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**The Origin of the Christian Species:
Lessons from the Study of Natural History
for the Reconstruction of the
History of Earliest Christianity**

Frederik Wisse
McGill University

Preface: Topic and Approach

The Christian movement went through an amazing change from its beginnings among the followers of Jesus in the third decade of the 1st century CE to the ancient Catholic Church of the early 4th century. It is the historian's task to trace this transformation, as far as the evidence allows, but also venture to explain it. That means specifying the factors that most likely caused the remarkable development from a small, Jewish, messianic sect to a major gentile religion with a stable governance structure and distinct theological and moral teachings, liturgy and rites. What brought about the transformation from the Jewish followers of Jesus to *homo christianus* of the 4th century with a distinct, and relatively stable, taxonomy throughout its range? What developmental theory accounts best for the earliest Christian 'fossil' remains, the surviving evidence from the period consisting exclusively of texts?

My approach to the topic is comparative. I will be comparing the problematic of reconstructing early Christian history with that of reconstructing natural history. In spite of major differences between the mechanics that drive cultural and biological history, the problematic of inferring from the textual evidence available to the historian of Christian origins the history of the period in which they were composed is strikingly similar to inferring natural history from the remaining fossil evidence. Whether the relationship between biological and religious history is in some respects homologous, or analogous, or fundamentally different, natural history is so richly attested over a very long period, and its reconstruction has been so successful, that it offers the biblical scholar a wide selection of test cases for the problematic of historical reconstruction.

I intend to show that biblical scholarship can learn in two ways from the scientific venture of reconstructing natural history. We may first of all learn from the mistakes that were made, i.e., the wrong classifications and fallacies of inference that naturalists made but learned to correct during two centuries of intense study and debate. Many of the same pitfalls into which natural historians stumbled are risks also for us who seek to reconstruct ancient religious history. Secondly, I will argue that the theory of biological evolution can make a positive contribution in suggesting different, and I believe, better ways of understanding various aspects of the early development of Christian dogma, practice, and polity, and in particular for understanding the historical place and role of texts within the larger phenomenon of early Christianity.

My guide, as far as natural history is concerned, is Stephen Jay Gould. This eminent evolutionary biologist and geologist, who died in May 2002 at the age of 60, wrote over 25 years a monthly essay for *Natural History Magazine*, many of which were collected in ten volumes published between 1977 and 2002.¹ These fascinating and witty essays on natural history, intended for a broad readership, show besides a profound knowledge of the history of science, literature, religion, music, and sport, also brilliant insights into historical methodology. Time and again the issues Gould raised prove to be relevant also to the historian of religion. His case studies in natural history raise and clarify the problems of reconstructing the past in striking ways that cannot readily be duplicated from the study of the history of religions. I can only allude to some of his insights, but Gould has stimulated my thinking throughout. Of course, he is not to blame if I have not rightly or convincingly applied his insights to 'the origin of the Christian species'.

I. The Role of Developmental Theory in Historical Reconstruction

The evidence available to the historian does not, of course, by itself add up to a comprehensive story of historical development. Historiography is not simply a matter of connecting the dots of the available data until the desired, three-

¹ Stephen J. Gould, *Ever Since Darwin: Reflections in Natural History* (New York: Norton, 1977); *The Panda's Thumb: More Reflections in Natural History* (New York: Norton, 1980); *Hen's Teeth and Horse's Toes* (New York, Norton, 1983); *The Flamingo's Smile: Reflections in Natural History* (New York: Norton, 1985); *Bully for Brontosaurus: Reflections in Natural History* (New York: Norton, 1991); *Eight Little Piggies: Reflections in Natural History* (New York: Norton, 1993); *Dinosaur in a Haystack: Reflections in Natural History* (New York: Norton, 1996); *Leonardo's Mountain of Clams and the Diet of Worms: Essays on Natural History* (New York: Harmony Books, 1998); *The Lying Stones of Marrakech: Penultimate Reflections in Natural History* (New York: Harmony Books, 2000); *I Have Landed: The End of a Beginning in Natural History* (New York: Harmony Books, 2002).

dimensional picture emerges. First of all the historian has to organize and classify the available data. This is the taxonomic task. Secondly, the historian must supply a developmental theory to interpret the evidence and specify its relevance to, and place in, the reconstruction of the episode in the past from which it comes. Without a developmental theory the evidence remains mute, and without appropriate and sufficient supporting evidence the theory will lack substance and claim of validity, for the success of a theory lies in its ability to accommodate and interpret the data better than rival ones.² Both steps, the taxonomic and interpretive one, carry a considerable risk of error and fallacious reasoning which can be prevented only by an acute awareness of them.

A: The Religious Developmental Theory

Prior to the 19th century, one developmental theory dominated both the study of natural and religious history. I shall refer to it as the religious view. For natural history it is known today as creationism, i.e., the belief that all biological species were created individually by God and remained basically unchanged throughout history. With reference to human history the religious view claims that all history is under divine control and guidance. Given its roots in religious belief, it is not surprising that the religious developmental theory has still many adherents today in spite of having been eclipsed, at least in academia, by modern science and historiography.

Starting in the 18th century, but especially in the 19th century, science and historiography went through a long and difficult process of extricating themselves from the religious developmental paradigm. Biology and geology were successful in replacing the religious view with the theory of evolution, thanks to the latter's success in accommodating and explaining the ever-increasing fossil record and other geological data. Creationism has become a fringe position among scientists. In the case of historiography, however, remnants of the religious developmental theory are still a part of the study of Christian origins. This is in part due to the fact that the religious developmental theory is an integral and inextricable part of the biblical writings, including our most important sources for the earliest Christian period, the Acts of the Apostles and the Letters of Paul.

For example, *Acts* presents the course and outcome of the early mission to Jews and Gentiles as guided directly by the divine Spirit. The three major transformations recorded in *Acts*, the conversion of Paul (9:1-19; 22:6-16; 26:12-18), who had been the prime persecutor of the Jerusalem church, the repeal of the kosher laws, and the extension of the mission to the Gentiles (10:1-11:26), which together had such far-reaching consequences for the history of the Church, are presented not as the contingencies they would appear

² Gould, "Evolution as Fact and Theory," *Hen's Teeth*, 253-62.

to be, but as divinely ordained events. Paul's conversion and the rescinding of Jewish dietary restrictions are described as direct acts of God. The increasing hardening of the Jews against the Gospel, which led to the extension of the mission to the Gentiles, followed the divine plan of salvation and was already prophesied by Isaiah (6:9-10; Acts 28:26-27). No doubt is left to the reader of *Acts* that the direction of the development of the Christian movement was determined by the Holy Spirit and not by chance or human will.

The religious developmental theory is evident also in the epistles of Paul. He tells his readers that his call to be the apostle to the Gentiles did not come from humans or through humans but directly from God (Gal 1:1), who had chosen him for this already before his birth (Gal 1:15). Furthermore, the law-free Gospel Paul preached came to him directly by revelation from Christ. This gospel may never be changed, and anyone guilty of this, "let him be accursed" (Gal 1:8). Paul rejected emphatically the apparent accusation of his opponents in Galatia that he had adapted the gospel to please his Gentile converts, by leaving out the requirements of circumcision and law observance. His aim, he says, was only to please Jesus Christ and God, the Father, who commissioned him (Gal 1:10).

The religious theory of historical development, together with the texts in which it was incorporated, received canonical status and so became part of the basic Christian self-understanding. An important aspect of this was, and is, the belief in the pure, apostolic beginning of the Christian faith as presented in the Scriptures. The believer is called to preserve and remain faithful to the original apostolic faith (e.g., Jude 3, 17). Constant vigilance is needed, for the world seeks to corrupt believers by tempting them to adapt the apostolic faith to its ways. Appeals are made to the sacred history of Israel as a warning against the evils and dangers of syncretism (e.g., 1 Cor 10:6-11). Orthodoxy is, by definition, standing in true continuity with the apostolic faith, and heresy is the corruption of true faith by outside influences. Heresy is by nature a hybrid.

