

Living is Christ and Dying is Gain: Paul's Reimagining of Human Flourishing in Philippians

Gregory E. Lamb

Gregory E. Lamb is an adjunct professor of Greek at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, Wake Forest, North Carolina, where he is presently finishing his PhD, and a lead/solo Docent Group researcher. He has a wide range of scholarly interests and is a regular presenter at academic conferences such as SBL, AAR, and ETS, and has published articles in *Evangelical Missions Quarterly*, *Christian Education Journal*, *Presbyterion*, and *Word and World*. Gregory is also a bi-vocational minister at an historic church within the Sandy Creek Baptist Association of the Southern Baptist Convention, a husband, and father of five.

INTRODUCTION

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 *Maat* in Egyptian,³ and *ars vivendi/ars moriendi* in Latin⁴), has been a thematic thread that has woven its way throughout the warp and weft of the tapestry of human history. Bedrock to human existence are questions such as: "What does it mean to live and die well?"; and "What of human suffering and death?" Paul's Epistle to the Philippians, perhaps more than any other New Testament (NT) writing, succinctly addresses these questions and more.

While the term *εὐδαιμονία* is not found in Scripture, Jonathan Pennington contends that three additional terms in the NT can also convey the sense

of “human flourishing”:⁵ εἰρήνη (often glossed as “peace”),⁶ μακάριος (“blessed”/“happy”),⁷ and τέλειος (“complete”/“perfect”).⁸ Philippians is important for discussions of human flourishing because it, in its four brief chapters,⁹ contains four references to two of these three terms: εἰρήνη (1:2; 4:7, 9) and τέλειος (3:15) as evidenced in the table below:

Table 1: Occurrences of Εἰρήνη, Μακάριος, and Τέλειος in the Pauline Epistles (PE)¹⁰

<u>εἰρήνη</u>	<u>μακάριος</u>	<u>τέλειος</u>
Rom – 10x (in 16 chapters)	Rom – 3x (in 16 chapters)	Rom – 1x (in 16 chapters)
1 <u>Cor</u> – 4x (in 15 chapters)	1 <u>Cor</u> – 1x (in 15 chapters)	1 <u>Cor</u> – 3x (in 15 chapters)
2 <u>Cor</u> – 2x (in 13 chapters)	--	--
Gal – 3x (in 6 chapters)	--	--
Eph – 8x (in 6 chapters)	--	Eph – 1x (in 6 chapters)
Phil – 3x (in 4 chapters)	--	Phil – 1x (in 4 chapters)
Col – 2x (in 4 chapters)	--	Col – 2x (in 4 chapters)
1 <u>Thess</u> – 3x (in 5 chapters)	--	--
2 <u>Thess</u> – 3x (in 3 chapters)	--	--
1 Tim – 1x (in 6 chapters)	1 Tim – 2x (in 6 chapters)	--
2 Tim – 2x (in 4 chapters)	--	--
Titus – 1x (in 2 chapters)	Titus – 1x (in 2 chapters)	--
<u>Philemon</u> – 1x (in 1 chapter)	--	--
43 total occurrences in PE (92 total occurrences in NT)	7 occurrences in PE (50 total occurrences in NT)	8 total occurrences in PE (19 total occurrences in NT)

Moreover, in Philippians 1:21, it appears that Paul may¹¹ invoke concepts that were likely well-known to Gentile readers: the Aristotelian concept of “living well” (τὸ εὖ ζῆν),¹² which many scholars take to be synonymous with εὐδαιμονία,¹³ and Plato’s notion of death as a “wonderful gain” (θαυμάσιον κέρδος) to this life.¹⁴ Thus, while Pennington’s essay is a helpful start, Paul may be “echoing”¹⁵ additional terminology in Philippians relevant to human flourishing.

Tragically, it appears that some evangelical discussions of human flourishing have neglected or misread Paul, or at least certain of his letters. There are three chief areas in which this appears to be the case. First, despite Philippians’ seeming importance in obtaining a more fully-orbed understanding of human flourishing, Philippians has received relatively short shrift in this discussion. For example, John Frame only briefly references Philippians 1:21 on a scant three pages within his massive volume on the doctrine of Christian living, and thus, fails to exegete and wed the seminal passage of Philippians 1:21–26 to a theology of Christian living and dying.¹⁶ This omission is further elucidated in the seeming omission of Philippians in more recent discussions on the doctrine of Christian living in works such as

Scot McKnight and Joseph Modica's *The Apostle Paul and the Christian Life*,¹⁷ which offers chapters on Galatians and Ephesians, but omits Philippians.¹⁸ This essay seeks to address this problematic lacuna in scholarship.

Second, many contemporary scholars separate living and dying in their discussions of human flourishing, whereas Paul does not. Paul's synergistic conception of human flourishing is perhaps most readily seen in Philippians 1:21, which weds both aspects—living and dying—together in beautiful harmony.¹⁹ Such a superfluous separation is evinced in the aforementioned works by Frame (*The Doctrine of the Christian Life*), McKnight and Modica (*The Apostle Paul and the Christian Life*), as well as the monographs by Bradley Arnold (*Christ as the Telos of Life*),²⁰ and Alexander Kirk (*The Departure of an Apostle*),²¹ whose titles intentionally delimit the scope of their studies to either Paul's conception of living (Frame, McKnight and Modica, and Arnold) or dying (Kirk).

Such a separation of living and dying well stands in contradistinction to the imprisoned apostle described in Philippians whose post-Christophany, cruciform lifestyle was marked by pain, suffering, and seeing the process of dying—including the moment of physical death—as the very fulfillment/profit (κέρδος) of the Christ-centered life (2 Cor 11:23–28; Phil 1:21; 4:12).²² In Philippians 1:21, Paul elucidates that the diachronic processes of living and dying are inextricably linked and not separate, “either-or” processes. Rollin Ramsaran offers a helpful corrective when he baldly states, “Living is dying. This is to say that Paul's maxim [i.e., Phil 1:21] and exemplary argumentation forces one to consider the power of God as cruciform in shape.”²³ Michael Gorman echoes Ramsaran's view when Gorman defines the cruciform life, “[C]ruciformity is Paul's all-encompassing spirituality. It is the *modus operandi* of life in Christ.”²⁴ John Behr sees true humanity—true living—as coming through the process of dying. In his own words, “Christian life in this world is a continual practice of death, or rather, of life in death, taking up the Cross daily and laying down their life for others, considering themselves dead to this world, but alive in Christ Jesus.”²⁵

Such a superfluous bifurcation of living and dying also contradicts the evidence in ancient extra-canonical literature. For example, in *Apol.* 40C–41D, Plato also uses the Greek term κέρδος to convey that dying/death can be seen as a “gain” to this life when he writes,

For dying is either one of two things: either it is the state of senselessness, so that no one having died has any perception of anything, or (it is) as people are saying, a change and migration for the soul—hence, from this place to another place. And if (it is) but an exact state of senselessness, such as slumber whenever one is laying down to sleep and neither (having a) dream, nor seeing, then death would be a wonderful *gain* (emphasis added).

