

# CIRCULAR RHETORIC AND LOGIC OF PARADOX

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## 1. Introduction

In the early twentieth century, Russell pioneered the formal study of paradox in logic.<sup>1</sup> He discovered that any type of vicious circle possessed the potential to cause a paradox to occur. His solution to avoiding the occurrence of a paradox was simply to eliminate any vicious circle or to render it invalid (or nonsense). The goal was to keep the emerging system of Formal Logic sound and valid by eliminating or denying the very presence of these potentially damaging paradoxes. Thereafter, the scholarly consensus and trend were established to follow Russell's solution, and many scholarly disciplines still adhere to it even today.<sup>2</sup>

Biblical scholarship is no exception, which has caused a devastating impact and has set up confusion by ignoring any literary circular (or cyclic) constructs frequently found in the Bible, thereby rendering them invalid.<sup>3</sup> As a result, the study of biblical paradoxes and circular-constructs has been one of the most ignored, confused, and controversial areas for the latter half of the twentieth century.<sup>4</sup> However, a renewed interest has occurred due to the innovative pioneering approach in the study of paradox by Kripke (1975).<sup>5</sup> The primary critical method of Logic in this paper (to analyze various literary constructs in circular rhetoric and paradox) is based on Russell (1910), Kripke (1975), Fitting (1985), and Min and Gupta (2010).<sup>6</sup>

In the past, the major work on circular rhetoric in biblical studies has been primarily associated with the Semitic influence in repetitive or tautological expression.<sup>7</sup> The study on biblical paradox has been mostly done in philosophy or theology, except one major work on the two-stage coming of the Kingdom of God (Luke 17:20–30)

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<sup>1</sup> Alfred North Whitehead and Bertrand Russell, *Principia Mathematica*, 3 vols. (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1913), 1:37; and R. M. Sainsbury, *Paradoxes*, 3ed (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009) 123–159.

<sup>2</sup> Alfred Tarski, "A Lattice-theoretical Fixpoint Theorem and Its Applications," *Pacific Journal of Mathematics* 5, no. 2 (1955): 285–309; Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, trans. D. F. Pears and B. F. McGuinness (New York: Humanities Press, 1961); Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, 4th edition. eds. and trans. P.M.S. Hacker and Joachim Schulte (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009).

<sup>3</sup> Anthony C. Thiselton, "The Logical Role of the Liar Paradox in Titus 1:12, 13: A Dissent from the Commentaries in Light of Philosophical and Logical Analysis," *Biblical Interpretation* 2 (1994): 207-23.

<sup>4</sup> David Basinger, "Biblical Paradox: Does Revelation Challenge Logic?," *Journal of Evangelical Theological Society* 30, no. 2 (June 1987): 205-213; Christian Cryder, "Reymond's Rejection of Paradox," *Trinity Journal* 22, no. 1 (2001): 99-112.

<sup>5</sup> Saul A. Kripke, "Outline of a Theory of Truth," *Journal of Philosophy* 72, no. 19 (1975): 690–716.

<sup>6</sup> Whitehead and Russell, *Principia Mathematica*, 1:37; Saul A. Kripke, "Outline of a Theory of Truth," *Journal of Philosophy* 72, no. 19 (1975): 690–716; Melvin C. Fitting, "A Kripke-Kleene Semantics for Logic Programs," *Journal of Logic Programming* 2:295-312 (1985); Richard K. Min and Gopal Gupta, "Biblical Paradox and Coinductive Reasoning" (Society of Biblical Literature International Meeting 2010, July 2010) [cited 1 July 2017]. Online: <http://www.utdallas.edu/~rkm010300/papers/SBLIM2010Min.pdf>.

<sup>7</sup> Wilbert Francis Howard, "Semitisms in the New Testament." *Accident and Word Formation*. Vol. 2 of *A Grammar of New Testament Greek*, by James Hope Moulton (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1929) 419–420; Anthony A. Hutchinson. *Semitic interference in the syntax of the gospel of john*. (The Catholic University of America, 2002) 132–133. S. R. Driver, *The Book of Exodus* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1911) 362-63; Walter C. Kaiser, Jr. "Exodus" In *Expositor's Bible Commentary*, vol. 2 Genesis-Numbers, ed. Frank E. Gaebelein, 287–487 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1990) 321.

by Oscar Cullmann.<sup>8</sup> There are a few serious scholarly works on circular rhetoric or related in the recent years. The first noteworthy work is the studies on the reciprocal in-dwelling relationships in John and 1 John by Brown (1966; 1982) and Malatesta (1978). The second noteworthy work is on the divine name of God ("I am who I am") in Exodus 3:14 as *idem per idem* by Lundbom (1978).<sup>9</sup> And through this present study the author hopes to continue what these works have left, and extend its status to establish a new critical framework of circular rhetoric and logic of paradox, and its exegetical and biblical justification of this framework in the biblical study.

A plural form of paradox (παράδοξα) is found in Luke 5:26, denoting a series of the marvelous and wonderful things revealed by Jesus in word and deed. Following its traditional meaning, the working definition of "paradox" (παράδοξος) is defined as a statement or an event which is "contrary to opinion or exceeding expectation," "unexpected," "strange," "wonderful," or "remarkable."<sup>10</sup> This definition is flexible and pragmatic for the purpose and the scope of this paper, conservatively adhering to the meaning in the *Koine* Greek of the Bible.<sup>11</sup>

The terms of cycle (צִקְלוֹ or κύκλος in Ecclesiastes 1:6), perichoresis (περιχώρησις), *idem per idem* (e.g., Exodus 3:14; 33:19), vicious circle or cycle, circularity, self-reference, infinite loop, and coinduction are used informally and interchangeably to designate any circular or cyclic relationship.<sup>12</sup>

Two terms of logic which appear frequently in this paper and closely related to circular rhetoric and logic of paradox are "modal" and "nonmonotonic." The reader is referred to the literature for an excellent introduction on circularity, nonmonotonicity, and modality in logic.<sup>13</sup>

Modal logic refers to the logic of which validity changes depending on one's perspective or aspect. A

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<sup>8</sup> Oscar Cullmann, *Christ and Time* (London: Gordon Pr Publishing, 1962); Oscar Cullmann, *Salvation in History* (London: SCM-Canterbury Press, 1967); Thomas F. Torrance. *The Christian Doctrine of God, One Being Three Persons* (London: T&T Clark, 1996) xi, 27–29, 102–110, 168–180.

<sup>9</sup> Raymond E. Brown, *The Gospel According to John (I–XII)* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1966): 533–38; Raymond E. Brown, *The Epistles of John* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1982): 195–96; Edward Malatesta, *Interiority and Covenant: A Study of εἶναι ἐν and μένειν ἐν in the First Letter of John* [Analecta Biblica 69] (San Francisco: Biblical Institute Press, 1978): 34–36; Jack R. Lundbom, "God's Use of the *Idem per Idem* to Terminate Debate," *The Harvard Theological Review*, Vol. 71, No. 3/4 (Jul. - Oct., 1978): 193–201.

<sup>10</sup> Frederick W. Danker, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 3rd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 763; James Hope Moulton, *The Vocabulary of the Greek Testament* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1930), 483; Gerhard Kittel, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964), 2:255; Narry Fajardo Santos, "The Paradox of Authority and Servanthood in the Gospel of Mark," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 154 (December 1997): 452–460.

<sup>11</sup> Peter Arzt-Grabner, "Greek Language in the Roman Empire". *The Encyclopedia of Ancient History*, 1st Edition. Edited by Roger S. Bagnall, Kai Brodersen, Craige B. Champion, Andrew Erskine, and Sabine R. Huebner (Blackwell Publishing Ltd. Published, 2013) 2988–2990.

