (c) ἐγερεῖ in 4:14 too is devoid of eschatological import; and (d) the future ἐγερεῖ simply anticipates Paul's arrival in Corinth amid pressures.[173] Against (a), Paul is loosely but clearly echoing beliefs about the general resurrection (cf. 1 Thess 4:14; 1 Cor 6:14; 15:22-23; Rom 8:11). We have already noted that the death of Jesus → life of Jesus in 4:10-11 tells decidedly against (b). That Paul's 'raising' is here aligned squarely with that *of Jesus* undermines (c) and in turn (d). Building on Baumert's observation that, recalling the gnomic futures in Rom 6:5, 8, ἐγερεῖ here could serve as a modal future emphasising a 'necessity contained in the nature of things',[174] however, our mythic hermeneutic applied to the foregoing verses affords a more cogent way of explaining this being raised as and 'with Jesus' solely on Paul's part, so as to be presented alongside the Corinthians.

As seen elsewhere in Paul, the believers' hope of the general resurrection, loosely echoed here, finds its precedent in, is conjoined with and patterned on, the past *given* of Jesus' death → *resurrection*.[175] This is recognisably mythic at its phenomenological core, and is as such suggestive of everything in the foregoing verses pertaining to Paul's *present*, *ongoing* experiences. Having valorised his afflictions as a continual playing out in his 'mortal flesh' of the death → resurrection life of Jesus (4:7-11), Paul has then spoken of the (God's) effecting of the 'death' in him and 'life' in the Corinthians (4:12). Although drawing a direct inference from the preceding verses, this would hardly constitute a fitting *conclusion to* them, since it has evoked of Paul himself only one half of the continual, twofold death → *life* pattern conveyed in 4:10-11. As such, Paul now draws on the stock imagery and 'logic' of the general ('literal') resurrection of all beyond the grave—contained in the being raised as and 'with Jesus' of 4:14. Yet shifting the focus from the ultimate destiny of all to himself alone, he is mythically extending this *to his own ongoing experiences of 'death'*, to his imminently, inevitably and perpetually 'also' being raised as and 'with Jesus' from the ongoing 'death' experience invoked on *his* part in 4:12a, so as to join the Corinthians in the divine-eschatological 'life' just invoked on *their* part in 4:12b. Hence ἐγερεῖ with Jesus is functioning as a modal future applicable, to be sure, to Paul's *ultimate* future, but most relevantly here to the 'logic' of his own ongoing experiences this side of the eschaton, as he has just conveyed in 4:10-11. Attentive to the eschatological character of Paul's language, yet in such a way that 4:14 is not abandoning what has preceded and merely affirming a life in the hereafter, this makes sufficient sense of the *purpose* this and the prior verse serve in their relation to what has preceded. And the issue of Paul's concrete imagery here is again addressed by the mythic symbolism at play in this passage. Paul's applying to his ongoing experiences Jesus' eschatological 'life' (4:10b, 11b, 12b) and being 'raised' (4:14) from 'death' (4:10a, 11a, 12a) is *not* some 'metaphorische *Übertreibung*'.[176] These form the very perceptual lens *through which* the broader meaning of Paul's afflictions is being disclosed.

[173] Ibid. 545-46, 549.
[174] Baumert 1973, 90-91.
[175] See esp. 1 Thess 4:13-14; also 1 Cor 15:20-23; Rom 8:29; cf. Rom 8:11; 1 Cor 6:14; Phil 3:21.
[176] Baumert 1973, 89.

5.3.4 Not Losing Heart: Overlaying the Transient with the Eternal (4:16-18)

Due to ambiguity about what these verses relate to, some have grouped 4:16-18 with the following section, or considered them a discrete unit.[177] However, 'the mention in 5:1 of the actual moment of death provides a minor break between 4:18 and 5:1'.[178] And the διό of 4:16a—a 'relatively emphatic marker of result', drawing 'a conclusion…from something already said'[179]—ties these concluding verses directly to what has preceded.[180] Here Paul reflects on what he has been writing by expressing that he 'therefore' does 'not lose heart' (διὸ οὐκ ἐγκακοῦμεν; 4:16a), and following this with two paradoxical combinations (4:16b-17). Speaking firstly of his ἔξω ἄνθρωπος 'being demolished' (διαφθείρεται), and of his ἔσω 'being made anew' (ἀνακαινοῦται) (4:16), he then places his transitory affliction in apposition to an eternal glory (4:17). Given the eschatological character of this language, some aver that Paul must be speaking of a hoped for future δόξα beyond his παραυτίκα θλῖψις 'at the end of time', of the '"glory" of the coming age'.[181] However, a number of factors negate this. While as with 'all of Paul's "newness" language' the 'being made anew' in 4:16 'is to be understood in eschatological terms',[182] both 'being demolished' and 'being made anew' here are in the present tense. Given this, if with most we may reject that Paul's language of ἔξω ἄνθρωπος and ἔσω is indebted to Hellenistic anthropological dualism, there would appear equally to be no relation to the 'sinful', pre-conversion 'old person' of Rom 6:6 and Col 3:9 in contradistinction to the 'spiritual body' or 'heavenly man' of 'the age to come'.[183] Rather, Paul speaks of his *present*, 'total existence from two contrasting viewpoints': the 'physical aspect' and 'spiritual aspect'.[184] Additionally, with the final temporal dative clause ἡμέρᾳ καὶ ἡμέρᾳ in 4:16 conveying 'repetition, "day after day," or, as in the colloquial English expression, "day in and day out"',[185] this suggests an *iterative* dynamic, evoking as it does something 'repeated all over again each day':[186] 'Therefore we do not lose heart; on the contrary, even though we are outwardly being demolished yet we are inwardly being made anew, day after day' (4:16). Turning to 4:17, which substantiates (γάρ) the dialectic of 4:16, there are echoes of what Paul elsewhere relates from a future eschatological perspective, most notably in Rom 8:18. There, however, the future aspect is conveyed by temporal qualifiers (τοῦ νῦν καιροῦ/τὴν μέλλουσαν), while the qualifiers here apropos Paul's 'affliction' and ensuing 'glory' are *perspectival* and *qualitative*: παραυτίκα (transitory)/αἰώνιος (eternal), ἐλαφρός (unburdensome)/βάρος (weightiness).[187] And, in accordance with this, the verb used in relation to this ensuing 'glory', κατεργάζομαι, is again in the present tense.

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[177] E.g., Barnett 1997, 246 (yet cf. 249); Matera 2003, 114, respectively.
[178] Thrall 1994, 347.
[179] Louw-Nida, 783; Pulickal 2021, 60 n. 11. Hence, *wherefore*, *therefore*, or 'in conclusion' (Betz 1979, 251).
[180] Rightly, e.g., Barrett 1997, 136-37; R.P. Martin 1986, 81-82; Harris 2005, 358.
[181] Collange 1972, 178; Barnett 1997, 251.
[182] Seifrid 2014, 217.
[183] Pace Barrett 1997, 146; also, e.g., Héring 1967, 34; Rissi 1969, 65-71; Young and Ford 1987, 123.
[184] Harris 2005, 360. Cf. Rom 2:28-29; 7:22; Eph 3:16; 1 Pet 3:3-4; Lk 17:21; Louw-Nida, 94, 320; BDAG, 82; R.P. Martin 1986, 92; D.E. Garland 1999, 240.
[185] Harris 2005, 359.
[186] Furnish 1984, 262; also, rightly, D.E. Garland 1999, 241; Seifrid 2014, 216.
[187] Cf. Thrall 1994, 353-54.

In the parallel statements of 4:16b-17, then, Paul is speaking of his *present*, *ongoing* experience in terms of a recurrent dialectical pattern of outwardly 'being demolished' and inwardly 'being made anew', and of his 'affliction' *being* met by an eternal 'glory'. Furthermore, albeit proving theologically objectionable for many,[188] with κατεργάζεσθαι meaning, 'to cause a state or condition, *bring about, produce, create*',[189] Harris rightly notes that the use of this verb in 4:17 suggests that Paul's 'affliction actually *generates* glory': [190] 'For this transitory, unburdensome affliction of ours *produces* (κατεργάζεται) in us abundantly beyond measure an eternal weightiness of glory' (4:17). As to the issue of why this should be for Paul, a cohesive light is shed on all of this by the mythic functioning of the gospel narrative throughout this passage. Since he has been mythically relativising and transmuting his every θλῖψις (4:17a) to the overarching, perpetually operative pattern of Jesus' death → resurrection, *whenever* Paul is outwardly, physically 'being demolished' (⇒ DEATH), he is *therein* inwardly, spiritually 'being made anew' (⇒ RESURRECTION). Again, his experiences of 'affliction', mapped onto the macro-symbolic plane of *Jesus' death* (4:10a, 11a, 12a), are actually *producing* in him corresponding experiences of the eternal 'glory' *of Jesus' resurrection* (4:10b, 11b, 14)—his being 'raised from the dead through the glory of the Father' (Rom 6:4; cf. 2 Cor 4:7b), unto a 'body of glory' (Phil 3:21; cf. 1 Cor 15:43). This mythic vantage point explains the present, iterative dynamics present in 4:16b-17 and establishes their direct, consequential connection (διό) to what has gone before in 4:7-15. Paul heading this reflection by expressing that he therefore does not *lose heart* (ἐνκακεῖν),[191] moreover, gives direct expression to the core *therapeutic* functioning of the gospel narrative as a mythic lens here. Thus mythically 'framed', assigned their fixed instrumental value and directionality, Paul is no longer pushed to 'despair' and 'crushed' (βαρέω) by his afflictions (1:8). These are experienced as 'transitory' and 'unburdensome', as the necessary outworking of an overarching, eternal 'weightiness' (βάρος) of glory (4:17), the *all-surpassing power of God as manifested in the resurrection of Jesus from the dead* (4:7b, 10-12, 14)—hence an eschatological 'being made a new, day after day' (4:16).

That such dynamics underpin 4:16-17 speaks to the ambiguity interpreters encounter in Paul's concluding word in 4:18. Paul rounds off his thought by tying it (μὴ σκοπούντων ἡμῶν…) to the fact that his sights are fixed not on 'things seen with the eye' (τὰ βλεπόμενα) that are 'transient' (πρόσκαιρα) but on 'things not seen with the eye' (τὰ μὴ βλεπόμενα) that are 'eternal' (αἰώνια). While this correlation of the eternal with the unseen might have been conditioned by the equation of the eternal and invisible in Greek thought, interpreters agree that Paul is not in a Platonic manner 'questioning the "reality" of the things that are seen'.[192] He is claiming to have his gaze fixed on 'realities that are worthy of focused attention because they are eternal, not transient'.[193] Yet there has been a pervasive lack of clarity on what Paul actually has in mind here. Many vague suggestions have been espoused. For example, Paul

[188] Cf., e.g., Barnett 1997, 252 n. 18.
[189] BDAG, 531.
[190] Harris 2005, 362.
[191] To *'be discouraged…lose heart…*be afraid in the face of a great difficulty' (BDAG, 272). Cf. 4:1.
[192] Furnish 1984, 263.
[193] Harris 2005, 363.

perhaps has in mind the insignificance of 'this age' in light of the 'age to come'; or the 'relative insignificance of outward phenomena in general'; or that only 'those aspects of reality which are hidden from the naked eye share in the life of God'.[194] Or again, here '"things seen" are those of the present, fallen world … "things unseen" are God's promises'.[195] Having clarified the 'eternal' *glory* dynamic in 4:17 by discerning an allusion to *God's raising of Jesus from the dead* to which Paul has been mythically relativising and orienting his own afflictions in the foregoing verses, our mythic vantage point on the dynamics at play in this passage yields a more sufficient, contextually informed reading. The 'eternal' realities in view are the *sacred realities of the gospel*. By situating his forgoing self-presentation (4:7-17) in the fact that the fundamental objects of his perception are realities that *eternal*, not transient, Paul is giving direct expression to the core foundational-therapeutic functioning of the gospel throughout this section *as* a mythic lens. It has acquired the status of an 'eternal truth in contrast to an empirical truth', and is thus affording Paul 'universals beyond [his] concrete experience', a '"transcendent" plane…of *absolute realities*' through which his 'experience escapes its singularity … is put on the track of existential structures … no longer reduced to a present experience.'[196]

Conclusions

Having analysed our two test case passages in 2 Cor, we have seen how reading Paul's discourse, and the rôle of the gospel within that discourse, in light of the phenomenology of myth in its capacity as a macro-symbolic foundational and therapeutic lens has in each case evidenced a profound heuristic fit and utility. This has clarified the exegetical difficulties which have plagued interpreters, and in ways more attentive to the nuances of the text. It has enabled us to take more seriously than other readings the pervasively self-referential, concrete, present and iterative character of Paul's discourse regarding Jesus, his sufferings (1:5a), death (1:9a; 4:10a, 11a, 12a), deliverance from death (1:10), resurrection (1:9b; 4:10b, 11b, 14), and related eschatological (1:3-4, 5b, 6b-7; 4:16b-17) and soteriological (1:6a; 4:12b) themes. It has enriched our understanding of the dynamics at play in both passages in relation to the situational exigencies of Paul's having to deal with a life and ministry fraught with an inordinate level of adversity, dejection and ignominy, and being spurned in Corinth on these very grounds. In so doing, a cohesive light has been cast on the whole. The key to both passages is that Paul is therapeutically relativising, transmuting and orienting his seemingly endless stream of deleterious experiences to the underlying pattern of the gospel story, assigning them a fixed meaning, instrumental value and directionality through the operatively foundational, macro-symbolic lens of that founding event. He is applying the gospel narrative itself to the pressing realities of his extensive afflictions in accordance with these well-established operative dimensions of myth. He is 'thinking mythically'.

[194] Collange 1972, 179; Thrall 1994, 356; R.P. Martin 1986, 93.
[195] Seifrid 2014, 219.
[196] May 1991, 27, 87; Eliade 1963, 139; Ricoeur 1969, 162-63.

CHAPTER 6.

COMPLETING THE MODEL: THE PROBLEM OF THE CHRIST-HYMN IN PHILIPPIANS

Chapters 3 through 5 have utilised 'myth' as a tool for interpreting Paul's letters in terms of its sacred, ritualistic, symbolic, foundational and therapeutic components modelled in Chapter 2. This chapter brings the remaining operative dimension explored in Chapter 2 to bear on the problem of the functional *raison d'être* of the 'Christ-hymn' in Philippians, namely, myth as *paradigmatic model* (§2.5).

Via early *religionsgeschichtliche*-oriented analyses of Phil 2:6-11, discussion of 'myth' finds some precedent in Philippians scholarship. A successor to the *religionsgeschichtliche Schule*, Käsemann proposed a pre-Christian background to Phil 2:6-11 in their tenuously posited 'Mythos vom Urmensch-Erlöser' or 'Anthroposmythos' (see §1.2).[1] Used as a designator for this posited *pre-Christian* antecedent 'myth', and under the further influence of Bultmann, Käsemann had had 'little time for myth' as such.[2] This reflects the weaknesses of the *religionsgeschichtliche Schule* and Bultmannian appropriations of 'myth' in Pauline studies. And having largely surfaced in dialogue with Käsemann, subsequent discussion of Phil 2:6-11 and 'myth' has followed suit—amounting throughout twentieth century scholarship to either the seconding of Käsemann's recourse to a Gnostic *Erlösermythos*;[3] rejecting it;[4] or making such vague statements as: 'concern with God's activity evident in the life of a historical personage distinguishes Phil 2:6-11 from mythic patterns of expression that may be employed'.[5] More recently, Nebreda includes a brief subsection on this passage and 'religious myth', considering potentially relevant parallels in Hellenistic traditions and figures. Conceding that it would be premature to transfer such materials 'into the Christ-hymn as if simple structural or literary similarity could prove direct dependence', Nebreda concludes with nothing more than that Phil 2:6-11 'may show close affinity with the descriptions and panegyrics of [certain] figures of the pagan world'.[6] Less tentatively, Holloway has spoken of Phil 2:6-11 as a 'Christ myth', drawn from Graeco-Roman 'metamorphic myths', along with their later incorporation into Jewish speculation about 'angels'.[7] Importantly, preoccupied as these have been with the question of possible antecedent parallels in non-Christian sources, such discussions of the presentation of Christ in Phil 2:6-11 and 'myth' have

[1] Käsemann 1950. A year early, Käsemann had argued much the same for Col 1:15-20 (Käsemann 1949).
[2] Morgan 1998, 68.
[3] Cf., e.g., J.A. Sanders 1969, 289; Wengst 1972, 153-56; Beare 1973, 75.
[4] E.g., Georgi 1964, 263-66; Fowl 1990, 69-70.
[5] Perkins 1991, 95 n. 33.
[6] Nebreda 2011, 324-29 (328-29).
[7] Holloway 2017, 48-52, 121-23, 126.

proceeded without any real theoretical reflection on the nature and function of 'myth' itself—much less how an informed understanding of this might be implemented in our understanding of this passage in relation to the wider letter. The only exception to this is to be found in brief comments by Horrell on Phil 2:5-11 in his *Solidarity and Difference* (cf. §1.5.3) in which he suggests: 'While an ethical interpretation of the Christ-hymn is…much more plausible than Käsemann's reading … [d]rawing on the rather different view [or myth] presented by Wendy Doniger, we can nonetheless affirm that the text presents a myth – a story believed to be true, and which shapes the identity and conduct of the people who affirm it.'[8] The present chapter substantially develops this fleeting suggestion.