The concept of “dying as gain” also appears in Sophocles’s *Ant.* 461–64.²⁶ Many scholars note the seeming “echoes” between Philippians 1:21 and these ancient pagan works,²⁷ and such a separation of living and dying well often obscures these important connections.²⁸

Third and last, missing in every treatment of human flourishing and Paul is a thorough examination of the literary milieu surrounding Paul. The topic of living and dying well permeated the thoughts of the ancients, surely Paul was aware of it. It follows, therefore, that by comparing and contrasting Paul’s milieu we will get a better understating of the apostle’s concept. This literary lacuna is seen in the recent flood of publications that tend to read Paul against *either* Greco-Roman *or* Second Temple Jewish literature. This essay shall seek to bridge the gap in exploring Paul’s conception of human flourishing against the combined backdrop of Greco-Roman, Egyptian, and Second Temple Jewish literature to better account for the complexity within the first-century Mediterranean world.²⁹ For example, within Second Temple Jewish literature, human flourishing was often equated with *Torah* observance.³⁰ In ancient Egypt, conceptions of human flourishing often centered around obtaining an equilibrium of justice and the “moral ideal” in the cosmos (*Maat*).³¹ In the Greco-Roman literature, human flourishing was often associated with pursuing the love of wisdom (*philosophia*), pleasure (*voluptas*), and living a life and dying a death that promoted personal fame (*fama*) and glory (*gloria*).³² Today, many equate the “good life” with personal happiness,³³ or a lifestyle of autonomous wealth and abundance—devoid of pain and suffering.³⁴

Thus, the questions arise: how does Paul present human flourishing throughout Philippians, and how does such a view comport with the pagan and Second Temple Jewish conceptions of human flourishing that Paul may have been familiar with? What are some of the ways contemporary scholars imagine human flourishing, and what are the implications for the church today in light of Paul’s teachings? The thesis of this study is that Philippians

is central to Paul's articulation of human flourishing as a cruciform life, and that while he was surely aware of the topic in the cultures around him, Paul stands in stark contrast to them.

The remainder of this essay consists of four sections. Section one is an investigation of Paul's conception of human flourishing within Philippians—looking at the verses (Phil 1:2; 3:15; 4:7, 9) that include the key lexemes identified in Pennington's study as well as other lexemes/phrases that Paul may have employed to convey the theme of human flourishing. Section two will succinctly trace the theme of human flourishing within select Greco-Roman, Egyptian, and Second Temple Jewish (including the Greek Old Testament [OT]) works that may have been familiar to Paul. Section three is a brief investigation of the conceptions of human flourishing within the contemporary world, including the works of Miroslav Volf and Justin Crisp,³⁵ Jürgen Moltmann,³⁶ and Charles Taylor.³⁷ Sections two and three will begin with a brief introduction, a succinct survey of each of the works, and then a brief synthesis—sketching the findings of each section in comparison/contrast with Paul—will be made. The fourth and final section shall conclude with four key implications for contemporary Western Christians based on the findings of this study.

PAUL'S CONCEPTION OF HUMAN FLOURISHING WITHIN THE EPISTLE TO THE PHILIPPIANS

Introduction

For Paul, living (τὸ ζῆν) can be summarized in one word—Christ (Phil 1:21). Yet Paul's conception of human flourishing in Philippians is not merely delimited to Philippians 1:21. An investigation of human flourishing throughout the rest of the epistle shall now ensue.

Investigation of Εἰρήνη and Τέλειος in the Greek Text of Philippians

Εἰρήνη

Εἰρήνη occurs three times in Philippians 1:2; 4:7, 9, and is used by Paul to denote the communal human flourishing (*shalom*) sourced in God the Father and Christ (1:2),³⁸ the “peace that God has and gives” (4:7),³⁹ and to describe the attributes of God himself (4:9). Paul likely intends the social concept of εἰρήνη rooted in the LXX (see e.g., Judg 6:23; Ps 29:11) as peace

and flourishing in a relational sense with both God (see e.g., Rom 5:1) and humanity (see e.g., 1 Cor 7:15).⁴⁰ Given the dissension within the Philippian church, such communal flourishing is disrupted, since some have neglected to honor God by honoring the law of the neighbor (Lev 19:18) in regarding others more important than themselves (Phil 2:3). Hence, true peace/flourishing is described by Paul in Philippians in three key ways: (1) true peace/flourishing is sourced in God the Father and Christ; (2) it is given by God; and (3) it consists in the relational nature of who God is. So what of the adjective τέλειος?

Τέλειος

Τέλειος only occurs once in Philippians (3:15). In its immediate context, Paul invokes τέλειος to show the necessity of the collective group of Philippians to whom Paul is writing to be united in their thinking. This is underscored by Paul's repetition of φρονέω as well as his use of the singular demonstrative pronoun τοῦτο ("have this [singular] mind in you [collective]"). The result of such a singular, Christ-centered mindset can only be achieved, according to Paul, by those Philippians whom he considers "perfect"/"mature." While Paul conveys the sense of eschatological "perfection" in Philippians 3:12 through the perfect passive verb τετελείωμαι, Paul intends the concept of "spiritual maturity" in Philippians 3:15.⁴¹ Thus, Philippians 3:15 explains that those who "attained" such a unified status of maturity in Christ can flourish as long as they continue to live joined together in imitation (συμμιμηταί) of Jesus's/Paul's cruciform life (2:5; 3:16–17).

*Other Lexemes/Phrases Conveying the Theme of Human Flourishing in Philippians*⁴²

In addition to εἰρήνη and τέλειος, it appears that Paul may be using other lexemes and phrases in Philippians to convey the idea of human flourishing. The example of Philippians 1 1:21 in which Paul seems to echo the Aristotelian and Platonic notions of the good life as τὸ εὖ ζῆν and dying/death as θαυμάσιον κέρδος has already been noted above.

In Paul's opening remarks in Philippians 1:2, it seems that human flourishing includes a life that is filled with the grace (χάρις) and peace (εἰρήνη) that are sourced in God the Father and Christ. In Philippians, the nominal term χάρις appears three times (1:2, 7; 4:23), and the verbal cognate χαρίζομαι

occurs twice (1:29; 2:9).⁴³ In Philippians 1:7, Paul explains that human flourishing involves the communal sharing (συγκοινωνούς) of χάρις through the bearing of one another's burdens (Gal 6:2; Phil 2:3) and willingness to suffer for the cause of Christ. Paul's reference to χάρις in the last verse of Philippians 4:23 serves as a fitting bookend in harking back to Philippians 1:2. Moreover, Paul is exhorting the Philippians to have flourishing lives and relationships with one another despite the presence or impending likelihood of suffering and persecution. Such a fearless, selfless attitude is possible because of the example of self-emptying love Christ himself displayed to them on the cross (2:5–11).⁴⁴ Paul's use of the verbal form χαρίζομαι in Philippians 1:29; 2:9 repeats this theme of suffering in terms of a "graciously granted" reward in light of the Philippians' (1:29) and Christ's (2:9) willingness to suffer for the purposes of God. The agency of such a reward is not sourced within the Philippians themselves, as the aorist passive ἐχαρίσθη illustrates. Rather, the agent of the gracious reward of suffering in Philippians 1:29 is God (divine passive) "for the sake of Christ."⁴⁵

In Philippians 1:15 and 2:13, Paul also seems to convey human flourishing in terms of aligning one's own desires to the good will/pleasure of God (εὐδοκία). For Paul, a flourishing life is one that exalts Christ (μεγαλυνθήσεται Χριστός) whether through life or death (εἴτε διὰ ζωῆς εἴτε διὰ θανάτου; Phil 1:20; cf. Luke 1:46; Acts 10:46; 19:17). This is further confirmed in Paul's contrast of the articular infinitival phrases τὸ ζῆν Χριστός and τὸ ζῆν ἐν σαρκί (1:21–22), in which Paul describes dying and being "with Christ" as "exceedingly better."⁴⁶ However, Paul is not saying that he wishes to die to escape the suffering and pain of living in bonds as a prisoner. Rather, Paul desires to be "with Christ," but also sees the need to remain steadfast so that he can help restore unity within the Philippian congregation (1:24). Philippians 2:13 clarifies that God is the enabling source of humanity's "willing" and "working" for his good pleasure (τῆς εὐδοκίας).

Paul's repeated references to χαρά/χαίρω also seem to connote the idea of human flourishing in Philippians. The concept of "joy"/"rejoicing" is a pervasive theme weaving its way throughout the tapestry of Philippians.⁴⁷ In the fourteen occurrences of χαρά/χαίρω in Philippians,⁴⁸ at least three common denominators seem to emerge: (1) that such joy is not individualistic, but flows out of living together in community (see κοινωνία and πολιτεύομαι in 1:5, 27; 2:1; 3:10); (2) that Paul's rejoicing was centered in Christ (1:18;

3:1; 4:4, 10); and lastly, (3) that Paul's rejoicing often involved suffering, even unto death (2:17–18). Thus, Paul depicts human flourishing in terms of joy/rejoicing as a community of believers in Christ who are willing to suffer (even to the point of martyrdom) for the gospel of Christ.