For the religious developmental theory, the ideal state is stasis; constancy is demanded and assimilation and change must be avoided. Apart from divinely ordained changes, the religious developmental theory can justify only two kinds of transformation. One is the change 'from bud to flower', for example the process of elaborating the apostolic faith in the creeds and theology. The other is reform, i.e., a return to the apostolic teaching after a period of perceived corruption by worldly influences. The most prominent example of this was the *ad fundum* changes advocated by the 16th century reformers, but earlier and later reforms were justified in a similar way.

Borrowing ideas from the world was, of course, not rejected altogether, but it would need special justification and demands great caution. It could be justified only for matters that were considered *adiaphora*. Augustine provided the classic justification for outside borrowing by comparing it to the despoiling

of the treasures of Egypt by the Israelites at the time of the Exodus (Exod 12:35-36).³ This event served as an allegory to justify the occasional adoption of pagan philosophical and ethical ideas by Christian theologians. But Augustine cautioned that the use of worldly ideas was only justified if the borrowed material was censured by Scripture and used for the advance of the Gospel. Even so there is always the danger that borrowed worldly wisdom would corrupt the faith and the faithful, just as the gold of Egypt had tempted the Israelites to set up and worship the golden calf.

The most important consequence of the central role of the religious development theory in early Christian self-understanding is that it gave *homo christianus* a special trait that also defines biological species. For speciation requires, in addition to a set of characteristics that distinguish one species from another, the trait of no outside breeding. Genetic stasis is normal for biological species. Similarly, in the case of the Christian movement, the demand to remain faithful to its apostolic beginnings and the need for vigilance against outside corrupting influence became early on a part of its speciation, its genetic make-up. I will return to this later in the discussion of the relevance of the Lamarckian and Darwinian theories of evolution for understanding transformation in the history of early Christianity.

It is not my intent to debate the religious developmental theory, let alone refute it. I consider it a grand vision, worthy of my respect. I believe that one can be a serious biblical scholar while adhering to the religious theory, but as a historian I need to set it aside. For the religious theory is fundamentally different from, and irreconcilable with, the scientific enterprise of historical reconstruction. Science and historiography stop being scientific if they expect, or resort at any point to, supernatural explanations for natural phenomena. The scientific task demands a singular commitment to natural causes and explanations, and to the scientific rules of inference. Reconstructing the history of earliest Christianity is, I believe, a scientific and not a religious quest. It demands of its practitioners that they follow the rules of the 'game' of scientific inference. This is the game I am playing. I have no argument with those who want to play a different game with another set of rules.

B: Ferdinand Christian Baur and the Beginning of Historical Thinking

Gould attributes the beginning of historical thinking in biology to Georges-Louis Leclerc, comte de Buffon. This great, 18th century, French natural scientist, assumed a long history of life on earth during which some forms of life became extinct and others emerged in response to changes in the environment. These changes, Buffon thought, were caused by the gradual cooling of the earth. His explanation was wrong, but his claim that the history

³ Augustine, *De doctrina* II.60.

of life was marked by real change proved fruitful.⁴ Buffon did not deny the existence of a divine creator but, in the Deist fashion of his time, God had become indistinguishable from the forces inherent in Nature.

Half a century after Buffon, in the mid-1830s, Ferdinand Christian Baur argued the same thing for the history of early Christianity. He abandoned the religious view and replaced it with a developmental theory in which real transformation took place, guided by an internal dynamic in history of opposing forces that unite at a higher level.⁵ According to this theory, human history is a dialectic process leading to spiritual and moral progress, and thus is accomplishing God's purposes. This developmental theory, derived from Hegel, appeared to be confirmed by the conflict, recorded in *Acts* and the Pauline Epistles, between a Jewish Christian faction represented by Peter, and a Gentile one represented by Paul. By the end of the first century, Baur argued, this conflict was resolved by a gradual unification of both factions into the early Catholic Church, which in turn came into conflict with Christian Gnosticism, and so on.

Baur also understood, as no Church historian before him, that it was the historian's task to account for the textual evidence in terms of a developmental theory. He accomplished this by assuming that all Christian texts represent and reflect directly or indirectly the ideological factions current at the time of writing. In the case of the New Testament writings this meant that he expected them to reflect either the Petrine position, or the Pauline one, or the later synthesis between the two.⁶ Thus one should be able to locate and date all texts according to the stage they represented in history's dialectical process. Baur's assumption about texts was not entirely new, for the heresiologists of the Patristic period believed that the differences among the Gnostic texts known to them corresponded to ideological differences among Gnostic sects.⁷

Even though Baur's development theory soon lost its appeal, his assumption that early Christian texts are direct windows into rival ideological positions at the time of writing has remained a major, and largely unquestioned, assumption in NT scholarship. The obvious attraction of this assumption is that it greatly increases the historical value of literary texts.⁸

⁴ Gould, "Inventing Natural History in Style," *Lying Stones*, 75-90.

⁵ For a summary of Baur's position see the excerpts from his writings and bibliography in Werner G. Kuemmel, *The New Testament: The History of the Investigation of its Problems* (trans. S. McLean Gilmour & H. C. Kee; Nashville: Abingdon, 1972) 127-40.

⁶ F.C. Bauer, "Die Einleitung in das Neue Testament als theologische Wissenschaft," *Theologische Jahrbucher* X (1851).

⁷ Cf. F. Wisse, "The Nag Hammadi Library and the Heresiologists," *Virgiliae Christianae* 25 (1971): 205-23.

⁸ Literary texts, in contrast to documentary texts, show no evidence that they were

Rather than being dependable evidence only for the opinions of one individual, their author, it would permit one to treat them as if they were fossils of early 'Christianoids', i.e., different species or subgroups within the early Christian genus. I shall return to this issue later.

Baur retained one important aspect of the religious developmental theory. He did not abandon the idea that Christianity introduced something new and of lasting value derived from Jesus. To the contrary, he considered it part of the historical task to define the unique contribution of Christianity, which had been taken for granted in the traditional, religious view, and to study how it was transmitted, developed and distorted. In so far as the recovery of the original, unique features of the gospel continues to play a role in NT scholarship it remains a religious quest.

C: Adolf Harnack's use of Developmental Theory

By the second half of the 19th century, the theory of evolution had gained the upper hand in the natural sciences and had also begun to influence historiography. This is evident in the work of Albert Ritschl, the first of Baur's students to abandon his teacher's Hegelian developmental theory. By the 1850s, Ritschl had become convinced that the conflict with Jewish Christians evident in Paul's letters was not really between Paul and the original apostles but with an extreme Jewish Christian faction that soon became marginalized and had no significant influence on later developments. He also noted that, in spite of Paul's pivotal role in the mission to the Gentiles, early Gentile Christianity did not become significantly Pauline in character. Rather, he argued, the Gentile churches developed under the influence of Hellenistic culture into the ancient Catholic church of the 4th century.⁹ Though he did not specify his developmental theory, he clearly assumed that transformation in early Christianity was due to an evolutionary process of adaptation to its cultural environment.

It was left to Ritschl's brilliant student, Adolf Harnack to provide a comprehensive account of the transformation of Christianity from Jewish sect to the ancient Catholic Church and beyond on the basis of a theory of evolution. His monumental treatment of the history of dogma remains a standard work.¹⁰ One may want to augment or qualify the process of transformation he specified, but there can be little question that his explanation of the development of

intended for a specific occasion and limited readership. Only the authentic letters among early Christian texts are clearly documentary; all the others appear to be literary, including the pseudepigraphic letters.

⁹ A. Ritschl, *Die Entstehung der altkatholischen Kirche. Eine kirchen- und dogmengeschichtliche Monographie* (2nd ed.; Bonn: A. Marens, 1857).

¹⁰ Harnack, *History of Dogma* (3rd ed.; trans. N. Buchanan; Boston: Little, Brown, 1901).

dogma has a serious claim. His achievement was in no small part due to an unsurpassed knowledge of the primary sources and the fact that he limited his argument largely to those aspects of Christianity for which there is considerable evidence, namely to doctrinal and institutional developments in the Church.

