GREGORY E. LAMB

Living and Dying Well in Philippians

Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament 2. Reihe
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A Comparative Analysis of Ancient Sources

Mohr Siebeck

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ISBN 978-3-16-162377-6 / eISBN 978-3-16-163959-3
DOI 10.1628/978-3-16-163959-3

ISSN 0340-9570 / eISSN 2568-7484
(Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament, 2. Reihe)

The Deutsche Nationalbibliothek lists this publication in the Deutsche Nationalbibliographie; detailed bibliographic data are available at *https://dnb.dnb.de*.

Mohr Siebeck GmbH & Co. KG, Wilhelmstraße 18, 72074 Tübingen, Germany
www.mohrsiebeck.com, info@mohrsiebeck.com

In memoriam

Rev. Earl J. Lamb
(1934–2000)

Doris W. Lamb
(1938–2020)

Rev. David R. Garner
(1953–2007)

Your lives were visible sermons to me.
Requiescat in pace.

Acknowledgements

This monograph is a slightly revised and updated version of my Ph.D. dissertation, which was successfully defended at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary in November 2021. As is the case with any academic project, this monograph is the fruit of a community of scholars and persons, who – investing their lives and resources in me – have become the conversation partners surrounding this study. While space precludes the possibility of listing the entire symphony of voices – past and present – within God's orchestra of influences, I hope to list here some of the major "notes." During the course of my doctoral studies, I was fortunate to receive various research grants and funding as a Risden P. Reece and CM Cares Scholar. Various parts of this research on Philippians (specifically) and human flourishing (more generally) also stemmed from participation in and feedback from academic conferences funded by the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft (DFG), Acton Institute, and the Land Center for Cultural Engagement and hosted by Ruben Zimmermann, Justin David Strong, Rev. Robert Sirico, and Evan Lenow, respectively. Moreover, I am humbled and honored by Jörg Frey, Elena Müller, and the editorial team at Mohr Siebeck for their acceptance of my manuscript and for the tireless assistance of Markus Kirchner, Jutta Thumm et al. in its preparation.

I am indebted to David Alan Black for instilling in me a deep love for the primary sources (*ad fontes*!) and whose work in Philippians has proven formative for my own. David Black's contagious curiosity exemplifies the spirit of Anselm's mantra: *fides quærens intellectum*. Likewise, I am especially grateful for the very Rev. Dr. John Behr, whose erudition, kindness, generosity, and willingness to help me along this journey illuminate what it means to live *and* die well in Christ. Stanley E. Porter's interest and warm conversation regarding my dissertation helped sharpen its comparative methodology. Philippian scholars Mark Keown, Isaac Blois, Sean Winter, and Chris Zoccali have also proven to be exceptional conversation partners along the way.

Many of the key concepts and ideas herein have been forged in the fires of formative feedback of numerous academic conference paper presentations. This would not have been possible apart from program unit chairs such as Benjamin L. White, Barbette Stanley Spaeth, Maria Doerfler, Edward Pillar, and Rhonda Burnette-Bletsch (Society of Biblical Literature), T. Desmond Alexander, Nick Moore, and Ian Paul (Tyndale Fellowship), Jason Staples, David

Sloan, Elizabeth Evans Shively, and Christopher Porter (Institute for Biblical Research), and Linda Belleville (Evangelical Theological Society).

No one could imagine better project partners than L. Scott Kellum, my *Doktorvater*, and my dissertation committee. Scott Kellum's constant encouragement, incessant commentary on my chapters, and enthusiasm in honing my arguments and guiding me through each phase of this project is exemplary of his excellence as a scholar, friend, and *Mensch*. Charles Quarles's refinement and attention to detail no doubt improved the quality and concision of my writing. Ben Laird's meticulous engagement of every detail in my dissertation helped prepare it for this stage of publication. I am grateful for my fellow students and friends at Southeastern, especially Tom Cribb and Stephen Stout, who helped me immensely along the way. Additionally, Craig Evans's pioneering research in the vast literary corpora of Paul's first-century world became the methodological soil from which this project was birthed.

I am forever thankful for my dear wife, Tamara, who exemplifies Christ's and Paul's sacrificial service and love to me and our children so I could complete this task. Truly, Paul's description of Euodia and Syntyche is apropos in describing you as my co-laborer in Christ: αἵτινες ἐν τῷ εὐαγγελίῳ συνήθλησάν μοι. My children, Austin, Brennan, Caitlyn, David, and Elijah were unending fonts of love, patience, grace, and encouragement throughout this process. Always remember that a flourishing life is a life focused on the needs of others above self and is solely satiated in Christ. Dissatisfaction with this current, physical cosmos breeds eternal contentment in Christ. Satisfaction and comfort in this life leads not to flourishing (although it erroneously appears so), but is, indeed, a shabby substitute for true, eternal flourishing. In remembering this, you will be wise, indeed. *Sapere aude*.

My parents (the late Rev. Earl J. Lamb and Doris W. Lamb) and mentor (the late Rev. David R. Garner) modeled for me what it truly means to live *and* die well as a Christian. Their lives and deaths were visible sermons to me. They continue to live and "preach" through the testimony of their beloved memories. Furthermore, the faith communities in which I and my family served during my doctoral studies helped me to think deeply, theologically, and pastorally about what truly matters most as we shared the highest peaks and darkest depths of life together as Bonhoeffer once wrote.

