

Michel GOURGUES, « *Plus tard tu comprendras* ». *La formation du Nouveau Testament comme témoin de maturations croyantes* (Lire la Bible, 196). Paris-Montréal, Cerf-Médiaspaul, 2019, 13,5 × 21,5 cm, 185 p., ISBN 978-2-89760-227-7

John S. Adimula

Volume 72, Number 1-2, January–August 2020

URI: <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/1067594ar>

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Publisher(s)

Collège universitaire dominicain, Ottawa

ISSN

0316-5345 (print)

2562-9905 (digital)

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Cite this review

Adimula, J. S. (2020). Review of [Michel GOURGUES, « *Plus tard tu comprendras* ». *La formation du Nouveau Testament comme témoin de maturations croyantes* (Lire la Bible, 196). Paris-Montréal, Cerf-Médiaspaul, 2019, 13,5 × 21,5 cm, 185 p., ISBN 978-2-89760-227-7]. *Science et Esprit*, 72(1-2), 243–246.

Dans l'étude des psaumes, l'A. recourt souvent à une approche exégétique qui est implicitement intertextuelle. Parfois, certains liens sont établis sans que soit clairement vérifié s'ils sont suffisamment fondés dans le texte. Par exemple, la métaphore du « venin du serpent » en Ps 58,5 est interprétée à partir de Gn 3,1-5 en fonction du seul mot « serpent » (p. 39-40), alors que l'A. précise que « l'image du serpent venimeux n'est pas rare » dans la Bible (p. 40).

À différents moments de son analyse et plus encore dans sa conclusion, l'A. partage également quelques réflexions permettant de dépasser le choc « interculturel » du lecteur moderne face au langage ancien des psaumes. Ainsi la vengeance au sens biblique « n'est pas revanche ou *vendetta*, mais rétablissement de la justice par jugement » (p. 49; rappel p. 177). Quand le psalmiste supplie Dieu de le venger, il lui demande en réalité de faire justice et renonce à se venger lui-même.

Face aux injustices qui ont libre cours dans le monde d'hier et d'aujourd'hui, les psaumes tracent un chemin de lucidité, d'empathie et de libération : « N'est-il pas compréhensible qu'un innocent qui se voit ainsi dos au mur et panique à l'idée d'une mort d'autant plus cruelle qu'elle est imméritée, désire être libéré de ses agresseurs ? N'est-il pas naturel que ce désir le saisisse avec véhémence ? » (p. 126) « On n'oubliera pas que ce ne sont que des mots, et que ceux qui les prononcent sont incapables de les concrétiser, tant est grande leur impuissance [...]. Ôter ces mots de leur bouche, c'est les réduire au silence une fois de plus, c'est leur faire violence une fois de plus, une violence à laquelle les âmes soi-disant sensibles seront – précisément – peu sensibles... » (p. 169-170) « Maîtriser l'animalité intérieure est possible, disait YHWH à Caïn, mais pas si on ne veut pas la voir. [...] À ce titre, les psaumes violents offrent au lecteur une porte vers l'inhumain en lui, premier pas vers une possible libération. » (p. 175) Il est aussi éclairant de garder à l'esprit que les psaumes sont écrits « dans un contexte où l'idée d'une vie éternelle ou d'une résurrection n'a pas cours » (p. 179). Le lecteur attentif trouvera encore bien d'autres richesses dans ce beau livre.

Marie DE LOVINFOSSE, CND

Michel GOURGUES, **« Plus tard tu comprendras ». La formation du Nouveau Testament comme témoin de maturations croyantes** (Lire la Bible, 196). Paris-Montréal, Cerf-Médiaspaul, 2019, 13,5 × 21,5 cm, 185 p., ISBN 978-2-89760-227-7.

The book, as the title suggests, traces the development of the formation of the New Testament not in the sense of its canonicity or the arrangement of its books but on its content, that is, the core of what makes Christianity different, namely, the mystery of Christ. In general, it is concerned with three particular points in the development, continuity and advancement of the formation of the New Testament that can be verified from one stage to another, namely: 1) the central importance given to the paschal mystery, death and resurrection of Jesus; 2) the sense made of the cross of Christ; 3) and the attention given to the salvific value of Jesus' death. It explores and practically demonstrates how faith in the mystery of Christ gradually evolved and was profoundly expressed and developed by the believing communities.