<sup>12</sup> S. R. Driver, *The Book of Exodus in the Revised Version: With Introduction and Notes* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1911) 362–363; Jack R. Lundbom, "God's Use of the *Idem per Idem* to Terminate Debate," *The Harvard Theological Review*, Vol. 71, No. 3/4 (Jul. - Oct., 1978): 193–201; Thomas F. Torrance. *The Christian Doctrine of God, One Being Three Persons* (London: T&T Clark, 1996) xi, 27–29, 102–10, 168–80; Daniel F. Stramara Jr. "Gregory of Nyssa's Terminology for Trinitarian Perichoresis," *Vigiliae Christianae* 52 no 3 (Brill: 1998): 257–263; E. Pollard, "The Exegesis of John 10:30 in the Early Trinitarian Controversies" in *New Testament studies* 3 (1957), 334–349; Jon Barwise and Lawrence S. Moss, *Vicious Circles* (Stanford, CA: Center for the Study of Language and Information Lecture Notes, 2004).

<sup>13</sup> Vern S. Poythress, *Logic: A God-Centered Approach to the Foundation of Western Thought* (Wheaton, IL; Crossway, 2013); Melvin Fitting, "A Kripke-Kleene Semantics for Logic Programs," *Journal of Logic Programming* 2, no. 4 (December 1985): 295–312; Jon Barwise and Lawrence S. Moss, *Vicious Circles: On the Mathematics of Non-Wellfounded Phenomena* (Stanford, CA: CSLI Lecture Notes, 2004); Gerhard Brewka, Jurgen Dix, and Kurt Konolige, *Nonmonotonic Reasoning: An Overview* (Stanford, CA: CSLI Lecture Notes, 1997); Grigoris Antoniou, *Nonmonotonic Reasoning* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1997); M. Fitting and Richard L. Mendelsohn, *First-Order Modal Logic* (New York: Springer, 1998); Richard K. Min, "Circular Rhetoric and Logic of Paradox" (Society of Biblical Literature—International Meeting, Buenos Aires, July 2015), [cited 1 July 2017] online: <http://www.utdallas.edu/~rkm010300/papers/SBLIM2015Min.pdf>.

classic example is the two-stage coming of the Kingdom of God "already" and "not yet" in temporal-modal logic in Luke 17:20–30. Another famous example is "give to Caesar what are Caesar's, and to God what are God's" in Matthew 22:21. Nonmonotonic logic signifies what has been true may not be true anymore, or what is expected in common sense or laws may not be held anymore. For instance, the law of "the righteous being blessed and the wicked being cursed" seems to be not functioning, for example, in the case of Job who is the righteous man in suffering with the allegations made by his three friends in their "monotonic" mind-set. The other example is found in the case of the man born blind where the disciples of Jesus suspected his blindness at birth as a divine punishment (John 9:1–5).

A brief survey of the selected examples is presented with the analysis of their literary circular-constructs to discover and classify some major patterns of circular rhetoric and logic of paradox. The selected examples in this paper include three paradoxes in Matthew 22:15–46, the Liar paradox in Titus 1:12, the divine "I am" sayings in Exodus 3:14, the circular indwelling relationships in John 14:10–11, and two proof-methods in John 8:12–20.

One distinctive proof-method for "I am the light of the world" in John 8:12–20 is based on self-reference or circular reasoning, providing a new interpretive basis and exegetical framework for Jesus' "I am" sayings in John. Further, the difficult passage and paradox of 1 John 3:9 is discussed. With these concrete results, a new critical method in analysis of circular rhetoric and logic of paradox is proposed to fill the apparent gap in the biblical studies, to fix the apparent confusion or mistake in the past, to extend the scope of biblical exegesis and interpretation, and to rediscover the lost wisdom of the biblical writers.

In this light, the paradoxes in Matthew 22:15–46 are reexamined for a deeper understanding in this new paradigm. Further, the theological framework of *Salvation History* (*Heilsgeschichte*) with the two-stage coming of the Kingdom of God ("already" and "not-yet" in Luke 17:20–30), and the testimony of John the Baptist (John 1:15, 30) is analyzed in this framework of circular rhetoric and logic of paradox.<sup>14</sup>

The difficult lesson in Hebrews on Psalm 110:4 has been analyzed and noted for circular "be-like" relationships (Hebrews 7:3, 15). Extending the present study to the epistles of Paul, the selected passages in Romans are investigated and analyzed. These passages include: "from faith to faith" in Romans 1:17, Romans 3:4 with the Liar paradox in Titus 1:12, "in Christ" and "Christ in you" in Romans 8:10, "already" and "not yet" in Romans 8:29–30, and the tautological assertions in Romans 9:15–18 in the light of Matthew 22:21 and Exodus 33:19.

The circular rhetoric of "grace for grace" in John 1:16 is investigated in the light of the temporal-modal frame of promise and fulfillment (Galatians 3:16–18). Finally a brief survey of the Christological mystery, controversies, and debates in early Christianity is presented in the scope of the present study, in the formulation and defense on the person of Jesus Christ and the doctrine of Trinity.

In order to explore a new critical method toward circular rhetoric and logic of paradox in the Bible, the approach and exegesis of this paper is distinctively computational.<sup>15</sup> Far from being complete or comprehensive, the scope and goals of this paper are rather modest, in order to demonstrate a promising new prospective and novel approach, and to bring renewed interest and understanding, with the hope of advancing in the twenty-first century the related works in the study of biblical paradox and "I am" sayings found in John.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Oscar Cullmann, *Christ and Time* (London: Gordon Pr Publishing, 1962); Oscar Cullmann, *Salvation in History* (London: SCM-Canterbury Press, 1967); Oscar Cullmann, *The Early Church* (London: SCM Press, 1956) 180–81.

<sup>15</sup> Richard K. Min and Gopal Gupta, "Biblical Paradox and Coinductive Reasoning" (Society of Biblical Literature - International Meeting, July 2010) [cited 28 April 2016] online: <<http://www.utdallas.edu/~rkm010300/papers/SBLIM2010Min.pdf>>.

<sup>16</sup> Raymond E. Brown, *The Gospel According to John (I–XII)* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1966): 533–538; Raymond E. Brown, *The Epistles of John* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1982): 195–196; Edward Malatesta, *Interiority and Covenant: A Study of εἶναι ἐν and μένειν ἐν in the First Letter of John* [Analecta Biblica 69] (San Francisco: Biblical Institute Press, 1978): 34–36; and Merrill C. Tenney, *The Bible; the Living Word of Revelation*, An Evangelical Theological Society Publication, Monograph No. 6 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1968).

## 2. Selected Examples of Circular Rhetoric and Paradox

The five biblical passages were selected and presented in this section to illustrate various paradox patterns based on literary-structural and logical complexity.

The selected passages include classical examples from: (1) the divine name of God in Exodus 3:14, (2) the mutual indwelling relationship in John 14:10-11, (3) the Liar paradox in Titus 1:12, (4) the paradox of marriage and resurrection in Mathew 22:23–33, and (5) the paradox of the divine versus human lineage of the Christ in Matthew 22:41–46 along with Luke 17:20–30. A circular literary-construct and complexity for each of these examples is analyzed on lexical, syntactic, or semantic levels. Among these examples, the simplest circular construct is in a form of self-referencing or an object referring to itself. The most complex construct involves a chain of multiple objects in a circular relationship.

### 2.1. Exodus 3:14

The first example is "I am who I am (אֶהְיֶה אֲשֶׁר אֶהְיֶה)" in Exodus 3:14.<sup>17</sup>

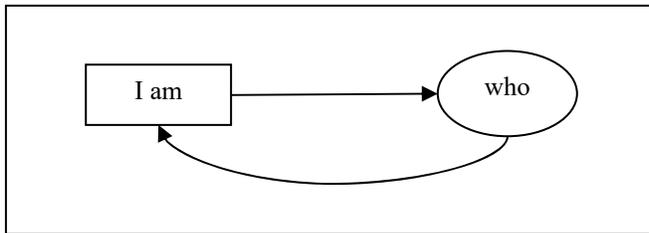


Figure 1. "I am who I am" in Exodus 3:14

In this example, a simple lexical or conceptual diagram clearly reveals its circular construct of "I am who I am." A cycle is formed to reference oneself or what is *idem per idem* idiom.<sup>18</sup> A literary circular construct is used to define a concept ("I am") with itself by self-referencing or circular reasoning. Though its exact syntactic or semantic meaning or understanding is still debatable, there have been many suggestions or scholarly speculations.<sup>19</sup> One possible (ontological or theological) meaning for "I am who I am" would be: (1) the one who is self-living or self-existing (that is, the living God who has no beginning and no end) and (2) the one who could not be defined, understood or even explained authoritatively except by Himself as he is "I am who I am" (cf. Hebrews 6:13; 7:21).<sup>20</sup>

<sup>17</sup> S. R. Driver. *The Book of Exodus* (CB; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1911) 362-63; Brevard S. Childs. *The Book of Exodus: A Critical Commentary* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1971) 63; Umberto Cassuto. *A Commentary on the Book of Exodus*. Translated by Israel Abrahams. (Jerusalem: Magnes, 1967) 37–38; Jack R. Lundbom, "God's Use of the *Idem per Idem* to Terminate Debate," *The Harvard Theological Review*, Vol. 71, No. 3/4 (Jul. - Oct., 1978): 193-201; Walter C. Kaiser, Jr. "Exodus," *Expositor's Bible Commentary* vol. 2 Genesis-Numbers, 287–487 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1990): 320–22.