Lastly, and most importantly, thanks be to Christ, the Author and Finisher of my faith, without whom, no true flourishing exists. As Alex Honnold clung to El Capitan, so too, I clung to Paul's encouraging and empowering words regarding Christ and Christ's Spirit throughout writing this monograph: ἅντα ἰσχύω ἐν τῷ ἐνδυναμοῦντί με. It is my quotidian prayer that all academic labors I perform under God's hand might bear much fruit in serving his purposes and in bringing him honor and glory.

Dunn, NC, Feast of the Conversion of St. Paul Gregory Lamb

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List of Abbreviations

Reference Works

ABD	*The Anchor Bible Dictionary*. Edited by David N. Freedman.
BD	The modern Book of the Dead spell numbering system.
BDAG	*A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*. Revised and edited by Frederick William Danker. 3rd ed.
BECNT	Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament series.
BHGNT	Baylor Handbook on the Greek New Testament series.
BOTD	*The Book of the Dead: The Chapters of Coming Forth by Day.* By E. A. Wallis Budge.
CII	*Corpus Inscriptionum Iudaeae/Palaestinae*. Edited by Hannah M. Cotton et al.
CIL	*Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum*. Edited by Theodor Mommsen.
CIM	*Corpus Inscriptionum et Monumentorum Religionis Mithriacae*. Edited by M. J. Vermaseren.
CIPh	*Corpus des inscriptions grecques et latines de Philippes*. Edited by A. Zannis, Ch. Koukouli-Chrysanthaki, and Cédric Brélaz.
DPL	*Dictionary of Paul and His Letters.* Edited by Gerald F. Hawthorne and Ralph P. Martin.
EDNT	*Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament.* Edited by Horst Balz and Gerhard Schneider.
EDOG	*Etymological Dictionary of Greek*. Edited by Robert Beekes.
EGGNT	Exegetical Guide to the Greek New Testament series.
GELS	*A Greek-English Lexicon of the Septuagint*. Edited by Takamitsu Muraoka.
GG	*Griechische Grabinschriften und neutestamentliche Eschatologie*. Edited by Imre Peres.
GMP	*The Greek Magical Papyri in Translation: Including the Demotic Spells*. Edited by H. D. Betz. 2nd ed.
HALOT	*The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*. Edited by Ludwig Koehler et al.
KIP	*Katalog der Inschriften von Philippi*. Edited by Peter Pilhofer.
L&N	*Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament Based on Semantic Domains.* Edited by J. P. Louw and E. A. Nida. 2nd ed.
LGG	*Lexikon der ägyptischen Götter und Götterbezeichnungen*. Edited by Christian Leitz.
LCL	*Loeb Classical Library*. Copyright © 1911, Harvard University Press. Edited by Jeffrey Henderson.

LSJ	*Greek-English Lexicon.* Edited by Henry George Liddell, Robert Scott, and Henry Stuart Jones. 9th rev. ed.
MGS	*The Brill Dictionary of Ancient Greek*. Edited by Franco Montanari.
MMM	*Textes et Monuments figurés relatifs aux Mystères de Mithra*. Edited by F.-V.-M. Cumont.
NIDB	*New Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*. Edited by Katharine Doob Sakenfeld.
NTTTC	*New Testament Text and Translation Commentary: Commentary on the Variant Readings of the Ancient New Testament Manuscripts and How They Relate to the Major English Translations.* Edited by Philip W. Comfort.
OLD	*Oxford Latin Dictionary*. Edited by P. G. W. Glare. 2nd ed.
PDM	*Papyri Demoticae Magicae*.
PG	*Patrologiae Cursus Completus:* Series Graeca. Edited by Jacques-Paul Migne.
PGM	*Papyri Graecae Magicae*.
TDNT	*Theological Dictionary of the New Testament.* Edited by Gerhard Kittel and Gerhard Friedrich. Translated by G. W. Bromiley.
TLG	*Thesaurus Linguae Graecae*. Copyright © 1972, 2014, the University of California, Irvine.
TOTP	*The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha.* Edited by James H. Charlesworth.
TuT	*Text und Textwert der griechischen Handschriften des Neuen Testaments: II. Die paulinischen Briefe, Band 3: Galaterbrief bis Philipperbrief*, Arbeiten zur neutestamentlichen Textforschung 18. Edited by Kurt Aland.

Bible Citations

EVV	English Bible Translations
LXX	The Septuagint, the Greek Translation of the OT
MT	Masoretic Text of the Hebrew Bible
NA^{28}	The 28^{th} edition critical text of the Nestle-Aland Novum Testamentum Graece
NT	The New Testament of the Christian Scriptures
OT	The Old Testament of the Hebrew Scriptures
UBS^{5}	The fifth revised edition of the United Bible Societies' Greek New Testament

Abbreviations typically follow the *SBL Handbook of Style*, 2nd ed.

Unless otherwise noted, English translations of the primary biblical and extrabiblical texts are author's own original translations.

Quotations from the Greek Bible are taken from a database of a combination of the United Bible Society 5th edition/Nestle-Aland 28th edition. *Greek New Testament* (BGT/BNT) and Rahlfs' *Septuagint* (LXT). Copyright © 1998–2018 BibleWorks, LLC.