6.1 The Problematic of Phil 2:5-11

The subject of a 'virtually infinite' number of studies with 'little consensus', Phil 2:5-11 has proved to be one of the chief passages in the Pauline corpus to 'both provoke and baffle study.'[9] Much of the literature has been embroiled in vexed debates about its prehistory, and hand in hand with this, matters of ontological christology, at the almost complete expense of its epistolary setting. Debates have raged over its form-critical classification, concerning its use as a *hymn*; the delineation of stanzas, rhythm and accentual metre; attempted retroversions into Hebrew or Aramaic; possible Pauline redaction; possible pre-Christian background and influences, to say nothing of the longstanding christological debates over individual terms and phrases. However, our present concern is with the more concrete issue which has proved to be another longstanding *crux* of Phil 2:5-11: its actual *raison d'être* in Philippians.

The framing of this issue has typically centred on the elliptical statement in 2:5: Τοῦτο φρονεῖτε ἐν ὑμῖν *ὃ καὶ ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ*, [6]ὃς… One camp wishing to insert an ἦν after ὃ so as to place the emphasis on emulating that 'which was also in Christ Jesus'; the other, a second (indicative) φρονεῖτε, to render some such sense as to act 'in such a way as befits their standing in Christ Jesus, i.e. as members of His Church',[10] two hotly contested readings of the purpose of 2:6-11 have prevailed: an *ethical* reading and a *kerygmatic-soteriological* reading. The former, whereby Jesus serves as an 'ethical example' or 'moral ideal' was common among nineteenth and early-twentieth century exegetes: 'Paul urges the faithful to brotherly unity, to humility, and to that generous self-denial which makes us prefer the interests of others to our own, in imitation of him who is our perfect model'.[11] Following Käsemann's repudiation of this, however, in what has now proved a longstanding impasse, scholars have generally (1) rejected the 'ethical example' reading in favour of a *kerygmatic-soteriological* reading, which 'sees the hymn as setting forth the story of salvation': 'it is manifestly wrong to think of it in terms of the presentation of Christ as the ethical ideal for our imitation. The hymn belongs in the realm of soteriology'.[12] Or else

[8] Horrell 2005, 209.
[9] Tobin 2006, 91; Gordley 2018, 80; R.P. Martin 1997, vii. Cf. Hawthorne and Martin 2004, 99.
[10] R.P. Martin 1997, 289.
[11] Prat 1933, 312. See further R.P. Martin 1997, 68ff.
[12] R.P. Martin 1997, viii; Beare 1973, 75. Cf. also, e.g., K. Barth 1962 [1947], 59-60; Bonnard 1950, 42; Bornkamm 1959a, 177; Grayston 1967, 25; J.A. Sanders 1969, 280, 289; Wengst 1972, 149-56; Schade 1981, 125; Binder 1987, 232; B.J. Dodd 1999, 191-92; U.B. Müller 2002, 80, 90; Cousar 2009, 59; Eastman 2011, 3; 2017, 134.

they have (2) reaffirmed the 'paradigmatische Funktion im ethischen Sinne', whereby the 'hymn…presents Christ as the ultimate model for moral action', as a 'moral example' for 'humble Christian service', for living 'on behalf of others the way Christ did'.[13] Legitimate points from each camp have been levelled against the other. Against *ethical* readings it has been noted how ἐν Χριστῷ (2:5) often has a locative nuance in Paul; and that such readings focus on partial echoes of 2:6-8 in 2:1-4 but leave 2:9-11 with little to no immediate relevance, given that 'the exaltation of Christ is accomplished by God in 2.9-11 and cannot be viewed as an ethical *Vorbild* for the Philippians'.[14] Conversely, against *kerygmatic-soteriological* readings it has been noted that assigning to 2:5b a second φρονεῖτε rather than a form of εἶναι,[15] and to ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ a mere reference to life in the church both obfuscates the force of the καί ('also'; cf. Rom 15:7) and renders the statement oddly redundant; and that such readings tend to leave the entire passage notably aloof from the wider letter.[16]

A further argument levelled against the 'ethical example' reading has been the inconceivability of anyone's imitating almost anything of this divine drama. Thus Martin avers that, 'as a piece of *Heilsgeschichte*, relating the drama by which men are redeemed, it becomes more and more impossible to think of the believer as treading in [Christ's] footsteps'; and therewith that

> the hymn is only loosely dependent upon the ethical admonition [of 2:1-4], yet it is important in that it supplies the objective facts of redemption on which an ethical appeal may be made. The Apostolic summons is not: follow Jesus by doing as he did—an impossible feat in any case, for who can be a "second Christ" who quits his heavenly glory and dies in shame and is taken up…?[17]

Yet this difficulty also concerns the 'ethical example' readers, who, already confining it to only the hymn's first half, tend to reduce this application even further by locating Paul's concern in merely one or other abstract(ed) virtue hinted at—typically a 'humble concern for others' (ταπεινοῦν, 2:8a; cf. 2:3-4),[18] and/or perhaps being 'obedient' (ὑπήκοος, 2:8b; cf. 2:12):[19] '"imitatio"…does not mean "repeat after me," but (in the present context) "have a frame of mind which lives on behalf of others the way Christ did'.[20] Given this, some have suggested that its ethical function works 'not…by posing Christ's activity in 2.6-11 as a model to be imitated in ethics', but as 'just…an analogy';[21] or that, perhaps, the 'function of the so-called "hymn" is both kerygmatic *and* ethical'.[22]

By way of evaluation, the following key point clearly undermines the kerygmatic-soteriological reading at its very core: in point of fact, the narration of the Christ event in 2:6-11 '*makes no direct*

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[13] Larsson 1962, 235; Hawthorne 1983, 79; Hansen 2009, 121; Fee 1995, 196 n. 14. Cf. also, e.g., Reicke 1962, 208-12; Stanton 1974, 99-106; Strimple 1979, 253-54; Deane 1997, 12; Bockmuehl 1998, 122; Holloway 2001, 120-22; L.T. Johnson 2003, 233-34; Furnish 2009, 218; Martin and Nash 2015, 137-38; Bird and Gupta 2020, 76.

[14] B.J. Dodd 1999, 191. Cf., e.g., Larsson 1962, 262.

[15] '[O]ften omitted in good Greek' (Holloway 2017, 116).

[16] E.g., Larsson 1962, 233; Deichgräber 1967, 192; Fowl 1990, 81-82; O'Brien 1991, 258.

[17] R.P. Martin 1997, 83, 290-91. Cf. also, e.g., B.J. Dodd 1999, 191-92.

[18] Furnish 2009, 218.

[19] Deane 1997, 12; Hansen 2009, 170; Smit 2013, 95; Holloway 2017, 130; Blumenthal 2020, 108 n. 31.

[20] Fee 1995, 196 n. 14. Cf. Stanton 1974, 103: only 'aspects of his character…provided the supreme example.'

[21] Fowl 1990, 101 (cf. 77, 91-92); Witherington 1994, 100.

[22] Hooker 2002, 389. Cf. Strecker 1964, 66-67; G. Barth 1979, 40-41; Smit 2013, 90 n. 72; Standhartinger 2013, 170-72; Blumenthal 2020, 119-23.

soteriological statement. … There is no mention of the consequences of this for sinful humanity.'[23] And this criticism undermines equally the way that Christ as an 'example' here has typically been approached: as an example for *interpersonal ethics*. Even while espousing that Phil 2:6ff. is an example for interpersonal ethics on the basis of 2:3-4, as Oakes concedes: 'One of the main features which distinguishes verses 6-8 from other Pauline comments on Christ's life and death is *precisely that it is not described from the point of view of benefit for others*.'[24] Confined to the specific narrative appeal of Phil 2:6-11 the only one who benefits, who experiences divine salvation by way of Christ's descent to death (2:6-8), is Christ himself (2:9-11). The conspicuous absence here of Christ doing anything 'for' anyone besides, inferentially, himself (and, it would seem, God) presents a fundamental problem for locating the *primary*, *much less sole function of* this appeal, in a reading already typically restricted to one or two isolated allusions in the first half of that appeal, in the realm of appropriate interpersonal ethics: in having the 'right attitude to and regard for others, humility and compassion'.[25] This scarcely makes sufficient sense of the emphatically Christ-centred narrative dynamics to which Paul appeals—in one of the most sustained narrative presentations of Christ in the entire Pauline corpus—in 2:6-11.

There are, then, fundamental problems with the prevailing kerygmatic-soteriological *and* ethical readings of the purpose of the 'Christ-hymn' in Philippians. What follows argues that this debate has been hampered by being framed on all sides in terms of whether or not Phil 2:6-11 serves as an *ethical* example, and that approaching this narrative appeal as a *mythic paradigm* better enables an understanding of its function in the letter.

As we have seen, while myths, as fixed loci of existential meanings and values, do inform their participants' sense of ethics, at their phenomenological core there is far more to myths than this: 'Myth, in itself, is not a guarantee of "goodness" or morality. Its function is to reveal models and, in so doing, to give a meaning to the World and to human life.'[26] They operate as fixed reference points for human existence *in toto*, 'establishing all the forms of action and thought by which man understands himself in his world.'[27] In their paradigmatic capacity, myths serve as exemplary models for how to move meaningfully through life—'setting a precedent for all human behaviour from that time on' (§2.5.1).[28] These models do not convey abstract principles for navigating life. They operate as 'ongoing *dramas* inside which we live our lives.' The paradigm exists at the level of the concrete, cohesive movement of the narrative, its core *pattern of sacred modality*, and so grounds one's overall life orientation 'in a *context* … a *plot*.'[29] This paradigmatic use of myth works with other functional aspects of myth (§2.5.2). It operates alongside myths' *foundational* usage as fixed perceptual models, 'systems or patterns for signifying meanings…among the elements of the world at hand' (§2.4).[30] In so doing it functions hand

[23] Fowl 1990, 72 (emphasis added); cf. 60 n. 6.
[24] Oakes 2001, 199 (emphasis added).
[25] O'Brien 1992, 277.
[26] Eliade 1963, 144-45.
[27] Ricoeur 1969, 5.
[28] Berndt and Berndt 1977, 230.
[29] Midgley 2003, 4; D.S. Bond 1993, 57.
[30] Doty 2000, 70.

in hand with myth's *symbolic*, polyvalent unity—as a generative 'reservoir of meanings…available for possible use again in other structures' (§2.3).[31] Expounding on his appeal to analogy apropos Phil 2:6-11, Fowl relates: 'Whereas metaphor presents diversity in unity, contrast-in-correspondence, analogy uses comparison to build a case for intelligible continuity despite experienced discontinuity'.[32] As networks of symbols or root metaphors, mythic models operate in terms of the former of these, not the latter. The mythic imagery is used to imbue elements of experience *with* meanings not given otherwise than in it, and which are as such bound to their mythic referent: 'myth binds particulars together in the unity of an image, a mythical figure.'[33] Finally, myth as paradigm is intimately tied to myth's core *therapeutic* functioning in times of crisis (§2.6). Since myths embody macro-schemas of wholeness, of order replacing chaos, consciously confirming one's life pattern to the myth's *given* dialectical system affords a means of actively engaging and depotentiating threatening forces by aligning them with experiences already recognised as safe. It offers assurance that the productive end of one's labours is a *fait accompli*, for one is simply reproducing on a microcosmic scale the macrocosmic *coincidentia oppositorum* mediated in the myth. Hence, in the face of any difficult or potentially precarious circumstances it imbues everything that one pursues and undergoes with a fixed 'simulacrum of safety by making activity repetitive, expective', makes their constructive end 'predictable by making it conform to the past', thereby effecting a 'lessening of emotional tension' and allaying any 'anticipation of disaster.' Accordingly, myths afford their adherents 'the paradigmatic solution for every existential crisis.'[34] Approaching the narrative appeal in Phil 2:5-11 from this heuristic vantage point yields a more penetrating reading of its epistolary function than the prevailing alternatives: one inclusive of, though moving beyond, the idea of an *ethical* example; which functionally integrates its *overall* trajectory and nature as a 'kerygmatic declaration of the drama of divine action';[35] and illuminates its function in far more of this letter than has typically been the case.

For many, considering this narrative appeal's 'context' has meant factoring in 2:5.[36] Given its elliptical brevity and ambiguity, Fowl's point that 2:5 alone 'will not solve the problems' of this passage and that 'the best reading will be the one that makes the best sense of the [broader] context' is sound.[37] When sights have moved to the broader context this has usually entailed relating 2:5-11 to the so-called 'extended ethical exhortation' of 2:1-4 (principally 2:3-4)[38]—or, occasionally, of 1:27-2:4[39]—albeit others reject this.[40] Some have suggested a relation specifically to 2:12-18;[41] or, perhaps, to 2:1-4 and

[31] Connerton 1989, 56.
[32] Hazelton 1978, 159; cited Fowl 1990, 92 n. 1.
[33] Cassirer 1955 [1925], 69. Cf. Ricoeur 1969, 17-18; Avis 1999, 110.
[34] Kluckhohn 1942, 66, 69-70; Eliade 1959, 210.
[35] Eastman 2017, 134.
[36] Among the whole swathe of studies on 'Phil 2:5-11', cf., e.g., Hurtado 1984, 120-21.
[37] Fowl 1990, 89.
[38] L.M. White 1990, 207, cf. 213; also, to give but one fairly recent example, Martin and Nash 2015, 137-38.
[39] '[W]e will try to show that Paul uses 2.6-11 to support the ethical demands of 1:27ff.' (Fowl 1990, 77). Cf. Oakes 2001, 188: 'Paul brings in [2]:6-11…to address the agenda of 2.1-4 (or more broadly of 1.27-2.4).'
[40] E.g., Käsemann 1950, 319, 355; R.P. Martin 1997, 84-85, 289-90.
[41] E.g., Larsson 1962, 263-75.

2:12-18: whereby the hymn 'looks back to the exhortation to humility in 2:1-4 (cf. 2:8a…) and forward to the exhortation to obedience in 2:12-18 (cf. 2:8b…)'[42]—albeit others reject this.[43] A few have suggested its playing a rôle 'to some degree' in Phil 3.[44] I will argue that approaching Phil 2:5-11 as a mythic paradigm enables us to see its playing a core and cohesive function throughout the letter, illuminating its contextual rôle, and solving interpretative problems elsewhere. Special attention shall be directed to the immediate context of 1:27-2:4 and 2:12-30. Following this, dynamics that further conform to and enrich the mythic dynamics unpacked in 1:27-2:30 will be teased out from the outer portions of the letter. As a base from which to proceed, we first consider the narrative appeal in 2:5-11 itself, and the letter's communicative setting.[45]

6.2 The Narrative Appeal of Phil 2:5-11, and Its Communicative Setting

We will confine ourselves to a few basic observations about this narrative appeal. As to nature, while a few disagree, most scholars have concluded that Paul is drawing on early Christian narrative tradition in 2:6-11. Alongside the usual matters of syntax, style, themes and terminology leading most to this conclusion, this is in line with the collective, traditional nature of a story *qua* myth.[46] In terms of substance, pertaining as it does to the story of 'Christ Jesus' (2:5), with its core ↓-↑ dynamic attested throughout Paul, the story evidences a basic descent (2:6-8)↘↗ascent (2:9-11) narrative trajectory.