The final lexeme to be studied in this section is *κοινωνία* (cf. *συγκοινωνός* and *συγκοινωνέω*). *Κοινωνία* occurs three times in Philippians (1:5; 2:1; 3:10), and is found in all four letters of the Hauptbriefe—indicating its importance to Paul for the churches he planted. For Paul, human flourishing is living in communal partnerships centered in the gospel of Christ (1:5). Such partnerships extend horizontally (to others) as well as vertically (to God) as the Holy Spirit partners with believers who are “in Christ” to effect God's purposes on earth (2:5). Philippians 3:10 reveals the common thread of suffering, as human flourishing involves not only knowing Christ and “the power of his resurrection,” but also involves a participatory fellowship (*κοινωνία*) in Christ's sufferings. In other words, Paul presents human flourishing in Philippians in a thoroughly cruciform shape. The churches Paul planted were “colonies of ‘cruciformity,’” and Philippians beckons contemporary churches to become the same.⁴⁹

Synthesis

While Philippians 1:21 is perhaps Paul's most succinct and theologically-rich portrayal of human flourishing in all the PE, Paul also employs in Philippians two of the three terms highlighted in Pennington's study: *εἰρήνη* and *τέλειος*. Despite the variegated usage of *εἰρήνη* and *τέλειος* in Philippians and throughout the PE, there are at least two commonalities: the necessity of unity in communal flourishing as well as the fact that God alone is the source of all peace/perfection.

There are additional terms in Philippians that seemingly connote the idea of human flourishing such as: *εὐδοκία*; *χάρις/χαρίζομαι*; *χαρά/χαίρω*; and *κοινωνία*. Paul's usage of these terms repeats many of the same concepts embedded within Philippians 1:21: (1) the inseparable nature of human living, suffering, and dying; (2) that Christians should not fear death, but rather see it in terms as the gain or fulfillment to human life; (3) that all human flourishing is sourced in and centered on God the Father and Christ; and (4) that human flourishing is commensurate with cruciformity—living and dying well involves denying self, taking up the cross, and following Jesus (Mark

8:34). This essay will now turn to investigate other Greco-Roman writings that may illuminate Paul's understanding of human flourishing in Philippians.

CONCEPTIONS OF HUMAN FLOURISHING WITHIN GRECO-ROMAN LITERATURE

Introduction

This second section will explore the theme of human flourishing across various ancient literary works. Two important Greco-Roman literary works will be surveyed including: a fourth-century BC Greek text from Aristotle (*Nicomachean Ethics*) and a first-century BC Latin epistle from Cicero (*De finibus*⁵⁰). These writers and their respective works were highly popular and represent pervasive pagan views on human flourishing that Paul may have encountered while in Philippi.

*Conceptions of Human Flourishing within Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics*⁵¹

Aristotle (384–322 BC), the famous philosopher and ethicist, was a pupil of Plato, instructed Alexander the Great, son of Philip II, and established the Lyceum in Athens, a school of philosophy later left to his successor Theophrastus.⁵² In *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle is arguing that the highest goal for humanity is to be “happy” (εὐδαιμονίαν; *Eth. nic.* 1.4.2) and asks whether or not there is a common goal or object of happiness that is the same for all.

While Aristotle sees εὐδαιμονία as the highest good one can achieve in life, Aristotle declares that εὐδαιμονία is synonymous with two other terms/phrases (τὸ . . . εὖ ζῆν, and τὸ εὖ πράττειν) when he writes,

[B]oth the multitude and persons of refinement speak of it [i.e., the “highest good”] as “Happiness,” [εὐδαιμονίαν] and conceive “living well” [τὸ δ’ εὖ ζῆν] or “practicing well” [τὸ εὖ πράττειν] to be the same thing as “being happy” [τῷ εὐδαιμονεῖν]. But what constitutes happiness is a matter of dispute; and the popular account of it is not the same as that given by the philosophers. Ordinary people identify it with some obvious and visible good, such as pleasure or wealth or honor—some say one thing and some another, indeed very often the same man says different things at different times: when he falls sick he thinks health is happiness, when he is poor, wealth (*Eth. nic.* 1.4.2–3).

So while, Aristotle sees the concepts of εὐδαιμονίαν, τὸ . . . εὖ ζῆν, and

τὸ εὖ πράττειν as synonymous, he claims that there is some subjectivity in considering what human flourishing means. Moreover, Aristotle claims that conceptions of human flourishing can change over time and circumstance depending on the experience of the individual: in sickness, flourishing means health; in poverty, flourishing means wealth; and in hunger, flourishing means an abundant feast.

Conceptions of Human Flourishing Within Cicero's De Finibus⁵³

Marcus Tullius Cicero (106–43 BC) was a soldier, jurist, politician, and orator, as well as a prolific epistolographer with many of his best known works happily preserved.⁵⁴ Cicero is important for NT studies primarily due to the fact that Cicero is widely considered to be the “most important letter writer of antiquity.”⁵⁵ Some scholars, such as P. L. Schmidt and Hans-Josef Klauck, argue that Cicero was “the ‘first to make letter writing a potential literary genre even if unwittingly and unwillingly.’”⁵⁶ In *De finibus*, Cicero sets forth a treatise on his theory of ethics, and critiques the three most important and pervasive ethical systems of Cicero’s day: Epicureanism, Stoicism, and the Academy.

In *Fin.* 4.16, Cicero presents human flourishing as a form of “self-preservation” when he writes,

Every natural creature aims at being its own “self-preserved,” so as to secure its safety and also its preservation true to its specific type. With this object, they declare, humanity has called in the aid of the arts also to assist nature; and primary among them is counted the art of living [*vivendi ars*], which helps humanity to guard the gifts that nature has bestowed and to obtain those that are lacking.

Cicero continues this anthropocentric understanding of human flourishing and concludes, “[S]o, the art of living [*vivendi ars*] is Prudence [*prudentia*]” (*Fin.* 5.16–17). In this sense, human flourishing is thoroughly naturalistic and anthropocentric as humanity, according to Cicero, holds its future and preservation in its own hands. Moreover, in Cicero’s schema, human flourishing is reduced to the mere attainment of *prudentia* (i.e., “practical wisdom”⁵⁷).

Synthesis

In this brief survey of Aristotle and Cicero, human flourishing has been presented in variegated ways. Human flourishing is subjective and based upon attainment of “happiness” in Aristotle’s purview. For Cicero, human flourishing is the anthropocentric desire of self-preservation and attainment of practical wisdom. Despite their own unique perspectives, there are at least two commonalities within these two writers’ conceptions of human flourishing: (1) that human flourishing is anthropocentric; and (2) that human flourishing deals with the attainment of wisdom or practical knowledge.

Aristotle’s flexible understanding of human flourishing stands in stark contrast to Paul’s bold and unshifting declaration “living/flourishing (is) Christ” (τὸ ζῆν) in Philippians 1:21. Moreover, Cicero’s understanding of human flourishing contrasts Paul who sees God as the creator, giver, and sustainer of all life (Acts 17:24–29). Rather than seeing the attainment of wisdom as the primary means of human flourishing, Paul decries any benefit to worldly philosophy and self-centric attainments in life in comparison to knowing Christ (1 Cor 2:2; Phil 3:8). This essay will now turn to an investigation of the ancient Egyptian literature.