Chapter 1

Human Flourishing as a Subject of Pauline Research

A. Kaleidoscopic Scope and Relevance for Biblical Studies

Given modernity's explosion of diversity and specialization of knowledge, few ideas or concepts can be thought of as truly universal or unifying. However, the idea of living and dying well, also known as "human flourishing"[1] (expressed in antiquity as εὐδαιμονία in the Greek,[2] *ma'at*/Maat in Egyptian,[3] and *ars vivendi/ars moriendi* in Latin[4]), has been a thematic thread that has woven its way throughout the tapestry of human history. This study is a comparative analysis of the subjects of living and dying well in Philippians and select ancient sources (up to 100 CE), including: Greco-Roman, Egyptian, and Second Temple Jewish sources.[5] Upon consideration of Paul's Jewishness and

[1] The theme of "human flourishing" has become a pervasively popular topic in theological/biblical studies, especially, over the past decade. This is due at least in part to the Yale University Center for Faith and Culture's God and Human Flourishing Program as well as in evangelical circles through the Institute for Faith, Work, and Economics (TIFWE).

[2] While the Greek term εὐδαιμονία has often been translated as "happiness," numerous scholars suggest "human flourishing" is a more accurate translation as it better captures the holistic, "true, full happiness" of the whole being. For the purposes of this monograph, the phrases "human flourishing," "the good life," and "living/dying well" will be used interchangeably to connote a more holistic understanding of the concept of εὐδαιμονία. Contrastingly, "happiness" is often understood in popular culture as merely a temporary state of euphoria. See Daniel N. Robinson, *Aristotle's Psychology* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999), 99–101; John Finnis, *Natural Law and Natural Rights*, 2nd ed. (Oxford; London; New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 103; and cf. "εὐδαιμονία," in LSJ 708.

[3] In ancient Egyptian literature, Maat was seen as both a feminine deity as well as a philosophical way of life. See Robert A. Armour, *Gods and Myths of Ancient Egypt*, 3rd ed. (Cairo; New York: American University in Cairo Press, 2016), 133. The second edition of the *SBL Handbook of Style* distinguishes between the divine name (Maat) as well as the Egyptian philosophical conception of living and dying well (*ma'at*). See Billie Jean Collins et al., *The SBL Handbook of Style*, 2nd ed. (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2014), 45. However, it is doubtful that the ancient Egyptians, themselves, made such a sharp distinction. Thus, for the purposes of this study, this author will refer to the ancient Egyptian conception of living and dying well as "Maat."

[4] The phrases *ars vivendi/ars moriendi* can be translated, "the art of living/dying."

[5] The methodology of "comparative analysis" used in this monograph will be explained in further detail in Chapter 2. While scholars have traditionally utilized a monolithic Greco-Roman or Jewish lens through which to view and understand Paul and his letters, this study

theological training,[6] possible Greco-Roman educational background through various *gymnasia*, and informal socialization as a Pharisee and as a Roman and Tarsian citizen, he may have been familiar with these ancient texts or at least their conceptions of living and dying well as he wrote his New Testament (hereafter abbreviated NT) letters.[7]

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investigates Paul kaleidoscopically and eclectically – surveying both ancient Jewish and pagan sources that Paul may have encountered in his studies and travels. The use of the hybrid adjectives "Greco-Jewish," Greco-Egyptian," and "Greco-Roman" belies the complexity and hyper-connectivity of the first-century Mediterranean world, which consisted in the coexistence of numerous antithetical and sometimes syncretized religious, political, cultural, and economical worldviews. See Gregory E. Lamb, "Beyond the Greco-Roman or Jewish Monocle: Reading Philippians and Paul 'Kaleidoscopically,'" *Religions* 15.4.467 (2024): 1–22, doi: 10.3390/rel15040467 and John M. G. Barclay, *Paul and the Gift* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2015), 24. While some scholars use the terminology "Greco-Egyptian" to denote the Egyptian literature written in Greek during the Hellenization of the Greco-Roman Period, this study will analyze the Greek writings within the *Papyri Graecae Magicae* (hereafter abbreviated *PGM*) as well as earlier literature, such as *The Book of the Dead*, not written in Greek. See Ian Rutherford, *Graeco-Egyptian Interactions: Literature, Translation, and Culture*, *500 BCE–300 CE* (Oxford; London; New York: Oxford University Press, 2016). The phrase "Second Temple Jewish sources" includes the Greek Old Testament (hereafter abbreviated LXX). For the purposes of this monograph, the descriptor "Second Temple" is meant to denote a time period which extends from the first to the last of the five great crises of the Jewish people: the destruction of Jerusalem and Solomon's Temple by the Babylonians in ca. 586 BCE and the destruction of the Second Temple by Titus in ca. 70 CE.

[6] Paul's "Pharisaic training" and "Torah knowledge" were vital to the organization and flourishing of the house-churches he founded, which became educational centers and communities of learning. See Janelle Peters, "Paul and Synagogues," in *Paul within Judaism: Perspectives on Paul and Jewish Identity*, ed. Michael Bird et al., WUNT 507 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2023), 194. Cf. Claire S. Smith, *Pauline Communities as 'Scholastic Communities': A Study of the Vocabulary of 'Teaching' in 1 Corinthians, 1 and 2 Timothy, and Titus,* WUNT II/335 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2012), 1.