The downward movement narrates Christ's initial, underlying 'existing in the form of God'—a heavenly, pre-incarnate state which sets the stage for the core ↓-↑ dynamic[47]—and his 'not count[ing] being equal with God something to cling to/clutch at' (2:6). Rather, it continues, he 'emptied himself, having taken the form of a slave (ἑαυτὸν ἐκένωσεν μορφὴν δούλου λαβών); having been born in human form and found in appearance as a man, he abased himself by becoming obedient unto death, death on a cross (ἐταπείνωσεν ἑαυτὸν γενόμενος ὑπήκοος μέχρι θανάτου, θανάτου δὲ σταυροῦ)' (2:7-8). Against those wishing to downplay Christ's death and place the emphasis elsewhere,[48] it is to be noted that (a) these verses culminate in a double appeal to Christ's death; (b) 'grammarians consistently identify θανάτου δὲ σταυροῦ as intentionally emphatic';[49] and (c) Christ's death on the cross is clearly the 'climax to which the last three verses have been pointing.'[50] Besides the statements pertaining to Christ's incarnation, which set the stage for his crucifixion, every one of the antecedent allusions point to this concrete climax. Apropos Christ's having 'emptied' himself (ἐκένωσεν), elsewhere in the New Testament κενοῦν points to the negation or destruction of something's existence (Rom 4:4; 1 Cor 1:17;

[42] Holloway 2001, 122; also Holloway 2017, 130; Smit 2013, 95; Blumenthal 2020, 108 n. 31.
[43] E.g., Deidun 1981, 64.
[44] Fowl 1990, 98; cf. Hooker 1975, 155-57; Kurz 1985, 105-6; Williams 2002, 231; Smit 2013, 138-42.
[45] While it was once popular to espouse partition theories of Philippians, there is now widespread consensus on its literary integrity, and this is the position taken in what follows.
[46] See p. 40, above.
[47] See Fowl 1990, 49-54.
[48] Cf., e.g., Fowl 1990, 64 n. 1; Deane 1997, 12; Smit 2013, 97, 107.
[49] Hellerman 2005, 203 n. 4.
[50] Caird 1976, 122.

9:15; 2 Cor 9:3), hence appearing synonymously with καταργεῖν in Rom 4:4. Accordingly: 'Whether or not the phrase focuses on the initial act of humiliation ("he became flesh," John 1:14), it surely points forward to his death.'[51] In context Jesus assuming the 'form of slave' (μορφή δούλου) relates clearly to the specific medium of his death, namely, *crucifixion*, which as a notoriously torturous fate inflicted primarily on slaves was throughout the Graeco-Roman world considered not only the most brutal and degrading of executions but the *servile supplicium*: the 'most cruel and ignominious … extreme and ultimate penalty of slavery (*servitutis extremo summoque supplicio*)'.[52] This linking of cross and slave was so entrenched that 'slave's death' had come to be used 'as a technical phrase of sorts to refer to death by crucifixion – even where non-slaves were concerned.'[53] Christ's 'abasement' (ταπεινοῦν)[54] corresponds precisely with his 'slave death'.[55] And whatever one may envision behind the ὑπήκοος reference (presumably obedience to the *divine necessity* of his death is indicated; cf. 2:9a), *the* reference is to Christ's having become 'obedient *unto death, death on a cross*'; a reference which, moreover, directly explains the abasement,[56] and therewith informs the initial allusion to 'emptying': which 'includes all the details…which follow, *and is defined by these*.'[57] The incarnate Christ's (mandated) descent to *death on a cross*, then, is the principal subject matter and focal point of 2:6-8.

The upward movement then narrates, with a διὸ καὶ formula indicating a *direct causal effect* of this descent to the cross, Christ's ensuing *ascent from death* to a state of exceeding glory by God the Father. 'Wherefore God also ὑπερύψωσεν him (διὸ καὶ ὁ θεὸς αὐτὸν ὑπερύψωσεν), and granted him the name above every name, that at Jesus' name every knee should bend of the heavenly, earthly and netherworldly and every tongue confess "Jesus Christ is Lord" to the glory of God the Father' (2:9-11). Contra the usual Pauline language of Christ's ἐγερθείς or ἀνάστασις we have a hapax compound form of ὑψοῦν: to '*lift up*, *raise high*…*exalt*'.[58] Use of other anomalous 'lifting' verbs for Christ's raising finds precedent elsewhere in Paul, such as ἀνιστάναι in 1 Thess 4:14. Moreover, the synonymity of all of the above terms is seen in the statements pertaining directly to Christ's resurrection in Acts 2:31-33; 5:30-31. The *ὑπερ*υψοῦν found here carries the sense, to '*raise someone to the loftiest height*';[59] to 'loftily raise'—carried over in the remained of these verses indicating that 'Christ is raised to the highest position in heaven',[60] and now acclaimed by the divine name *κύριος* Ἰησοῦς Χριστὸς to the δόξα θεοῦ πατρός. Given that this ὑπερυψωμένος follows directly from Jesus' crucifixion, and the inherent early

[51] Silva 2005, 105.

[52] Cic. *Verr.* 2.5.165, 169. See further, Hengel 1977, 51-63; Kuhn 1982, 719-20; Punt 2009, 448-51; J.G. Cook 2014, 358-59, passim; H.K. Bond 2019, 431-32; Pounds 2019, 42-47; also Fowl 1990, 64; Bockmuehl 1998, 135; Hawthorne and Martin 2004, 123; Thurston and Ryan 2005, 83; Hellerman 2005, 146-48; Smit 2013, 92.

[53] Hellerman 2005, 146-47.

[54] To 'cause someone to become disgraced and humiliated', 'done esp. to slaves' (Louw-Nida, 310; BDAG, 990).

[55] He 'underwent the most shameful public humiliation imaginable in the ancient world – *death on a Roman cross*' (Hellerman 2005, 143).

[56] Cf. Hansen 2009, 156.

[57] Vincent 1897, 59 (emphasis added).

[58] BDAG, 1045-46. Cf. LXX Pss 36:35; 96:9; Dan 3:52, 54, 57-88.

[59] BDAG, 1034.

[60] Bockmuehl 1998, 140.

Christian connection of the themes of Jesus' lordship, the Father's agency, and glory with Jesus' resurrection the reference is clearly to Christ's resurrection from the dead.[61]

Phil 2:6-11 thus narrates Christ's having undertaken a (divinely mandated) descending-ascending journey *through* suffering death on a cross *to* being loftily raised by God. Or, more precisely stated: a heavenly Christ who ↘ descends incarnate to suffer a slave's death on a cross and is thereby ↗ raised by God to a state of exceeding divine glory. As for the elliptical 2:5 introducing this narrative appeal, heeding Losie's point that, contra the scholarly tendency to absorb the emphatic 'this' into an implied-noun-of φρονεῖν 'as if it intransitively denoted some attitude or mind-set, without the object…being clearly established', allowing τοῦτο its natural force renders it the object of the transitive verb φρονεῖν,[62] we may take the following as a bare-bones, fairly neutral yet readable rendering: 'Let the orientating in all of you be this (Τοῦτο φρονεῖτε ἐν ὑμῖν), which (is) also in Christ Jesus (ὃ καὶ ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ): [6]who…' This appeal does not exist in a vacuum. It forms part of a letter written to a certain group of people in a particular context and with a specific set of communicative concerns and aims, to which we turn.

The subject of suffering runs throughout Philippians as a leitmotif. Likely one of his last extant epistles, as one of the 'captivity letters' Paul is writing to the Philippian ἐκκλησία—which he seems to have been involved in founding[63]—out of a situation of imprisonment (1:7, 12-17). Redolent of 2 Cor, alongside repeated invocations of his 'chains' (1:7, 13, 14, 17) are interspersed allusions to Paul's affliction, pain, persecution, struggles, losses etc.[64] As already indicated, one also finds references to Christ's suffering unto death (2:7-8; also 3:10). Further, one encounters a certain Epaphroditus, a fellow Philippian missionary the community had sent to aid Paul in *his* affliction (4:14-18) succumbing to great peril (2:27, 30)—and whom, given the extent of his distress and longing after the Philippians, who are in turn anxious about him, Paul has sent back to Philippi (2:25-26, 28). And, in contrast to 2 Cor, the matter of suffering emerges throughout as a pressing reality on the part of Paul's addressees.[65] In this latter regard, together with appeals to 'comfort' and 'consolation' (2:1), solidarity (1:8, 27, 30; 2:2; 3:20; 4:2-3), for the Philippians to 'not be anxious' (4:6), 'not be terrified' (1:28) and to 'persevere/stand firm' (1:27; 4:1) are frequent encouragements to 'rejoice' or experience 'joy'.[66] Indeed, one of the principal concerns of the letter seems to be restoring a lost sense of joy.[67]

Based on his painstaking demographic modelling of first-century Philippi, Oakes has made a strong case that there was almost certainly widespread *economic suffering* in the Philippian church.[68] On the basis of 4:2 (with, perhaps, 2:14 and 3:15) some suggest there was a major issue with internal strife

[61] Dunn 1998, 246. 'If there is no resurrection of the dead, then neither has Christ been raised' (1 Cor 15:13).

[62] Losie 1978, 53. Nb. Käsemann 1950, 320: '*φρονεῖν*…meint ja nicht die Gesinnung, sondern die *Ausrichtung*'; also Gorman 2001, 44 n. 57: 'the activity indicated by the Greek words *phroneō* and *phronesis* is not a purely mental event but a perceptual skill, a way of seeing that results in a corresponding way of living.'

[63] Cf. Phil 1:5; 4:15; Acts 16:9-40; Holloway 2001, 43-44; Smit 2013, 62.

[64] Cf., e.g., 1:15-17, 30; 2:17, 27; 3:7-8, 10; 4:12, 14.

[65] Cf. 1:7, 27-30; 2:1-2, 12, 15-19, 26, 28; 3:2-3, 18-21; 4:1-8, 10, 14, 19; also 2 Cor 8:1-2.

[66] 1:25; 2:17, 18, 28, 29; 3:1; 4:4a, 4b; cf. 1:4, 18; 2:2; 4:1, 10.

[67] Tellbe 2001, 230-31. Cf. Holloway 2001.

[68] Oakes 2001, 1-76, 89-96.

after the manner of 1 Cor.[69] This, however, seems unlikely given the tone of warmth, mutuality and praise that characterises this letter to a group Paul deems his 'joy and crown' and thanks his God 'upon every remembrance of' (4:1; 1:3)[70]—hence the now widespread literary classification of Philippians as (akin to) an ancient 'letter of friendship', 'Verbindungsbrief' or 'family letter'.[71] But the letter does clearly indicate both the presence and danger of *external oppression and threats*.[72] Given the lack of specifics, it may well be that Paul 'had some vague information that there was trouble in the church at Philippi, but very little specific information; to meet this…challenge, he cast a wide net.'[73]

In sum, then, in Phil 2:5-11, penned with a view to the Philippians' 'orienting', one finds a focused narrative appeal to the heavenly, incarnate Jesus Christ undertaking a mandated descending-ascending journey *through* suffering death on a cross *to* being loftily raised by God. And this forms part of a letter in which an imprisoned, suffering Paul is writing to a community to address at least vague news of *their* experiencing some acute sources of suffering, and foster amid their difficulties a sense of unity, resolve and joy. In this the ingredients for a mythic reading of Phil 2:5-11 are already latent. For on the one hand, myths are 'not just narrated as past events; they [are] actualised as present happenings', wherein the 'principles and paradigms for all conduct must be sought and recovered.' And on the other, myths serve especially as models in times of crisis, functioning to help their participants resiliently navigate the polarities of personal existence: to securely 'engage with, appreciate, and understand the complex joys and sorrows of human life.'[74] Furthermore, such a mythic perspective is capable of supporting both points about 2:5 which have typically been pitted against each other, namely, (1) the Philippians' being called to orient themselves by way of *that which was* 'also' in Christ Jesus; and (2) the *locative* nuance to being ἐν Χριστῷ in Paul—albeit a more penetrating reading of the latter would be in order than its simply denoting being 'members of His Church':[75] 'when people are "thinking mythically" … they take themselves to inhabit the myth'.[76] Such factors in place, we turn to the wider letter.

6.3 Phil 2:5-11 as a Mythic Paradigm in the Immediate Context

Most commentators seeking to relate Phil 2:5-11 to the wider letter have focused either primarily or exclusively on 2:1-4, on positing a 'linkage between this extended ethical exhortation (2:1-4) and the Christ-hymn that follows in 2:6-11'.[77] Let us begin by considering 2:1-4, which forms a lengthy single sentence, before extending our purview, firstly, to 1:27-30, and then to 2:12-30.

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[69] Peterlin 1995.

[70] Cf. Sampley 1996, 121-23, 127-31; Hooker 2002, 380-81.

[71] L. Alexander 1989; L.M. White 1990; Stowers 1991, 107-14; Fee 1995, 18-20; Wansink 1996, 104-6; J.T. Fitzgerald 1996; Fowl 1998, 141; Vos 2005, 276; Thurston and Ryan 2005, 34-37; Hansen 2009, 6-12; Ware 2011, 163.

[72] Cf. 1:27-28; 3:2-3, 18-19; also the language of 1:15, 17; 2:14-18; 3:20.

[73] J.W. Marshall 1993, 361. Cf. Hawthorne and Martin 2004, 171.

[74] Buxton 2007, 166; Eliade 1959, 102; Lule 2001, 15.

[75] R.P. Martin 1997, 289.

[76] Neville 1996, 39. Cf. Vincent 1897, 4; Thompson and Longenecker 2016, 23.

[77] L.M. White 1990, 207.