In a bid to do this, the author, Michel Gourgues, divides the period of the formation of what is now seen as the New Testament into three stages – oral, epistolary and narrative. The first stage comprises the verbal expression of faith in Jesus Christ after his death and resurrection, from about 30-50 AD. How does one know what was involved at this oral stage? The author in answer to this question employs some criteria for detecting primitive vestiges found in the writings of the New Testament. He takes two passages, 1 Cor 15:3-5 and Phil 2:6-11, as examples among other passages and applies some of the criteria to show what remains from the oral tradition found in them. In the former passage, it is discovered that the manner of introducing the formula reveals the confession of the oral tradition. The author of the passage uses, for example, two revealing verbs, παραλαμβάνω (to receive) and παραδίδωμι (to hand on) which were followed by the proclamation of the death and resurrection of Christ. Using the same criteria on the latter passage, it is also discovered that the author was using oral tradition materials which talk about the preexistence, death, resurrection and exaltation of Christ. Within these elements of faith is the recognition of the value of the death of Christ: “died for our sins.”

The second stage (50-70 AD) continues with these basic tenets proclaimed at the oral stage, expands and develops on them with emphasis on the cross of Christ which appears silent at the previous stage because of some known reasons: seen as a curse, scandal and foolishness. The epistolary stage consists primarily of the epistles of Paul. Gourgues analyzes the first recorded writings of the New Testament, particularly 1 Thess and 1 Cor and exposes the tenets of faith already present and advanced in these letters. Regarding the cross, Paul makes a radical development and interpretation on its value and connects the shedding of blood on the cross to the sacrifice of the Jews: “la croix se trouve réhabilitée, devenue source de bénédiction et de salut” (p. 83). While developing and advancing on the oral confessions, this stage arrives at some new themes, which cannot be totally separated from the foundation laid by the oral stage, among them are: imminent parousia, God who is addressed now as a Father (cf. Phil 2:11). The idea of obedience expressed in the hymn of Phil 2 was developed (cf. Rom 5, in particular v. 19). This stage strives to deepen the death of Jesus (“Christ died for our sins in accordance with the scriptures,” 1 Cor 15:3) and gives a theological account of it. It does that in two different ways, namely, the sacrificial and existential perspectives. The former is based on the modality of the death of Jesus which had involved bloodshed. It uses the analogy of sacrifice to account for the “negative” dimension of salvation in terms of “forgiveness of sins” (cf. Rom 3:24-26; 5:6-9). The latter sees rather in the death of Jesus the summit of a human existence lived in communion, openness and transparency to God and his will, and whose quality marks, for himself and for all those who come to him by faith, the reversal of the disobedience of the first Adam (cf. Rm 5:12-19).

Gourgues maintains that the title of Christ as “Lord” was already present at the oral stage by using in particular the hymn of Phil 2:11 “Jesus is Lord” and other brief proclamations in 1 Cor 12:3; 16:22 and Rom 10:9. It appears difficult to prove this title from the oral stage. As the author himself noted in this book that there was very probably Paul’s redaction in Phil 2:6-11, it could be said that this title of “Lordship” was borne out of Paul’s experience (especially on the road to Damascus) and theology, just like the mention of the “cross” and “Father” in this same passage. The

question of the "Lordship" is not very clear unlike other professions of faith from pre-epistolary stage like in 1 Cor 15:3-5; 1 Tim 3:16b, 1 Cor 11:23-25 and other letters. For example, the majority of scholars view the expression Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ τοῦ Κυρίου ἡμῶν of Rom 1:4 as Pauline addition to encase the creedal formula he cited in Rom 1:3b-4d. The prophecy of Isaiah which the early tradition employed in explaining the passion and mystery of Christ made use of low terminology like servant and not Lord. In short, the argument for "Christ is Lord" as being from the very early tradition is difficult to ascertain. Phil 2 states with regard to the exaltation of Christ that God has now given him a name which is above every other name (Θεὸς αὐτὸν ὑπερύψωσεν, καὶ ἐχαρίσατο αὐτῷ τὸ ὄνομα τὸ ὑπὲρ πάντων ὀνομα). The mention of κύριος appears in v. 11 together with πατρός. Although its application could be traceable to Ps 110:1 and its interpretation mostly found in the Gospels and Acts.

What is new at this second stage is the appearance of the concept of the Holy Spirit as the factor of transformation; given to individuals and manifested as gifts. This was not obvious at the previous stage. This according to Gourguès shows a great sign of maturity in the development of the mystery of God: "Cela témoigne d'une maturation et d'un développement considérables si l'on songe que, dans les formulaires de l'étape antérieure, le terme *pneuma* n'était encore utilisé [...] qu'en relation avec la condition céleste du Christ ressuscité" (p. 92). This appears clear, correct and just.