[7] Regarding Paul's potential access to Greco-Roman education through various *gymnasia*, James Harrison argues, "Because most cities had built at least one gymnasium, the gymnasium remained the most famous and popular educational institution in antiquity.… It is not inconceivable that Paul encountered *gymnasiarchoi* [i.e., leaders of *gymnasia*] or visited a gymnasium, even though there were strict regulations as to who might enter a gymnasium.… Inscriptional and papyrus evidence reveals that Jewish men of the Diaspora received ephebic training at the gymnasium.… Paul as a Jew could not have escaped the pervasive influence of the gymnasium.… Paul would have been exposed to the gymnasiarchal culture even if … he did not have the ephebic education of other first-century Jews." See James R. Harrison, "Paul and the Gymnasiarchs," in *Paul: Jew, Greek, and Roman*, ed. Stanley E. Porter (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2008), 146, 148–49, 177. While the past decade of Pauline scholarship has a priori assumed much of Paul's putative formal rhetorical education, others, such as Ryan Schellenberg, are not convinced. Schellenberg writes, "[F]igures, tropes, and rhetorical strategies as are found in Paul's letters derive not from formal education but from informal socialization." Ryan S. Schellenberg, *Rethinking Paul's Rhetorical Education: Comparative Rhetoric and 2 Corinthians 10–13*, ed. Gail R. O'Day, Early

I. Thesis, Scope, and Purpose

1. Thesis

The thesis of this study is that Paul's conception of living and dying well in Philippians as a Christocentric, cruciform life and death stands in stark contrast to competing pagan and Jewish conceptions.[8] Paul's concept was not genealogically dependent upon these ancient pagan and Second Temple Jewish sources to pen his Epistle to the Philippians. Any similarity is possibly an example of Paul deconstructing and reshaping erroneous cultural worldviews on flourishing represented within these ancient works to serve his own rhetorical purposes in light of Paul's own experience as a "slave of Christ Jesus" (Phil 1:1).[9] Contra some "New Perspective on Paul" (NPP) proponents,[10] the

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Christianity and Its Literature 10 (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2013), 5–6. Despite this lack of consensus on Paul's formal academic training, Pauline scholars agree that Paul's letters do evince a rhetorical strategy regardless of the provenance of Paul's knowledge. The qualifier "may" is key at this juncture, as it is impossible to speak with absolute certainty regarding the influence these texts or traditions may or may not have had in Paul's conception of living and dying well. See Jacob Neusner, *Rabbinic Literature and the New Testament: What We Cannot Show, We Do Not Know* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 1994), 16.

[8] Sarah Ruden sees the value of reading Paul against the backdrop of ancient sources when she writes, "As I began to read Paul in connection to Greco-Roman writing, I seemed to be actually reading him: understanding his devotion and his constraints, and not simply listening to 1 Corinthians 13 with boredom and irritation, and with smug agreement to excoriations of his 'betrayal of Jesus' message'.… What Greco-Roman works can teach about Paul's writings is incredibly rich and virtually unexplored so far – and often rather mortifying to a previous knee-jerk anti-Paulist like me." Ruden, *Paul Among the People: The Apostle Reinterpreted and Reimagined in His Own Time* (New York: Pantheon, 2010), 4–5.

[9] Paul's deconstruction of his opponents' arguments can be readily evinced in what Douglas Campbell sees as a rhetorical diatribe in Rom 1:18–3:20. See Douglas A. Campbell, *The Deliverance of God: An Apocalyptic Rereading of Justification in Paul* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009), 572. The so-called "letter of tears" in 2 Corinthians 10–13 also displays Paul's deconstruction of his opponents' views in defending his apostolic authority. In Philippians 3, Paul deconstructs the views of those "dogs," "evil workers," and "those outwardly mutilated" yet having uncircumcised hearts (Phil 3:2). These individuals were apparently putting their confidence in their flesh and not in Christ. While not exactly a *reductio ad absurdum*, Paul uses a syllogism with both negative and positive parts in 1 Cor 15:12–19 to deconstruct the Corinthians' skepticism regarding the bodily resurrection of Christ and believers. See Roy E. Ciampa and Brian S. Rosner, *The First Letter to the Corinthians*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010), 753–54.

[10] See e.g., James D. G. Dunn, "'A Light to the Gentiles': The Significance of the Damascus Road Christophany for Paul," in *The Glory of Christ in the New Testament: Studies in Christology in Memory of George Bradford Caird*, ed. L. D. Hurst and N. T. Wright (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2006), 251–66. The nexus of the debate regarding Paul's Damascus Road event was initiated by Krister Stendahl's 1963 essay, "The Apostle Paul and the Introspective Conscience of the West," which many claim as the fount from which the nascent

Damascus Christophany became *the* defining event in Paul's life,[11] as it radically reshaped Paul's worldview and permeated the fabric of Paul's subsequent theological writings – especially, his Epistle to the Philippians. This transformative, missionary call reoriented every aspect of Paul's identity,[12] life, and death in a trajectory that was thoroughly Christocentric and dependent on the inner, transformative workings of the Holy Spirit.