6.3.1 The Preceding Sentence (2:1-4)

On the standard 'ethical' reading 'the hymn is invoked in support of a specific deliberative claim introduced in the immediately preceding verses (2:1-5):…that the audience should look not to its own interests but to the interests of others.'[78] Hence, 'Paul draws upon the attitude and activities of Jesus in order to construct a new ethos for interpersonal relations'.[79] Thus locating the primary, much less sole function of 2:6-11, we have seen, lends itself to an etiolated reading of 2:6-11, and does not square with the Christ-centred narrative dynamics appealed to therein. To this may be added that it is accompanied by an overly simplified, selective reading of 2:1-4—indicative of which is Holloway when he avers that, contra 2:3-4, 'which will be echoed in…2:6-7', 2:1-2 'does not merit close scrutiny.'[80]

2:1-4 does not reflect *a* 'specific deliberative claim', *an* 'ethical exhortation'. On the face of it here, as Beare indicates, Paul 'appears to be casting around for any and every kind of thought, feeling, and Christian experience to which he may appeal'.[81] In assessing the seemingly random and disconnected clauses of 2:1-4, something our model of myth immediately suggests is the importance of its being headed, in the oft-neglected first half of this sentence, by an appeal to the addressees' finding '*comfort* (παράκλησις) in Christ' (2:1a).[82] This is not an ethical appeal, but an *existential*, *consolatory* appeal. Accordingly, one then encounters appeals to 'love', 'participation in a spirit' (κοινωνία πνεύματος), 'affection and mercy', where the call is not *to* love but to seek out παραμύθιον—'consolation, encouragement'—through some implied locus of love, divine spirit, affection and mercy (2:1b-d). This is followed by a call to 'fulfil', 'carry into effect' or 'realise' *Paul's* 'joy' (2:2a), then tied causally, twice prefiguring the 'orienting' imperative of 2:5, to a string of clauses about 'nourishing a shared orientation':[83] 'so that you all might be *oriented the same*' (ἵνα τὸ αὐτὸ φρονῆτε), bearing *the same* love' (τὴν αὐτὴν ἀγάπην ἔχοντες), *together as one person* (σύμψυχοι),[84] being *singularly oriented* (τὸ ἓν φρονοῦντες)' (2:2b-e). One then comes to the final clauses most focus on apropos the function of 2:6-11. Yet even these do not present *a* clear 'ethical exhortation'. First there is a general exclamation, 'nothing according to ἐριθεία or vain-glory (κενοδοξία)' (2:3a). Given its rarity and polysemy it is difficult to gauge with certainty what ἐριθεία implies here.[85] It seems to have taken on pejorative usage from a base meaning of 'the manner of a day-labourer' (ἔριθος). With Pauline usage elsewhere indicating some such meaning as those 'who think only of immediate gain', Büchsel suggests that it connotes baseness in the sense of 'those who cannot lift their gaze to higher things' (cf. 3:19).[86] This corresponds with the accompanying *κενο*δοξία, '*vain*-glory', finding a positive counterpart in the δόξα

[78] Martin and Nash 2015, 137-38.
[79] Hellerman 2005, 154.
[80] Holloway 2017, 113.
[81] Beare 1973, 70.
[82] Given the combined appeals to παράκλησις and παραμύθιον in 2:1, παράκλησις is clearly to be read here as 'comfort'. On the further, specifically eschatological background to this use of παράκλησις, see p. 99, above.
[83] Schellenberg 2021, 165.
[84] Σύμψυχοι 'here means something close to…"together as one person," putting emphasis on "unity…in feeling as well as in thought and action" (*EDNT*, 3.291)' (Fee 1995, 185 n. 60).
[85] Cf. Oakes 2001, 182.
[86] F. Büchsel, *TDNT*, 2:660-61.

θεοῦ, the *divine* 'glory' tied to Christ's being raised in 2:9-11. While the following clause, in which the theme of Christ's abasement (ταπεινοῦν) unto death (2:8) is echoed, is often rendered in terms of regarding 'others as greater than yourselves',[87] Paul does not strictly write this. Literally Paul writes: 'but in the abasement (τῇ ταπεινοφροσύνῃ) counting *one another* (ἀλλήλους) as transcending *themselves* (ὑπερέχοντας ἑαυτῶν)' (2:3b).[88] The final clause then references 'everyone setting their sights not on the things of themselves (μὴ τὰ ἑαυτῶν ἕκαστος σκοποῦντες), but also on the things of others (ἀλλὰ καὶ τὰ ἑτέρων) (2:4). If, as seems likely, the καί in 2:4b is original,[89] one is not confronted here with a dichotomy between focusing on τά ἑαυτῶν versus τά ἑτέρων, but a qualification about how the Philippians should go about focusing on τά *ἑαυτῶν*—in conjunction with τά *ἑτέρων*. It is often maintained that 2:4 is nevertheless to be read 'in absolute terms because τὰ ἑαυτῶν … σκοποῦντες is pejorative: it is not something which Paul could directly permit the Philippians to do.'[90] Is this, however, the case? With the two occurrences in 2:3-4, ἑαυτοῦ appears a further four times in this letter, and as Blumenthal notes,[91] the fact that these are all concentrated in the immediate vicinity suggests that they should be read together. The first two surface in the immediately ensuing narrative appeal and relate directly to the self-referential activity pertaining to *Christ Jesus himself*, his having *ἑαυτὸν* ἐκένωσεν and ἐταπείνωσεν *ἑαυτὸν* 'unto death', wherefore 'God also loftily raised him…' (2:5-11). The third immediately follows this appeal and encourages the Philippians thus (ὥστε) to pursue their '*own* salvation' (*ἑαυτῶν* σωτηρίαν), 'for God is the one working' in them also (2:12-13). This is then met, finally, by Paul favourably contrasting Timothy to those who τὰ ἑαυτῶν ζητοῦσιν, *οὐ τὰ Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ* (2:21). Aligning these dynamics with those of 2:3-4, the picture that emerges is hardly one of an altruistic rejection of 'the things of the self'. Moving immediately from the Philippians 'transcending *ἑαυτῶν*' and setting their sights 'also on τά *ἑτέρων*' (2:3-4) to invoking the activity of Christ *ἑαυτὸν* and God (2:5-11), then via an inference thus to pursue the 'salvation' *ἑαυτῶν* (2:12-13), to the final word on τὰ ἑαυτῶν in 2:21, 2:21 illustrates where the real issue lies for Paul: people focusing on 'the things of themselves, *not the things of Jesus Christ*' (2:21).

What is one to make of the smorgasbord of themes in 2:1-4 in relation to the narrative appeal in 2:5-11? I propose there are clear indicators that Paul is here gearing up to appeal to the *Christ event* as the point of reference, as the single point of *orientation* (2:5ff.) with which the Philippians ought to navigate their lives as a whole, and hence their present crises, and that this brings a certain coherency to 2:1-4. To the extent that there may be resonances of a general altruistic ethic vis-à-vis 'others' in 2:3-4, this may be accounted for by the fact that, though failing to surface in the actual narrative appeal in 2:6-11, it is language bound up with the broader gospel story to which Paul is to make a specific appeal.

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[87] Oakes 2001, 186.

[88] The third person ἑαυτῶν can at times serve in place of first and second plurals. However, such a reading here is frustrated by its appearing alongside ἀλλήλων, for ἑαυτῶν is used '[o]ften side by side with ἀλλ[ήλων] for variety', where 'ἑαυτῶν does not really differ in idea from ἀλλήλων' (MHT, 3:44; Robertson, 690). In other words, there would be considerable precedent for rendering: 'counting one another as transcending one another'.

[89] Being by far the majority reading, including the earliest, $\mathfrak{P}^{46}$ manuscript. See esp. Blumenthal 2020.

[90] Oakes 2001, 187.

[91] Blumenthal 2020, 114-16.

The same can be extended to Paul's mind being drawn to the theme of 'love'—and by extension 'affection and mercy' (cf. 1:8: 'affection *of Christ Jesus*')—which is equally ingrained in the wider gospel story, but does not surface in the specific appeal of 2:6-11. Paul's present concern, however, is not with any of these *per se*. It is with the Philippians seeking '*comfort in* Christ' (2:1a), 'encouragement' (παραμύθιον) from the *locus* of his and God's 'love', 'affection and mercy', namely, the Christ event itself (2:5-11), and so to discern their own shared spiritual 'participation' in *this* (2:1b-d)—the 'spirit *of Jesus Christ*' (1:19). Such then makes sense of the string of clauses in 2:2b-e where, twice prefiguring the call to a deriving a shared 'orienting' *in (the narrative of) Christ* in 2:5, Paul encourages the Philippians to have 'one concern and goal in mind':[92] to all be '*oriented* the same', 'together as *one person*', etc. As for the allusion to Paul's 'joy' in 2:2a tied to this shared 'orienting', it is to be noted that 'Paul's two weightiest expressions of joy (1:17; 2:17) are both in the context of his suffering.'[93] Finally, the statements in 2:3-4 about (a) nothing 'according to *vain*-glory', prefiguring the *divine* 'glory' tied to Christ's being raised in 2:9-11; (b) 'in *the abasement* (τῇ ταπεινοφροσύνῃ) counting one another as transcending themselves', prefiguring the *means* by which Christ was raised, his having 'abased (ἐταπείνωσεν) himself…*unto death*' in 2:6-8; and (c) 'everyone setting their sights not on τὰ ἑαυτῶν, but *also* on τὰ ἑτέρων' make cohesive sense if by *τὰ ἑτέρων* here Paul primarily has in mind *the things of Christ Jesus* (2:21) and God to which he immediately turns. 'Let the orienting in all of you be this…' (2:5ff.). The Philippians are to count one another as transcending themselves because they are *all* called to 'lift their gaze higher', to derive a shared self-orienting by means of the very things of Christ Jesus and God Paul then immediately appeals to. Ultimately, however, I suggest that the tendency to focus squarely on 2:1-4 apropos the function of 2:5-11 has been far too limited, and that a clearer picture emerges, in the first instance, by factoring in Paul's immediately preceding statements in 1:27-30.

6.3.2 Continually Live Your Lives in a Manner Worthy of the Gospel of Christ (1:27-30)

The direct relevance of this preceding unit is suggested by οὖν in 2:1, and by the fact that literary-rhetorical analyses have usually seen in it the letter's core *propositio*.[94] Thus the emphatic μόνον of 1:27a introduces something of absolutely central and singular importance.[95] Having noted the existential, consolatory tone of 2:1-4, and identified clear indicators that Paul is there gearing up to appeal to the Christ event itself in 2:5-11 as the single point of orientation with which the Philippians ought to navigate their lives as a whole, and hence their present crises, this comes more clearly to the fore in 1:27-30. Concern with the Philippians seeking '*comfort* in Christ' in 2:1-4 surfaces in a concern specifically with their 'suffering' (1:29), 'struggle' (1:30), 'standing firm in one spirit, as one person … and not in any way being terrified by those assailing' them (1:27-28). Moreover, concern specifically in 2:1-4—anticipating 2:5-11—with the Philippians seeking 'comfort *in Christ*' surfaces in the opening

[92] Dahl 1995, 10.
[93] Oakes 2001, 180-81.
[94] Watson 1988, 59, 65-67, 79; Geoffrion 1993, 21-22, 35; D.A. Black 1995, 35, 44, 48; Edart 2002, 88-92.
[95] 'Nur dies eine ist wichtig…' (Landmesser 1997, 554); '*This point only*…' (Reumann 2008, 262).

imperative: 'Only, continually live your lives (πολιτεύεσθε) *in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ* (ἀξίως τοῦ εὐαγγελίου τοῦ Χριστοῦ)' (1:27a). The ἀξίως + genitive here conveys a 'norm which governs something', in this instance that of *the gospel of Christ* governing the lives of the Philippians, while the present imperative πολιτεύεσθε emphasises a durative aspect to this norm: its being something by which the 'whole life of Christians is constantly and in all respects shaped'.[96] Understanding this telling *Überschrift* in conjunction with the ensuing narrative appeal in 2:5-11 as a *mythic paradigm*, held out with a view to comforting, existentially guiding and regulating the lives of the Philippians amid their crises sheds light on everything that follows in 1:27b-30.

Anticipating themes in 2:1-2, Paul continues in the remainder of 1:27 by expressing the following intended corollary of the call in 1:27a: '…so that whether having come and seen you or absent I should hear concerning your things that you are all standing firm in one spirit (στήκετε ἐν ἑνὶ πνεύματι), as one person co-striving in the faith of the gospel (μιᾷ ψυχῇ συναθλοῦντες τῇ πίστει τοῦ εὐαγγελίου)'. The parallel ἑνὶ πνεύματι, μιᾷ *ψυχῇ* 'militates against reading πνεῦμα as a reference to the Holy Spirit'.[97] Paul speaks of his addressees' firmly striving amid their 'things' in and as a *single spirit and person*. As to the implied referent behind this singular spirit and person, a number of factors point to Christ. Firstly, this is qualified by co-striving in τῇ πίστει τοῦ εὐαγγελίου, an unusual formulation likely to be read appositionally, '"the faith, that is, the gospel"; or "the faith that is contained in the gospel"'—or else as '"the rule of life which distinctly characterises" the gospel.'[98] Either way this co-striving is shaped specifically by the content of the gospel. Secondly, Paul is elaborating precisely on the imperative of 1:27a, on being governed by the norm of 'the gospel of Christ'. Finally, the only prior reference to πνεῦμα has been to 'the spirit *of Jesus Christ*' (1:19). Elaborating on 'your things' in 1:27b, Paul continues in 1:28: 'and not in any way being terrified by those assailing you (ὑπὸ τῶν ἀντικειμένων), which is a herald for them of destruction (ἥτις ἐστὶν αὐτοῖς ἔνδειξις ἀπωλείας), but of your salvation, and this from God (ὑμῶν δὲ σωτηρίας, καὶ τοῦτο ἀπὸ θεοῦ)' (1:28). This verse is obscure. First, it is uncertain whether Paul speaks of something which, for their assailers points to the *Philippians'* destruction, *actually* 'heralding' their salvation; or of something heralding their salvation, along with the *oppressors'* destruction.[99] A more pressing issue has been the subject of *ἥτις ἐστὶν* ἔνδειξις (1:28b). While many try to relate this to the allusion to steadfastness in 1:27c,[100] this is hardly natural, for it follows directly upon invoking, and so surely refers to, the Philippians being assailed (1:28a): καὶ μὴ πτυρόμενοι ἐν μηδενὶ *ὑπὸ τῶν ἀντικειμένων*, *ἥτις ἐστὶν ἔνδειξις*…[101] However one takes αὐτοῖς ἀπωλείας, then, Paul speaks of the Philippians being assailed serving as the 'herald' or 'harbinger' (ἔνδειξις) of their experiencing a situation of salvation, 'and this from God' (1:28). Here we begin to see directly at work the operative character of 2:5-11 as a mythic paradigm.

[96] Reumann 2008, 263; Landmesser 1997, 558.
[97] Fowl 1990, 86 n. 5; cf. also, e.g., O'Brien 1991, 150; Oakes 2001, 178.
[98] Fee 1995, 167; Silva 2005, 89; citing Vincent 1897, 34.
[99] Many presume the latter (cf. 3:19). For the former, cf., e.g., Collange 1973, 70; Hawthorne 1983, 59-60.
[100] See, e.g., Fowl 1990, 86.
[101] Thus, rightly, Thompson and Longenecker 2016, 55: '"Which" [*hētis*] refers to their suffering.'