<sup>18</sup> S. R. Driver, *The Book of Exodus* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1911) 362–363; S. R. Driver, *Notes on the Hebrew Texts and the Topography of the Books of Samuel* (2nd ed.; Oxford: Clarendon, 1966) 185–186; Jack R. Lundbom, "God's Use of the *Idem per Idem* to Terminate Debate," *The Harvard Theological Review* 71 (Jul. - Oct., 1978): 193-201.

<sup>19</sup> Cyrus H. Gordon, "HE IS WHO HE IS," *Berytus* 23 (1974): 27–28; William R. Arnold, "The Divine Name in Exodus iii:14," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 24 (1905): 107–165; David Noel Freedman, "The Name of the God of Moses," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 79 (1960):151–156; Sigmund Mowinckel, "The Name of the God of Moses," *Hebrew Union College Annual* 32 (1961): 121–133; Raymond Abba, "The Divine Name Yahweh," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 80 (1961): 320–328; E. C. B. Maclaurin, "YHWH, the Origin of the Tetragrammaton," *Vetus Testamentum* 12 (1962): 439–463; Roland de Vaux, "The Revelation of the Divine Name YHWH," In *Proclamation and Presence: Essays in Honour of G. H. Davies* (1970): 48–75; Cornelis den Hertog, *The Other Face of God* (Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2012).

<sup>20</sup> Walter C. Kaiser, Jr. "Exodus," *Expositor's Bible Commentary* vol. 2 Genesis-Numbers, 287–487 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1990): 321.

In this light, the confessional formula by Paul, "by the grace of God I am what I am" (χαρίτι δὲ θεοῦ εἰμι ὃ εἰμι) in 1 Corinthians 15:10, is clearly in rhetorical parallel with "I am who I am" (ἐγὼ εἰμι ὁ ὢν) in Exodus 3:14. Here the whole person and meaning of Paul is defined and qualified in the grace of God.

The discourse in Exodus 3:1–17 is the Lord's call to Moses for the deliverance of the people of Israel from bondage. Hearing the mission impossible being assigned, Moses asks or challenges God with a series of questions (in a rhetorical frame of question-answer). Moses is doubtful, and thus seeks to discourage God from holding him to this commission assignment. The first question regards Moses' qualifications for this enormous and impossible mission. The second question is in regard to the name of God, that is, God's identification of the people of Israel to respond to His call, their obedience, and then to Pharaoh of Egypt. Here God promises all the wonders and signs to take place, thus authenticating Himself and His presence with Moses, to the people of Israel and to Pharaoh of Egypt. However, Moses is still doubtful about himself, questioning and challenging God as to what if the Israelites do not believe or listen to him as God claims (Exodus 4:1). God is then providing Moses the ability to implement two specific miraculous signs: (1) making a staff into a snake and back to a staff, and (2) turning one of Moses' healthy hand into a leper's hand and back to a normal hand. Still doubtful about himself, Moses gives God the excuse of his poor communication skills, but God allows Aaron be his spokesman. Moses was still reluctant to go, urging God to send someone better and more capable than himself. Finally, the repeating reluctance of Moses extended beyond the limit of God's patience, and in His anger against Moses, He closed this question-answer discourse.

A few noteworthy examples of *idem per idem* in Exodus reveal its consistent and rich usage in this book. Along with the first example in Exodus 3:14 with the divine name, the second example is "to send by the hand of whom you will send (חַדְשֵׁי יְדֵי־כֹהֵן אֲשֶׁר־תִּשְׁלַח)" in Exodus 4:13, within the same discourse unit of Exodus 3:1–4:17. The third example is "bake what you want to bake and boil what you want to boil" in Exodus 16:23. The fourth example is "life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot, burn for burn, wound for wound, stripe for stripe" in Exodus 21:23–25. This legal code of *lex talionis* has been cited in Leviticus 24:19–20 and Deuteronomy 19:21, in the New Testament (Matthew 5:38), and in the ancient legal code of Hammurabi.<sup>21</sup> The fifth example is "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy" and "I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion" in Exodus 33:19.<sup>22</sup> Additionally, this passage is cited by Paul in Romans 9:15 and 9:18 as the absolute and perfect basis for the justice, righteousness, goodness, and sovereignty of God.<sup>23</sup> Finally, one noteworthy example of God's self-reference is the oath of God, sworn by Himself in Exodus 32:13, for no higher authority exists (c.f., Genesis 22:16; Hebrews 6:13).

The Bible contains many similar patterns of self-referencing. For example, "the good one brings out what is good out of one's own goodness, whereas the evil one brings out what is evil out of one's own evilness" (ὁ ἀγαθὸς ἄνθρωπος ἐκ τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ θησαυροῦ ἐκβάλλει ἀγαθά, καὶ ὁ πονηρὸς ἄνθρωπος ἐκ τοῦ πονηροῦ θησαυροῦ ἐκβάλλει πονηρά) in Matthew 12:35. Here each example defines or characterizes a person with the very character or description that it attempts to describe. This type of literary construct is used to define, explain, describe, or even justify one concept by referring to itself in self-reference or in circular rhetoric. This literary pattern is also described as a "pleonastic relative clause modifying a noun to which its verb is cognate" (John 5:32 and 17:26), as tautology (Exodus 4:13; Zechariah 11:13; Jeremiah 19:2; 1 Samuel 23:13; 2 Samuel 15:20; 2 Kings 8:1), or as *idem per idem* as the same root or phrase in a principal clause is repeated in the dependent clause (Exodus 3:14; 33:19).<sup>24</sup>

There are many similar examples of circular rhetoric in the Bible (e.g., "eye for eye" in Exodus 21:23–25

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<sup>21</sup> Umberto Cassuto, *A Commentary on the Book of Exodus*, trans. Israel Abrahams (Jerusalem: Magnes, 1967), 273–78; and W. D. Davies and D. C. Allison, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to Saint Matthew 1* (Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1988), 540.

<sup>22</sup> Cassuto, *Commentary on the Book of Exodus*, 435–36.

<sup>23</sup> Cranfield, *Romans*, 431–33; Dunn, *Romans 1–8*, 482–86; Stott, *Romans*, 248–53; and Middendorf, *Romans 1–8*, 690–98.

<sup>24</sup> Wilbert Francis Howard, "Semitisms in the New Testament," In *Accident and Word Formation*. Vol. 2 of *A Grammar of New Testament Greek*, by James Hope Moulton (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1929) 419–420; Anthony A. Hutchinson, *Semitic Interference in the syntax of the Gospel of John*, (The Catholic University of America, 2002) 132–133; Walter C. Kaiser, Jr. "Exodus," In *Expositor's Bible Commentary*, vol. 2 Genesis-Numbers, ed. Frank E. Gaebelein, 287–487 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1990) 321.

and Matthew 6:37–38; "a good tree with its good fruit" in Matthew 12:33; "to give Caesar what is Caesar's, and to God what is God's" in Matthew 22:21; "what is born of flesh is flesh" in John 3:6). Another noteworthy and controversial example in 1 John 3:9 declares that everyone "born of God" does not sin for God's seed dwells in him, and he is unable to sin for he is "one born of God" (Πᾶς ὁ γεγεννημένος ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ ἁμαρτίαν οὐ ποιεῖ, ὅτι σπέρμα αὐτοῦ ἐν αὐτῷ μένει, καὶ οὐ δύναται ἁμαρτάνειν, ὅτι ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ γεγέννηται). Here the subject-person (1 John 3:9) is expressed as "one born of God (ὁ γεγεννημένος ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ)." This phrase "one born of God" is used again as the basis for "one born of God" being unable to sin. This is clearly an example of circular rhetoric. That is, "one born of God" cannot sin simply by nature of being "one born of God."