CONCEPTIONS OF HUMAN FLOURISHING WITHIN EGYPTIAN LITERATURE

Introduction

This section will investigate the concept of human flourishing (known in Egyptian as “Maat”) in two key Egyptian works. The first will be *The Book of the Dead* or *Coming Forth by Day* as it is also known (dating perhaps to the first dynasty 4266 BC).⁵⁸ The second body of Egyptian literature to be investigated is the *Papyri Graecae Magicae* (*Greek Magical Papyri*; hereinafter abbreviated *PGM*), a body of papyri originating between the second century BC to fifth century AD from within Greco-Roman Egypt.⁵⁹

Conceptions of Human Flourishing Within the Egyptian The Book of the Dead

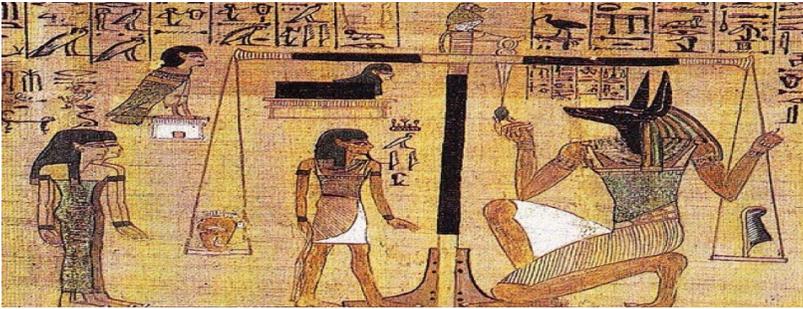
The Book of the Dead is the name given by Egyptologists to a collection of mortuary spells that depict the Egyptian concern for the preservation of their bodies for the afterlife. It is a type of “instruction manual” for the dead. Archaeology has shown that such instruction manuals were read by

“priests of the *ka*”⁶⁰ in order to give sacrifices and pay homage to the dead.⁶¹

One such text within *The Book of the Dead* (*The Book of the Dead of Nesikhonsu, a Priestess of Amen*) begins, “This holy god, the lord of all the gods, Amen-Ra, the lord of the throne of the two lands, the governor of Apt; the holy soul who came into being in the beginning; the great god who liveth by (or upon) Maat.”⁶² So, according to the Egyptian cult, Maat was the *modus operandi* of Ra and other deities within the Egyptian pantheon. Such deities “lived” by the ethical standard set forth in the concept of Maat. In a section of the *Book of Breathings*, the writer further elucidates the Maatian concept of human flourishing:

Hail, ye gods who are in the Tuat, hearken ye unto the voice of Osiris Kerasher . . . and let him come before you, for there is neither any evil . . . nor any sin . . . with him, and no accuser can stand [before him]. He liveth upon Maat, he feedeth upon Maat, and he hath satisfied the heart of the gods by all that he hath done. He hath given food to the hungry, and water to the thirsty, and clothes to the naked. He hath made offerings to the gods, and to the Khus, and no report whatsoever hath been made against him before the gods.⁶³

In this text, Maat is a mode of sustenance—something to be lived and fed upon. Maat is brought about in selfless acts of generosity: giving food to the hungry, water to the thirsty, clothes to the naked (cf. Matt 25:35–46; Gal 6:2; Phil 2:3). Maat also results in obeisance to the gods. In a final passage within *The Book of the Dead*, the writer exhorts the deceased to chant, “I live in right and truth [Maat] and I have my being therein.”⁶⁴ So not only is Maat the ethical standard of the gods, but is also the standard by which all souls trying to surmount the obstacles within the afterlife will be judged as the illustration below highlights.⁶⁵



Conceptions of Human Flourishing Within the Papyri Graecae Magicae⁶⁶

The extant PGM represent a much larger body of ancient magical spells that were suppressed or destroyed. Acts 19:19 documents such a destruction of pagan magical literature. Suetonius also notes the destruction of such books by Augustus (*Aug.* 1.1).⁶⁷ What is illustrated in the PGM is a process of syncretistic Hellenization that included, “[T]he egyptianizing of Greek religious tradition. The Greek magical papyri contain many instances of such egyptianizing transformations, which take very different forms in different texts or layers of tradition.”⁶⁸

In PGM IV.2170–77, human flourishing is depicted as the individualistic acquisition of power, invulnerability, esteem, and honor,

All will fear you; in battle you will be invulnerable; when you ask you will receive; you will enjoy favor; your life will change; and you will be loved by any woman or man you have contact with. You will have honor, happiness [μακάριος]; you will receive inheritances, have good fortune [εὐτυχήσεις], be unaffected by potions and poison; you will conquer spells and will conquer (your) enemies.

Despite the fact that this is technically not an anthropocentric conception of human flourishing, as the rewards are given from the gods, it is clearly self-centric and unlike the communal flourishing depicted in Maat. The PGM depict a hybrid, syncretistic understanding of flourishing in which the self-centric, Greco-Roman ideals of gloria, fama, and potestas (power) are blended together with the ancient Egyptian cult of Maat to form an “updated,” “Hellenized” religion.

Synthesis

In *The Book of the Dead*, human flourishing was clearly grounded in the ethical, theocentric, concept of Maat. Maat was “a great gift of god,”⁶⁹

and was centered on the flourishing and generalized reciprocity by the wealthy necessary for the flourishing of a limited-goods society (*Book of the Breathings*). In contrast to this others-centric conception of human flourishing in Maat is the PGM's self-centric portrayal of human flourishing that aligns with much of what is seen above in the Greco-Roman literature.

While the stress of wisdom is not as prevalent in the PGM as it is in Cicero, the affinities of the PGM clearly betray the syncretistic influence of Hellenization. Such a Hellenistic conception of human flourishing stands in contradistinction to Paul who adopts a selfless understanding of human flourishing. Rather than existing for the attainment of power, titles, and fame, Paul defines living and dying well in terms of cruciformity.

There are a couple of similarities between Paul's conception of human flourishing and that of Maat. First, both Pauline and Maatian conceptions of human flourishing are theocentric (albeit, Paul's source for human flourishing is the God of the Bible, whereas the Maatian concept is focused on the Egyptian pantheon). Second, at times, the ethics of Maat seem to comport with some of the ethical teachings of Scripture (e.g., the care for the neighbor [Lev 19:18] and the poor/needy [Prov 14:21; Matt 25:35–46]). However, there are at least two key differences between the Pauline and Maatian conceptions of human flourishing. First, Paul adopts an others-centric stance, whereas Maat is performed to ultimately benefit one's own self. Second, Paul does not see human flourishing as a works-based method of salvation (see e.g., Eph 2:8–9), but *The Book of the Dead* clearly illustrates human flourishing (Maat) as being proportionate to the amount of good works performed in one's lifetime.

CONCEPTIONS OF HUMAN FLOURISHING WITHIN SECOND TEMPLE JEWISH LITERATURE

Introduction

This section will consist in two parts. Part one will investigate select passages from the Greek OT (LXX) that employ the three terms conveying human flourishing (εἰρήνη, μακάριος, and τέλειος) as referenced in Pennington's study above. While an exhaustive analysis of these terms within the OT is beyond the scope of this study, this section will briefly investigate passages from each section of the *Tanakh* (i.e., the *Torah*, *Nevi'im*, and *Ketuvim*) that

contain clusters of these terms. Part two will investigate two key writings (Philo's *De Specialibus Legibus* also known as *On Special Laws* and Josephus's *Jewish Antiquities*) from within the vast corpus of non-canonical Greco-Jewish writings. The primary reason for selecting these writings is their treatment of the concept of human flourishing as τὸ εὖ ζῆν and εὐδαιμονία.