Rather than relegating καὶ τοῦτο ἀπὸ θεοῦ to an 'appendix-like reference to God's agency',[102] regardless of whether τοῦτο includes the Philippians' situation as a whole or just their salvation,[103] Paul is clearly valorising their suffering as participating in some transcendent meaning from some divine vantage point. Given not least 1:27a, an obvious candidate for the divine vantage point from which Paul can valorise his addressees' adverse experiences as, in fact, being the very 'herald' or 'harbinger' of their experiencing a situation of salvation 'from God' emerges readily from a mythic perspective in that of the *dynamics of* 'the gospel of Christ' (1:27a) to which Paul will shortly appeal. 'Let the orienting in all of you be this, which is also in Christ Jesus, who … abased himself by becoming obedient unto death, death on a cross. *Wherefore* (διό) *God* also loftily raised him…' (2:5-11). To be sure, Paul is speaking here of divine deliverance through oppression. But in its capacity as a mythic paradigm the operative character of 2:6-11 would be that of a *symbolic, polyvalent reservoir of meanings available for use again in other structures*: 'bound to its content and, through its primary content, to its secondary content.'[104] And understanding that theses paradoxical dynamics of 1:28 are mythically anchored in the paradigm of the Christ event shortly laid out before the Philippians in 2:5-11 sheds immediate light on 1:28, and on the paradigmatic relevance of the overall narrative trajectory appealed to in 2:5-11. But what, *if* this is alluded to, of the Philippians being assailed also spelling the assailers' destruction?[105] Paul's thinking here is mythically 'gospel-shaped', as in 2:1-4 where his mind is drawn to elements of the wider gospel story absent from the specific appeal of 2:5-11. So his allusions elsewhere to those who 'crucified the Lord', who 'killed the Lord Jesus' as 'coming to naught' and meeting (God's) 'wrath' (1 Cor 2:6-8; 1 Thess 2:15-16) would afford an obvious, albeit secondary, mythic backdrop.[106]

Having addressed suffering *oppression* Paul proceeds more generally in 1:29 with the rather unsettling-sounding: 'for it has been graciously given for you all (ὅτι ὑμῖν ἐχαρίσθη) with reference to Christ (τὸ ὑπὲρ Χριστοῦ) not only to believe in him but also, with reference to him (τὸ ὑπὲρ αὐτοῦ), to suffer (πάσχειν)'. If 1:28 has proved difficult for exegetes this has been still further the case with 1:29. Hence Caird, in his otherwise stringent verse-by-verse commentary, passes over 1:29 entirely, while even Fowl, who sets out precisely to argue that 2:6-11 supports the so-called 'ethical demands of *1:27ff.*', assigns the specifics of 1:29 but a single exegetical comment: 'Paul does not deny that the struggle to maintain the community as a faithful witness to the gospel will entail suffering (v. 29).'[107] The opening ὅτι, however, signals that Paul is here elucidating the crux of what has been said.[108] While exegetes have been uncertain of *what* he is expanding on,[109] it is likely his foregoing allusion to the Philippians' suffering oppression 'heralding' a salvation 'from God' (1:28). Accordingly the ἐχαρίσθη in 1:29,

[102] Smit 2013, 99.
[103] O'Brien 1991, 157; Loh and Nida 1995, 42, respectively.
[104] Ricoeur 1969, 17.
[105] If the sense here is simply that what appears to others to spell 'destruction' is in fact the very 'herald' of the Philippians' experiencing a divine deliverance, then there is nothing further to explain.
[106] As 1:29-30 will confirm, Paul's principal concern here is with the Philippians themselves.
[107] Caird 1976, 116; Fowl 1990, 77, 87. To subsume 1:27-30 under 'ethical demands' is clearly misleading.
[108] '[V]erse 29…seems to function as a reason for something preceding it' (Oakes 2001, 81).
[109] '[W]hat Paul is setting out to explain is not immediately clear' (Fee 1995, 170).

cognate of χάρις (‘grace’), is clearly a divine passive (cf. 2:9). Here Paul invokes two things as divinely ‘given’ for them: ‘believing and, surprisingly, suffering.’[110] The issue, then, is ‘how in the world can Paul write to faithful friends that God has graciously given to them the experience of suffering?’[111] As in Fowl’s comment above, exegetes tend to place the primary emphasis here on ‘believing’ or being ‘faithful’ and to annex ‘suffering’ (and ἀγών in 1:30) as subservient to this. It is, however, hardly the case that Paul’s ‘central concern’ here is ‘living a life worthy of the gospel *in spite of opposition*’; that he simply ‘*does not deny* that the struggle to maintain the community as a faithful witness to the gospel will entail suffering’; or makes ‘reference to the fact that the Philippians *may* also suffer’.[112] Rather, Paul writes that it has been graciously, divinely *given* for them ‘*not only* to believe’, but ‘*to* suffer’ (timeless present), such that the emphasis in fact falls quite clearly and specifically on the *latter*. Discerning this, Holloway has contextualised this in Jewish ideas of ‘the eschatological suffering of the righteous’: ‘that in the last days the righteous will be persecuted by the wicked but that, in the process, they (the righteous) will be perfected’.[113] Yet, no such speculative detour is called for. For in the parallel, emphatically repeated ὑπέρ-clauses—‘with reference to Christ (τὸ ὑπὲρ Χριστοῦ) … with reference to him (τὸ ὑπὲρ αὐτοῦ)’—Paul himself situates what he is saying here squarely in *Christ*. Paul thus speaks specifically of it being a divine ‘given’ for the Philippians, *with reference to Christ*, to suffer; of suffering generally (πάσχειν) as something ever actually to embrace as a divine *desideratum*, grounded in Christ. Discerning that Paul’s discourse here is symbolically anchored in the ensuing *narrative appeal to* Christ in 2:5-11—his undertaking a divinely mandated journey *through* suffering death on a cross *to* being loftily raised by God—as precisely a *mythic paradigm*, an *exemplary* narrative pattern held out for the Philippians’ *self*-‘orienting’ amid their crises, makes sense of this.

The adjunctive *belief* in Christ here is by no means irrelevant from a mythic perspective. Belief is fundamental to myth: ‘Without the belief in the reality of its objects, myth would lose its ground’.[114] But as in 1:29 there is an integral ‘not only’ to this belief. As a living and lived reality, ‘believed to have once happened…and continuing ever since to influence the world and human destinies’, myth ‘does not merely affirm an abstract truth as an idle comfort… Through the revealed truth, and on its foundations, [it] tells man how to behave’. It is ‘believed to be true, and of vital significance to human action’, ‘regarded as a setting a precedent for all human behaviour from that time on’, such that ‘almost every important action in everyday life, can be referred back to [the] myth’.[115] Reading Paul’s statement here in light of just such a view of the narrative appeal these verses are building up to (2:5-11), as a mythic paradigm—with its attendant symbolic, foundational and therapeutic dimensions—makes sense of 1:29, and of how this is directly enlarging on what has preceded. With a view to the Philippians resiliently

[110] Reumann 2008, 291.
[111] Cousar 2009, 46.
[112] Watson 1988, 65; Fowl 1990, 87; Smit 2013, 93 (emphases added). Cf. also, e.g., Reumann 2008, 291: ‘Belief in Christ is a necessary presupposition: it *may* cause persecution’.
[113] Holloway 2017, 107-8.
[114] Cassirer 1944, 75. See p. 40, above.
[115] Malinowski 1948 [1926], 78; 1936, 28; Berndt and Berndt 1977, 241, 230, 268.

standing firm amid their crises (therapeutic) in and as one person, 'co-striving in the faith of the gospel', Paul has opened with the call to 'continually live your lives in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ' (paradigmatic)—evoking the gospel narrative as the norm by which the 'whole life of Christians is constantly and in all respects shaped' (1:27).[116] Rooted in the overall paradigm *of* the 'gospel of Christ' to be narrated for the Philippians' self-'orienting' in 2:5-11, he has then interpreted (foundational) their present adverse experiences, their suffering oppression, as being the very 'herald' of their experiencing divine deliverance (1:28). Anchored as this is in the causally dependent divine raising of Christ to be articulated in 2:9-11 (symbolic), the determinative backdrop and complement to this expanded on in 1:29 is that 'with reference to *Christ*', suffering is to be positively embraced, as something divinely given and beneficial for them (paradigmatic), after the manner precisely of that upon which Christ's raising was causally dependent—his divinely mandated, self-abasing suffering unto death to be articulated in 2:6-8 (symbolic). In accordance with the symbolic, foundational, paradigmatic and therapeutic functioning of mythic models the present particulars of the Philippians' sufferings are being transmuted to the broader, transcendent plane and pattern of the gospel story, and transfigured into a positive, paradigmatic imperative for believers given therein (1:27a), in line with the overt narrative appeal these verse are leading into in 2:5-11. The instrumental value of their sufferings is being mediated by the overarching symbolism of Christ' descent to the cross, such that their sufferings are (to be) valorised as part and parcel of the divine call for those who believe in the gospel of Christ to embrace situations of suffering (1:29; 2:6-8), so as to experience situations of divine salvation (1:28; 2:9-11), *after the manner of* the gospel of Christ (1:27). Thus *mythically* 'framed' the Philippians' present difficulties are but a particular occasion for and means of realising the call for all those who *believe* in that founding event to '*continually live your lives* in a manner worthy of' it (1:27a).

Such a vantage point then speaks to the difficulty many have faced in 1:30, namely, how Paul can proceed to speak singularly of his own adversities past and present being 'the same' as those undergone by the Philippians—who are hardly all chained in a Roman prison: '…(since you are all) experiencing the same struggle (τὸν αὐτὸν ἀγῶνα), which you witnessed in me (οἷον εἴδετε ἐν ἐμοὶ)[117] and now hear of in me (καὶ νῦν ἀκούετε ἐν ἐμοί).'[118] The Philippians' adversities are 'the same' as those Paul has undergone and continues to undergo *because their meaning*, the very meaning of πάσχειν and ἀγών in the believer's life, is for Paul being shaped and mediated by the overarching symbolism of Christ's descent to the cross: 'myth binds particulars together in the unity of an image, a mythical figure.'[119]

Having read 1:27-30 in light of the ensuing narrative appeal in 2:5-11 as an operatively mythic paradigm, a clearer picture of the latter's functioning has emerged. Paul's concern in 2:1-4 with the Philippians seeking comfort in Christ, nourishing a shared orientation, each transcending themselves

[116] Landmesser 1997, 558.

[117] Cf. 1 Thess 2:2; also Acts 16:11-40.

[118] Cf. Plummer 1919, 36: 'it was not identical, for the Philippians were not in prison'; Michael 1928, 73; Fee 1995, 172-3; Oakes 2001, 99; Hawthorne and Martin 2004, 77: 'he knew…their sufferings had taken a different form from his. He gives no indication that the Philippians or any of their leaders were in prison'; Cousar 2009, 47.

[119] Cassirer 1955 [1925], 69. Cf. Houlden 1970, 65-66.

etc., followed by the call to find their self-orienting *in the narrative of Christ* in 2:5-11 is neither a narrowly ethical, nor self-contained, thought. It is continuing what has been conveyed in the immediately preceding *propositio* (1:27-30), headed by a call to 'continually live your lives in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ' (1:27a; cf. 2:5), in which Paul has sought to offer psychological support, stability and direction to the Philippians amid their crises (1:27b; cf. 2:1-4) by symbolically mapping these onto the overarching dialectical pattern of the gospel as a paradigm to live by. Modelled on Christ's undertaking a divinely mandated journey *through* suffering death on a cross *to* being loftily raised by God, the Philippians' own adverse experiences are (to be regarded as) the very herald of their experiencing a salvation from God (1:28). Correspondingly, with reference to (the death of) Christ, suffering is to be positively embrace as a gracious gift (1:29). Thus navigating 1:27-30 has resulted in a reading which coheres with and informs the dynamics unpacked in 2:1-4, sheds a cohesive light on exegetically difficulties in 1:27-30, and has enabled us to discern the immediate paradigmatic relevance of the *overall sacred drama* appealed to in 2:5-11. Having thus illuminated the material leading directly into the narrative appeal of 2:5-11, we turn to the material immediately following it.

6.3.3 Continually Bring About Your Own Salvation (2:12-18)

2:12-18 has proved a 'problematic sub-section'.[120] Many feel that, despite the ὥστε (2:12), it appears unrelated to 2:5-11.[121] In this vein, exegetes commonly delve headlong into the 'doctrinal issues' raised by 2:12 as if the prior verses existed in a vacuum.[122] The opening 'so then', however, signals that in this section Paul is drawing a direct inference from 2:5-11. Some, as intimated earlier, relate this section to the foregoing verses by suggesting that 2:5-11 supports the 'exhortation to *obedience* in 2:12-18 (cf. 2:8b…)': [123] that here 'Christ's obedience established the ultimate moral standard of obedience'.[124] Recalling our critique of how interpreters have typically sought to relate 2:5-11 to 2:1-4, however, thus focusing on 'obedience' here is strained at both ends. As regards 2:5-11, isolating but a single adjective (ὑπήκοος, 2:8b), it again entails a conspicuously etiolated reading of that overall narrative appeal. And as regards 2:12-18, ὑπακούειν appears once (2:12a), and this single allusion is *not* an '*exhortation to* obedience'. It is something *affirmed in passing* apropos the Philippians, in a subordinate καθώς-clause lacking any corresponding οὕτως-clause (*καθὼς πάντοτε ὑπηκούσατε…*). It lacks any specific object. It immediately gives way to the actual matter of 'salvation' and does not surface again here or anywhere else in the letter. As with 1:27-2:4, approaching 2:5-11 as an operatively mythic paradigm furnishes a more penetrating reading.

In what has proved the most difficult part of this section, Paul proceeds inferentially from 2:5-11: 'So then (ὥστε) my beloved, even as you have always been obedient, not only in my presence but now

[120] Bloomquist 1993, 127.
[121] E.g., Dibelius 1937, 82; Collange 1973, 97; Deidun 1981, 64; U.B. Müller 2002, 114.
[122] A striking case in point being Silva 2005, 118-23.
[123] Holloway 2001, 122; also idem. 2017, 130.
[124] Hansen 2009, 170; cf. also, e.g., Fee 1995, 229; Smit 2013, 95-100, 107; Blumenthal 2020, 108 n. 31.

all the more in my absence, continually bring about your own salvation (τὴν ἑαυτῶν σωτηρίαν κατεργάζεσθε) with fear and trembling (μετὰ φόβου καὶ τρόμου), [13]for God is the one working in you equally to will and work concerning his good purpose (θεὸς γάρ ἐστιν ὁ ἐνεργῶνἐν ὑμῖν καὶ τὸ θέλειν καὶ τὸ ἐνεργεῖν ὑπὲρ τῆς εὐδοκίας)' (2:12-13).[125] The chief and highly vexed issue confronting exegetes is how, given his statements elsewhere about salvation being wrought wholly by God through Christ, Paul can speak of believers 'working' *their own* salvation: 'Is not such a concept subversive of Paul's fundamental doctrine of grace?'[126] As Beare observes: 'The salvation of which he speaks is here, as always, the eschatological fulfilment of the hope of the gospel.…This salvation is still the gift of God… But the part of the believer is not merely passive; he is called to exert himself actively … [i]n some sense…working out their own salvation'.[127] Two further factors need to be reckoned with. This is no singular reference to a past, present or future heavenly event. As with πολιτεύεσθε in 1:27a, the present imperative κατεργάζεσθε 'implies continuous action' with 'no defined ending point. Instead it is work that Paul imagines will occupy these Christians…for the length of their days.'[128] And while this meaning has 'not commended itself to translators for 2:12',[129] generally being replaced by the more ambiguous 'work out', κατεργάζεσθε means 'to cause a state or condition, *bring about, produce, create*'.[130] With these two points tending to be evaded the call here is perhaps even more striking than many have realised. The Philippians are *continually to bring about* their own salvation. As theologically difficult as this may seem, it makes sense from the perspective of 2:5-11 as a mythic paradigm.