It was obvious to Harnack that the available evidence did not fit the religious theory which claimed that the development of orthodox dogma involved no more than an elaboration of the teachings of Scripture.¹¹ Dogma, as far as Harnack was concerned, was not even a part of the original gospel of Jesus but was a new development in the Gentile Church provoked by the Greek spirit. In this process, faith was transposed into knowledge and hardened into Dogma.¹² Harnack, like 19th century pietists and romantics, considered this development a decline, though it may have been necessary at the time. Actually, he found much to be admired about the intellectual achievements of the Patristic theologians. They did not simply elaborate on apostolic teaching but made important creative contributions to Christian theology.

In his explanation of the 'why' and 'how' of the development from gospel to dogma, Harnack did not present it as a gradual adaptation to a changing environment but as the effects of a struggle for survival and dominance in face of major internal and external challenges. In its need to counter gnosticizing tendencies within, and pagan intellectual opponents without, the Church adopted, consciously or subconsciously, methods and concepts from its opponents. The danger posed by Christian Gnosticism was syncretism, the acute Hellenization of the Christian faith. The challenge posed by Greek philosophy demanded an intellectual defense. The Church was successful in this struggle for survival of the fittest, but underwent a major transformation in the process. A particularly fateful step, according to Harnack, was the adoption of the Greek logos concept by the Christian Apologetes of the 2nd century, which led the Church into the quagmire of metaphysics. The four development stages in the early history of dogma that Harnack differentiated correspond roughly to the stages Greek philosophy went through from the 2nd to the 4th century CE.¹³

Harnack, like his predecessors, was not a disinterested historical observer. The study of Church history was for him a religious quest for the original gospel of Jesus. Just as Paul had liberated the gospel from its Jewish confines, so the study of Church history must remove the dogmatic mask that has come to obscure faith, as Augustine, and especially Luther, had already begun to do.¹⁴

¹¹ A. Harnack, *Outlines of the History of Dogma* (trans. E. K. Mitchell; Boston: Beacon, 1957 [1893]) 5.

¹² Harnack, *Outlines*, 5.

¹³ Harnack, *Outlines*, 83-84.

¹⁴ Harnack, *Outlines*, 6.

Not surprisingly, Harnack defined the original gospel in terms of his own values, as we are all tempted to do. In his case they were the spiritual and ethical values of late 19th century liberal German Protestantism. This bias lessens the value of his account of the development of dogma, but Harnack was, I think, more critical and responsible in his use of evolutionary theory than the largely unselfconscious use of it in subsequent scholarship on Christian origins.

In contrast to F.C. Baur, Harnack did not try to account historically for the earliest Christian writings, since he thought that they preceded the transformation of faith into dogma. The historical place of the NT writings did again become a major preoccupation in late 20th century NT scholarship. Attempts to specify their historical place and role are still going on, and would, I am arguing here, greatly benefit from awareness of parallel efforts in reconstructing natural history.

II: Negative Lessons from the Study of Natural History

A: Errors in Taxonomy

1. Errors in Classification

Before theory can be applied to historical evidence, its features must be ordered and classified in such a way that the connections and differences with other data can become apparent. Taxonomical analysis is far from an objective, value-free starting point for historical reconstruction, for there is much opportunity for error and bias to distort the classifications. The history of the study of fossils shows many false taxonomies which stood in the way of placing them in their proper historical relationships and sequence.¹⁵ For example, before the 18th century a fossilized organism tended to be classified as a mineral that mimicked in shape a living organism.¹⁶ Scientists at that time could not imagine how sea organisms could have ended up buried in rock layers high in, for example, the Andes. Such errors in taxonomy will, of course, hinder and mislead historical reconstruction.

Particularly important in taxonomy is the determination whether a certain feature is a distinguishing characteristic of a species or is shared with other species. There often is within the same species significant differentiation in features depending on age, sex, and other factors, that could readily lead to mislabeling or misinterpretation. Particularly when the fossil record is very meager, as in the case of early humanoids, it is often impossible to determine whether a certain feature is a distinguishing mark between species or is within the range of differences within one species. A fuller fossil record would be

¹⁵ Gould, "The Clam Stripped Bare ...," *Leonardo's Mountain*, 77-98.

¹⁶ Gould, "The Lying Stones of Marrakech," *The Lying Stones*, 9-26.

needed to be sure. Anyone who has followed recent debates about early humanoid fossils realizes how controversial and uncertain the reconstruction of early human history is, and how readily even one new fossil find can change the picture. The situation for the early history of Christianity is the same. One would think that this would be sufficient reason for great caution and hesitancy in reconstructing the history of earliest Christianity, but that has not been the case.

2. Bias in Classification

Another major liability in taxonomy is the tendency to attach questionable value judgements to certain features, such as the size of brains or the color of skin. Thus the special features of Neanderthal man compared to *homo sapiens* were long considered a sign of their inferiority as a race or species, in spite of the many major features held in common.¹⁷ Similarly, in comparing early Christian texts there is a tendency to minimize or lose sight of what is held in common and over-interpret the differences or burden them with value judgments. Some descriptive categories historians have used already presuppose a certain developmental theory rather than being neutral. The major bias in natural history has been an anthropocentrism which considers our own species, if not wholly distinct from the animal world, as the inevitable goal and culmination of the evolutionary process.¹⁸

Bias in taxonomy is an even greater problem in the case of early Christian texts than with fossils. There are major consequences for historical reconstruction whether a text is labeled canonical or non-canonical, Jewish Christian or Gentile Christian, documentary or literary, genuine or pseudepigraphic, composite or integral, Pauline, deutero-Pauline, or early Catholic, gnostic or anti-gnostic, early or late, orthodox or heretical. These labels are seldom inherent in the text or self-evident. Even genre designations are not always neutral but may already have assumptions attached to them about original function, *Sitz im Leben*, and close relationship to other texts of similar genre, that cannot be taken for granted and can skew the place and role the text is given in early Christian history.¹⁹

The problem of taxonomical bias is compounded by the fact that most of the earliest Christian texts are anonymous or have a high likelihood of being pseudonymous, and lack an absolute date and indication of provenance. Yet the desire to make them serve as windows into the particular historical situation in which they were written has proven irresistible. At least humanoid fossils were

¹⁷ Gould, "Our Unusual Unity," *Leonardo's Mountain*, 197-212.

¹⁸ Gould, "In the Midst of Life," *Panda's Thumb*, 134-39.

¹⁹ E.g., assuming certain texts or parts of texts to have served originally a liturgical function.

normally found *in situ* and their date can be roughly calculated on the basis of the geological layer in which they were found. Most early Christian texts, however, are like fossils for which we do not know the date, place, and even to what part of the Christian 'skeleton' they belonged. This greatly compromises their usefulness for the historical reconstruction of earliest Christianity, and should make historical inferences based on them modest and, at best, tentative.

The greatest temptation in the taxonomy of early Christian texts is treating them as if they were 'fossils' of different Christian subgroups. For fossils we can take for granted that the special features which distinguish them from other fossils are indicative of the state of the species at a certain moment in time. But religious texts are not fossils in that sense. First claim in the interpretation of their peculiarities is that they represent the creative views of an individual, the author. This would be especially the case for the uncontrolled, heterodox period in which early Christian texts were written. There would normally have to be extraordinary reasons, such as an overt claim within a text, an *imprimatur* in the preface, or other external, corroborating evidence, to be sure that certain unique features in a text were widely shared at the time of writing. This means that literary texts can only be dependable witnesses for the historical circumstances in which they were written in the characteristics they share with other texts from the period. Their unique features are of importance for historical reconstruction only in so far they were adopted by readers.

Harnack complained that, according to the traditional, religious view, the role of Patristic authors was limited to being expositors of the teaching of Scripture rather than the obvious creative contribution they made to the history of dogma.²⁰ The same mistake is made if the authors of early Christian writings are reduced to being spokespersons for the ideological position of a particular community or faction. Like Paul, these authors deserve credit for making theological history rather than simply reflecting it.