Part 1: Conceptions of Human Flourishing Within Select Passages from the LXX⁷⁰

Select Passages from the Torah

In the *Torah* or written law, the term εἰρήνη is employed in Leviticus 26:6 and Numbers 6:26 to indicate that all human flourishing is theocentric in that it is sourced in YHWH. The *Torah* presents Israel as μακάριος in Deuteronomy 33:29 due to its salvation by YHWH. The term τέλειος occurs less frequently than εἰρήνη and μακάριος in the OT, but appears in Genesis 6:9 and Deuteronomy 18:13 in the context of Noah's (Gen 6:9) and the Israelites' (Deut 18:13) "blameless" status before God and others. This view of human flourishing echoes the Egyptian concept of Maat. Interestingly, the immediate context of Deuteronomy 18:13 discusses warnings against oracles (μαντεῖαν), magic (φαρμακός), spell conjuring (ἐπαείδων), and consulting the dead (τερατοσκόπος ἐπερωτῶν τοὺς νεκρούς), which are well-attested practices within the Egyptian literature (especially the PGM).⁷¹

Select Passages from the Nevi'im

The books of the *Nevi'im* (Prophets) present human flourishing as εἰρήνη in sundry passages. Judges presents εἰρήνη as the flourishing that exists horizontally between humanity (Judg 4:17), and vertically in God (Judg 6:24). This concept is repeated in 1–2 Kings (1 Kgs 2:13; 2 Kgs 4:26). Samuel explains the horizontal flourishing of εἰρήνη that exists between individuals and people groups (1 Sam 7:14). Isaiah presents εἰρήνη as the reward for obedience to God's commands (Isa 48:18; 57:2), and the instruction of *Torah* to the children of the next generation (Isa 54:13). Jeremiah reveals the communal nature of εἰρήνη as he exhorts the exiles to seek peace for the city of their captivity (Jer 36:7). The term μακάριος is not as common in the *Nevi'im* as it is in the *Ketuwim*, but is found in Isaiah 31:9 to show the character of God in Zion, and in Isaiah 56:2 to show the reward of human flourishing for *Torah*-keeping. Daniel 12:12 invokes μακάριος

as the reward for those persevering in God's promises. The term τέλειος is used in the *Nevi'im* to show the negative (1 Kgs 15:3) and positive (1 Kgs 15:14) effects for those who either choose to reject *Torah* or keep it. Τέλειος also occurs in the negative sense in Jeremiah 13:19 to describe the totality of the exile for Judah.

Select Passages from the Ketuvim

Similar to Judges and 1–2 Kings, 1–2 Chronicles depict εἰρήνη as the flourishing that exists horizontally between humanity (1 Chr 12:19), and vertically in God (2 Chr 34:28). The Psalmist describes the flourishing that comes through εἰρήνη as sourced in God (Ps 4:9; 28:11). Psalm 118:165 also presents human flourishing through εἰρήνη as a reward for those who love (i.e., keep) the *Torah*. Proverbs 3:17, 23 explains that the paths of Wisdom are εἰρήνη. Human flourishing as μακάριος is found throughout the Psalms and Proverbs to denote the reward of *Torah*-keeping and taking refuge in YHWH.⁷² There is also the communal aspect of flourishing through caring for the poor (Ps 40:2), as well as the rearing of sons (Ps 126:5), and vocation (Ps 127:2). Like 1 Kings 15:3, 14, the term τέλειος is used in the *Ketuvim* to show the negative (Ps 138:2) and positive (1 Chr 28:9) effects for those who either choose to reject *Torah* or keep it.

Part 2: Conceptions of Human Flourishing Within the Non-Canonical Greco-Jewish Writings

*Conceptions of Human Flourishing within Philo's De Specialibus Legibus*⁷³

In the Greco-Jewish writings of Philo (*Spec. Laws* 1.339), the Alexandrian Jewish historian (ca. 20 BC–50 AD),⁷⁴ one sees the Aristotelian/Platonic concept of τὸ εὖ ζῆν employed in the consideration of the physical senses (sight and hearing) which foster the attainment of philosophy (φιλοσόφων), and, thus, the “good life” (τὸ εὖ ζῆν). Interestingly, in *Spec. Laws* 1.337, Philo makes a technical distinction between the physical senses (smell and taste) necessary for living (τοῦ ζῆν) and those senses (sight and hearing) required for living well (τοῦ καλῶς ζῆν). Those senses (sight and hearing) which enable the attainment of philosophy are of higher value to Philo for human flourishing.

*Conceptions of Human Flourishing within Josephus's Jewish Antiquities*⁷⁵

The importance of Josephus, the Jewish historian (37 AD ca.-100 AD),⁷⁶

for biblical studies can hardly be overestimated. His numerous extant works help illuminate many concepts and figures within the NT, the Greco-Jewish, and Greco-Roman world. Josephus has also been shrouded in controversy as many doubt the trustworthiness of his writings.⁷⁷ Nevertheless, Josephus stands as an important figure in understanding first-century Jewish conceptions of human flourishing. In *Ant.* I.223, Josephus casts human flourishing in terms of εὐδαιμονία in describing Abraham's happiness as being due to his zeal in following God and the prospect of leaving his son, Isaac, unharmed when he died. Moreover, Abraham's human flourishing was sourced in God (*Ant.* I:224; cf. *Ant.* I.155). Yet in *Ant.* XVI.36, Josephus adopts an anthropocentric understanding of εὐδαιμονία and attributes human flourishing to King Agrippa. Whether this is evidence of a discrepancy within Josephus's writings, or written out of political convenience is unknown.

Synthesis

Despite the variegated portrayal of human flourishing from within the Greek OT, human flourishing can be summarized by three main motifs. First, all human flourishing is ultimately sourced in God (see e.g., Lev 26:6). Second, human flourishing is often equated with *Torah*-keeping (see e.g., Isa 56:2). Third and last, human flourishing is both communal (others-centric) and generative in that the future generations (sons) are important for the continued flourishing of the religious community (see e.g., Ps 40:2; 125:4–5).

In part two, the extra-canonical works, human flourishing was portrayed by Philo in terms of τὸ εὖ ζῆν and the Hellenistic attainment of wisdom. Josephus sent mixed signals throughout *Jewish Antiquities*—taking a theocentric view of human flourishing as εὐδαιμονία in some sections, and an anthropocentric approach in others.

How does Paul compare? While Paul agrees with Greek OT passages above that human flourishing is sourced in God (theocentric) and communal in nature, Paul is reticent to equate *Torah*-keeping with human flourishing. It is important to note that Paul does not abrogate the *Torah* in his writings, and, in 2 Timothy 3:16,⁷⁸ Paul sees all the OT Scriptures (πᾶσα γραφή)—including the *Torah*—as “inspired by God” or “God-breathed” (θεόπνευστος). However, for Paul, human flourishing is not gained through

Torah-keeping, as sinful humanity cannot perfectly keep the law (Rom 3:19–23). Rather, for Paul, the *Torah* serves as a type of “pedagogue” (παιδαγωγός) to teach sinful humanity their need for Christ (Gal 3:24). Philo’s Hellenistic understanding of human flourishing as the attainment of wisdom and Josephus’s passages that posit an anthropocentric view of human flourishing (true flourishing comes from the worldly leaders) is antithetical to Paul’s Christocentric, cruciform view. Now that the survey of ancient works is complete, this essay will investigate contemporary views on human flourishing.

CONCEPTIONS OF HUMAN FLOURISHING WITHIN THE CONTEMPORARY WORLD

Introduction

This third section will briefly survey the recent works of some of the leading contemporary writers on human flourishing including: Miroslav Volf, Justin Crisp, Jürgen Moltmann, and Charles Taylor. While some focus on the value of joy (so Crisp), others on the need for religion (so Volf), and still others on the problem of a diminished, humanistic conception of living (so Moltmann), one fact remains clear—there is no shortage of opinions on the important topic of human flourishing. While a full-length review of each work is beyond the scope of this essay, this section will identify and engage the central tenet(s) of each work.

Joy and Human Flourishing (2015)

This anthology of writers, ranging from Volf and Crisp to Moltmann and N. T. Wright, argues as one of its central theses that, “[J]oy stands at the very core of Christian faith, life, and practice, and that the dearth of sustained scholarly reflection on joy has left theologians bereft of a key resource for articulating a compelling vision of the good life capable both of pushing against the tide of suffering and of resisting the shifting tides of a culture unmoored from transcendence.”⁷⁹ While Paul’s Epistle to the Philippians does highlight the centrality of joy in the Christian life (see above), such joy does not necessarily “push against the tide of suffering” as Volf and Crisp suggest. Rather, such suffering for the cause of Christ allows Paul to rejoice in exuberant fashion (Phil 3:10; 4:4–12).