Σωτηρία in 2:12 picks up 1:28, where Paul has spoken of the Philippians' suffering issuing forth a σωτηρία 'from God'. As the dynamics at play there, together with 1:27-2:4 overall, were clarified by 2:5-11's functioning as a mythic paradigm, such is the case here. Betraying all of the operative dimensions to mythic paradigms, in the verses leading into 2:5-11 Paul has therapeutically addressed the present realities of the Philippians' suffering by symbolically interpreting them through the lens of the gospel of Christ, and assimilating the former to the latter as a paradigm to live by. The result has been a life orientation, continually governed by the norm of 'the gospel of Christ' (1:27), which positively embraces situations of suffering (1:29), as being *ipso facto* the herald of divine deliverance—situations of salvation 'from God' (1:28). Paul has then proceeded to the Philippians' deriving their shared self-'orienting' in the specific narrative appeal of 2:5-11: Christ's having embraced his descent to the cross (2:6-8), from which he *ipso facto* experienced divine deliverance—a personal salvation from God (2:9-11). The immediate inference (ὥστε) Paul then draws from this narrative appeal is to thus 'continually bring about your own salvation…' (2:12-13). Discerning that 2:12-13 is, as the above overview readily indicates, continuing the mythic dynamics unpacked throughout 1:27-2:11 speaks to a second difficulty many have faced in these verses, namely, what to make of the accompanying 'with

[125] On God as the subject of the final clause, cf. Bockmuehl 1998, 154; Silva 2005, 131; Hansen 2009, 178-79.
[126] Silva 2005, 121.
[127] Beare 1973, 90.
[128] Witherington 1994, 320; Boyce 2017, 28-29. Cf. Cousar 2009, 60.
[129] Reumann 2008, 387.
[130] BDAG, 531. Cf., e.g., Rom 4:15; 5:3; 7:8, 13; 15:18; 2 Cor 4:17; 9:11; Hansen 2009, 172.

fear and trembling' (μετὰ φόβου καὶ τρόμου): 'it is not at all certain what he intends by these words'.[131] With the μετά + genitive indicating the 'attendant circumstances of' or that 'within which something takes place', that which is here evoked by bringing about one's own salvation specifically *with* φόβος ('something terrible/awe-inspiring, a terror … fear, alarm, fright') and τρόμος ('trembling, quivering') is, surely, *suffering*.[132] Thus, in one of the only two other instances of this combined phrase in the undisputed epistles it is aligned with ἀσθένεια—'weakness', 'incapacity', 'experience of limitation' (1 Cor 2:3);[133] while in its few LXX occurrences, it is used of 'the dread that pagans experience of the living God (e.g., Exod 15:16; Isa 19:16), which then is transferred to their dread of his people… (Deut 2:25; 11:25); finally it is used of the sheer terror of circumstances that bode death (Ps 54:6…).'[134] We are again confronted with a regulative suffering ↔ salvation paradigm, anchored mythically in that of the sacred drama appealed to in 2:5-11, with which Paul is offering encouragement, resilience and direction to the overall lives of the Philippians amid their difficulties. And so the remaining difficulty interpreters face in 2:12-13 is addressed: that the appeal to human agency in 2:12 being met by an explanatory (γάρ) appeal to divine agency in 2:13 seems to form a 'seltsam paradoxer Satz'.[135] Such merging of human and divine agency speaks to the very essence of mythic paradigms—their entailing the continual reactualising of a sacred drama whereby the 'protagonists of the myth are made present': 'Gods and humans come together and behavior is "archaized."'[136] And the specific paradigm of 2:5-11 is itself characterised by an interlocking of human and divine agency: an outworking in the *activity of Christ Jesus* of the *purposeful activity of God*. Rather than taking one adjective in 2:5-11 as supporting some non-existent moral *exhortation to* 'obedience' here, by approaching 2:12-13 in light of 2:5-11 as an operatively mythic paradigm a more penetrating reading emerges. Prompted by the cue of their always being obedient (καθὼς πάντοτε ὑπηκούσατε; cf. 2:8), Paul's inference in 2:12-13 is encouraging the Philippians to do precisely what he has just put forward in the foregoing narrative appeal, and which picks up the way this has already been mythically applied to the issue of their sufferings in 1:27ff.: to derive a regulative *self*-'orienting' in *Christ's* obedient, self-abasing suffering unto death on a cross ↔ *wherefore God* also loftily raised him (2:5-11). Paul is drawing out the 'lesson' of 2:5-11 by encouraging the suffering Philippians to thus 'orient' *their* lives (2:5), to 'continually', actively realise (in both senses of the word) as something at work *through their* experiences of suffering (*μετὰ* φόβου καὶ τρόμου; cf. 2:6-8) the very 'bringing about' of *their* experiencing divine deliverance (τὴν *ἑαυτῶν* σωτηρίαν κατεργάζεσθε; cf. 2:9-11): '*for* God is the one working in [them] equally to will and work concerning his good purpose' (2:12-13). This sheds light on the complexities of 2:12-13 in relation to what has gone before in 2:5-11, and more broadly 1:27-2:11, enabling us to see the direct relevance of the *overall sacred drama* appealed to in 2:5-11. Anchored mythically in the core narrative pattern appealed to in

[131] Fee 1995, 236.
[132] BDAG, 636-37, 1062, 1016. Cf. Giesen 1988.
[133] BDAG, 142. Cf. 2 Cor 7:15; also Eph 6:5, with reference to δοῦλοι.
[134] Fee 1995, 236 n. 25.
[135] Bornkamm 1959b, 91.
[136] Eliade 1963, 19; Hatab 1990, 20.

2:5-11, Paul continues to speak therapeutically to the Philippians' sufferings by symbolically valorising these through the lens of the gospel of Christ, and assimilating the former to the latter as a paradigm to live by: 'continually live your lives in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ…' (1:27a).

Turning to the ensuing verses, while some see the statement about 'without grumblings and disputes' speaking to some specific issue of internal strife in Philippi, the present imperative ('continue to do all things') tells against this.[137] Rather, echoing negative LXX terminology associated with the suffering wilderness generation,[138] and 'affliction' generally—'Keep grumbling and discouragement far from me in affliction' (Pss Sol 16:11)—this seems but a foil for the biblically-coloured positive affirmations in 2:15. Here Paul speaks of the Philippians being 'blameless and pure (ἄμεμπτοι καὶ ἀκέραιοι) children of God without blemish in the midst of crooked and perverse generation' (cf. LXX Deut 32:5), and of their 'shining as lights (φαίνεσθε ὡς φωστῆρες) in the world' (cf. LXX Dan 12:3). This citation of LXX Dan 12:3 invokes language used of God's eschatological 'lifting up' (ὑψωθήσεται), his 'raising' (ἀναστήσονται) of the dead at the end of days, who shall thereupon 'shine as lights (φανοῦσιν ὡς φωστῆρες) of heaven' (Dan 12:1-3)—while 'blameless and pure' similarly picks up language used elsewhere apropos the eschaton (cf. 1 Thess 3:13; 5:23; Phil 1:10). Yet Paul deploys this imagery of something *present and attainable by* the Philippians. Informed by the fact that throughout 1:27-2:13 Paul has applied the *overall* narrative pattern in 2:6-11, Christ's self-abasing suffering unto death↘↗wherefore 'God also *loftily raised* (ὑπερύψωσεν) him', as a mythic paradigm for the suffering Philippians to 'continually live' and 'bring about' in themselves (1:27; 2:12), why Paul should utilise this eschatological-resurrection imagery of something present and attainable by the Philippians is immediately illuminated. Seen in this light, it is perhaps no coincidence that Paul accompanies this imagery with that of their being 'children of God' (τέκνα θεοῦ)—a theme modelled squarely for Paul (and earliest Christianity) on the very divine sonship of Christ (cf. Rom 8:1-17, 29; Gal 3:27-28; 4:6).

Accordingly, Paul then, with clear reference to the gospel, invokes the Philippians' continually 'holding fast to the word of life' (2:16a; cf. 1:27). This is for him a 'source of glorying' (2:16b), which then leads into the obscure: 'if indeed I am being poured out as a drink offering (εἰ καὶ σπένδομαι), upon the sacrifice (θυσία) and service of your faith, I rejoice and co-rejoice with you all; in the same way (τὸ δὲ αὐτὸ) let you also rejoice and co-rejoice with me (καὶ ὑμεῖς χαίρετε καὶ συγχαίρετέ μοι) (2:17-18). Accompanied by a direct reference to θυσία, irrespective of whether σπένδειν was used of the pouring of blood, Paul's being 'poured out' is 'most naturally read as referring to Paul's death.'[139] Many seek to explain this imagery by positing an allusion to Paul's future anticipated martyrdom,[140] or the fact that his imprisonment 'zum Tod führen *könnte*'.[141] Yet, σπένδομαι is in the present tense.[142] As Fee notes, there is 'no analogy for a conditional sentence like this one to refer to a future supposition'.

[137] Cousar 2009, 62.
[138] Cf. Ex 16:7-12; 17:3; Num 14:27-29; 16:41; 17:5, 10; 1 Cor 10:10.
[139] Oakes 2001, 82.
[140] Bloomquist 1993, 171.
[141] Gerber 2005, 167.
[142] Cf. also 2 Tim 4:6—which 'no doubt interprets our text' (Holloway 2017, 136 n. 7): *ἤδη* σπένδομαι.

The '*kai* that goes with the "if" is almost certainly intensive, heightening the actuality…: "if indeed, as is the case, I am currently being poured out."'[143] Furthermore, Paul nowhere 'suggests (or even hints) that he expects his imprisonment to end in death. Quite the opposite' (cf. 1:19-20, 25-26; 2:24). It is thus, Fee concludes, highly improbable that Paul speaks of his anticipated martyrdom: 'But if not, then what? One cannot be certain here'.[144] Given Paul's concern with the Philippians' suffering since 1:27, and the parallel with 1:27-30 in Paul moving from the Philippians' circumstances (1:27-29; 2:12-16a) to including himself within these (1:30; 2:16b-18), one may readily discern in the Philippians' 'sacrifice' an allusion to their sufferings.[145] As with 1:30, then, Paul is aligning the Philippians' sufferings with his own, only now under the more striking imagery of Paul's ongoing experience of *death*, of being sacrificially 'poured out' (2:17a). Moreover, this ongoing death experience on his part is an occasion for him to 'rejoice' (2:17b), and in 'the same manner' such should be so on the part of the Philippians (2:18). Here we gain an insight into the paradoxical *content* of Paul's 'joy' tied to the *Philippians'* seeking 'comfort in Christ' and nourishing a shared orientation in 2:2a, appearing here and elsewhere in the context of his *suffering*. He actually rejoices in suffering, in being sacrificially 'poured out'—and in the same way should the Philippians. As 1:30 was clarified by the operative nature of 2:5-11 as a mythic paradigm, such is the case here. Paul's imagery finds its referential backdrop in the paradigm behind everything he has written since 1:27: Christ's self-abasing emptying of himself unto *death* (2:6-8), wherefore God also raised him (2:9-11). As in 1:30 Paul aligns the Philippians' sufferings and his own, now under the death-connotative imagery of 'sacrifice' and 'being *poured out*' as occasions to 'rejoice', because the *meaning of* suffering is, for Paul, being shaped and mediated by the overarching symbolism of Christ's descent to the cross, and its paradoxically positive divine end, in 2:5-11. The therapeutic rôle of mythic paradigms is their enabling participants to regulate meaningfully the polarities of personal existence: to resiliently 'engage with, appreciate, and understand the complex joys and sorrows of human life'.[146] Such is readily in evidence here.

6.3.4 Timothy, and Epaphroditus' Approaching unto Death (2:19-30)

In what has often felt odd to interpreters, for one would normally expect such material at the end of the letter (though cf. 1 Cor 4:17-21), Paul continues in 2:19-30 by alluding to his plans for Timothy and Epaphroditus. Many interpreters have simply deemed these verses a digression.[147] Others have, more reasonably, sought to relate them to their context. Typically they argue that Timothy and Epaphroditus may serve as 'other ethical examples for the Philippians',[148] supporting either (a) Paul's concern with selflessness in 2:1-4; [149] or (b) his concern with 'obedience' in 2:12-18: 'as an

[143] Fee 1995, 252 n. 58, 253. Cf. also, e.g., Reumann 2008, 415.
[144] Fee 1995, 253-54.
[145] Cf. Oakes 2001, 82.
[146] Lule 2001, 15.
[147] Watson 1988, 71.
[148] Kreitzer 1998, 124 n. 17. Cf. Bloomquist 1993, 128-29; Peterman 1997, 118-19.
[149] E.g., Hawthorne 1983, 108, 114.

exemplum…Timothy is also associated with obedience (as a son to a father)'; 'Epaphroditus' example substantiates the exhortation to uncomplaining obedience in 2:12-18.'[150] Yet, not only are each of these suggestions tied to reductive and inadequate readings of 2:5-11 and the verses preceding and following it, but it seems a stretch to isolate either selflessness or obedience as Paul's actual concern in 2:19-30. Furthermore, there is nothing comparable to 2:5 overtly introducing either as models. On the face of it, at least, Paul is primarily informing the Philippians of his future plans. He hopes to send Timothy to them, for he has no one as 'like-minded who sincerely cares/is anxious concerning [their] things', and is persuaded he shall also be free to visit them soon (2:19-20, 23-24). He is sending his fellow-worker Epaphroditus back to them, whom they sent to Paul in his need, and who has suffered greatly (2:25-30). The dynamics unpacked thus far in the body of the letter, with their determinative mythic centre in 2:5-11, enable us better to see how Paul's allusions to Timothy and Epaphroditus here are nevertheless supporting—even if indirectly—that determinative centre to everything he has written in 1:27-2:18.

The relevance of Timothy in this regard (2:19-24) has already been indicated in considering 2:1-4. Leading into 2:5-11 Paul spoke of (a) one another 'transcending *ἑαυτῶν*' and setting one's sights 'also on the things *ἑτέρων*' (2:3-4). This was then met precisely by (b) the paradigmatic appeal to the activity of Christ *ἑαυτὸν* and God in 2:5-11. Immediately following this Paul called the Philippians to (c) thus 'continually bring about *ἑαυτῶν* salvation, for God is the one working in [them] equally' (2:12-13). Here that τά ἑαυτῶν theme finds its concluding word—spelling out Timothy's worthiness (cf. 2:22) as one to send to the suffering Philippians (2:19-20)—in (d) Timothy being contrasted to those who 'pursue the things ἑαυτῶν, not the things *of Jesus Christ*' (2:21). Reinforcing that which he has been mythically encouraging the suffering Philippians to do throughout 1:27-2:18 'concerning their things' (1:27; cf. 2:20), namely, to orient their lives by means of the overarching paradigm of the Christ event in 2:5-11, Paul is holding out Timothy as one whose life-orientation is governed precisely by *the things of Christ Jesus* (cf. 2:5). That behind this pursuing of 'the things of Jesus Christ' is the gospel paradigm laid out in 2:5-11, moreover, is reinforced by the fact that, recalling precisely Christ's '*slaves'* death' narrated therein (μορφὴν *δούλου* λαβών…), Paul further spells out Timothy's worthiness here by alluding to his: 'with me, *having been a slave* (ἐδούλευσεν) in the gospel' (2:22).

Turning to Paul's word on Epaphroditus, a still more striking picture emerges. Not only does Paul place notable emphasis on the extent of Epaphroditus' suffering 'on account of the work of Christ' (διὰ τὸ ἔργον Χριστοῦ, 2:30; cf. 2:26-27), but this is placed specifically within a suffering → divine deliverance trajectory: 'And indeed he was afflicted to the point of death (ἠσθένησεν παραπλήσιον θανάτῳ), yet God effected his mercy on him (ἀλλ' ὁ θεὸς ἠλέησεν αὐτόν)' (2:27). Furthermore, the telltale allusion to 'death' in 2:27 is taken up in the final verse emphasising that, 'on account of the work of Christ', Epaphroditus 'approached *unto death* (μέχρι θανάτου)' (2:30). This μέχρι θανάτου formula is found once elsewhere in the entire New Testament: Phil 2:8. To opine that here 'Paul deliberately echoes the language of Christ's self-humbling'[151] is correct if read in light of what was

[150] Smit 2013, 115 n. 192; Holloway 2001, 129 n. 131.
[151] O'Brien 1992, 278.

noted above about the broader focus of 2:6-8. But it is clearly an etiolated, 'moralistic' reformulating of Paul's emphasis. Paul's claim is not that Epaphroditus 'humbled' himself. It is that he approached 'unto death'. In accordance with everything unpacked thus far in the letter, Epaphroditus' extensive suffering is surely being 'framed' precisely by the paradigm of Christ's journey *unto* and *through* 'death' in 2:5-11. On this point, Dodd objects: 'Epaphroditus is indeed sick to the point of death, but he does not experience death as Christ did… Furthermore,…the correspondence of their sufferings is a description of what is in fact already the case rather than an ethical exhortation'.[152] Yet there is no issue at all on these counts when one recognises that 2:5-11 is *not* a mere 'ethical exhortation', but a powerfully symbolic, regulative narrative paradigm Paul is therapeutically holding out for the Philippians' overall, existential self-'orienting' amid their crises. In other words, when one recognises that it is functioning, as we have now seen to be the case throughout 1:27-2:30, as a *mythic paradigm*.

6.4 Phil 2:5-11 as a Mythic Paradigm in the Wider Letter

The heuristic value of approaching Phil 2:5-11 as a mythic paradigm extends to the outer portions of this letter as well, and the issue of Paul's self-presentation therein. As previously indicated, some have suggested that 2:6-11 plays a rôle 'to some degree' in Phil 3.[153] In this vein some have suggested that Paul's deeming himself an 'example' therein (3:17) depends in turn on that of Christ.[154] This, however, is now widely dismissed: 'there is nothing like an equation of Paul's example with Christ's story.'[155] Paul lauding himself *qua* himself as a model has dominated—increasingly read as enforcing a 'kyriarchal relationship between the Philippian community and himself':[156] 'the imitation of Paul can and should be understood…as an implied assertion of authority as a summons to conform to the pattern *set by Paul as the regulative model*.'[157] This is a misjudgement of Paul's self-presentation in Phil 3, and the wider letter, and our mythic perspective on the functioning of 2:5-11 facilitates a clear apprehension of this. In 1:30 and 2:17-18 we have encountered Paul aligning himself with the Philippians' circumstances. And, both pertaining to their sufferings, each has been illuminated by the fact that, *just as*, *and in the service of that which, he is encouraging the Philippians to do*, Paul is mythically orienting his own lived world equally within the core paradigm of 2:5-11. Thus approaching his self-presentation in the outer portions of this letter yields a far more penetrating reading of the dynamics encountered here.