B: Errors in Interpretation

1. The Lamarckian vs. Darwinian Theory of Evolution

In historical reconstruction one must guard not only against errors and bias in taxonomy but also errors in interpretation, such as the use of an inappropriate developmental theory or fallacious inferential reasoning. Though the application of a theory of evolution to natural history quickly gained many proponents in the late 18th and 19th century, there was much debate over which evolutionary theory was more appropriate for the interpretation of the rapidly accumulating evidence for the history of life. The choice was basically between the Lamarckian and Darwinian theories of evolution.

²⁰ Harnack, *Outlines*, 5-6.

The brilliant, late 18th / early 19th century French naturalist Jean Baptiste Lamarck taught that all life forms strive to develop from simple to complex in response to changes in environmental requirements, and are able to transmit acquired, beneficial characteristics to offspring. Thus, he argued, the neck and front legs of giraffes became elongated over successive generations in order better to reach the high leaves of acacia trees, and webs gradually formed between the toes of waterfowl to enhance their ability to swim.²¹ Darwin, in contrast, argued that all changes in organisms are caused only by random genetic mutations that happen to be favored by natural selection. The environment only selects but is not the cause of transformation in organisms. Later discoveries in genetics and the role of DNA proved Darwin right.

While Lamarckian evolution is clearly the wrong theory for natural history, it does explain well social progress in human history. Human memory and consciousness, particularly when enhanced by writing, make it possible to transmit advances and benefits to succeeding generations. Thus it would seem reasonable to think that Lamarckian evolution would also be the correct theory to explain developments in religious history, such as the change from a Jewish sect to the imperial Christianity. For example, F. C. Baur's developmental theory is Lamarckian in that he poses a dialectical force within history that drives it toward spiritual progress. Scholars who attribute the transformation and eventual success of early Christianity to an inherent ability and willingness to adapt to the changing circumstances of the Greco-Roman world assume a Lamarckian theory of evolution.

Yet, even though, in contrast to biological organisms, early Christianity would have been able to change in a Lamarckian way, there were strong forces within it against change in general and change by adaptation to its environment in particular. As I argued earlier, the ideal state for early Christianity was stasis, i.e., remaining faithful to its apostolic beginnings. It is the world that needs to be changed, not the church. Believers were not supposed to conform to the world, and those who combined the Christian faith with pagan teaching were considered heretics. In so far as non-Christian ideas were borrowed, it was mainly, as Harnack argued, in defense of the gospel against false teachers within or persecutors and cultured despisers without. Transformation through adaptation may have entered at times through the backdoor, but it was not a deliberate effort or a natural tendency. The transformation that Christianity underwent during its first three centuries can be explained only in a very limited way by a Lamarckian evolutionary process; the main mechanism for change has to be found elsewhere.

²¹ Gould, "A Tree Grows in Paris: Lamarck's Division of Worms and the Revision of Nature," *The Lying Stones*, 115-43.

2. Gradualism vs. Punctuated Equilibrium

Another common, developmental assumption is that change must have been gradual. Both Lamarck and Darwin believed that transformation in organisms was due to a gradual accumulation of small, almost imperceptible adjustment, and, no doubt some changes in natural and social history are best explained that way. But in more recent evolutionary thought the view has gained ground that major transformations in the past happened rapidly when measured on a geological time scale, and were followed by long periods of virtual stasis. For example, the division of early life into the five major phyla appeared to have happened in a relatively short time of some ten million years during the so-called 'Cambrian explosion.' One of Gould's main contributions to evolutionary thinking is his thesis that biological change has been spasmodic. The history of life is best conceptualized as a punctuated equilibrium.²²

Spasmodic change would also appear to apply to the transformations that happened in early Christianity. This was, no doubt, the case for the revocation of the Mosaic law requirements recorded in Acts (10:9-16). This important change was neither gradual nor the result of a natural tendency in the Jewish church. To the contrary, it was strongly resisted and was the reason why Paul was opposed and persecuted (Gal 5:11). I will return to the issue in my final section.

3. The Fallacy of Functionalism

There is one more negative lesson from the study of natural history I need to mention, because it points out a common flaw in inferential reasoning, the fallacy of functionalism. It involves the interpretation of what are thought to be special features in a text. I will ignore for the moment the point made earlier that the textual evidence for early Christianity is far too sparse to distinguish between features that are unique to the author and those that were shared by a faction or community of believers. No doubt, some special features in an early Christian text could have been characteristic of a special group to which the author may have belonged, though we cannot say which. It is these shared features that would appear to allow historical inferences. A striking example of such inferential reasoning is the one based on the three occurrences of *ἄποσυνάγωγος* in the Gospel of John (9:22; 12:42; 16:2) with reference to expulsion from the synagogue. On the basis of this minor Johannine feature—which could be called special only if it were an anachronism, which is very doubtful—Louis Martyn inferred that the Gospel was written in and for a Jewish Christian community that had experienced expulsion from the synagogue.²³ Thus the presence of a feature in gospel stories about Jesus is

²² Gould, "The Episodic Nature of Evolutionary Change," *The Panda's Thumb*, 179-93.

assumed to have had its origin in a benefit for the intended readers who could, by means of it, more readily identify with characters in the gospel. The principle at work here is that a perceived benefit of a special feature for the original reader makes it possible to infer its origin, namely the historical situation that gave rise to it.

At issue here is not whether literary texts do reflect to some degree the historical circumstances in which they were created. There is no reason to doubt this. Rather the issue is whether the circumstances can be inferred from them in the absence of any direct knowledge of the historical situation, as happens to be the case for early Christian literature. The truth is that even when the historical circumstances are well known, as is the case for more recent historical periods, the connections between texts and the circumstances of their composition is often contrary to what one would expect and surprisingly small. There is no predictable cause-effect relationship which would allow one to infer the circumstances of composition from features in the text.

The inference of the origin of a feature on the basis of its perceived function is too often wrong to be useful in historical construction. Gould gives a number of examples of the fallacy of functionalism in the reconstruction of natural history.²⁴ There is now fossil evidence that some sea creatures had developed a skeletal structure in their fins well before this became beneficial for walking on land. Thus this skeletal development must have originated for a reason other than the later benefit of walking. Wings must have begun to develop for quite another reason than flying.²⁵ Such unanticipated, new functions are common in nature. Furthermore, natural selection often did not lead to optimal functioning and allowed redundancy, sloppiness, whimsicalness and even features with no apparent function at all, such as male nipples.²⁶

All this is even truer for texts. The history of interpretation is full of shifts in function. Paul shifted the Mosaic command not to muzzle an ox treading out the grain (Deut 25:4), which, no doubt, was originally intended to prevent cruelty to animals, to the right of preachers to receive material support from those to whom they are ministering (1 Cor 9:9-10), and the point of the story of Sarah and Hagar became in Paul's hands a theological argument about the covenants of works and grace (Gal 4:21-31). Like natural organisms, early Christian texts are at times redundant, sloppy in style and thought, whimsical even, and include features that must have been problematic, or lacking in obvious meaning, to readers from the start. Such features in organisms and texts actually enhance their ability to serve new, creative functions. The

²³ J. Louis Martyn, *The Gospel of John in Christian History: Essays for Interpreters* (New York: Paulist, 1978) 90ff.

²⁴ E.g., Gould, "Of Kiwi Eggs and the Liberty Bell," *Bully*, 109-122.

²⁵ Gould, "Not Necessarily a Wing," *Bully*, 139-51.

²⁶ Gould, "Male Nipples and Clitoral Ripples," *Bully*, 124-38.

common assumption in NT scholarship that early Christian texts were extensively redacted during their early transmission to make them fit changing circumstances is quite unnecessary.²⁷ Texts need not match the demands of the environment to be useful. Various interpretative strategies were available to readers from the start to help them reach the desired meaning, and theologians have always been able to shift the function of strange textual 'limbs' to become feet suitable for walking or wings for flying.