2. Scope

The heart of this monograph is an investigative comparative analysis between Paul's Epistle to the Philippians and Greco-Roman, Egyptian, and Second Temple Jewish sources up to 100 CE. This will first require an analysis of the themes of living and dying well in Philippians – with a heavy emphasis on the primary sources for establishing the text of Philippians via text criticism – as well as the seminal sources relevant to Paul's conception of human flourishing in Philippians.[13] This effort, as historian and philosopher Quentin Skinner has

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beginnings of the NPP flowed. See Krister Stendahl, "The Apostle Paul and the Introspective Conscience of the West," *HTR* 56.3 (1963): 199–215.

[11] Constantine R. Campbell, *Paul and Union with Christ: An Exegetical and Theological Study* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012), 420. See also Seyoon Kim, who writes, "The essential and constitutive character of the Damascus experience for Paul's theology is widely recognized by recent interpreters…. To assert that Paul's theology is to be derived from his Damascus experience, is not, however, to say that Paul at once obtained explicitly at the Damascus revelation his whole theology as seen in his letters. It says only that the main lines of his theology have their origin in the fundamental [Christophanic] event." See Seyoon Kim, *The Origin of Paul's Gospel* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2007), 102. However, proponents of the NPP, such as Dunn, are not convinced that Damascus Christophany is the locus of Paul's theology, and they are critical of Kim's thesis. Dunn contends that Kim's thesis lacks originality, and that Kim is assuming his conclusion before sufficiently arguing his case. Nowhere, claims Dunn, does Paul argue that "the law could no longer function as God's instrument of salvation, and that therefore the gospel of this Jesus should go to Gentile as well as to Jew." Moreover, Dunn posits that Kim is guilty of making a false dichotomy in that, for Kim, Paul was confronted with this soteriological alternative: "either the law or the crucified Christ." See Dunn, "'A Light to the Gentiles,'" 256–57; Dunn is citing Kim, *The Origin of Paul's Gospel*, 48. Cf. N. T. Wright, *Paul and the Faithfulness of God*, 2 vols., vol. 4 of *Christian Origins and the Question of God* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 2013), 2:1418–19. Cf. C. J. Roetzel, "Paul the Apostle," in *NIDB*, ed. K. D. Sakenfeld et al., 5 vols. (Nashville; New York: Abingdon, 2009), 4:407.

[12] So Stendahl and Wright. See Wright, *Paul and the Faithfulness of God*, 2:1420–21. Moreover, Paul exchanged his Jewish name (Σαούλ/Σαῦλος from שָׁאוּל) for that of his Roman name (Παῦλος) in his self-identification with Christ (Acts 13:9). Furthermore, in his epistles, Paul never refers to himself as "Saul." The identity transformation from Σαούλ/Σαῦλος to Παῦλος is perhaps in response to the apostle's God-given mission to the gentiles. See Darrell L. Bock, *Acts*, BECNT (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007), 445.

[13] Despite this lack of dogmatic assertion and verifiability, these textual "echoes" can inform one's reading and understanding of Paul. Hays has argued that Paul did not see

warned,[14] is not an exercise in locating some "timeless wisdom" in Philippians regarding Paul's first-century conception of living and dying well – thus, risking the fallacy of anachronism. Rather, this study seeks to locate Paul within his own first-century context within the Greco-Roman world, which was an amalgam of competing worldviews, religions, and textual traditions.

The corpora to be investigated are, of course, vast, and an exhaustive listing of ancient sources that may have been relevant for Paul's understanding of living and dying well is beyond the scope of this study. Therefore, Paul's conception of flourishing in Philippians will be read against the backdrop of select ancient sources whose ancient intertextual contexts make the most sense of Paul's argument given the often competing religious, political, and cultural voices within the first-century Mediterranean world.[15]

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himself "as a writer of Scripture." Rather, for Hays, Paul was "interpreting Scripture" with the pragmatic and missiological purpose of exhorting these "fledgling churches" to "live as good citizens worthy of the gospel of Christ" (Phil 1:27). Richard B. Hays, *Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989), 2, 5. However, many disagree with Hays's conclusions. First of all, whether Paul saw himself as writing Scripture or not, the writer of 2 Peter certainly did – equating Paul's writings with τὰς λοιπὰς γραφάς (2 Pet 3:15–16). Second, Craig Evans takes issue with Hays's "typological thinking." See Craig A. Evans, "Listening for Echoes of Interpreted Scripture," in *Paul and the Scripture*, ed. Craig A. Evans and James A. Sanders, JSNTSup 83 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1993), 47–48. Third, James Sanders states his fundamental differences with Hays's methodology more bluntly when he writes, "There is indeed but one God at work throughout Scripture. As Hays rightly notes, Paul's reading of Scripture is not typological *as that term is normally understood; Paul does not fret about types and antitypes*. Rather, Paul's argument, like Isaiah's and Luke's, and indeed much else in the Bible, *is from theological history*." See James A. Sanders, "Paul and Theology of History," in *Paul and the Scripture*, ed. Craig A. Evans and James A. Sanders, JSNTSup 83 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1993), 53–54, emphasis added. Cf. Young S. Chae, *Jesus as the Eschatological Davidic Shepherd: Studies in the Old Testament, Second Temple Judaism, and in the Gospel of Matthew*, WUNT II/216 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2006), 50–51. While some pushback is warranted against Hays's methodology, it seems at least plausible that Paul was not only an interpreter of canonical Scripture (see e.g., Gal 4:21–31), but, as a church-planting missionary, was also an interpreter of the surrounding first-century cultures as well (see e.g., Acts 17:22–31; 1 Cor 9:19–23). Paul would have likely been familiar with the influential literary traditions driving the worldviews of the first-century pagan and Jewish cultures as his putative quotations of the Greco-Roman writers illustrate (see e.g., Paul's seeming use of the Cretan philosopher Epimenides in Titus 1:12).