## 2.2. John 14:10–11

The second example deals with a circular indwelling relationship in John 14:10–11.<sup>25</sup>

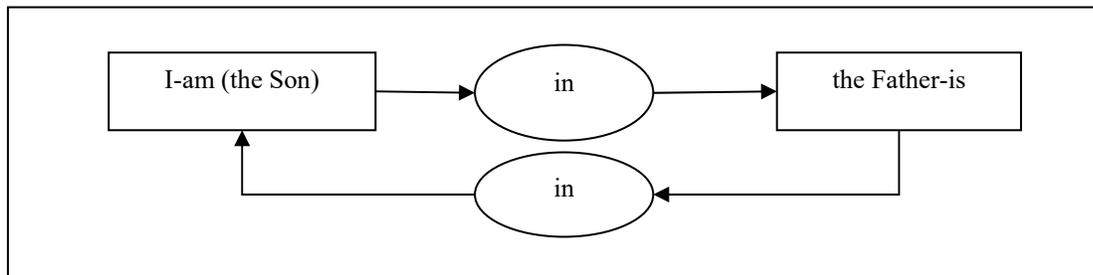


Figure 2. "I am in the Father and the Father is in me" in John 14:10

Here Jesus (the son) says: "I am in the father and the father is in me," and "the father is in me and I in him" (ἐγὼ ἐν τῷ πατρὶ καὶ ὁ πατήρ ἐν ἐμοί) in John 14:10–11. In contrast with the first example of "I am who I am" in Exodus 3:14, the construct here is circular, but with two persons mutually referencing each other in a circular or reciprocal indwelling relationship.<sup>26</sup>

A similar example of a circular indwelling relationship is found between the son and his disciples (John 14:20; 17:21–23). Moreover, a close pair-relationship should be noted between the circular indwelling (ἐν ἐμοί ὁ πατήρ καὶ ἐγὼ ἐν τῷ πατρὶ) in John 10:38 and the oneness (ἐγὼ καὶ ὁ πατήρ ἐν ἑσμεν) in John 10:30. Because of this close relationship, the Jews accused Jesus of making the claim that he was identical to God (σὺ ἄνθρωπος ὢν ποιεῖς σεαυτὸν θεόν) in John 10:33.<sup>27</sup> However, one should note the equality of the Father and the Son (ἴσον ἑαυτὸν ποιῶν τῷ θεῷ) in John 5:18. Further, Jesus maintains his self-testimony, asserting that (1) he is in the Father and the Father is in him (John 14:10–11), that (2) he and the father are one (John 17:10; 21), that (3) the father is greater than he is (ὁ πατήρ μείζων μου ἐστίν) in John 14:28, and that (4) it is the pair-relationship of "circular-indwelling" and "being one" (John 17:21–23), to distinguish the son from the father even though they are one and equal (John 10:30, 38). This pair-relationship is also used for the son and his disciples as the disciples are "one" and to be in the father and the son who are "one" (ἐν).

<sup>25</sup> Raymond E. Brown, *The Gospel According to John (I–XII)* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1966): 533–38.

<sup>26</sup> Raymond E. Brown, *The Gospel According to John (I–XII)* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1966): 533–38; Raymond E. Brown, *The Epistles of John* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1982): 195–96; Edward Malatesta, *Interiority and Covenant: A Study of εἶναι ἐν and μένειν ἐν in the First Letter of John* [Analecta Biblica 69] (San Francisco: Biblical Institute Press, 1978): 34–36; and Thomas F. Torrance, *The Christian Doctrine of God, One Being Three Persons* (London: T&T Clark, 1996) xi, 27–29, 102–110, 168–180.

<sup>27</sup> E. Pollard, "The Exegesis of John 10:30 in the Early Trinitarian Controversies" in *New Testament studies* 3 (1957), 334–349.

### 2.3. Titus 1:12

The third example is the well-known Liar paradox in Titus 1:12.<sup>28</sup>

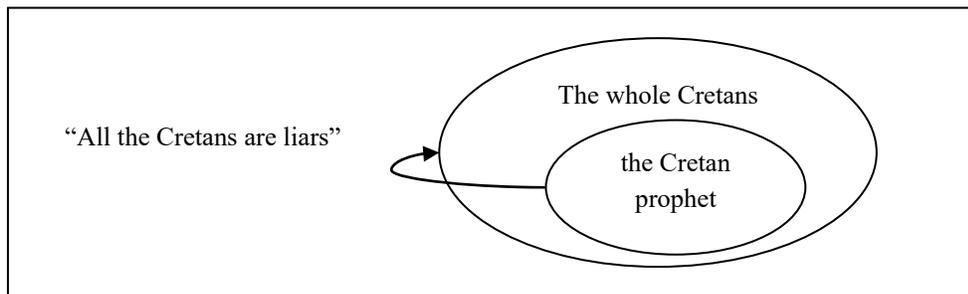


Figure 3. The Liar paradox in Titus 1:12

The text in Titus 1:12 presents a prophet who is a Cretan and thus a member of the larger group of Cretans to whom he is referring in his prophecy of self-negation. That is, the Cretan prophet is referring to himself, creating a circular reference by referring to the Cretan community of which he is a member. The paradoxical question and problem in Titus 1:12 is whether the prophet himself is also a liar as he declares that every Cretan is always a liar. A similar passage is found in Romans 3:4 where Paul declares that all men are liars ( $\pi\acute{\alpha}\varsigma$  δὲ ἄνθρωπος ψεύστης), citing the passage in Psalm 116:11 (כָּל־הָאָדָם כֹּזֵב). The difficulty in the Liar paradox is the presence of a self-negation in the circular relationship. In this paradox, even though not explicitly stated, a negative implication is clearly present.

Negation in circular reasoning not only presents a challenge, but also complicates the matter with respect to its meaning and validity. Since the Cretan prophet in Titus 1:12 asserts that all Cretans are liars, this Cretan prophet is then also a liar, and thus his own statement (as cited by Paul in Titus 1:12) is a lie. In other words, the Cretan prophet's prophecy (which is true and is even affirmed by Paul) negates the validity of any truth-statement made by any Cretan (including himself). If granted and extended, this line of reasoning further shakes the credibility of Paul's assertion in Titus 1:13.<sup>29</sup> Further the implication of this assertion challenges on Paul's racial bias against Cretans.

One critical note is that most discussions on the Liar paradox or Titus 1:12 are primarily based on monotonic logic using propositional or first-order logic. A development in nonmonotonic logic has occurred to handle what is exceptional or abnormal (versus what is default).<sup>30</sup> For example, we know that bird can fly (by default) but penguin cannot fly (as an exception). To handle exception or default in logic requires a higher order logic, much more powerful. For example, a chosen prophet—whether or not he is a liar—may speak a true prophecy given by God as is clearly stated for the case of Caiaphas in John 11:49–52.

Many biblical prophecies and miracles are truly an exceptional phenomenon, which cannot be explained by common sense, reasoning, or experience of a finite man, and are not possible without an intervention of the supernatural and almighty God. Another point to note is that a liar does not need to tell lies all the time. That is, a liar may tell a lie mixed with some true statements with respect to all the statements in a unit of his or her discourse, possibly to gain some credibility. Moreover, an act of cheating or being unfaithful to one's oath or promise is also an act of a lie. In this case, a liar simply does not keep his own word or promise in action. One famous and classic example and the judgment upon the religious hypocrites is found in the seven-woe passage by Jesus in Matthew

<sup>28</sup> Alfred North Whitehead and Bertrand Russell, *Principia Mathematica*, 3 vols. (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1913), 1:37; Saul A. Kripke, "Outline of a Theory of Truth," *Journal of Philosophy* 72, no. 19 (1975): 690 – 716; William D. Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 46 (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 2000), 397–399.