III: Positive Lessons from the Study of Natural History

A: The Role of Texts as Analogous to Genetic Mutations

What the study of natural history offers us, historians of religion in antiquity, is a better way to conceptualize and assess the historical place and role of texts, which in the case of earliest Christianity makes up our only evidence. It prompts us to be more circumspect on what aspects of religious history texts may normally represent, and thus can be evidence for, and what aspects they normally do not represent. Furthermore natural history can offer us an analogous developmental theory that can more adequately explain the role texts played in the transformation of early Christianity.

A fundamental rule in the reconstruction of natural as well as religious history is that the processes that produced transformation in the past, which by definition cannot be observed, must have been like processes that can be observed in the present, or from well documented periods in the recent past.²⁸ Our only hope for understanding the place and role of texts in early Christianity is if it was similar to the role of religious writings in later periods. This rules out roles that would be unique for religious texts, such as taking them to be 'fossils' of different early Christianoids. The special features of an early Christian text cannot, without further ado, be assumed to be the distinguishing marks of an otherwise unknown subgroup of early Christians. Even if it were the case that some features in them represent traits of an ideologically distinct community, as is the case for some religious texts written within the much later, controlled 'orthodoxies' that divided Christianity after the Protestant Reformation, still one cannot distinguish group traits from those that are peculiar to the author without having direct knowledge of the subgroup. For early Christian texts all we can count on is that their special features represent the views of the author.

I propose that Darwin's theory of evolution offers a more appropriate

²⁷ E.g., Martyn's hypothesis that "the literary history behind (the present form) of the Gospel of John reflects to a large degree the history of single community . . ." (*The Gospel of John in Christian History*, 91)

²⁸ Gould, "Worm for a Century, and All Seasons," *Hen's Teeth*, 122-23.

paradigm for conceptualizing the original historical place and role of religious texts in general and early Christian texts in particular. This is not because the transformation of biological organisms and of early Christianity are homologous, but because they are analogous. The benefit of comparing them is heuristic, the way a mechanical pump helps to explain the function of the heart or a computer helps us to conceptualize the processes of the brain. The main reason for the correspondence is that early Christianity, like an organism, and unlike culture in general, resisted a Lamarckian type of transformation by adaptation. Much like an organism, early Christianity sought to replicate the 'genetic' make-up of its ancestors. The ideal state for both early Christianity and organisms is stasis, and transformation has happened only inadvertently, i.e., only when a random mutation was favored by natural selection. If a religious community abandons this conservative, backward looking trait—as may be the case for mainline Protestantism today—it reverts to a Lamarckian type of transformation by embracing change by adaptation as necessary and virtuous.

B: The Role of Internal and External Contingencies

Using a development theory analogous to Darwin's theory of evolution means assigning a major role to contingencies, unforeseeable events that caused or facilitated change. Most important are the internal contingencies, but contingencies in the environment can also play a significant role. Internal contingencies in the case of organisms are the random, genetic mutations which occur spontaneously and frequently. Only very few of these are favored by natural selection because of their benefit to the organism, and consequently have a chance to be transmitted to offspring. The special features of early Christian texts are best thought of as mutations. Their production was random, i.e., dependent on the creativity and initiative of individuals rather than being imposed by the environment. Only some of these features were favored by the 'natural selection' of the Christian movement, and so were allowed to shape and transform the subsequent history of the Church. Actually, the main role of natural selection in natural history is negative, by eliminating unwelcome mutations. Like genetic mutations, most texts never had much of an impact and simply disappeared; only a few of the 2nd century Christian texts still known to Eusebius, at least by title, survived beyond his time. For most Christian tractates discovered in the Nag Hammadi Codices we had no inkling that they existed.

The Christian writings that were favored, chief among them those that became part of the canon, did not automatically transmit their special traits to their readers. Ritschl observed correctly that many aspects of Paul's theology do not appear to have been adopted by the churches he founded. But they did become part of the Christian 'gene pool' and so could come to the fore in, for

example, the deuterio-Pauline writings and at various other times in the history of dogma. Harnack's conclusion is plausible that the 2nd century Apologetes, in the process of providing a defense of the Christian faith, introduced metaphysics into the history of Dogma, but his negative evaluation of this development hinders historical reconstruction.²⁹ So also Ernst Käsemann's disdain for the eschatology of 2 Peter, when compared to Paul's, has no place in historical research.³⁰ As a matter of fact, 2 Peter has a greater claim of being typical for early Christian belief than Paul's eschatology.

But texts were not the only agents of change. Though they were, no doubt, the main factor in the development of Dogma, they appear to have been less so in the development of liturgy and governance. The letters of Ignatius witness to the rise of the monarchical bishopric, but did not cause this key development. From an historian's viewpoint, none of these transformations were inevitable, and the eventual flourishing of the Church did not happen because it was inherently better adapted to its Hellenistic environment than its rivals. Remove any of a number of chance happenings and the outcome would have been quite different. Reconstructing history, Gould reminds us, is locating "a set of contingent events that explain in retrospect what could not have been predicted beforehand."³¹ Among them the conversion of Paul and his role as missionary should loom large. Another crucial contingency was the conversion of Constantine only a decade after the most severe persecution had threatened the very existence of the Church. Julian, the Apostate, half a century later, might still have turned the tide in favor of a renewed paganism if he had not been mortally wounded by an arrow shot at random in a battle against the Persians. To the historian the arrow was one of a long string of contingencies, but believers were convinced that it was guided by St. Mercurius.

The role of the environment in the transformation of organisms is not limited to natural selection. Contingencies in the environment, in the form of catastrophic happenings, have caused the extinction of some species and facilitated the emergence of others. Gould argues that catastrophic happenings were a more important factor in the transformation of organisms than gradual adaptation.³² This relates to the point made earlier that the major changes in natural history happened spasmodically and were followed by long period of stasis. Biologists have noted that change is more likely to happen in an organism when there is severe predation called 'cropping.'³³ When organisms face few

²⁹ Harnack, *Outlines*, 117-29.

³⁰ E. Käsemann, "An Apologia for Primitive Christian Eschatology," *Essays on New Testament Themes* (London: SCM, 1964) 169-95.

³¹ Gould, "Eight Little Piggies," *Eight*, 77.

³² Gould, "Dinosaur in a Haystack," *Dinosaur*, 147-58.

³³ Gould, "An Unsung Single-Celled Hero," *Ever Since Darwin*, 123-24.

threats they remain more or less static. Cropping in the form of persecutions happened repeatedly in early Christianity and was likely instrumental in facilitating rapid change. When the threat of persecution ended with the conversion of Constantine a long period of orthodox stasis set in, though dogma underwent further refinement for some time in response to internal theological controversies.

C: The Place of Texts in the History of Christianity

I will close with a lesson from the study of natural history relevant to the place of texts within the total phenomenon of Christianity. Gould likes to point out a myopia evident in the study of natural history in its preoccupation with the more complex terrestrial vertebrates, though they are far less common than invertebrates and did not exist for the first half of the history of life.³⁴ This myopia finds its parallel in our preoccupation with religious texts, and the complex ideas they contain, though they were most likely exceptional at the time they were written, when one considers Christianity as a whole. This is evident also in our tendency to neglect less profound texts, such as the Pastoral Epistles, 2 Peter and 2 Clement, though they were much more likely representative for their time than, for example, the letters of Paul.

Gould plots the totality of living organisms by means of a bell curve in which the vertical axis, the left wall, measures the number of organisms, and the horizontal axis measures increasing degrees of complexity. At the left wall of the curve we find organisms which are least complex in form, the single cell bacteria, which still form the bulk of life today, while the right wall of the bell curve thins to the higher vertebrates with humans at the very end.³⁵

In a similar vein we can graphically depict the totality of early Christianity made up of its institutions and rites, and the beliefs and practices of men, women, and children. In that depiction texts would form only the extreme tail end of the right-skewed bell curve. Thus, by assuming texts to be characteristic of the whole and representative of mean values, we allow "the tail to wag the dog."³⁶ Just as complex organisms are inevitable over time, but unpredictable and marginal to the totality of life,³⁷ so modal, i.e., the relatively simple but most common form of Christians dominated the history of Christianity, and the production of texts was and is a marginal, and largely a random, phenomenon. If this depiction of the place of texts in the full Christian 'house' has a serious claim—and it would be hard to prove that it does not!—it will set major

³⁴ Gould, *Full House: The Spread of Excellence from Plato to Darwin* (New York: Harmony Books, 1996) 168-75.