[14] Skinner writes, "[A]ny statement [including Paul's] is inescapably the embodiment of a particular intention on a particular occasion, addressed to the solution of a particular problem, and is thus specific to its context." Quentin Skinner, *Visions of Politics*: *Volume 1: Regarding Method* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 88.

[15] Skinner, *Visions of Politics*, 11.

3. Purpose

The purpose of this study is to articulate Paul's understanding of human flourishing through a close analysis of his letter to the Philippians including a contrast/comparison to the extant traditions of his day. Such delimitation probes beneath the surface of mere comparison and explores the pagan conceptions of key theological motifs such as living and dying well and the afterlife.[16] The similarities/differences between these corpora will be defined as Paul's rhetorical response (pro and contra) to the expected Jewish and/or secular ethical norms commensurate within Paul's first-century *Sitz im Leben*.

Paul's conception of living and dying well permeates the entirety of Philippians. For example, Paul's focus on living in servitude to Christ is highlighted immediately in Phil 1:1 as he describes himself and Timothy as δοῦλοι Χριστοῦ Ἰησου. Here, Paul Christocentrically reimagines the often denigrating and dehumanizing industry of slavery in vertical rather than horizontal dimensions.[17] Paul's Christocentric view of living and suffering is also evident in Phil 1:12–17 in which Paul describes his imprisonment as a positive catalyst for the *missio Dei*.[18] Paul's positive view of physically dying for Christ is described in the ecstatic expression πολλῷ … μᾶλλον κρεῖσσον (1:23).[19] Later in the epistle (Phil 2:17), Paul rejoices together with the

[16] Critically important regarding pagan conceptions of the afterlife are Egyptian sources dealing with Maat such as *The Book of the Dead* as well as the later works within the *PGM*. Equally important for this discussion are the Hellenistic epitaphs presented in Imre Peres, *Griechische Grabinschriften und neutestamentliche Eschatologie*, WUNT 157 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2003).

[17] Philippians 1:1a can be translated as "Paul and Timothy, slaves of Christ Jesus." Unless otherwise noted, all New Testament references are author's original translations from the Greek text of Barbara Aland et al., eds., *Nestle-Aland Novum Testamentum Graece*, 28th ed. (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2012). First-century slavery involved servitude, suffering, submission, and the slave's ownership by their master. Paul clarifies that he and Timothy are Christ's property – serving Christ and free of all competing man-made claims. See Angela Standhartinger, *Der Philipperbrief*, HNT 11/I (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2021), 75.

[18] For a discussion of the various views regarding Paul's imprisonment and the provenance of Philippians see Douglas A. Campbell, "The Provenance of Philippians: A Response to the Analyses of Michael Flexsenhar, Heike Omerzu, Angela Standhartinger and Cédric Brélaz," *JSNT* 43.4 (2021): 508–22; Angela Standhartinger, "Greetings from Prison and Greetings from Caesar's House (Philippians 4.22): A Reconsideration of an Enigmatic Greek Expression in the Light of the Context and Setting of Philippians," *JSNT* 43.4 (2021): 469, 475–76; and Michael Flexsenhar III, "Paul the Trojan Horse: The Legacy of Triumph in Philippians," *JSNT* 43.4 (2021): 438–40 – albeit these sources seem to a priori dismiss the plausibility of a Roman provenance.

[19] This rather odd construction is translated "far better" (NRSV), "very much better" (NASB) and "better by far" (NIV) in the English translations. However, none of these translations fully account for this phrase, which if rendered woodenly could be (nonsensically) translated into English as "much more better!" Perhaps, "exceedingly better" more fully captures the ecstatic essence of Paul's words here.

Philippians (χαίρω καὶ συγχαίρω) at the prospect of his life being "poured out as a drink offering." These and numerous other examples reveal that living and dying well is a pervasive, thematic "thread" that weaves its way throughout the tapestry of Philippians – holding it together in a beautiful unity.[20]

II. Why Study Paul's Conception of Living and Dying Well in Philippians?

There are at least five reasons why scholars should study Paul's conception of living and dying well in Philippians. First, the themes of living and dying well are important theological motifs for Paul but relatively few studies have investigated these topics within Philippians.[21] No current, comprehensive studies on Philippians focusing exclusively on living and dying well were found in relevant database searches.[22] While many monographs and articles were found that focus on *either* a Pauline theology of living *or* dying, no works were located that focus specifically on Paul's understanding of living and dying well in Philippians. This database search uncovered a journal article written by Nijay Gupta, "'I Will Not Be Put to Shame': Paul, The Philippians, and the Honourable Wish for Death," which is a comparative study of death/suicide between Philippians, Jewish, Egyptian, and Greco-Roman sources.[23] Yet, given the scope of the article, only a few sources were investigated and Paul's concept of living well was not addressed.