The third stage (70-100 AD) is characterized by the actions and the teachings of Jesus narrated and theologized on by the evangelists. The reference to the teachings of Jesus at the epistolary stage most times connects it to this stage. The tenets of the oral stage on the death and the resurrection of Christ are continued at the narrative stage. Also the interpretation of the cross is taken further. Beginning with the gospel of Mark, being the first recognized written gospel, the author explores the centrality of the paschal mystery which shows Jesus as Christ and Son of God who died and rose.

The synoptic gospels follow similar order of the passion, death, and resurrection-exaltation but that of John is different in order, content and manner of presentation. Jerusalem becomes a central place to the gospels because that happened to be the place of the ascension which culminated in the entrance into glory of the resurrected Christ after his death and resurrection. The obedience which leads to the accomplishment of the mystery of Christ found in Phil 2 was further developed in the gospels even though the term is not found in Luke but the meaning is demonstrated by other expressions such as *dei* and *dei me*, "I must...", in connection to Christ's passion, "Il faut que le Fils de l'homme souffre beaucoup" (Lk 9:22). His obedience was to the point of death, but that does not mean he was out in search of suffering and death: "Jésus ne courra pas après la mort. Mais si la mission doit déboucher dans la passion et la mort, il ne reculera pas." (p. 123) This understanding of obedience is down to earth and explains some misconceptions many believers and even some biblical scholars have about the passion of Christ and human suffering. That Christ suffered and died does not mean a forced-choice on his part and that believers are not also called to a forced-choice or automatic suffering. In this way, this book updates the processes and arguments needed for modern Christianity to understand the passion of Christ not as a forced obedience predestined negatively for death but freedom and openness to what comes.

From his exalted state, Christ becomes Saviour. This is a development on the title of lordship from the previous stages. The positive aspect of salvation was emphasized more by Luke by showing that Christ now has access to the heavenly prerogatives, the gifts of the Holy Spirit (cf. Acts 2:33). This is a new development which in John is called "life."

The aspect of the oral tradition concerning the consequences of the death of Christ was further explored at this stage. The author shows that Luke and John emphasize the positive effects of salvation in Jesus Christ, in terms of the Holy Spirit, of life and eternal life; hence less attention to the cross of Jesus in Luke and, in both, to the redemptive sense of the death of Jesus. In John, this is suggested by the designation of Jesus only once as "the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world" (Jn 1:29). What is striking is that, within the Johannine tradition, the first letter of John insists on the redemptive sense of the death of Jesus in terms of forgiveness of sins and sacrifice for the sins, in this way, renewing, at the end of the formation of the New Testament, with the first two stages. Luke is discreet about the cross, but John gives attention to it and calls it the "glorious cross of Jesus." He explains the glorification of Christ within the mystery of his cross brought about by his resurrection. The same verb (ὑψώω) used by the oral tradition was also employed by John to describe Christ's elevation on the cross. The cross of Jesus became part of his glorification. It is from this eye-opening-understanding of the mystery of Christ about his cross, which the oral tradition was silent about and the evangelist Luke shows discretion, that for John has become a glorious cross. This is for Gourgues an understanding which came through maturity in faith, hence the appropriate title of his book: «Plus tard tu comprendras». The cross of Christ now becomes that of the disciples.

It is the gospel of John that goes deeper into the aspect of the preexistence which has already been echoed in the hymn of Phil 2:6 (considered to be at the oral stage) and in Heb 1:1-2 (epistolary stage).

The illustrations in the book are highly useful for they aid in quick understanding and comparison. This approach makes the exploration practical in a sense. This could have been done also by distinguishing the differences and noting the similarities in contents between Mark and the other two synoptic gospels using a table, as a book that exposes the formation of the New Testament from the internal faith development just as the author did to Luke and Matthew. The differences and similarities are nevertheless explained in the book.

The book is an important tool for teaching in biblical studies, and recommended for lovers of scripture because its approach focuses on the contents on how the Christian faith gradually developed. For those who seek to know the Christian faith in the Bible and not just its arrangement or canonical development, this book has enough to offer.

John S. ADIMULA

*Graduate Studies - Faculty of Theology  
Dominican University College  
Ottawa*