³⁵ Gould, *Full House*, 171.

³⁶ Gould, *Full House*, 167.

³⁷ Gould, *Full House*, 197f., 216.

restrictions to the kind and amount of historical evidence religious texts can provide.

IV: Conclusion/Summary

My goal has been to make a contribution to the historian's task of explaining the 'why' and 'how' of the transformation of the early Christian movement from its beginning as a sect within Judaism to the ancient Catholic Church of the 4th century, and to locate the place and role of Christian texts in this transformation.

Central to my argument is the claim that the study of natural history can be of significant help in this task, since the reconstruction of natural history and of ancient religious history face similar methodological challenges and pitfalls. Furthermore, a developmental theory analogous to Darwin's theory of evolution appears to be more appropriate for explaining the changes in early Christianity than a Lamarckian type of adaptation to the environment. Within such a developmental theory the place and role of early Christian texts would not be that of 'fossils' representing different branches that made up the early Christian 'bush' but, as far as their special features are concerned, they represent new mutations, some of which came to play an important role in the three-centuries-long development toward *homo christianus*.

Minutes of the 2003 CSBS Annual General Meeting

Dalhousie University
Halifax, Nova Scotia
May 29, 16h00-17h00

Present: Dietmar Neufeld, Colleen Shantz, Michel Desjardins, John L. McLaughlin, Gary Knoppers, Fred Wisse, Glen Taylor, Mona Tokarek LaFosse, Stephen Wilson, Peter Richardson, Christine Mitchell, Bill Richards, Marion Taylor, Nancy Calvert-Koyzis, David Hawkin, Wayne McCready, John F. Horman, Paul E. Dion, Joyce Rilett Wood, Richard Ascough, Margaret MacDonald, Harry O. Maier, Catherine Rose, Karen Williams, Lincoln Blumell, Keir Hammer, Phil Harland, Matthew Mitchell, Lissa Wray Beal, Rebecca Idestrom, Adele Reinhartz, Randall Heskett, J. Richard Middleton, Susan Slater, John Kessler, Robert Derrenbacker, Keith Bodner, Daniel Smith, Allan Martens, Ian Henderson, Edith M. Humphrey, Sylvia Keesmaat, Terry Donaldson, Erin Runions, Fiona Black, Bill Morrow, Kimberly Stratton, John Kloppenborg, David Jobling, Jack Lightstone, Christiana de Groot, Murray Baker, Francis Landy, Michele Murray, Daniel Miller, Patricia Dutcher-Walls, Steven Muir

1. Approval of the Agenda

The agenda was approved as circulated.

2. Approval of the Minutes

The minutes of the last Annual General Meeting (May 27, 2002) were approved as circulated (Richardson/Wilson), with one correction: David Tushingham (point 3) becomes Douglas Tushingham.

3. President's Report

Fred Wisse expressed his thanks to the other members of the Executive for their service and collegiality, highlighting the importance of email communication and the website to the health of the Society. He also noted that membership remained high, with a healthy mix of junior and senior scholars.

4. Executive Secretary's Report

Michel Desjardins announced CSBS's Congress dates for next year: Sunday, May 30 through Tuesday, June 1, in the context of a Congress that will run

from May 29 to June 5. He also reviewed the list of upcoming congresses: University of Manitoba (2004), University of Western Ontario (2005), York University (2006), University of Saskatchewan (2007), University of British Columbia (2008).

He reminded members of the Society's links to the Canadian Corporation for Studies in Religion, mentioning the importance of contributing effectively to *SR* and the CCSR website. Peter Richardson added an ECSJ update, announcing the upcoming publication of Michele Murray's *Playing a Jewish Game* and noting that several manuscripts were under review. He encouraged members to consider ESCJ for their monographs.

Michel reminded members of the Society's links to the Canadian Federation for the Humanities and Social Sciences, noting their advocacy work in helping to generate the new SSHRC Canada Research Scholarships (M.A. scholarships beginning this Fall; Ph.D. scholarships in 2004), and the two task forces (Scholarly Associations; New Scholars' Needs) that would report on best practices in November 2003.

He also indicated that the Executive had started to plan for the Society's 75th anniversary in 2008. Colleen Shantz added that the Executive intended to establish a planning committee to help build toward this event; an email note would go out to members in the near future asking for volunteers to serve on this committee. She added that Michel Desjardins also intended to prepare a study of CSBS members for this occasion.

Fred Wisse closed this section of the meeting by thanking Michel for his six years of service as Executive Secretary on behalf of the Society (saying lovely things that the secretary is too embarrassed to record).

5. Student Liaison Officer's Report

Colleen Shantz thanked those who contributed their time and energy to this year's special session on writing: John Kloppenborg, David Jobling, Fiona Black and Michel Desjardins. She also encouraged student members to keep in touch with the Student Liaison Officer, expressing their interests and concerns—adding that the Society's student membership was strong: about 1 in 4 members are students, and students contributed 18 CSBS Congress presentations this year.

Fred Wisse congratulated Colleen for her new permanent appointment at St. Michael's College, and thanked her for her two years of exceptional service on the Executive.

6. Vice-President's Report and Nominations

Gary Knoppers congratulated the student essay prize winners (Murray Baker and Lissa Wray Beal) for their exceptional scholarship.

He then submitted the following slate for Executive positions: David Hawkin (Memorial University of Newfoundland) as Vice-President (2003-2004), Dietmar Neufeld (continuing) as Treasurer and Membership Secretary (2003-2006), Michele Murray (Bishop's University) as Executive Secretary (2003-2006), and Mona Tokarek LaFosse as Student Liaison Officer (2003-2004). With no other nominations coming from the floor, and following a motion that nominations close (Richardson/Reinhartz), the four were elected by acclamation, then thanked for their willingness to serve and continue to serve the Society.

7. Programme Coordinator's Report

Glen Taylor thanked members for submitting paper proposals: this year's program was brimming with 59 contributions, one third of which were from students. He also announced a few changes to the program, gave instructions on how to get to the dinner, and thanked Susan Slater for her work as local representative on the Society's behalf (confirming rooms, choosing a dinner locale, welcoming the Executive).

8. Communications Officer's Report

John McLaughlin reported on the following issues:

- His current e-mail list comprises 268 out of 288 members. Both First and Second mailings were distributed via this list, as well as membership news as it became available. E-mail communication continues to be a money-saving mechanism, and an effective way to share information. He encouraged members to send him news (including the completion of dissertations) and book publication notices, and to keep him updated on email address changes.
- Webpage additions continue to be added. Programmes and abstracts from 1989 through 2002 are now available. He offered heartfelt thanks to Paul Dion for his ongoing translation of webpage sections from English into French.
- The *Bulletin* was prepared and distributed. A slight change this year: forthcoming publications were not listed under publications; he encouraged members to wait until full bibliographic information is available before including these works as publications.
- Five volumes were nominated for the 2003 Francis W. Beare Award and four

volumes for the 2003 R. B. Y. Scott Award. The unsung heroes in these deliberations are the judges (three for each award), who are anonymous and remain unknown even to one another. He encouraged members to recommend outstanding books in Christian origins for consideration for the upcoming Beare Award, and outstanding books in Hebrew Bible / Old Testament and Ancient Near East, with formal notification of the awards to go out in the Fall in the First Mailing. Self-nominations are accepted, as are ongoing financial donations earmarked for these prizes.