The Living God and the Fullness of Life (2015)

Moltmann states that his goal in writing is to, “[P]resent a transcendence that does not suppress and alienate our present life but that liberates and gives life a transcendence from which we do not need to turn away, but that fills us with the joy of life.”⁸⁰ Moltmann’s thesis can be perhaps summarized as, “The modern world takes its bearings from humanistic and naturalistic concepts of life, and in so doing, what it experiences is a diminished life. Christian life takes its bearing from the ‘living God,’ and in doing so, it experiences the fullness of life.”⁸¹ Moltmann’s tightly-knit, and carefully-worded thesis finds many resonances with Paul in Philippians: a rejection of humanistic/naturalistic modes of living; the centrality of the resurrected Christ; and the fullness of joy that comes as a result of being in Christ.

A Secular Age (2007)

In *A Secular Age*, Taylor argues that there are three dimensions in which religion should be seen as going “beyond” (i.e., transcending). The most important of these three, argues Taylor, is “[T]he sense that there is some good higher than, beyond human flourishing.”⁸² For Taylor, such a good is the transformative Christian concept of, “[A]gape, the love God has for us, and which we can partake of through his power.”⁸³ Taylor rightly sees the problem of separating living from dying in human flourishing when he writes, “Modern humanism tends to develop a notion of human flourishing which has no place for death. Death is simply the negation, the ultimate negation, of flourishing; it must be combated, and held off till the very last moment.”⁸⁴

There is much to commend in Taylor’s conception of human flourishing: that basic, self-centric notions of human flourishing are insufficient; the importance of agape in all aspects of living and dying; and that living and dying are inextricably linked when it comes to human flourishing. However, Taylor perhaps overstates his case regarding the need to go beyond human flourishing. The Westminster Shorter Catechism declares that the chief end of man is not self-centric “human flourishing” as the pagans have claimed, but “to glorify God and to enjoy him forever.” Biblically, human flourishing is the story of God enacting his redemptive purposes on earth. When one sees human flourishing through the lens of the grand narrative of Scripture, there is no need to go “beyond” human flourishing. Rather, one should reimagine erroneous understandings of human flourishing to comport with the teachings of Scripture.

Synthesis

In this short survey of contemporary conceptions of human flourishing, it is perhaps Taylor and Moltmann who give the most illuminating window into Western culture. Volf and Crisp rightly focus on joy, but lamentably remove human flourishing from suffering and dying in a way that is alien to Paul's conception in Philippians. Each of these works have their merits (such as N. T. Wright's helpful discussion of Philippians in *Joy and Human Flourishing*⁸⁵), but none adequately capture Paul's portrayal of human flourishing within Philippians.

Concluding Remarks

Human flourishing is one of the few meta-themes that has pervasively transcended time and culture, and, as Taylor has rightly said, "Every person, and every society, lives with or by some conception(s) of what human flourishing is: what constitutes a fulfilled life? what makes life really worth living? What would we most admire people for?"⁸⁶

Given the findings above, a few implications for the contemporary church are in order. Further exploration is critically needed in these areas for Christians to be faithfully engaged in the *missio Dei*. First, human flourishing, as presented by Paul, is not subjective. Paul grounds his conception of human flourishing in the cruciform example of Christ. Every human life, as a bearer of God's image, matters to God (Gen 1:26–27), not just the elite or wise.

Second, human flourishing is not anthropocentric; it is theocentric. Despite humanity's attempts to become what Adam Smith has famously called "masters of mankind,"⁸⁷ Paul clearly squares human flourishing as God's good gift in Christ, and not something humanity creates.

Third, Paul couches his discussion of human flourishing in terms of cruciform living and dying.⁸⁸ Human flourishing does not always involve "happiness" or "good fortune." For Paul, cruciform living often involved suffering for the gospel. Contra many conceptions of human flourishing within ecclesial circles as "health and wealth,"⁸⁹ Paul presents a Christocentric conception of flourishing that rejoices in all circumstances—both positive and negative (Phil 4:4–12). Western Christians must think deeply and biblically through what it means to both live *and* die well in a culture that eschews any form of suffering and death.⁹⁰ Pastors should help

their congregations recover a robust theology of Christian suffering and dying from Scripture.

Fourth and last, Paul's understanding of human flourishing is steeped in communal living where the other is regarded more highly than self (Phil 1:24, 27; 2:3). Churches should strive to build every-member ministries that provide avenues of opportunities to all congregants (and other Christ-centered congregations) to become actively engaged in God's mission in their homes, communities, and around the globe. Christians should live with open hands and open hearts in portraying the radical, cruciform generosity exemplified by Christ and Paul.⁹¹

Humanity's conception of human flourishing is shaped both individually (through one's own unique life experiences) and corporately (through the various social and religious communities to which one subscribes). For the contemporary church to be a winsome witness to its surrounding cultures, Christians must, like Paul, deconstruct and confront views on human flourishing that contradict the teachings of Scripture.

¹ The theme of "human flourishing" has become a pervasively popular topic in theological/biblical studies 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 essay, 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 *ibid.*; Daniel N. Robinson, *Aristotle's Psychology* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 1999), 99–101; John Finnis, *Natural Law and Natural Rights* (2nd ed.; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 103; and cf. Henry George Liddell and Robert Scott, "εὐδαιμονία," in *A Greek-English Lexicon* (ed. Henry Stuart Jones, 9th rev. ed.; Oxford: Clarendon, 1996), 708 (hereinafter abbreviated LSJ).

³ Maat was seen as both a feminine deity as well as a philosophical way of life. See R. A. Armour, *Gods and Myths of Ancient Egypt* (Cairo and New York, NY: The American University in Cairo Press, 2016), 133.

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

⁵ Jonathan T. Pennington, "A Biblical Theology of Human Flourishing," n.p. Institute for Faith, Work & Economics. <http://tifwe.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/Pennington-A-Biblical-Theology-of-Human-Flourishing.pdf>.

⁶ W. Bauer et al, "εἰρήνη," in *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (3rd ed.; Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 287–88 (hereinafter abbreviated BDAG).

⁷ *Ibid.*, "μακάριος," 610–11.

⁸ Ibid., “τέλειος,” 995–96.

⁹ Statistically speaking, Romans and 1 Corinthians are the only epistles containing all of Pennington’s three terms. However, they are also the two largest of Paul’s letters—consisting of a total of thirty-one chapters. These three terms occur a total of fifty-eight times in the Pauline Epistles (hereinafter abbreviated PE) or 36.0 percent of the total occurrences in the NT. In terms of the *Hauptbriefe* in the PE, Romans accounts for 24.1 percent of these fifty-eight occurrences. Both letters taken together within the Corinthian correspondence only account for 17.2 percent. Galatians contains only three instances of the term εἰρήνη for a total of 5.2 percent. Among the remaining undisputed Pauline letters (Philippians, 1 Thessalonians, and Philemon), only Philippians has two of Pennington’s three terms for human flourishing (εἰρήνη and τέλειος) and accounts for 6.9 percent in only four chapters.

¹⁰ Lexical data was derived from Andreas Köstenberger and Raymond Bouchoc, *The Book Study Concordance of the Greek New Testament* (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman, 2003).

¹¹ The qualifier “may” is key, as it is impossible to speak dogmatically regarding the influence these texts 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. Sarah Ruden argues for the validity of reading Paul within his cultural milieu, “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.” See Sarah Ruden, *Paul Among the People: The Apostle Reinterpreted and Reimagined in His Own Time* (New York, NY: Pantheon, 2010), 4–5.

¹² Author’s translation. Unless otherwise noted, all English translations of the primary sources (biblical and extra-biblical) are author’s own. In Phil 1:21, Paul also uses the articular infinitive τὸ ζῆν to convey the essence of living. Cf. Aristotle’s *Eth. nic.* 6.S.1140a25–28.