<sup>29</sup> Anthony C. Thiselton, "The Logical Role of the Liar Paradox in Titus 1:12, 13: A Dissent from the Commentaries in Light of Philosophical and Logical Analysis," *Biblical Interpretation* 2 (1994): 207-23.

<sup>30</sup> John McCarthy, "Circumscription: A form of non-monotonic reasoning." *Artificial Intelligence* 13 (1980), 27–39; R. Reiter. "A logic for default reasoning." *Artificial Intelligence* 13(1980), 81–132; Robert C. Moore, "Semantical considerations on nonmonotonic logic." *Artificial Intelligence* 25 (1985), 75–94.

23:13–32. Further, in Romans 3:4, Paul made an even stronger assertion saying that all human beings are liars (cf. Psalm 116:11). This assertion includes Paul himself as he is the person writing this very statement, and this assertion is a divine revelation.

Many paradoxes in the Bible use self-negation. A similar rhetoric and exegesis should be applied to all the prophetic assertions that all men are sinners (e.g., Psalm 14:1–3; Romans 3:10–18; Ephesians 2:3). A few more difficult examples worthy of mention are the paradoxes of (1) self-denial discipleship (Mark 8:34), (2) saving by losing one's life (Mark 8:35), and (3) servant-leadership (Mark 9:35).<sup>31</sup> Even though as naïve logicians, we may not provide a formal proposition about these paradoxical truth statements, we still somehow intuitively recognize their truthfulness.

#### 2.4. Matthew 22:23–33

The paradox of Matthew 22:23–33 deals with marriage and resurrection.<sup>32</sup>

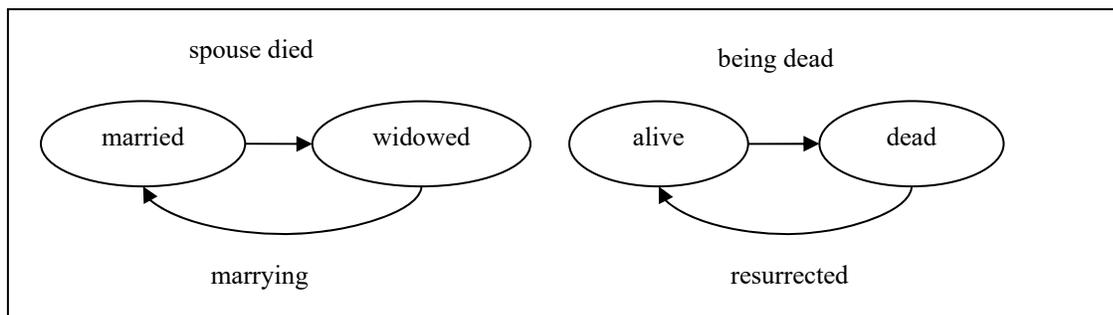


Figure 4. One's Marital Status and Life Status in Matthew 22:23–33.

The paradoxical question here is used in order to trap Jesus in an intellectual and theological dilemma. No solution to this paradoxical question seems to exist until Jesus resolves it (Matthew 22:29–32). Initially resolving this question of whose wife the woman would be in eternity seems impossible in this world of the living. The marital status and spouse of the woman changed with each marriage following the subsequent deaths of her spouses. Additionally, her life status would be ever-changing as she transformed from the states of being alive, dead, and then resurrected. One may note her marital status in a cycle of being married, then widowed, and then married after remarriage. Similarly, her life status was in a cycle of being alive, dead, and then back to being alive after resurrection.

This aspect of temporal-modal reasoning in a paradox of circularity brings our attention to an additional and critical feature of a paradox for being nonmonotonic. That is, instead of one to be married and then to stay married forever, the marital status of the woman is not monotonic (to stay same forever) but nonmonotonic (changing each time with her next marriage). At the same time, the identity of the woman's husband changes with each new stage. Thus, the issue with regard to the identity of her husband is not absolute, but rather changes over time. A simple solution to this paradoxical problem is provided by Jesus (Matthew 22:29–32). It is first to clarify the confusion of the Sadducees caused by the circular and monotonic presumption on marriage and resurrection in the age to come. Here, Jesus simply points out that the state of living after the resurrection is not returning to the old state of body and life of this age, but rather like angels in heaven in the age to come. That is, it is not circular but linear.

It is noteworthy that nonmonotonic reasoning is one of the most common motifs and themes in the Bible (e.g., Ecclesiastes 3:1–10; 7:14), seemingly contradictory in the framework of monotonic reasoning or principle. For example, if the righteous are to be blessed, and the evil are to be cursed (in the conventional paradigm of monotonic

<sup>31</sup> Narry Fajardo Santos, "The paradox of authority and servanthood in the gospel of Mark," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 154 (1995), 452-460.

<sup>32</sup> W. D. Davies and D. C. Allison, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to Saint Matthew* 3 (Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1997), 221–34.

reasoning), then no valid justification exists for the suffering of a righteous man who is cursed or persecuted (as noted frequently in the biblical paradigm of nonmonotonic reasoning). A few similar classic examples in the Bible would make the case for Job's suffering or a Christian who is cursed to be blessed (Matthew 5:10–12).

### 2.5. Matthew 22:41–46

The paradox in Matthew 22:41–46 extends the number of the constituents in the cycle.<sup>33</sup>

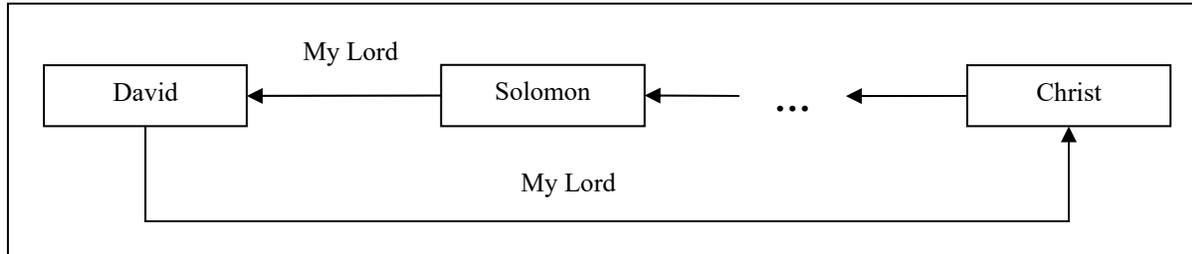


Figure 5. Lord-Servant relationship from David to Christ in Matthew 22:41–46

This example deals with the extended "father-son" relationship, which is compatible with the "lord-servant" relationship. A father who is also a king is the lord of his own son. This father-son relationship is further extended to the ancestor-descendant relationship. Then the question in Psalm 110:1 is why did David call the Christ, who is his own descendent, "my lord"? This clearly illustrates a circular relationship creating a paradox that is counterintuitive to the intended "father-son" or "lord-servant" relationship from David to the Christ. The human lineage from David to the Christ is clear and intuitive, to be monotonic and linear. However, a circular relationship is then formed by overlapping the divine relationship between the creator God and His creature, which is addressed by David in Psalm 110:1. A similar case is noted in Luke 3:28–38 where human genealogy goes back from the Christ to David and then further back to the God who is the creator of all.

As shown in this example, some of the circular relationships may not be so clear or vivid at a lexical or syntactic level, but rather require a careful semantic analysis to make visible an underlying circular relationship. In this regard, we will explore a few more examples to illustrate the circular and temporal logic of "already" and "not yet" in tension.

A classic example in contemporary New Testament scholarship with pioneering and successful application of temporal-modal logic is found in the works of Cullmann.<sup>34</sup> In the framework of *Salvation History* (*Heilsgeschichte*), the two-stage coming of the Kingdom of God (Luke 17:20–30) is expressed in temporal-modal logic of "already" and "not yet" in tension.