9. Treasurer and Membership Secretary's Report

Dietmar Neufeld, acting as both Membership Secretary and Treasurer, touched on the following points:

- Membership numbers remain strong—up to 288 from 272 in both 2001 and 2002, and 255 in 2000. 29 new members were nominated for 2003. New members include: John Harvey, Sandra Boyko, Cameron Boyd Taylor, Karl McDaniel, Gerbern S. Oegema, Elizabeth Morton, Matthew W. Dunn, Jennifer Pfenniger, Dean Brady, Barbara Craig, Briana Lee, Ken Ristau, R. Glenn Wooden, Jean-Philippe Fontanille, Etienne Haché, Pierluigi Piovaneli, Elizabeth M. Davis, Murray Baker, Amanda Benckhuysen, Catherine Rose, R. S. Kraemer, Anders Runesson, Pauline Hogan, Wei-Hua (Wesley) Hu, Allan W. Martens, Michael Pahl, Margaret Dore, Rene Baergen, Ian McDonald, and (added late) Randall Heskett.

A motion to accept these people as new members (Neufeld/Lightstone) received unanimous support.

- SSHRC renewed its travel grant of \$4755 for this fiscal year. He distributed it (with some money carried over from last year) to registered participants using a formula of 25% (for full members) and 40% (for students) of people's requests.
- The Society's financial picture is stable, mainly as a result of recruitment of new members, high membership, generous donations, and sound investment by the Endowment Committee. Projected expenses for 2003-2004 (ca. \$16,000) will be offset fully by projected receipts.
- Wayne McCready reviewed the history of the Endowment Committee's work (chaired by himself, and also including Peter Richardson, Harold Remus and William Klassen): investing \$56,425 with Merrill Lynch Canada in 1998 (transferred to Jennings Capital Inc. in 2002), to ensure long-term financial health. The Society has a 30 year investment strategy that is reviewed annually

by the Society's Executive on the recommendation of the Endowment Committee. Features of the investment plan include: (a) a commitment to long-term investment strategies for endowed funds; (b) a conservative approach to investment for an income and growth portfolio; (c) and a judicious use of interest from the investments. The portfolio market evaluation in May 2002 reached \$71,567; in May 2003, despite ongoing financial troubles worldwide, it stood at \$72,258.91. In addition to growth in the principal invested, these funds have provided the Society on average \$4,000 per annum in extra income; this past year for the first time the Society was in a position to start re-investing some of this (interest) income.

The Treasurer thanked the Endowment Committee for their work, then moved (Neufeld/Murray) that his report be received and approved.

10. Other Business

It was brought to members' attention that the Women's Scholars Breakfast did not take place as it had in previous years. Edith Humphrey encouraged interested people to take the initiative next year to ensure that a breakfast (or late afternoon beer, etc.) be arranged.

Francis Landy announced that all that remained of his department in Edmonton were three biblical scholars: Willi Braun, Ehud Ben Zvi, and himself.

Fred Wisse thanked everyone for their participation, the members of the Executive for their work, and the Society at large for their support.

11. Adjournment

Peter Richardson moved (seconded by Steve Wilson) that the meeting be adjourned.

(Minutes prepared by Michel Desjardins, June 2003.)

Financial Statements

Fiscal year 1 Sept. 2002—31 Aug. 2003

The following amounts have been audited. The full audited report is available to any member of the CSBS/SCÉB upon request to the treasurer.

General Fund		
	2003	2002
Opening Balance:	1,086	357
Revenue:		
Membership Dues	14,177	13,811
SSHRC Travel Grant	4,755	4,755
CSBS Dinner	2,107	2,494
Congress Registration	1,281	
Subscriptions	139	40
TOTAL	22,459	21,100
Expenses:		
Accounting and Auditing	1,458	1,445
Bank Charges	131	161
CSBS Dinner	2,286	2,393
Dues and Memberships	2,162	2,162
Executive	4,044	2,424
HSSFC AGM		546
Member Travel	5,028	4,299
Office, Printing and Postage	640	1,919
Subscriptions (SR)	6,180	5,921
Teleconference		253
TOTAL	21,929	21,523
Revenue Over Expenses	530	(423)
Interfund Transfers	545	1,152
Closing Balance	2,161	1,086

Restricted Funds:

	Capital	Income on hand
<u>General Endowment:</u>		
Opening Balance 1 Sept. 2002	8,913	0
Donations	60	
Investment Income:		545
Expenditures		
Interfund Transfers		(545)
Closing Balance 31 Aug. 2003	8,973	0
<u>Bearé Award:</u>		
Opening Balance 1 Sept. 2002	12,072	71
Donations	0	
Investment Income		735
Expenditures		(500)
Interfund transfers		(300)
Closing Balance 31 Aug. 2003	12,072	6
<u>Craigie Fund:</u>		
Opening Balance 1 Sept. 2002	15,747	10
Donations	0	
Investment Income		959
Expenditures		(1,539)
Interfund transfers		600
Closing Balance 31 Aug. 2003	15,747	30
<u>Founders Prize:</u>		
Opening Balance 1 Sept. 2002	6,618	19
Donations	100	
Investment Income		406
Expenditures		(250)
Interfund transfers		(100)
Closing Balance 31 Aug. 2003	6,718	75
<u>Jeremias Prize:</u>		
Opening Balance 1 Sept. 2002	6,831	8
Donations	637	
Investment Income		436
Expenditures		(250)
Interfund transfers		(100)
Closing Balance 31 Aug. 2003	7,468	94

	Capital	Income on hand
<u>Publication Fund:</u>		
Opening Balance 1 Sept. 2002	756	70
Donations	850	
Investment Income		72
Expenditures		
Interfund transfers		(100)
Closing Balance 31 Aug. 2003	1,606	42
<u>Scott Award:</u>		
Opening Balance 1 Sept. 2002	2,406	3
Donations	1,754	
Investment Income		200
Expenditures		(500)
Interfund transfers		300
Closing Balance 31 Aug. 2003	4,160	3
<u>Student Research:</u>		
Opening Balance 1 Sept. 2002	1,283	68
Donations	0	
Investment Income		78
Expenditures		
Interfund transfers		(100)
Closing Balance 31 Aug. 2003	1,283	46
<u>Wagner Award:</u>		
Opening Balance 1 Sept. 2002	10,293	80
Donations	0	
Investment Income		627
Expenditures		(500)
Interfund transfers		(200)
Closing Balance 31 Aug. 2003	10,293	7
TOTALS		
Opening Balances 1 Sept. 2002	64,919	329
Donations	3,401	
Investment Income		4,058
Expenditures		(3,539)
Interfund transfers		(545)
Closing Balances 31 Aug. 2003	68,320	304

2003 / 04 Membership News

Monographs, Edited Volumes:

- Ascough, Richard S. *Paul's Macedonian Associations: The Social Context of Philippians and 1 Thessalonians*. WUNT 161. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2003.
- _____. *The Miracles of Jesus*. Ottawa: Novalis, 2003.
- Ben Zvi, Ehud. *Signs of Jonah: Reading and Rereading in Ancient Yehud*. JSOTSup 367. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2003.
- Ben Zvi, Ehud, with Marvin A. Sweeney, eds. *The Changing Face of Form Criticism for the Twenty-First Century*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003.
- Boda, Mark J. *Haggai and Zechariah Studies: A Bibliographic Survey*. Tools for Biblical Study; Leiden: Deo, 2003.
- Boda, Mark J. and Michael H. Floyd, eds. *Bringing out the Treasure: Inner Biblical Allusion and Zechariah 9-14*. JSOTSup 370. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2003.
- Braun, Willi and Russell T. McCutcheon, eds. *Egheiridio Threskeiologias*. Trans. Dimitris Xygalatas. Thessaloniki: Vanias, 2003.
- Duhaime, Jean (traducteur). *Les manuscrits de la mer Morte et le Judaïsme*. Par Lawrence H. Schiffman; traduit, révisé et mis à jour par Jean Duhaime. Montréal: Fides, 2003.
- Harland, Phillip. *Associations, Synagogues, and Congregations: Claiming a Place in Ancient Mediterranean Society*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2003.
- Kloppenborg, John S., James M. Robinson, Paul Hoffmann and Santiago Guijarro, eds. *El Documento Q en grieco y en español con paralelos del evangelio de Marcos y del evangelio de Tomas*. Biblioteca de estudios biblicos 107. Salamanca: Ediciones Sígueme/Leuven: Uitgeverij Peeters, 2002.
- Knoppers, Gary N., with M. Patrick Graham and Steven L. McKenzie, eds. *The Chronicler as Theologian: Essays in Honour of Ralph W. Klein*. JSOTSup 371. London/New York: T. & T. Clark, 2003.
- Penner, Todd and Caroline Vander Stichele, eds. *Contextualizing Acts: Lukan Narrative and Greco-Roman Discourse*. SBLSymS 20. Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature; Leiden: E. J. Brill, 2003.
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- Zerbe, Gordon. "The Politics of Paul: His Supposed Social Conservatism and the Impact of Postcolonial Readings," *Conrad Grebel Review* 21/1 (Winter 2003): 82-103.
- _____. "Revelation's Exposé of Two Cities: Babylon and New Jerusalem," *Direction* 32, no. 1 (Spring 2003): 47-60.