Thus, contra his usual practice of distancing himself and his colleagues, in 1:1-26 Paul opens by introducing himself and Timothy equally in relation to Christ, and alone in Paul's openings the descriptor is simply δοῦλος—'slave' (1:1). Many failed attempts have been made to explain this

[152] B.J. Dodd 1999, 190.
[153] Fowl 1990, 98, cf. 98-101; also Smit 2013, 138-42.
[154] Cf., e.g., Hooker 1975, 155-57; Kurz 1985, 105-6.
[155] B.J. Dodd 1999, 189.
[156] Marchal 2006, 17.
[157] B.J. Dodd 1999, 29 (emphasis added). Cf., e.g., Castelli 1991, 95-98, 116; B.J. Dodd 1998; 1999, 171-95; Oakes 2001, 116 n. 33; U.B. Müller 2002, 29; Marchal 2006, 143-47, 183; Reumann 2008, 528, 588-89.

anomaly.[158] But δοῦλος occurs once elsewhere in this letter, uniquely in Paul's letters to describe Christ in 2:7. Paul is patterning himself and Timothy equally (cf. 2:22) on the presentation of Christ in 2:5-11. Accordingly, Paul then declares that his 'chains are *in Christ*' (ἐν Χριστῷ; cf. 2:5) and have as such 'actually' (μᾶλλον) served a positive end—'to further the gospel' (1:12-14). In what has struck exegetes as a 'very strange', 'unexpected excursus',[159] he adds in 1:15-18 that while some preach out of love (1:16), others are doing so maliciously 'intending to increase [his] affliction in chains' (1:15, 17), regarding which he declares not to have the least concern. In either case he 'rejoices' (1:18). As Oakes notes, the point seems to be 'that he does not care if evangelism even deliberately exacerbates [his] suffering.'[160] Not only that: he *rejoices* in it. Why? He is mythically 'orienting' *his own* lived world within the paradigm of 2:5-11, whereby suffering is to be positively embraced (2:6-8) as the very occasion and means (2:9-11) of one's experiencing a divine salvation (1:27-30; 2:12-13, 17-18, 27). In accordance with this, Paul continues the positive 'shape' of his affliction by declaring that with the 'provision of the spirit of Jesus Christ' he 'knows' that 'this shall *result in [his] salvation* (τοῦτό μοι ἀποβήσεται εἰς σωτηρίαν)' (1:19). While many see Paul simply anticipating a 'successful outcome of his trial',[161] as Silva notes, Paul 'specifically ties in his adversity with his deliverance. It is not merely that he will be delivered, but that his adversity *will result* in his deliverance.'[162] Granted the circumstance implied by this 'salvation' is his expected release, we thus arrive on Paul's part, undergirded by *the spirit of Jesus Christ*, at the causally connected suffering ↔ salvation paradigm he will, *anchored mythically in that of 2:5-11*, apply to the Philippians. Finally, before qualifying this with the fact that, however tempting, he has no plans of actually 'departing' this life and abandoning the Philippians, but is hopeful that he will go on living fruitfully and remaining 'in the flesh' (1:22-26), Paul grounds what he has just written (κατὰ…) in his conviction that: 'as always even now Christ shall be magnified in my body either by life or by death. For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain' (1:20-21). Most see Paul pre-empting two potential outcomes of his trial here, 'a reprieve' or 'possible execution'.[163] This accords neither with his clear conviction that his imprisonment will *not* end in death (1:19, 24-26; 2:24), nor with what he writes. His magnifying Christ in himself by (instrumental διά) 'life' or 'death' has in view a *perpetual* dynamic: *ὡς πάντοτε* καὶ νῦν… (1:20). And as Ramsaran notes, the statement clarifying this (γάρ), that for him 'to live is Christ and to die is gain (τὸ ζῆν Χριστὸς καὶ τὸ ἀποθανεῖν κέρδος)' (1:21), bears all the hallmarks of *maxim*: a 'concisely expressed, stylized, and memorable principle or rule of conduct.'[164] Discerning the core functioning of 2:5-11 as a mythic paradigm explains these dynamics. By situating the certainty that via 'the spirit of Jesus Christ' his imprisonment shall *result in* a salvation (1:19) in the fact that '*as always* even now' he lives and

[158] See, e.g., Bloomquist 1993, 141-43.
[159] Oakes 2001, 113; Bockmuehl 1998, 76.
[160] Oakes 2001, 114.
[161] Winter 1994, 96. Cf. Hawthorne and Martin 2004, 49; Thurston and Ryan 2005, 62.
[162] Silva 2005, 69.
[163] Fee 1995, 137-38. And yet, cf. ibid. 253.
[164] Ramsaran 2002, 327 n. 8; see 327-30.

magnifies Christ in himself by way of 'life' and 'death', whereby 'to die is gain' (cf. 2 Cor 4:10-11), Paul is hardly speaking of literal life and death as two possible outcomes of his present situation. He is giving *symbolic* expression to the mythic dynamics underpinning what he has said about *his* affliction, and will go on to apply to the *suffering Philippians* in 1:27ff.: Christ's journey *though* 'death' *to* being 'loftily raised' (2:5-11) as an overarching paradigm to live by: whereby precisely to suffer ⇒ DIE is gain.

Turning to 3:1ff. Paul begins—via a passing invective against (Christian) 'Judaizers' (3:2-3)—by depicting his life orientation in terms that reflect the UP-DOWN-UP pattern of 2:6-11.[165] He depicts himself starting from a position of privilege before the divine—a Pharisaic, perfectly Torah-observant 'Hebrew of Hebrews' (3:4-6)—followed by a recurring ↓-↑ pattern: 'whatever were gains to me these I have counted (ἡγεῖσθαι), because of Christ (διὰ τὸν Χριστὸν) ↘ loss. Moreover I continue to count (ἡγεῖσθαι) all things loss ↗ because of the rising above of the knowing of Jesus Christ my Lord; because of whom (δι' ὃν) ↘ I have suffered the loss of all things, and count (ἡγεῖσθαι) them refuse ↗ in order that (ἵνα) I should gain Christ' (3:7-8). Alongside the structural parallels with 2:6-11, the thrice repeated ἡγεῖσθαι provides a direct verbal link (2:6), and Paul repeatedly emphasises that the driving force behind this descending↘↗ascending way of life is *Christ*. Continuing the purpose statement in 3:8c, Paul adds that this dynamic involves his being 'found in [Christ] (εὑρεθῶ ἐν αὐτῷ)' (3:9) and is: 'in order to know him, that is,[166] the power of his resurrection (τὴν δύναμιν τῆς ἀναστάσεως αὐτοῦ) and participation in his sufferings (καὶ κοινωνίαν παθημάτων αὐτοῦ), taking on the same form as his death (συμμορφιζόμενος τῷ θανάτῳ αὐτοῦ),[167] if indeed I should attain to the raising up out from the dead (εἴ πως καταντήσω εἰς τὴν ἐξανάστασιν τὴν ἐκ νεκρῶν)' (3:10-11). These statements have been subjected to an array of questionable readings negating their plain meaning. In view is neither the 'sonship' of Christ and of believers,[168] nor 'the messianic woes of Jewish apocalyptic thought' and/or the believer's baptismal death to sin—'Gleichgestaltung mit Christus *in der Taufe*'.[169] The object of Paul's κοινωνία, that which he seeks to 'participate' in, is Christ's sufferings: 'the meaning is simply, "(the) sharing of his sufferings" … participation in the sufferings of Christ'.[170] This participation in Christ's sufferings refers to Christ's death, involves Paul's 'taking on the same form (συμμορφιζόμενος) as his death', and the present participle συμμορφιζόμενος conveys a continual, ongoing activity—an 'ongoing process of "being moulded to the pattern of his death" (NJB).'[171] Correspondingly, Paul's experiencing 'the power *of his resurrection*' hardly speaks of, 'not the power by which Christ was raised', 'not the act by which Christ came forth living from the tomb, but…the life of the glorified Christ', 'that which emanates from

[165] Pace B.J. Dodd 1999, 188, claiming that 'nothing in Paul's self-depiction' 'exhibits self-abasing, downward movement.'

[166] Taking the initial καί here, with most, as explanatory.

[167] BDAG, 958. On opting here for the 'middle or reflexive voice insofar as it is more congruent with the clear emphasis of the apostle's choice in light on the sentence as a whole' (3:7-11), cf. Byrnes 2003, 226, 228.

[168] Pobee 1985, 91.

[169] O'Brien 1991, 405-6, 410; Jervell 1960, 208; cf. also Proudfoot 1963, 150; Collange 1973, 116 (misreading συμμορφιζόμενος as aorist); R.P. Martin 1976, 134 (the thought is 'clearly baptismal'); Hawthorne and Martin 2004, 199; Smit 2013, 129 n. 289 (the 'notion of transformation may suggest a baptismal context').

[170] J.Y. Campbell 1932, 371.

[171] Bird and Gupta 2020, 148.

Christ', or 'the activity of the Holy Spirit'.[172] The reference is to Christ's resurrection, and hence denotes, as throughout Paul, God's power *as manifested in Christ's resurrection*.[173] Furthermore, it is not the case that Paul's attention is centred 'on the resurrection hope of the parousia.'[174] In 3:10, as most recognise: 'The resurrection is viewed…as a present, continuously active force in his Christian development.'[175] Admittedly many see in 3:11 a separate allusion to the general resurrection: '*This* "resurrection" is the general resurrection, hence the plural *ek nekrōn* (lit. "from the dead corpses"), and refers to the raising up of the righteous and the wicked at the end of history'.[176] Yet even this seems unlikely. Virtually all other Pauline references to resurrection ἐκ νεκρῶν refer to the singular fact of Jesus' being raised ἐκ νεκρῶν—and/or extend this to something happening in the present lives of believers.[177] Moreover, Paul does not use the normal word for 'resurrection' here but a hapax compound ἐξανάστασις (cf. 2:9: *ὑπερ*υψωμένος), the only person in view in 3:11 is *Paul*, and this personal attaining (καταντήσω) to an ἐξανάστασις ἐκ νεκρῶν is wholly contingent upon (εἴ πως) Paul's ongoing participation in/assuming the form of Christ's death (3:10b)—none of this making much sense as a reference to the general resurrection. Regardless, in 3:10 certainly—and with 3:11 read naturally in the same light—Paul speaks of his ongoing experiencing of Christ's resurrection, as demonstrated by συμμορφιζόμενος conveying a 'continuous process or an on-going activity concurrent with the main verb' (γνῶναι),[178] which encompasses both the sufferings/death and resurrection experiences; the sufferings and resurrection of Christ being conjoined by the same article (τὴν…);[179] and the fact that Paul begins with his experiencing *resurrection*. While this ordering has puzzled exegetes,[180] it makes sense in context. Directly continuing Paul's descending↘↗ascending way of life conveyed in 3:4-9, 3:10-11 is firstly continuing the *upward* pole of this way of life: '…because of [Christ] ↘ I have suffered the loss of all things… ↗ in order that I should gain Christ and be found in him … in order to know him, *that is, the power of his resurrection*…' (3:8-10). With Paul's experiencing *Christ's resurrection* here corresponding to the upward pole of Paul's ongoing life pattern imaged in the foregoing verses, this then being bound equally to his ongoing participation in/adopting the form of *Christ's sufferings and death* clearly encompasses the downward *means* to that end conveyed in the foregoing verses: his ongoing embracing of suffering. Paul's Christ-dependent descending ↔ ascending life pattern imaged in 3:4-9 is being framed as two ongoing, perpetually interlocking experiences on his part of the death of Christ ↔ resurrection of Christ. And discerning here the functioning of 2:5-11 as a mythic paradigm

[172] Vincent 1897, 104; Huby 1947, 350; Osty 1945, 194; Ahern 1960, 30.

[173] Cf., e.g., Rom 1:4; 6:4; 8:11; 1 Cor 6:14; 2 Cor 13:4; Eph 1:20; Col 2:12.

[174] Bloomquist 1993, 181.

[175] Vincent 1897, 104. Cf. Lightfoot 1885, 150; Tannehill 1967, 121; Siber 1971, 11, 116-18; A.T. Lincoln 1981, 92; Patte 1983, 173; Schenk 1984, 321; Koperski 1996, 184, 187; Williams 2002, 187-88; Hansen 2009, 243.

[176] Bird and Gupta 2020, 149.

[177] For the former, see Rom 1:4; 4:24; 6:4, 9; 7:4; 8:11a, 11b; 10:7, 9; 14:9 1 Cor 15:12a; 15:20, 21; Gal 1:1; 1 Thess 1:10; also Eph 1:20; Col 1:18; 2:12; 2 Tim 2:8. For the latter, see Rom 6:4; 11:15; Eph 5:14.

[178] Byrnes 2003, 225.

[179] Cf. Hansen 2009, 243.

[180] 'There is…a problem with these verses, for Paul's argument seems to be reversed.…Paul should have spoken of suffering and then of resurrection' (Bloomquist 1993, 179).

makes immediate sense of this. Throughout 3:4-11 Paul is 'orienting' *himself* and *his sufferings* in the very mythic manner he has encouraged the Philippians to 'orient' themselves and their sufferings: symbolically valorising them through the lens of Christ's journey *through* 'death' *to* being 'loftily raised' in 2:5-11, and assimilating the former to the latter as a paradigm to live by. This faithfully clarifies the concrete imagery and dynamics at play in these verses.

The beginning and ending with resurrection in 3:10-11 notwithstanding, Paul's self-presentation in 3:4-11 does not leave him in a static state of 'resurrection' and inertia, but an ongoing dialectic of suffering/death experiences ↔ resurrection experiences. Accordingly, Paul indicates in 3:12-14 that the two-pronged participatory 'knowing' of Christ conveyed in the foregoing verses 'remains a relentless quest'[181]—entails an ongoing pursuing (διώκω) of 'God's upward calling in Christ Jesus' (3:14). With 3:15 then commences an inferential (οὖν) 'application of what has been narrated from v. 4'[182] to the Philippians: 'Therefore, as many as are mature, our orienting should be this (τοῦτο φρονῶμεν)…' (3:15). And here we encounter the 'example' utterance: 'Be my συμμιμηταί brothers, and consider those living their lives in this manner even as you have us (as) example (καὶ σκοπεῖτε τοὺς οὕτως περιπατοῦντας καθὼς ἔχετε τύπον ἡμᾶς)—for many are living their lives…as enemies of the cross of Christ (ἐχθροὺς τοῦ σταυροῦ τοῦ Χριστοῦ), whose end is destruction, whose God is the belly and glory is in their shame; whose orienting is worldly things (οἱ τὰ ἐπίγεια φρονοῦντες)' (3:17-19). As if much argument was now needed to discern that Paul's 'example' here is fundamentally rooted in the paradigm of the Christ event in 2:5-11, the following factors further substantiate this. (1) In lieu of the standard μιμηταί Paul uses a hapax compound *συμ*μιμηταί ('co-imitators'). To read this as 'join together in imitating me' and explain the odd construction as 'reinforcing Paul's emphasis on corporate unity of the community'[183] makes little sense when one considers that in the letter concerned more than any other specifically with communal unity, Paul twice calls his audience to be 'imitators' with the standard, prefixless μιμηταί (1 Cor 4:16; 11:1). Given the dynamics we have unearthed throughout the letter to this point, and that on two separate occasions Paul ties being his 'imitators' *directly to the imitation of Christ* (1 Thess 1:6; 1 Cor 11:1), a cogent explanation is found in that Paul is calling the Philippians to be *his* 'co-imitators' *of Christ*.[184] (2) The τύπος here is not tied specifically to Paul: '…and consider *those* (τοὺς) conducting their lives in this manner *even as you have us* (as) example' (3:17). Thus far Paul has singled out two others besides himself and the Philippians, Timothy (1:1; 2:19-22) and Epaphroditus (2:25-30), and each placed on a par with Paul, their respective presentations have been rooted thematically and terminologically in the Christ paradigm of 2:5-11. Finally, (3) there are clear indicators that these verses are directly recalling 2:5-11. By characterising the *antithesis* of the 'example' here as those living as 'enemies of the cross of Christ' (3:18), Paul is *aligning* this example specifically with 'the σταυρός of Christ', and in so doing picking up terminology found elsewhere in this letter only in the Christ

[181] Holloway 2017, 172. Cf. Oakes 2001, 120.
[182] Fee 1995, 355 n. 14.
[183] B.J. Dodd 1999, 188; cf. Reumann 2008, 588.
[184] Cf. McMichael 1893; Pollard 1966, 63; Kurz 1985, 106; George 2018.

paradigm of 2:5-11. The language of φρονεῖν (3:15, 19) and δόξα (3:19) picks up terminology last used in 2:5-11. And together with the concluding ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ of 3:14, the opening τοῦτο φρονῶμεν of 3:15 is directly picking up the opening line of 2:5-11, but now with the second person plural pertaining to the Philippians cast in the first person plural *to include Paul*: 'Let the orienting in all of you be this (τοῦτο *φρονεῖτε*), which is also in Christ Jesus (ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ)' (2:5); 'in Christ Jesus (ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ) … *our* orienting should be this (τοῦτο *φρονῶμεν*)' (3:14-15). These factors substantially confirm that which our mythic analyses of 1:1-26; 1:30; 2:17-18 and 3:1-14 have consistently pointed to. Paul is not lauding himself *qua* himself as the regulative model for the Philippians. Rather, *just as*, *and in the service of that which*, *he is encouraging the Philippians to do*, Paul is mythically orienting his own lived world equally within the core paradigm of 2:5-11.