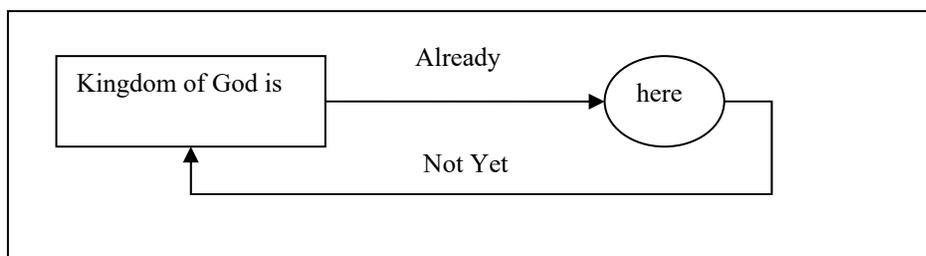


Figure 6. Two-stage coming of the Kingdom of God "already" and "Not Yet" in circular rhetoric

To uncover the underlying critical method in temporal-modal logic, and to be recognized correctly and appreciated rightfully, took over a half-century. Further, it is based on circular rhetoric built in temporal-modal

<sup>33</sup> W. D. Davies and D. C. Allison, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to Saint Matthew* 3 (Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1997), 249–57.

<sup>34</sup> Oscar Cullmann, *Christ and Time* (London: Gordon Pr Publishing, 1962); and Oscar Cullmann, *Salvation in History* (London: SCM-Canterbury Press, 1967).

aspect of the two-stage coming of the Kingdom of God, in order to generate a temporal tension of "already" and "not yet." As Cullmann noted in *Christ and Time*, some critical and exegetical premises in this framework are summarized as: (1) "the linear conception of time in the revelatory history of the Bible," (2) "God's Lordship over time," (3) "Christ event at the mid-point" in the redemptive history of the past, the present, and the future stages, and (4) the "complete Lordship of Christ and the redemptive process." The representative paradox in tension is deeply associated in the person of the Christ who was already preexisting in the beginning (divine), and yet to be born and come as a man (human). This paradox in temporal-modal logic is constructed and expressed effectively with circular rhetoric in Matthew 22:41–46 with Psalm 110:1. As Cullmann correctly notes, "Christian faith, like Jewish faith, was distinguished from all other religions of the time by this salvation-historical orientation."<sup>35</sup>

The similar rhetoric and paradox of "already" and "not yet" in time is found in the dawn of early Christianity. In a public testimony (John 1:19–23), John the Baptist testifies himself as the forerunner of the coming Christ (Isaiah 40:3). At this time, Christ is not yet revealed in public, but is to be identified later by John the Baptist through his baptism with the sign of the Holy Spirit (John 1:26–34). John the Baptist's unique description about the coming Christ with respect to himself is found in John 1:15 (ὁ ὀπίσω μου ἐρχόμενος ἔμπροσθέν μου γέγονεν, ὅτι πρῶτός μου ἦν), and again in John 1:30 (ὁπίσω μου ἔρχεται ἀνὴρ ὃς ἔμπροσθέν μου γέγονεν, ὅτι πρῶτός μου ἦν). The passage is composed of three simple and distinctive prepositional phrases, in either temporal or spatial meaning, to generate an interesting enigma and paradox in exegesis.<sup>36</sup>

The first prepositional phrase (ὀπίσω μου ἐρχόμενος) can be viewed as either temporal ("who comes after me" in a before-after relationship) or spatial ("who comes after me" in rank or "who follows me" in a teacher-disciple relationship).<sup>37</sup> The second phrase (ἔμπροσθέν μου γέγονεν) can be also viewed as either temporal ("has been before me" in timeline) or spatial ("has surpassed me" or "has been superior to me" in rank or superiority).<sup>38</sup> The third clause (πρῶτός μου ἦν) is viewed either as temporal in a relative or comparative sense ("was earlier than I" in time) or as temporal in an absolute temporal sense ("was before me" from the beginning of John 1:1).<sup>39</sup>

The following figure (Figure 7) provides an illustration and insight about the reciprocal "is-before" (or "is-after" in reverse) relationship between two objects in circular rhetoric.

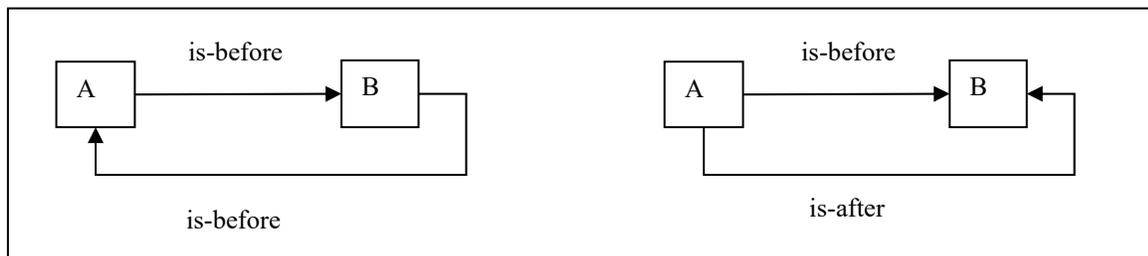


Figure 7. "A is before B" and "B is before A" (or "A is after B") in circular rhetoric

<sup>35</sup> Oscar Cullmann, *Salvation in History* (London: SCM-Canterbury Press, 1967) 25.

<sup>36</sup> Herman N. Ridderbos, *The Gospel According to John: A Theological Commentary*, trans. John Vriend (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1997), 55; and John F. McHugh, *Critical and Exegetical Commentary on John 1–4*, ed. Graham N. Stanton (London; New York: T. & T. Clark, 2009), 61–63; 63, fn. 39. McHugh notes (from ἔμπροσθέν, BADG 257) Cullmann's view of ἔμπροσθέν μου to treat this clause as the absolute time in John 1:1 (*Coniectanea Neotestamentica* 11 [1947: Fridrichsen Festschrift], 26–32), and to avoid the following clause "ὅτι πρῶτός μου ἦν," to give simply the reason for it (simply being a tautology or a circular logic) where this point is also noted in Oscar Cullmann, *The Early Church* (London: SCM Press, 1956) 180–81; and J. Ramsey Michaels, *The Gospel of John* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2010) 83–87.

<sup>37</sup> John McHugh, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on John 1–4* (New York: T. & T. Clark 2009), 62; "ὀπίσω," by H. Seesemann in Kittel, TWNT, VI, 289-92; "ὀπίσω," in BAGD, 575 [2 b; 2 a (β)]; and Michaels, *Gospel of John*, 86, fn. 50.

<sup>38</sup> McHugh, *Critical and Exegetical Commentary on John 1–4*, 63; and "ἔμπροσθέν" with genitive in BADG 257 [2 f] of rank.

<sup>39</sup> McHugh, *Critical and Exegetical Commentary on John 1–4*, 63; "πρῶτός" with genitive in BADG 725–26 [1 a] of time "first, earlier"; [1 c (β)] of rank; and "πρῶτός," in Kittel, TWNT, V 865–68.

For a note, an exegetical choice to take both the second and the third as temporal would mean that "he was before me because he was before me." This is clearly in circular rhetoric. For this reason, a careful exegetical elaboration has been noted in the past in order to avoid the passage from being simply tautological (or circular). Proposed by Cullmann, one alternative is to place or qualify its temporal point of the Christ in the third clause (πρῶτός μου ἦν) to the beginning in John 1:1.<sup>40</sup> However, the same or similar circular rhetoric should be noted with the second clause and the third clause either in a spatial sense (in rank) or a temporal sense (in time). Further, a similar caution should be applied to the first clause (with the second or the third clause) as they are also in circular rhetoric generating a paradox in rank or in time. That is, he "who comes after me has been before me" in rank or in time.

In summary, we have surveyed and analyzed these five noteworthy and exemplary biblical paradoxes of circularity. A circular construct to form a circular relationship is detected and displayed on a lexical, syntactic, or semantic level. Further, a circular relationship can be complicated by a layer of negation as found in Titus 1:12. As noted in these examples, a cycle can be constructed with one concept in self-reference as in Exodus 3:14, two concepts in circular relationship as in John 14:10, many concepts chained in a cycle as in Matthew 22:41–46, one concept referring to a set where the concept is its member as in Titus 1:12, and a cycle with a negation. Some distinctive features with the biblical paradoxes are circular, modal, and nonmonotonic. The present list of these patterns and features in this paper is by no means complete or exhaustive, but rather is waiting to be explored and extended in future study.