Perhaps the work most similar to this study is the chapter by Rollin Ramsaran (*Rhetorical Argumentation in Biblical Texts*, 2002), which sees Phil 1:21 as a rhetorical "maxim" in a "memorable" form of *adiaphora* to add weight and force to Paul's propositions on Christ-centered living and dying.[24]

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[20] For a discussion of the debates surrounding the literary integrity of Philippians, see F. W. Beare, *The Epistle to the Philippians*, 3rd ed., BNTC (London: Adam & Charles Black, 1973), 1–5; Gordon D. Fee, *Paul's Letter to the Philippians*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 21–23; Wolfgang Schenk, *Die Philipperbriefe des Paulus: Kommentar* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1984), 1–28; and John Reumann, *Philippians*, AB 33B (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008), 8–13.

[21] See Michael J. Gorman, *Becoming the Gospel: Paul, Participation, and Mission*, The Gospel and Our Culture Series (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2015), 3, 197.

[22] This information is based upon WorldCat® and ProQuest® database searches on the titles of "living and dying well in Philippians," "*ars vivendi* and *ars moriendi* in Philippians," "human flourishing in Philippians," "Paul and human flourishing," "the good life in Philippians," "Philippians 1:21," "Christian living in Philippians," "Christian dying in Philippians," "Philippians and thanatology," "Pauline Thanatology," and "Leben und Sterben im Brief des Paulus an die Philipper."

[23] Nijay K. Gupta, "'I Will Not Be Put to Shame': Paul, The Philippians, and the Honourable Wish for Death," *Neotestamentica* 42.2 (2008): 253–67.

[24] Rollin A. Ramsaran, "Living and Dying, Living Is Dying (Philippians 1:21): Paul's Maxim and Exemplary Argumentation in Philippians," in *Rhetorical Argumentation in Biblical Texts: Essays from the Lund 2000 Conference*, ed. Anders Eriksson, Thomas H. Olbricht, and Walter Übelacker, Emory Studies in Early Christianity 8 (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity

Ramsaran notes that "the rhetorically effective maxim" in Phil 1:21 and "the accompanying personal example [vetting Paul's ethos in 1:19–26] are often overlooked and seldom commented upon at length."[25]

Unlike these aforementioned works, this study seeks to provide a thorough analysis of the concepts of living and dying well in Philippians. This will include tracing the theme of flourishing in all four chapters of Philippians – discovering vocabulary, imagery, and literary devices that Paul used to convey his concept of flourishing. Paul often employed his critics' tools to deconstruct their arguments and worldviews.[26] N. T. Wright explains how Paul often donned the rhetorical "garb" of his opponents to refute them. In his own words, "Paul was a master of the rhetoric that the Corinthians so prized, and that, like a good philosopher, he could steal his opponents' clothes, using their rhetoric in order to say, 'Rhetoric? Who needs that?' 'I am no orator, as Brutus is.'"[27]

Second, the search found no scholarly studies that specifically focus on the themes of living and dying well via the methodology of a comparative analysis between Philippians, Greco-Roman, Egyptian, and Second Temple Jewish sources.[28]

Third, in this study it shall be argued that these concepts are, for Paul in Philippians, inextricably linked. John Behr concurs, and sees the process of

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Press International, 2002), 329–30. The term *adiaphora* is derived from the negativized Greek terms ἀδιάφορία/ἀδιάφορος, which are not found in Scripture, but are found in classical literature. These terms are composed of the alpha privative substantive διαφορά ("difference, variance, disagreement, distinction") and the adjective διάφορος ("different, unlike, differing from"). See LSJ 418–19. In their classical usage (see e.g., Aristotle, *Rhet.* 1.12.35 [1373a35] and Epicurus, *Nat.* 15G), ἀδιάφορία/ἀδιάφορος have the semantic range of: (1) "indifference; absence of difference;" (2) "neglect;" (3) "equivalence of signification;" (4) "not different; indistinguishable;" (5) "individual objects, as having no logical differentia;" (6) "indifferent;" (7) in Stoic philosophy, "things neither good nor bad; to be indifferent of the moral agent;" (8) "common;" (9) in reference to persons, "making no distinction;" (10) in mathematics, "negligible; not differing sensibly" and (11) used as an adverb, "without discrimination." See LSJ 22–23. *Adiaphora* is used today to describe actions that are morally neutral or indifferent.

[25] Ramsaran, "Living and Dying," 326.

[26] Numerous scholarly studies have demonstrated Paul's use of rhetoric and forms of stylistic devices and argumentation. See Stanley E. Porter and Bryan R. Dyer, eds., *Paul and Ancient Rhetoric: Theory and Practice in Hellenistic Context* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 23, 83, 283; and Wright, *Paul and the Faithfulness of God*, 2:1365–67.

[27] Wright, *Paul and the Faithfulness of God*, 1:433.