¹³ See e.g., John M. Cooper, *Reason and Human Good in Aristotle* (Indianapolis, IN and Cambridge: Hackett, 1986), 111.

¹⁴ In his *Apol.* 40C–41D, Plato (like Paul) uses the Greek term κέρδος to explain that death can be seen as a “gain” to this life.

¹⁵ This nomenclature invokes Richard B. Hays’s study, *Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul* (New Haven, CT and London: Yale University Press, 1989). In this work, Hays argues (pp. 2, 5) that Paul did not see 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). 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 γραφὰς (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, NT scholar 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 2, Reihe 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). As a result, Paul would have likely been familiar with the influential traditions driving the worldviews of those whom he was trying to reach with the gospel of Christ as his putative quotations of Greco-Roman writers illustrates (see e.g., Paul’s seeming use of the Cretan philosopher Epimenides in Titus 1:12).

¹⁶ John M. Frame, *The Doctrine of the Christian Life* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2008), 1065.

¹⁷ Scot McKnight and Joseph B. Modica, eds., *The Apostle Paul and the Christian Life: Ethical and Missional Implications of the New Perspective* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2016).

¹⁸ Ibid., vii–viii. Given the lexical data in Table 1, this is all the more surprising as, statistically speaking,

- Philippians is more “pregnant” than Galatians with the biblical terms often invoked in discussions of living and dying well.
- ¹⁹ The Greek text ἐμοὶ γὰρ τὸ ζῆν Χριστὸς καὶ τὸ ἀποθανεῖν κέρδος can be translated “For me, living (is) Christ and dying (is) gain.”
- ²⁰ While Arnold does include the topics of shame, suffering, and the summum bonum (i.e., the “highest good”) in his index of subjects, the subjects of dying and death are conspicuously absent. Moreover, Arnold intentionally limits the scope of his study to viewing Paul through a Greco-Roman lens. See Bradley Arnold, *Christ as the Telos of Life: Moral Philosophy, Athletic Imagery, and the Aim of Philippians* (WUNT 2, Reihe 371; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2014), 1–2, 259.
- ²¹ Like Arnold, Kirk intentionally restricts his study to investigating Paul’s Greco-Roman background. See Alexander N. Kirk, *The Departure of an Apostle: Paul’s Death Anticipated and Remembered* (WUNT 2, Reihe 406; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2015), viii–xii, 1, 11.
- ²² Heinrich Schlier, “κέρδος, κερδαῖω,” in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (ed. Gerhard Kittel and Gerhard Friedrich, trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley, 10 vols.; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1964–1976), 3:672–73 (hereinafter abbreviated TDNT).
- ²³ 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; Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 2002), 336.
- ²⁴ Michael J. Gorman, *Reading Paul* (Cascade Companions 4; Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2008), 147.
- ²⁵ John Behr, *The Mystery of Christ: Life in Death* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 2006), 143.
- ²⁶ Sophocles writes, “But if I will die [θανοῦμαι] before (my) time, I myself say this (is a) gain [κέρδος]. For whoever lives in as many troubles as me, how does the way of dying [καρτανῶν] not bring gain [κέρδος]?” In this sense, Sophocles explains that dying is seen as a “gain” because it cuts short the pain and suffering to be faced in life. This is antithetical to Paul, who does not see dying/death as escape from life, but as the very conduit through which eternal life with Christ is gained (Phil 1:23).
- ²⁷ The importance of Greco-Roman literature for reading Paul is illustrated by Craig Evans who notes thirteen quotations/allusions/parallels to the Greco-Roman literature in Philippians alone. See Craig A. Evans, *Ancient Texts for New Testament Studies* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2005), 391–92.
- ²⁸ While parallelomania has been a pervasive problem in biblical studies over the past century as Samuel Sandmel’s seminal essay portends, the NT writers appear to cite numerous passages within the extra-biblical literature (e.g., Acts 17:28; 26:14; 1 Cor 15:33; Titus 1:12), and there are legitimate “echoes” and parallels that help to inform our reading of Paul and the rest of the NT. See Samuel Sandmel, “Parallelomania,” *JBL* 81.1 (1962): 1–13; and Hays, *Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul*, 154–92.
- ²⁹ The rationale for the investigation of these three specific corpora of literature is based upon both their influential reach in the ancient world, as well as their pertinence to the discussion of Pauline studies and human flourishing. This is attested in the works of a plethora of scholars including: Abraham J. Malherbe, *Paul and the Popular Philosophers* (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Fortress, 1989); Wayne A. Meeks, *The First Urban Christians: The Social World of the Apostle Paul* (New Haven, CT and London: Yale University Press, 1983); Bruce W. Winter, *After Paul Left Corinth: The Influence of Secular Ethics and Social Change* (Grand Rapids, MI, 2001); Maulana Karenga, Maat, *The Moral Ideal in Ancient Egypt: A Study in Classical African Ethics* (New York, NY and London: Routledge, 2004); and the aforementioned works of E. P. Sanders and Rollin Ramsaran.
- ³⁰ See the discussion of dissimilarity between Aristotelian virtue ethics and Israelite conceptions of the “good life” in Brent A. Strawn, “Introduction to Part I: Hebrew Bible/Old Testament,” in *The Bible and the Pursuit of Happiness: What the Old and New Testaments Teach Us About the Good Life* (ed. Brent A. Strawn; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 29–30.
- ³¹ Karenga, Maat, 3.
- ³² The ambitious quest for *gloria* and *fama* was so great among the Caesars that Suetonius (*Jul.* 7.1–2) cites a legend regarding Julius Caesar’s beholding of Alexander the Great’s statue in the temple of Hercules while in Spain. Julius Caesar “having mourned” (*ingemuit*) over his own lack of noteworthy accomplishments, compared his life to Alexander, who, at the same approximate age, “had already conquered the world” (*orbem terrarum subegisset*).
- ³³ See e.g., Martin E. P. Seligman, *Authentic Happiness: Using the New Positive Psychology to Realize Your Potential for Lasting Fulfillment* (New York, NY: The Free Press, 2002), 13.
- ³⁴ Aristotle vehemently rejects such a materialistic view of human flourishing (*Politics*, 1257b40–1258a2).