### 3. "I am" Sayings in John

A noteworthy example of a self-reference being used as a proof method is found in John 8:12–20. Here Jesus makes the claim himself saying, "I am the light of the world" (Ἐγώ εἰμι τὸ φῶς τοῦ κόσμου) in John 8:12. With regard to this claim, the Pharisees immediately accused Jesus of projecting an invalid self-testimony. One should note that the testimony of Jesus is indeed a circular reasoning, as it is also acknowledged by Jesus (σὺ περὶ σεαυτοῦ μαρτυρεῖς· ἡ μαρτυρία σου οὐκ ἔστιν ἀληθής) in John 8:13. Further, Jesus defended the validity of his self-testimony (κἂν ἐγὼ μαρτυρῶ περὶ ἑμαυτοῦ, ἀληθής ἐστιν ἡ μαρτυρία μου) in John 8:14. Citing two witnesses according to the Law in his defense, Jesus further provided a lawful testimony (καὶ ἐν τῷ νόμῳ δὲ τῷ ὑμετέρῳ γέγραπται ὅτι δύο ἀνθρώπων ἡ μαρτυρία ἀληθής ἐστιν. ἐγὼ εἰμι ὁ μαρτυρῶν περὶ ἑμαυτοῦ καὶ μαρτυρεῖ περὶ ἐμοῦ ὁ πέμψας με πατήρ) in John 8:17–18. Thus, it is worthy to note the two distinctive proof methods presented by Jesus in John 8:12–18.

#### 3.1. Two Proof Methods in John 8:12–20

First, using a circular reasoning (John 8:12), Jesus declared his self-testimony with his own justification in John 8:14. Here Jesus argued the validity of his self-testimony even when testifying on his own behalf. His argument and defense is based on his own supernatural and omniscient knowledge about himself of knowing where he came from and where he is going. In contrast to his own defense, Jesus argued that they (the accusers) did not know where Jesus came from or where Jesus was going. This claim further reveals that Jesus not only knows their inner thoughts (John 2:24–25), but also their origin and destination (John 8:44).

Second, using a lawful reasoning (John 8:17), Jesus provided two witnesses in compliance with the acceptable legal requirement imposed by the Law (Deuteronomy 19:15). Interestingly, the accused (Jesus) was also qualified as a witness to defend himself. The accusers accepted at least a part of Jesus, but then sought the claimed second witness (the father of Jesus) to be in witness stance (John 8:19). Clearly, the accusers were willing to accept both witnesses (Jesus and his father) as mere men. Later, one may note at least one more independent witness (John 9:29–33) who is willing to stand up in the witness stance to defend the validity of the self-claim of Jesus as being the light of the world. He is the man born blind whom Jesus healed. He boldly came forward to testify for Jesus about who Jesus is (John 9:17) and from whence Jesus came (John 9:30–33).

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<sup>40</sup> Cullmann, *Early Church*, 180–81.

### 3.2. John 5:31 in the Light of John 8:12–20

From this perspective, two conflicting statements by Jesus found in John 5:31 and John 8:16, are worth noting, with respect to the validity of his own self-testimony.<sup>41</sup> However, the conflict caused by these two statements could be easily resolved with a simple analysis of each context in its own modal aspect. In John 5:31, Jesus denied the validity of his own self-testimony, as this statement is valid according to the Law. In contrast to John 5:31, Jesus affirmed the validity of his self-testimony based on his own divine knowledge and self-reference (John 8:16). As noted in the paradox of paying tax to Caesar or not (Matthew 22:15–22), a model set of two contradicting interpretations or solutions could be valid. Thus in these multi-modal layers of one according to the Law, and the other according to the divine self-reference, one may resolve these seemingly-contradicting claims of Jesus in John 5:31 versus John 8:14. That is, each claim has its own valid model in either lawful or divine aspect. With this insight, one may take a fresh look at the four witnessing agents (John 5:31–39) provided to substantiate the proof that Jesus is the Christ (John 20:31). The four-fold proof about Jesus Christ in John 5:31–39 is based on (1) Jesus who is a credible prophet (Isaiah 39:3–9; John 1:19–37), (2) His work of the miracles as the divine sign (John 2:11; 20:30–31), (3) the Father as a witness (John 1:33–34; 12:28), and (4) the Scriptures as the proof text for the Christ (John 5:39). As noted in John 8:17, it is sufficient for Jesus to present one more individual other than himself to defend his divine "I am" claim, according to the Law. Furthermore, the miracles performed by Jesus are used as the signs and, thus, were a means of proof to authenticate the divine "I am" claims of Jesus, as noted in John 10:25, 38.

### 3.3. Exodus 3:14–15 in the Light of John 8:12–20

One may notice a close parallel between John 8:12–20 and Exodus 3:14–15 with respect to the pattern of the two-proof method.<sup>42</sup> First, in Exodus 3:14, God identifies himself with respect to himself. This is clearly a self-referencing proof method, which is clearly a circular proof method. Second, in Exodus 3:15, God identifies himself by referring the people of Israel to their most credible three witnesses: Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. These three persons are not only the founding fathers of the people of Israel, but also are the living witnesses of the living God (Matthew 22:32). This is clearly a lawful and inductive (objective) proof method.

Similar provision for the proof method in the authentication process is explicitly stated and mandated (Deuteronomy 18:21–22) for a safeguard against false testimony (Exodus 20:16). One may find many biblical examples for the "challenge-response" model or "identification-authentication" model of security, for example, for the identity and proof of Christ (John 1:19–27; 6:30) and toward the secure model of revelation. Thus the secure system of the biblical reasoning and revelation warrants the challenge-response model, using the "sign" as one of the most prominent proof methods in the Bible (Deuteronomy 18:19–22; Isaiah 7:10–17; John 20:30–31).

This elevates the necessity and interest toward the biblical concept of "sign" as a proof method in the "identification and authentication" process (cf. John 2:11). One may find the stages or the process of the faith (for example, of Peter in John) in formation, growth, and maturity through (1) an indirect but a credible personal testimony of one's teacher and prophet (John 1:35–42), (2) a direct and personal self-experience of the unshakable "sign" as a proof (John 2:11), (3) a doubt and controversy (John 6:60–71), (4) a confirmation of the faith (John 16:29–31), (5) the ultimate shake-and-break test (John 13:36–38 and 16:32–33 for John 18:25–27), and (6) the commencement (John 21:15–18). In this framework, one may extend the contemporary view and scope of paradox beyond the literary genre of discourse and rhetoric into the realm of action and communication. That is, one may view the miraculous signs in the Bible under the category of paradox "in action" to extend the definition of paradox, as it is either in word or in work, as noted in Luke 5:26.

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<sup>41</sup>Merrill C. Tenney, *The Bible; the Living Word of Revelation*, An Evangelical Theological Society Publication. Monograph No. 6 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Pub. House, 1968): 107–108, 144–145.

<sup>42</sup>S. R. Driver, *The Book of Exodus* (CB; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1911) 362–63; Umberto Cassuto. *A Commentary on the Book of Exodus*. Translated by Israel Abrahams. (Jerusalem: Magnes, 1967) 37–39; Brevard S. Childs. *The Book of Exodus: A Critical Commentary* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1971) 60–70; Jack R. Lundbom, "God's Use of the *Idem per Idem* to Terminate Debate," *The Harvard Theological Review*, Vol. 71, No. 3/4 (Jul. - Oct., 1978): 193–201; and Walter C. Kaiser, Jr. "Exodus," *Expositor's Bible Commentary* vol. 2 Genesis-Numbers, 287–487 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1990): 320–322.

In conclusion, the majority of "I am" sayings by Jesus in John should be taken as self-identification, self-predication, self-reference, self-witnessing, or self-testimony. Additionally, this is noticed and accused by the Pharisees (for example, in John 8:13). Further a new exegetical model and means are presented and explored to a few controversial cases in exegesis (i.e., John 5:31-39 and John 8:17-18). This conclusion leads the writer to examine and evaluate "I am" sayings (and its variants) by Jesus in John, with respect to circular rhetoric and self-reference.