[28] This information is based upon searches within WorldCat® and ProQuest® databases on the titles of "living and dying well in Philippians," "the good life in Philippians," "comparative studies in Philippians," "comparative analysis in Philippians," "Philippians and Second Temple Judaism," "Philippians and Second Temple Literature," "Philippians and Egyptian literature," "Paul and Greco-Egyptian literature," "Philippians and Greco-Roman literature," and "Philippians and Graeco-Roman literature."

dying as the beginning, not the end of true human living. In his words, "Death … is a defining moment: not the end, but the beginning; not disappearance, but revelation."[29]

Fourth, most Pauline theologies tend to focus monolithically on either Paul's Jewish or Greco-Roman background. There were no current monograph-length studies found via searches in the Worldcat® or ProQuest® databases that specifically focus on Paul's conception of Christ-centered living and dying in Philippians from a combined Greco-Roman, Egyptian, and Jewish framework. The results of this study will, hopefully, fill this lacuna and help to contribute to a better understanding of Paul's conception of flourishing.

Fifth, a study on living and dying well in Philippians is also important in that these themes form a major theological motif not only in Philippians,[30] but all the *Corpus Paulinum*.[31] J. Cooper posits a nuanced approach to *theosis* (i.e., "participating in the 'life of God'") writing, "*Theosis* is thus a thoroughly Pauline theme that does not replace forensic justification, but stands alongside it as a complimentary soteriological reality."[32]

In investigating both sides of this debate and avoiding throwing the proverbial "baby out with the bathwater," this study seeks to employ the fruit of Gorman's work in Paul's synergistic, participation in the suffering and conformity to Christ's death, without bifurcating or elevating the theological concepts of participation and justification above the other. Ben C. Blackwell rightly notes that ontological distinction needs to be maintained in a Pauline understanding of *theosis* between God and humanity as it would seem to contradict the monotheism inherent in the Shema (Deut 6:4).[33]

A comparative analysis between Philippians and other ancient works is important in that it helps situate Paul's Christocentric views on living and dying well within his first-century, Mediterranean *Sitz im Leben*. This comparative analysis elucidates the stark contrasts between Paul and the world

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[29] John Behr, *Becoming Human: Meditations on Christian Anthropology in Word and Image* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2013), 4.

[30] Allen Verhey, *The Christian Art of Dying: Learning from Jesus* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans. 2011), 99–104.

[31] N. T. Wright states, "Paul believes that apostolic life consists not only in *telling* people *about* the dying and rising of the Messiah, but also going through the process oneself." See Wright, *Paul and the Faithfulness of God*, 1:433, emphasis original. See also Jeremy Punt, "A Biblical Death-Wish: Paul Celebrating Dying in Phil 1:21," *Verbum et Ecclesia* 30.1 (2009): 202; and Thomas R. Schreiner, *Paul, Apostle of God's Glory in Christ* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2001), 25–26, 451.

[32] Jordan Cooper, *Christification: A Lutheran Approach to Theosis* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2014), 60.

[33] See Ben C. Blackwell, *Christosis: Pauline Soteriology in Light of Deification in Irenaeus and Cyril of Alexandria*, WUNT II/314 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2011), 267–68; and Blackwell, *Christosis: Engaging Paul's Soteriology with His Patristic Interpreters* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2016), xxii–iii.

around him. Such contrasts (as argued in this monograph) are the result of Paul's experience in his Damascus Road Christophany.

B. Review of Literature[34]

I. Monographs

1. John Behr, The Mystery of Christ *(2006)*[35]

Behr begins his monograph with an epigraph from a journal entry[36] by nineteenth-century existentialist Søren Kierkegaard (1813–1855), "We only understand life backwards, but we must live life forwards."[37] In other words, one comes to understand the purpose(s) in life retrospectively, however, one must live prospectively – toward the diachronic process of dying – and it is in this living toward the unforeseeable, opaque future (i.e., toward death) that one is in a position to "recognize the eschatological Lord."[38]

Behr describes his concise work as a systematic "account of Christian theology" based upon his earlier works, *The Way to Nicaea* (2001)[39] and *The Nicene Faith* (2004).[40] Behr's five chapters offer a whirlwind, theological journey through the Synoptics and the centrality of the cross (ch. 1), the complex process of canonization (ch. 2), the sinfulness of man and the power of the resurrection (ch. 3), the virgin Mary as mother of Christ and metaphor/symbol for the church (ch. 4), and lastly, glorifying God in life and death (ch. 5). Behr's thesis can perhaps be summarized as:

> [T]heology is a confession, witnessing to the transforming power of God manifest in Christ: Light in darkness, Life in death, Word in flesh. What history would record as Jesus being put to death, theology confesses to be the very victory over death by one who gave himself for the life of the world.[41]

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[34] This review of literature is not intended to be an exhaustive list of relevant works but is rather representational of important entry points to the contemporary discussion of Paul's conception of living and dying well. These works engage themes covered within this monograph, and/or have proven to set forth pervasive, formative views within the various circles of Pauline scholarship.

[35] John Behr, *The Mystery of Christ: Life in Death* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2006).

[36] Søren A. Kierkegaard, *Kierkegaard's Journals and Notebooks.* Søren Kierkegaard's Writings. 55 vols. (Copenhagen: Gad, 1997–), 2:179.

[37] Kierkegaard, *Journals*, 2:179.

[38] Kierkegaard, *Journals*, 2:179–83.

[39] John Behr, *The Way to Nicaea* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2001).

[40] Behr, *The Nicene Faith* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2004).

[41] Behr, *The Mystery of Christ*, 141.

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