Appointments, Promotions, Awards, Honors:

- Ascough, Richard S. Premier's Research Excellence Award (Government of Ontario), 2003-08: Recruitment, Conversion, and Adherence Among Voluntary Associations in Antiquity.
- _____. Alexander von Humboldt Research Fellowship (Westfälische Wilhelms Universität, Münster).
- _____. The United Church of Canada Davidson Award for Excellence in Teaching and Scholarship in Theological Education.
- Boda, Mark J. Installed as Professor of Old Testament and Hebrew, McMaster Divinity College, McMaster University (November 14, 2003).
- D'Angelo, Mary R. National Endowment for the Humanities Fellowship for University Teachers, 2004-2005: Roman Imperial Family Values and Early Christian and Jewish Sexual Politics.
- Derrenbacher, Robert A. Jr. Ordained Priest in the Diocese of Toronto (Anglican), September 29, 2002
- _____. Assistant Professor of New Testament, Regent College.
- Margaret Y. MacDonald. SSHRC Grant 2003-2006: Women, the Family and House Churches in Early Christianity.
- Maier, Harry. Winner of Canadian Christian Writers Association Award for Best Book in Theology 2002, for *Apocalypse Recalled: The Book of Revelation After Christendom* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2002).
- _____. Alexander von Humboldt Fellow, University of Heidelberg, January-June 2004.
- McLaughlin, John L. 2003 R. B. Y. Scott Book Award for *The marzēah in the Prophetic Literature: References and Allusions in Light of the Extra-Biblical Evidence*. VTSup 86; Leiden/Boston/Köln: E. J. Brill, 2001.
- _____. Appointed Director of Advanced Degree Programs, Faculty of Theology, University of St. Michael's College (July 1, 2003).
- _____. Book Review Editor, *Journal of Hebrew Scriptures*.
- Mitchell, Matthew W. Completion of Preliminary PhD exams. Advanced to candidacy (April 11, 2003).
- Patterson, Dilys. Full-time contract at Concordia University.
- Reinhartz, Adele. 2003 F. W. Beare Award for *Befriending the Beloved Disciple: A Jewish Reading of the Gospel of John*. New York: Continuum, 2001.
- Scott, Ian W. Lecturer in Religious Studies at King's University College, University of Western Ontario (July 1, 2003).
- Webster, Jane S. Co-chair of the Society of Biblical Literature Committee for the Status of Women.
- Wooden, R. Glenn. Associate Professor of Old Testament Studies (July 1, 2003).

Dissertations Completed:

- Crook, Zeba. Patronage, "Loyalty, and Conversion in the Ancient Mediterranean." Ph.D., University of St. Michael's College, 2003.
- Bergen, David A. "Dialogic in the Narrative of Deuteronomy." Ph.D., University of Calgary, 2003.
- Lee, Bernon Peng Yi. "Reading Law and Narrative: The Method and Function of Abstraction." Ph.D., University of St. Michael's College, 2003.
- Patterson, Dilys. "'Honoured in Her Time': Queen Shelamzion and the Book of Judith." Ph.D., University of Ottawa, 2002.
- Shantz, Colleen. "Paul in Ecstasy: An Examination of the Evidence for the Implications of Paul's Ecstatic Religious Experience." Ph.D., University of St. Michael's College, 2003.
- Wray Beal, Lissa M. "The Deuteronomist's Prophet: Narrative Control of Approval and Disapproval in the Story of Jehu (2 Kings 9 and 10)." Ph.D., University of St. Michael's College, 2003.

Research in Progress:

- Ascough, Richard S. Recruitment, Conversion, and Adherence Among Voluntary Associations in Antiquity.
- John A. Bertone. Ph.D. Dissertation: "'The Law of the Spirit': Experience of the Spirit and Displacement of the Law in Romans 8:1-16."
- Boda, Mark J. Monograph on David and Old Testament Kingship.
- _____. Projects on Repentance and Penitence in Jewish Tradition, in Old Testament Theology, and in Christian Theology.
- _____. Commentary work on Chronicles and Judges.
- Calvert-Koyzis, Nancy. Article(s) on Foucauldian interpretations of Galatians.
- Cox, Claude. Critical edition of Armenian Job.
- Damm, Alex. Dissertation: Ancient treatments of the chreia and the synoptic problem;
- _____. Imitation of novels in the 'Shepherd of Hermas'.
- de Bruyn, Theodore. Translation, with introductions and annotations, of Ambrosiaster's commentary on Romans.
- Duhaime, Jean. The Bible at Qumran.
- _____. Sectarianism in ancient Judaism and in New Religious Movements.
- Harland, Phillip. Immigrant groups and acculturation in the Greco-Roman world (articles leading to a book).
- Humphrey, Edith M. "Ecstasy and Intimacy: Recovering the Trinitarian Shape of Christian Spirituality."
- _____. Repentance and Penitence in the Johannine Writings.

- Kloppenborg, John S. The Parable of the Tenants.
- _____. James.
- _____. Associations in the ancient world.
- Knowles, Michael. Study of Paul's cruciform spirituality as the basis of apostolic proclamation in 2 Corinthians 1-6.
- Maier, Harry. Preparing Manuscript of "De/Colonizing Jesus: Pauline Christologies Against the Backdrop of the Roman Empire."
- Matties, Gordon. Commentary on the book of Joshua.
- McLaughlin, John L. Ancient Israelite Religion.
- Mitchell, Matthew W. Dissertation research on Paul's "conversion" and the origins of the Gentile mission.
- Penner, Todd. Socio-rhetorical analysis of book of Acts within the context of Roman imperial propaganda.
- _____. Conceptions of gender in antiquity and use in rhetorical, social, and ideological battles in early Christianity in the Greek East.
- Reinhartz, Adele. *Jesus of Hollywood*. In preparation for Oxford University Press. A study of the Jesus films, from the earliest silent movies to Mel Gibson's *The Passion*. Projected publication in 2005.
- _____. *Caiaphas the High Priest*. A study of the figure of Caiaphas, in history, historiography and popular culture for the Personalities of the New Testament Series, edited by D. Moody Smith. (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press). Projected publication 2007.
- François Rousseau, <http://pages.infnit.net/exegete/>
- Van Seters, John. Monograph dealing with the origins of the notion of "redactor" or "editor" in Old Testament/Hebrew Bible studies.
- Wooden, R. Glenn. Translations of the Greek 1 and 2 Esdras for the *New English Translation of the Septuagint* (Oxford).
- _____. Daniel commentary for the *New International Commentary on the Old Testament* (series ed., Robert Hubbard), Eerdmans.
- _____. 1 and 2 Esdras commentaries in the *New English Translation of the Septuagint Commentary* series, sponsored by the International Organization for Septuagint and Cognate Studies.

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