Having identified the paradigmatic rôle throughout of both Christ's descent to death (2:7-8) and resultant divine ascent (2:9-11), and glimpsed the *UP*-DOWN-UP pattern of 2:6-11 on Paul's part in 3:4-8, Paul's statement in 3:20-21 further illuminates the mythic functioning of the overall narrative appeal in 2:5-11. In what many consider to be invoking a piece of preformed tradition, Paul adds: 'For our citizenship (πολίτευμα) exists in the heavens (ἐν οὐρανοῖς ὑπάρχει), and from whence we await a savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall transform our body of abasement conformable to his body of glory, in accordance with the working which indeed enables him to subject all things to himself' (3:20-21). Besides the many echoes of 2:5-11, and the way Paul has been applying this to the present lives of the Philippians and himself, the main point Paul opens with invokes a state that pertains to the present, underlying standing (ὑπάρχει) of believers—which 'das Leben der Christen jetzt schon gültig bestimmt'.[185] Paul thus underscores that believers as such 'belong ultimately to the heavenly world'.[186] And the verb used here (ὑπάρχει) appears elsewhere in the letter only of Christ in 2:6. Afforded our mythic vantage point, we now see how throughout this letter Paul is symbolically, foundationally, paradigmatically, and therapeutically modelling the believer's overall life orientation (2:5) on the sacred drama precisely of a heavenly Christ (2:6) who ↘ descends to a self-emptying, self-abasing suffering unto death (2:7-8) and is thereby ↗ raised by God in glory (2:9-11).

Reflecting the therapeutic rather than 'ethical' functioning of the Christ paradigm governing this letter, Paul closes in 4:1ff. by encouraging the suffering Philippians: 'So then my beloved…, in this manner stand firm/persevere in the Lord' (4:1; cf. 1:27; 2:12-13; 3:17). They are to 'rejoice in the Lord continually' (cf. 2:17-18) and 'not have anxiety about anything' (μηδὲν μεριμνᾶτε): 'the peace of God…shall protect your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus (ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ)' (4:4-7; cf. 2:1, 5). With παραλαβεῖν being a technical term for tradition used throughout Paul of gospel tradition[187]—and so reflecting the *mythic* character of that appealed to in 2:5-—Paul's concluding exhortation is: 'What you also learned and received (παραλαβεῖν), and have heard and seen in me, *keep putting these things into practice* (ταῦτα πράσσετε)' (4:9). Finally, in a postscripted note that has long perplexed interpreters

[185] Landmesser 1997, 555-56.
[186] Bloomquist 1993, 136.
[187] Cf. 1 Cor 11:23; 15:1, 3; Gal 1:9; 1 Thess 2:13; also Col 2:6.

(4:10-20) Paul acknowledges joyously the Philippians' having gifted him via Epaphroditus (4:10, 18), only to stress that he neither needs nor desires their material support (4:11-14, 17-19). For 'in any and everything circumstance' he has 'learned that in which' he is 'to be content' with life extremes: 'how both *to be abased* (ταπεινοῦσθαι) and *to abound* … both to abound and suffer loss' (4:11-13; cf. 2:8-9). Reflecting the Philippians' economic hardship (cf. 2 Cor 8:2), what really matters to Paul is their having thereby actively (πλὴν καλῶς ἐποιήσατε) 'co-participated' (συγκοινωνήσαντές; cf. 1:7) with him '*in affliction*' (τῇ θλίψει; 4:14), which Paul then frames as a divine sacrifice (θυσίαν εὐάρεστον τῷ θεῷ; cf. 2:17-18), to be met with divine glory in Christ Jesus (ἐν δόξῃ ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ) (4:18-19). Why should Paul commend the Philippians, not for their gifting itself, but for their actively participating thereby in affliction, and then situate this in an affliction/sacrifice ↔ divine glory 'in Christ Jesus' dynamic? The answer is found in the core functioning of 2:5-11 throughout this letter as a *mythic paradigm*.

Conclusions

We have now seen how approaching the 'Christ-hymn' in Philippians as a mythic paradigm sheds a far more penetrating light on its contextual functioning than either of the two prevailing alternatives—thereby mediating and illuminating a longstanding impasse in Philippians scholarship. The core narrative appeal in Phil 2:5-11 is neither a narrowly ethical example nor a purely kerygmatic-soteriological statement. Its operative character is that of a mythic paradigm: a sacred narrative with which Paul is therapeutically orienting the Philippians' (1:27-2:18; 3:15-21; 4:1-9, 14-19), his own (1:1-21, 30; 2:17-18; 3:4-14; 4:10-13) and other believers' (2:19-30) sufferings, by symbolically valorising them through the lens of that narrative, and assimilating the former to the latter as a paradigm to live by. Evidencing a heuristic utility throughout, availing ourselves of this vantage point has, in contrast to the longstanding alternatives, enabled us to unearth the direct relevance throughout this letter of the overall sacred drama appealed to in Phil 2:5-11, and shed a cohesive light on difficulties which have plagued interpreters across the wider letter.

EPILOGUE

The contention of this thesis has been that a thoroughgoing rethinking of the concept of myth within Pauline studies is necessary. For the discipline's longstanding resistance to, and insufficient engagement with, the concept has deprived scholars of a rich and illuminating means of situating and interpreting Paul's letters. This has now been substantively demonstrated. The discipline's overall failure to engage critically with the concept is now clear. Engaging a wealth of myth scholarship, a theoretically informed model of core properties and functions of myth has been established. These core properties and functions have been shown to possess a profound heuristic fit and utility in the study of Paul.

This project has been expansive and ambitious. Conceivably, my engagement with myth might be charged with being too broad by spanning numerous theorists and disciplines, and too narrow by being focused and selective. This would be to misunderstand the difference between a theory and a heuristic model. Whereas a theory is 'a basic proposition through which a variety of observations or statements become explicable', models 'will employ one or more theories to provide a simplified (or an experimental or a generalized or an explanatory) framework that can be brought to bear on some pertinent data. Theories are thus the stepping stones upon which models are built.'[1] As Lemche notes:

> A 'heuristic tool' is a…constructed model which can be used to study a certain object.…The model as such has generally been constructed as simple as possible, and normally it includes…a limited range of phenomena which are the elements of the model and which together form its structure or framework.…The model is the instrument of the analysis, the device for the evaluation of the single facts which form part of a certain phenomenon. The aim of the analysis is to demonstrate the presence of as many of the constituent variables as possible in order to prove the general validity of the model. If enough variables are present the model is considered to be verified.[2]

This is what has been sought and achieved in applying the phenomenon of 'myth' as analysed across various disciplines to the interpretation of Paul. The application of this framework has also been broad—though necessarily selective—in spanning multiple letters to different communities. The respective test cases have, nevertheless, been contextually informed and this is in reality a strengthening of the thesis: 'The wider the range of cases covered by a model, the more useful it is'.[3] Against any charge that this study entails reducing Paul's theology or earliest Christianity to certain socio-psychological properties and functions of myth, furthermore, it must be stressed that this does not follow from an analysis of the gospel at the level of its mythic functioning: 'As to the theory that all human behavior and products may be interpreted as actions or organs which increase the chances of biological survival, it is neither more nor less arbitrary than the doctrine which claims that human nature is codefined by an irremovable organ directed at mythological realities.'[4]

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[1] Carney 1975, 8. Cf. p. 33, above.
[2] Lemche 1996, 277.
[3] Oakes 2001, 40.
[4] Kolakowski 1989, 127.

The contributions of this study are many. In terms of the history of biblical scholarship, it has unpacked the superficial and polemically charged reception of 'myth' within Pauline research in the modern era. In terms of the crossdisciplary study of myth, both its history and insights have been substantially traced, mapped and explored, thereby filling an obvious *lacuna* in the field New Testament studies, while also being of value to anyone interested in the modern study of myth. In terms of the interpretation of Paul, it has shown how the various properties and functions of myth shed considerable light on many portions of the Pauline corpus.

The hermeneutical framework and insights of this study intersect with and illuminate various threads in Pauline scholarship, such as discussions of Paul's theology of 'participation' or 'union with Christ' which have arisen intermittently throughout the history of the discipline. As previously indicated, such a phenomenon has remained shrouded in obscurity: 'However difficult it may be to specify that union, a kind of ontological oneness with Christ is postulated by Paul and referred to frequently in his writings.'[5] E. P. Sanders famously confessed being at a loss in locating an appropriate category through which to construe the apparent realism of Paul's 'participationist language':

> Having agreed that Paul was not interested in cosmological speculation and did not believe in magical transference, are we then left with no choice but to interpret being one body with Christ as constantly accepting a revised self-understanding…? … But this seems to be the…consequence of Paul's theology rather than the exhaustive interpretation of it.… It seems to me best to understand Paul as saying what he meant and meaning what he said: Christians really are one body and Spirit with Christ… But what does this mean? How are we to understand it? We seem to lack a category… I must confess that I do not have a new category of perception to propose here.[6]

The present study has directly resolved this quandary. The missing perceptual category here is found in the concept of *myth*. Another area which this study speaks to is discussion of the importance of 'narrative' in Paul, particularly the 'story of Jesus', which includes conducting oneself 'in ways somehow homologous to that fundamental story.'[7] Noting Sanders' quandary, Nikkanen has proffered the concept of 'narrative' as 'a possibility for finding a modern category to speak about participation in the death and resurrection of Christ.'[8] The insufficiency of this as an explanatory concept *per se* is seen in the many cumbersome ways in which scholars have further tried to elucidate it: a 'narrative substructure or underlying story' which 'Paul builds on, argues from, interprets (or reinterprets), and uses for his own purposes';[9] a 'theological Jewish story-shaped worldview of Paul with its stories, symbols, beliefs, and practices';[10] a 'narrative spirituality' involving some kind of 'dynamic correspondence in daily life to the strange story of Christ crucified';[11] a 'mysterious', 'story-shaped world',[12] or 'narrative thought world' in which Jesus' ministry serves 'as some sort of pattern for

[5] Lambrecht 1999, 77-78.
[6] E.P. Sanders 1977, 522-53.
[7] Meeks 1993, 196.
[8] Nikkanen 2018, 250.
[9] R.N. Longenecker 2015, 360.
[10] Constantineanu 2010, 45.
[11] Gorman 2001, 5.
[12] Hays 2002 [1983], xxix, 20.

behaviour and belief.'[13] This study has established a comprehensive, unifying concept disambiguating and informing simultaneously the rôle of narrative in Paul, and therewith Paul's participationist language in a far more penetrating manner. Narrative is not itself the modern category illuminating Paul's thought. It is the specific *kind* of narrative phenomenon we are dealing with—*myth*. This insight is all the more pressing because, restricting themselves to 'catch-all' terms such as *story* and *narrative* which arguably serve little more than 'to labour the obvious'—for 'who would want to deny that a cluster of basic theological convictions concerning Jesus lie at the heart of Paul's thinking and that those convictions tell a story'?—those discussing narrative in Paul have tended to 'avoid studiously' the concept of *myth* as if it were 'a four-letter word that should not be used in theologically correct circles'.[14]

This study's mythic hermeneutic speaks to a number of other issues in the study of Paul, such as the age-old 'problem of indicative and imperative in Paul's thought', and the 'irreducible tension between the "already" and "not yet"', future eschatology and realised eschatology in Paul.[15] Moreover, its focus on the mythic functioning of the gospel in Paul could readily be extended to the functioning of other narrative traditions in Paul (e.g., Rom 4:1-24; 5:12-21; 1 Cor 10:1-13). Its unpacking of baptism as a myth-ritual complex could certainly be extended to the longstanding 'problem of the Lord's Supper' in Paul[16]—a repeated ritual which Paul presupposes (οὐχὶ ἐστὶν) involves the participants' 'participation in the blood of Christ' and 'participation in the body of Christ' (1 Cor 10:16-21; 11:17-29). The symbolic, foundational, paradigmatic and therapeutic aspects of myth applied to 2 Cor 1, 4, and Philippians could be extended to numerous other passages in Paul that deal with suffering positively in relation to Christ, and apply death/crucifixion:life/resurrection and other gospel-based imagery in various ways to the lives of believers;[17] along with countless other instances of the same running throughout the New Testament and early Christian literature.[18]

A prevalent assumption among New Testament scholars is that 'myth' was engaged within the field in by-gone generations and has proved to be of no relevance going forward. 'What makes today's scholarship so different', Evans celebrated some thirty years ago, 'is that it does not find it necessary to formulate a theology or hermeneutic that deals with myth.'[19] After reading this thesis, I hope that the tenuous nature of such a standpoint has been demonstrated; and that, positively, I have shown how the application of a nuanced and multivalent, critical understanding of myth to New Testament texts can enrich and enliven our understanding of them.

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[13] Witherington 1994, 104.

[14] Stanton 2002, 131-32.

[15] Furnish 2009, 279; Keck 1984, 240.

[16] Käsemann 1964, 108.

[17] E.g., Rom 5:1-11; 6:12-23; 7:1-6; 8:1-39; 1 Cor 15:29-32; 2 Cor 6:1-13; 12:1-10; 13:1-10; Gal 2:15-21; 5:22-26; 6:11-17; 1 Thess 2:1-16; 3:1-5; 4:13-18.

[18] Mk 8:34; Mt 10:38; 16:24; Lk 6:20-23; 9:23; 14.27; Jn 5:24-25; 11:16; 12:23-26; 16:20-21; Acts 9:15-16; 14:21-22; 20:18-24; 2 Thess 1:4-5; 2 Tim 2:3, 8-12a; 3:10-12; Heb 2:5-18; 12:1-13; 13:11-13; Jas 2:5; 1 Pet 2:19-25; 4:12-19; 5:9-10; *GosThom* 55; *Perp. Fel.* 15, 18, 21 (Robinson, 84, 88, 94); IgnRom 1-6; Pol. *Phil.* 8.1-10.1; Barn. 7.11; *Mart. Lyons* 1.41-42 (Musurillo, 74-75); Orig. *ExhMart* 12; Chrys. *HomJo* 62.1 et al. Cf. Hase 2024.

[19] C. Evans 1993, 36.

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