Introduction

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Dr. Gregory J. Riley has been a staple in the Claremont community of religious studies for over two decades and has made essential contributions to biblical studies, not only through his academic interests and publications, but also with his countless hours in the classroom implanting the ideals of hard work and enthusiasm for the field into the minds of future religious leaders and academics. Throughout his tenure at the Claremont School of Theology, Claremont Graduate University, and The Episcopal Theological School at Claremont (Bloy House), Dr. Riley has taught courses and led seminars discussing nearly every aspect of the New Testament and the world in which it was produced.

Throughout his academic career, Riley has made a concerted effort to look beyond the New Testament and better understand the world in which its authors lived, in order to comprehend what they were writing and why they wrote it. This is clearly seen in his works such as Resurrection Reconsidered, The River of God, and One Jesus, Many Christs. The common thread throughout is that in order to fully comprehend Christianity, one must look beyond Palestine and Judaism to the Greeks, Romans, Egyptians, Babylonians, and Persians. It is just like Dr. Riley’s masterful metaphor of the river of God: as we follow it downstream, we see the impact each of these cultures have had as tributaries that lead into the river of God, which in turn has influenced the development of religion in general, and Christianity in particular.

Year after year, as new students enter Riley’s classroom, they not only increase their knowledge of the gospel of Jesus and the New Testament. More than that, he guides them through the world of the mighty heroes of the Homeric epics, the classical works of the Greek tragedians, the philosophical works of Plato, and the often-strange imaginations of the Gnostic writers. He helps his students see the important contributions that all of these made to what would later become Christianity. Riley is able to make these texts and their often-foreign ideas understandable to students who are encountering them for the first time and is able to spark the curiosity of many to continue their studies in these topics. This
expansive catalog of courses and topics that Dr. Riley has taught and studied can clearly be seen in the diverse topics that are taken up in this Festschrift.

Nicholas J. Frederick opens this work perfectly by discussing a phrase every student of Dr Riley has heard countless times in his lectures: the journey of the soul. In his essay, “The Journey of the Soul in Two Lucan Parables,” he examines this important concept through the lens of the parables of the good Samaritan and the prodigal son in the Gospel of Luke. He compares these parables with the Nag Hammadi writings the *Hymn of the Pearl* and *Exegesis on the Soul* and argues that the archetype of the journey of the soul is found in both these gospel parables.

Margaret Froelich continues our examination of the Synoptic Gospels by looking at the Gospel of Mark in her essay, “Kings of the Jews: Herodian Collaboration with Rome through a Markan Lens.” Froelich argues that if Mark is read as a political document with a specific emphasis on its use of the term βασιλεύς, it can be understood to compare Jesus and the Herodian dynasty. Mark does not use the personal name Antipas, but instead uses Herod as a dynastic name and portrays him as weak, cowardly, and violent, thus implanting these characteristics in the mind of his audience and making the entire dynasty a foil for the Jesus the true βασιλεύς.

Continuing on the theme of the Markan gospel, we are pleased to present the contribution of Dr. Riley’s colleague of over a decade in the New Testament department, Dennis R. MacDonald. In his essay, “Mark’s Transformation of the Love Commandment: Controversy in the Lost Gospel,” MacDonald provides detailed analysis and utilizes his Q+/Papias Hypothesis to determine that the exchange between Jesus and another teacher of the Mosaic law concerning the greatest commandment to conclude that this pericope was adopted by all three evangelists from Q/Q+.

James Van Dore concludes our Markan section by looking at Mark’s relationship with Q. Taking Harry T. Fleddermann’s reconstruction of Q as his starting point, Van Dore argues that it is nearly impossible to separate the Q from the Gospel of Mark unless one examines the longer passages, where multiple elements were collected into compositions; it is in these sections where parallel constructions and overlaps are found.

Thomas E. Phillips, another esteemed colleague of Dr. Riley’s in the New Testament department, agrees with Riley’s insistence on reading the New Testament as a product of the Greco-Roman world and uses this as a framework to better understand the Johannine pericope of the woman caught in adultery. In his essay, “A Woman Caught in Adultery? Or a Wandering Teacher Trapped Between Roman and Jewish Law?” Phillips argues that trying to understand this often-debated scene solely through a Jewish lens is not adequate. A full grasp of this scene requires Greco-Roman context. Phillips does this by examining the Roman laws concerning adultery as enunciated by Quintilian and Seneca and comparing them to the Mosaic Law, concluding that Jesus’s actions are consistent with the former.