- For a discussion of human flourishing as the absence of pain/suffering see Hesook Suzie Kim, *The Essence of Nursing Practice: Philosophy and Perspective* (New York, NY: Springer Publishing Company, 2015), 73.
- ³³ Miroslav Volf and Justin Crisp, eds., *Joy and Human Flourishing: Essays on Theology, Culture, and the Good Life* (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Fortress, 2015). Cf. Miroslav Volf, *Flourishing: Why We Need Religion in a Globalized World* (New Haven, CT and London: Yale University Press, 2015).
- ³⁶ Jürgen Moltmann, *The Living God and the Fullness of Life* (trans. Margaret Kohl; Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2015).
- ³⁷ Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age* (Cambridge, MA and London: Harvard University Press, 2007).
- ³⁸ The preposition ἀπό indicates that such peace/flourishing is not inwardly innate in humanity, but is “from God our Father and (the) Lord Jesus Christ.” Paul appears to be echoing the Shema in Phil 1:2 and including Jesus Christ within its formula. Compare the Greek text of Deut 6:4 (LXX) κύριος ὁ θεὸς ἡμῶν κύριος εἰς ἔσθιν with Phil 1:2 θεοῦ πατρὸς ἡμῶν καὶ κυρίου Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ.
- ³⁹ Reumann rightly sees the genitive phrase in Phil 4:7 (τοῦ θεοῦ) as subjective, not objective. See John Reumann, *Philippians* (AB 33B; New Haven, CT and London: Yale University Press, 2008), 499.
- ⁴⁰ See Joseph H. Hellerman, *Philippians* (EGGNT; ed. Andreas J. Köstenberger and Robert W. Yarbrough; Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman, 2015), 13–14, 240–41.
- ⁴¹ Hellerman, *Philippians*, 206.
- ⁴² While this is not intended to be an exhaustive list of terms which Paul may be using to discuss human flourishing in Philippians, it is hopefully a helpful addition to the scholarly discussion.
- ⁴³ Köstenberger and Bouchoch, *Concordance*, 1108.
- ⁴⁴ G. Walter Hansen, *The Letter to the Philippians* (PNTC; Grand Rapids, MI: 2009), 332.
- ⁴⁵ The redundant repetition of τὸ ὑπὲρ Χριστοῦ ... τὸ ὑπὲρ αὐτοῦ in Phil 1:29 underscores this focus on the imitation of Christ’s suffering.
- ⁴⁶ Paul uses a triad of comparative terms (πολλῶ ... μᾶλλον κρείσσον) in Phil 1:23 that can be (nonsensically) woodenly translated in English as “much more better!”
- ⁴⁷ Carolyn Osiek sees the overarching theme of Philippians as “joy.” See Carolyn Osiek, *Philippians, Philemon* (Abingdon New Testament Commentaries; Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 2000), 31.
- ⁴⁸ Χαρά and its cognates appear fourteen times in the text of Philippians: χαρὰ (4:1); χαρᾶς (1:4; 2:29); χαρᾶν (1:25; 2:2); χαίρω (1:18; 2:17); χαίρετε (2:18; 3:1; and twice in 4:4); χαρήσομαι (1:18); χαρήτε (2:28); and ἐχάρην (4:10). Lexical data obtained from Köstenberger and Bouchoch, *Concordance*, 1108.
- ⁴⁹ Michael J. Gorman, *Becoming the Gospel: Paul, Participation, and Mission, The Gospel and Our Culture Series* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2015), 3. Cf. idem, *Cruciformity: Paul’s Narrative Spirituality of the Cross* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2001), 49–67.
- ⁵⁰ The full Latin name is *de Finibus Bonorum et Malorum*, which can be translated “On the Ends of Good and Evil!”
- ⁵¹ The Greek source text is Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* (trans. H. Rackham, Aristotle volume 19, LCL 73; Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1926).
- ⁵² Evans, *Ancient Texts for New Testament Studies*, 289.
- ⁵³ The Latin source text is Cicero, *On Ends* (trans. H. Rackham, Cicero vol. 17, LCL 40; Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1914).
- ⁵⁴ Evans, *Ancient Texts for New Testament Studies*, 289.
- ⁵⁵ Hans-Josef Klauck, *Ancient Letters and the New Testament: A Guide to Context and Exegesis* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2006), 157.
- ⁵⁶ P. L. Schmidt, “Cicero und die republikanische Kunstprosa,” in *Römische Literatur* (Neues Handbuch der Literaturwissenschaft Bd. 3, ed. M. Fuhrmann; Frankfurt: Frankfurt am Main: Akademische Verlagsgesellschaft Athenaion, 1974), 152. Cited in Klauck, *Ancient Letters and the New Testament*, 157.
- ⁵⁷ P. G. W. Glare et al, eds., “prudentia,” in *Oxford Latin Dictionary* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1968), 1509–10.
- ⁵⁸ E. A. Wallis Budge, *The Book of the Dead: The Chapters of Coming Forth by Day* (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, and Trubner, 1898), xlvi. All translations for *The Book of the Dead* are from Budge.
- ⁵⁹ H. D. Betz, ed., *The Greek Magical Papyri in Translation: Including the Demotic Spells* (Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 1986), xli.
- ⁶⁰ In ancient Egyptian culture, humans consisted of multiple physical and spiritual constituents: *ka* (vital energy); *ba* (soul); *khet* (body); *akh* (transformed spirit); *ren* (name); *ib* (heart/mind); and *shuit* (shadow). See Karenga, *Maat*, 158.
- ⁶¹ Budge, *The Book of the Dead*, 43–54.

⁶² *Ibid.*, clxxxiii.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, cci.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 76.

⁶⁵ Note the feather on the right scale that represents Maat—the standard of measure by which the Egyptians thought that the heart (ib) of the dead would be judged in the afterlife. This is why the hearts of the mummies were preserved, as it was thought to be part of the soul to be judged. This image derives from the papyri of *The Book of the Dead*, and features the various “assessors” judging the Maat of the deceased.

⁶⁶ The source Greek text for the translation of this section is Karl Preisendanz, ed. and trans., *Papyri Graecae Magicae: Die griechischen Zauberpapyri* (2 vols.; Leipzig: Teubner, 1928–1931).

⁶⁷ Betz, *Papyri*, xli.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, xlvi.

⁶⁹ See *Sebit of Amenemope* 20.21–21.8. Translation taken from Miriam Lichtheim, *Ancient Egyptian Literature* (3 vols.; Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1973–80), 2:158.

⁷⁰ Please note that the versification listed in the Greek OT (LXX) may differ from that in English Bibles.

⁷¹ See e.g., *Coming Forth by Day* LXXX; PGM III.10–14; IV.2176, 3087; VII.155; PDM XVI.167.

⁷² See e.g., Ps 33:9; 40:2; 83:13; 93:12; 111:1; 144:15; 146:5; Prov 8:34; 28:14.

⁷³ The author’s original translations are derived from the Greek text of Philo, *On the Decalogue, On the Special Laws, Books 1–3* (trans. F. H. Colson, LCL 320; Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1937).

⁷⁴ David M. Scholer, “Foreword,” in *The Works of Philo: Complete and Unabridged* (trans. C. D. Yonge, rev. ed.; Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2006), xi.

⁷⁵ The author’s original translations are derived from the Greek text of Josephus, *Jewish Antiquities, Volume 1: Books 1–3* (trans. H. St. J. Thackeray, Josephus vol. 5, LCL 242; Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1930).

⁷⁶ See Paul L. Maier, “Introduction,” in *The New Complete Works of Josephus* (trans. William Whiston, rev ed.; Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel, 1999), 8–9.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 7.

⁷⁸ This author affirms Pauline authorship of the Pastoral Epistles.

⁷⁹ Justin Crisp, “Introduction: A Bright Sorrow,” in *Joy and Human Flourishing: Essays on Theology, Culture, and the Good Life* (ed. Miroslav Volf and Justin Crisp; Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Fortress, 2015), viii.

⁸⁰ Moltmann, *The Living God*, x–xi.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 1.

⁸² Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 20.

⁸³ *Ibid.*

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 320.

⁸⁵ N. T. Wright, “Joy: Some New Testament Perspectives and Questions,” in *Joy and Human Flourishing: Essays on Theology, Culture, and the Good Life* (ed. Miroslav Volf and Justin E. Crisp; Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Fortress, 2015), 50–54.

⁸⁶ Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 16.

⁸⁷ Adam Smith, *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of the Nations* (Edinburgh: Thomas Nelson, 1843), 169.

⁸⁸ See e.g., 1 Cor 15:31; Gal 2:20; Phil 1:1, 21; 2:5–11, 17; 3:17; 4:9.

⁸⁹ For an overview of the “health and wealth” gospel (also known as the “prosperity gospel”) in America, see Kate Bowler, *Blessed: A History of the American Prosperity Gospel* (Oxford and New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2013).

⁹⁰ Such an aversion and fear of death is famously illustrated in Ernest Becker’s Pulitzer Prize-winning book about death, *The Denial of Death* (1974), in which he writes, “The fear of death is a universal that unites data from several disciplines of the human sciences, and makes wonderfully clear and intelligible human actions that we have buried under mountains of fact, and have obscured with endless . . . arguments about the ‘true’ human motives.” See Ernest Becker, *The Denial of Death* (New York, NY: Free Press, 1974), ix–x.

⁹¹ Sociologists Christian Smith and Hilary Davidson note a paradox of generosity: “giving we receive, grasping we lose.” See Christian Smith and Hilary Davidson, *The Paradox of Generosity: Giving We Receive, Grasping We Lose* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 1.