Brett Provance’s essay, “Romans 1:26–27 in Its Rhetorical Tradition,” moves us away from the Gospels and towards Paul’s epistle to the Romans. In this essay, Provance examines one of the more controversial aspects that modern interpreters have used as an indictment against same-sex sexual activity. Provance argues that this interpretation is incorrect. After guiding the reader through similar passages in the Hebrew Bible pseudepigraphal writings, Provance concludes that in order to arrive at the optimal interpretation, we need to look at general rhetorical tradition of the dual-judgment topos.

Thomas A. Wayment’s essay, “New Directions in the Gospel of Thomas: Oxyrhynchus as Test Case,” moves us out of the canonical gospel and into the realm of Gnosticism. In particular, Wayment looks at the Gospel of Thomas, the topic of one of Riley’s earliest publications, *Resurrection Reconsidered*. Wayment considers the use of the Gospel of Thomas in the Oxyrhynchus Christian community by examining the physical evidence through a papyrological lens. Based on the evidence, Wayment concludes that the Gospel of Thomas was not read in public but instead was used in private settings.

Staying within the Gnostic realm of religious studies, L. Arik Greenberg leads the reader through an extensive study of the term “Son of Man” in his essay, “A Separate Son of Man.” By closely examining the use of the term in Q, Babylonian literature, the Enoch traditions, and the Gnostic/Thomas traditions, Greenberg comes to the conclusion that the Son of Man as a title existed separate from the Christian tradition. The early Jesus traditions were also familiar with this theological/apocalyptic figure and reimagined Jesus, incorporating it into his teachings. As time passed, the figure of Jesus and the Son of Man were conflated into the current traditions of Jesus referring to himself as the Son of Man.

We conclude this Festschrift with a contribution by Marvin E. Sweeney, another long-time colleague of Dr. Riley’s in the He-
brew Bible department. In his essay, “Eschatological Perspective in the Heikhalot Rabbiti,” Sweeney moves us further in time to the Tannaitic period and into the genre of hekhalot literature (i.e., the ascents to the heavenly palaces). Sweeney examines Heikhalot Rabbiti, one of the many hekhalot works, noting that scholars have debated the fundamental concern addressed in this text. Sweeney argues that this work is concerned with both the mystical experience of the sage and the interpretation of the Torah.

It is with great pleasure and pride that we present this collection of essays submitted by former students and current colleagues. It is our hope that these will add to the legacy that Dr. Riley has established of diligent and committed research in religious studies. Like the many influences that have added to the river of God through the centuries we, as dedicated scholars, hope to add to the scholarly conversations and make meaningful contributions to our various fields of studies. Dr. Riley has surely paved the way for us.

The “Journey of the Soul” in Two Lucan Parables
Nicholas J. Frederick

One of the revolutionary concepts theorized and developed by the ancient Greek philosophers was the immortality of the soul. Because the soul was immortal, it stood to reason that the soul was in the midst of a journey, with life on this world merely a temporary stop. The Greeks of Homer’s time had conceived of Hades as largely a place where the shades of men and women mingle, but without any teleological purpose. By the fourth century BCE however, Plato would challenge these beliefs and introduce a radical revision of the notion of both a pre-mortality and a post-mortality. For Plato, the soul was a resident of the realm of the absolute, the constant and the invariable. It was immortal, pure, and changeless. The soul existed before it came to earth, and thus when humanity “learns” something they are only recollecting or remembering something already learned in a prior state. According to Plato, once the soul is placed into a body of flesh it becomes tainted to a variable degree, and the fate of the soul upon death is a direct correlation to how much it is weighted down. So those who have cultivated gluttony while in the flesh assume the forms of donkeys upon their return to a carnal state. Those who lived good lives but were unable to gain any significant philosophical understanding return as wasps or even as people. Those who have been fortunate enough to encounter philosophy, however, may “attain to the divine nature.” In the Phaedrus, Plato beautifully illustrates this concept through the example of a charioteer, who guides the immortal soul into a cavalcade of gods and purified souls.

With an understanding that the soul has a pre-mortal and a

1 See, for example, the famous exchange between Odysseus and Achilles, upon the former meeting the latter in Hades: “No winning words about death to me, shining Odysseus! By god, I’d rather slave on earth for another man—Some dirt—poor tenant farmer who scrapes to keep alive—Than rule down here over all the breathless dead” (Homer, Od. 11: 554–558).
2 Plato, Phaed. 79d
3 Plato, Phaed. 82a-c
4 Plato, Phaedr. 246a-254e