### 3.4. "I am" as Interpretive Key

One distinctive narrative-feature in John is the abundant usage of the first person pronoun (ἐγώ) and the "I am" phrase (ἐγώ εἰμι) narrated by Jesus. As noted by the Pharisees in John 8:13, all of these metaphorical "I am" sayings are essentially self-testimonies of Jesus. Two metaphorical "I am" sayings are found in John 10:1–18.<sup>43</sup> The discourse begins with a figure of speech (παροιμία—parable, proverb, allegory, or riddle) in John 10:1–5.<sup>44</sup> For a practical reason, this metaphorical story in John 10:1–5 is viewed as a proverbial "parable" in this paper.

The discourse begins with a distinctive "amen, amen" introductory opening statement by Jesus (John 10:1), uniquely observed in John. As usual, the audience does not understand the meaning of the parable, that is, its hidden and intended message. Noting the inability of the audience to understand in John 10:6, Jesus provides a key (an aid to the audience) to unlock one part of the hidden message (its intended meaning or interpretation) of the parable, using "I am" (ἐγώ εἰμι) as the key to the partial and modal interpretation of the parable. The first key is "I am" the gate, designating the true identity of the gate (John 10:7). The second key is "I am" the good shepherd, designating the true identity of the good shepherd (John 10:11).

A few interpretive notes should be understood. First, a distinctive modal approach could be made possible to allow at least two interpretive solutions. Second, the true identities of many other metaphorical figures in the parable are still hidden (e.g., who are the gatekeeper, the sheep, the thieves, the hireling, or the wolf in the story?). Thus these two keys of "I am" do not provide a complete solution (interpretation) of the parable in John 10:1–5, but rather each to a partial solution.

A few distinctive features of the Johannine parable in John 10:1–5 with its interpretation in John 10:7–18 should be noted in contrast with the synoptic parables.

First, the parable of the seed-sower in Matthew 13:3–9 (in a fixed and static content) with its complete interpretation in Matthew 13:18–23 provides an exemplary case to be compared with the parable and its interpretation in John 10:1–18. The parable in John 10:1–5 is explained (or interpreted) with the first-person key of

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<sup>43</sup>Quasten, Johannes, "The Parable of the Good Shepherd: Jn 10:1–21," *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 10 (1948): 1–12; Meyer, Paul W. "A Note on John 10:1–18," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 75 (1956): 232–235; Raymond E. Brown, *The Gospel According to John (I–XII)* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1966): 383–400; C. K. Barrett, *The Gospel According to St. John* (London: SPCK, 1978) 367–378; Leon Morris, *The Gospel According to John* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Pub. House, 1995): 443–458. D. A. Carson, *The Gospel According to John* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991), 379–390; Kysar, Robert, "Johannine Metaphor – Meaning and Function: A Literary Case Study of John 10:1–18," *Semeia* 53 (1991): 81–111.

<sup>44</sup>Henry George Liddell and Robert Scott, *A Greek English Lexicon* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1973), 1342; G. W. H. Lampe, *A Patristic Greek Lexicon* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1961), 1042; J. A. T. Robinson, "The Parable of John x. 1-5," *Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft* 46 (1955): 233–240; Brown, Raymond E. "Parable and Allegory Reconsidered." *Novum Testamentum* 5 (1962): 36–45; C. H. Dodd, *The Parables of Kingdom* (Glasgow: Fontana, 1961); Joachim Jeremias, *The Parable of Jesus* Rev. ed. (London: SCM, 1972); John Dominic Crossan, "Parable, Allegory and Paradox," In *Semiotics and Parables: An Exploration of the Possibilities Offered by Structuralism for Exegesis*, edited by Daniel Patte (Pittsburgh Theological Monographs 9; Pittsburgh: Pickwick Press, 1976) 247 – 281; Kim E. Dewey, "Paroimiai in the Gospel of John," *Semeia* 17 (1980) 81–99; D. A. Carson, "Understanding Misunderstandings in the Fourth Gospel," *Tyndale Bulletin* 33 (1981): 59–91; Lawrence Boadt, "Understanding the *Mashal* and Its Value for the Jewish-Christian Dialogue in a Narrative Theology," In *Parable and Story in Judaism and Christianity*, edited by Clemens Thoma and Michael Wyschogrod (New York: Paulist Press, 1989) 172–176; Alan P. Winton, *The Proverbs of Jesus: Issues of History and Rhetoric*, JSNT Supplement 35 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1990), 35.

"I am" to reveal the hidden or intended meaning. In contrast, the figures in the synoptic parables and their interpretations are mostly in third-person and rarely are in second-person (Matthew 5:13–16).

Second, the parable in John 10:1–18 is interpreted partially to the general audience. In contrast, the parable in Matthew 13:3–9 is interpreted completely and to the disciples only in Matthew 13:18–23.

Third, the parable in John 10:1–18 is unfolding as it is being interpreted with the keys, by expanding or adding to the story of the parable with further parabolic materials (blended with the intended message), in a continuous and dynamic narrative-frame. In contrast to John 10:1–18, the two stages of presentation and interpretation of a parable are usually clearly marked and distinguishable. Thus, the content of a parable in scope is mostly fixed or static to be interpreted, and exclusively for the disciples (e.g., Matthew 13:10–13).

Fourth, the effect of the rhetoric process and framework of the parable in John 10:1–18 generated catastrophic offense, controversy, and disturbance among the general audience (John 10:19–21). In contrast, in the synoptic gospels, the effect and outcome of the telling of a parable was mostly met with the general audience exhibiting no understanding followed by a general sense of bewilderment, but with the disciples learning a significant lesson (e.g., Matthew 13:10–17, 36; 14:51; 15:15; 16:6–12; 17:10–13).

Fifth, the focus and emphasis of Johannine parables of "I am" saying is primarily on the person of Jesus Christ whereas the Synoptic parables are focused primarily on the Kingdom of God.

Finally, the narrative framework (of both the Synoptic or Johannine parables) should be understood as two-stage process of communication and revelation in proverbial model of teaching and learning, in two-stage communication model of concealed and clear (or plain) message (cf. John 16:25, 29).

Another noteworthy discussion on John 10:1–18 is whether John 10:1–5 consists of one parable or a mix of two parables as the story is being interpreted with two possible keys for who or what Jesus should be in the story: the door or the good shepherd.<sup>45</sup> The basis of this type of a question is essentially based on a literary premise of a parable (or an allegory) having one and only one valid interpretation, or to restrict one unique figure in the story to be interpreted as one unique figure in the interpretation. That is, if the door is interpreted as Jesus Christ, then the good shepherd cannot be interpreted as Jesus Christ but someone else. Likewise, a similar argument is also possible with the good shepherd. Based on this premise, yet another radical approach or proposal is to view this story in John 10:1–18 as a mix of two stories which were initially separated but then combined in the text of John. However, the pattern of the dual or triple role of Jesus Christ in the metaphoric "I am" sayings in John is not unusual. For example, Jesus declares himself to be both the resurrection and the life (John 11:25–26), and again he is the way, the truth, and the life at the same time (John 14:6).

Further the dual role being both the door and the good shepherd in John 10:1–5 presents an acute paradox. How can one person be the door through which he as the good shepherd goes in and out and leads his sheep in and out through the very door (which is the shepherd himself)? These patterns of circular rhetoric and paradox are found very frequently and rich in John. One noteworthy parallel expression is the mutual-indwelling relationship (perichoresis) of Jesus Christ and his disciples in the metaphor of the true vine and the branches (John 15:4–5). The branches (the disciples) should dwell in the vine (Jesus Christ) as the branches cannot survive without the vine. However, Jesus Christ (as the vine) also dwells in the disciples (who are the branches).

### 3.5. A Unifying Framework for "I am" Sayings in John

The pattern in John 10 is clearly observed in John 6. First, Jesus claimed to be the "bread of life" (John 6:35), using "I am" as the key to unlock the story of "the true bread of God" from heaven—the one who gives life to the world (John 6:31–34). Second, Jesus gave a partial interpretation of the parable to his audience, thus inviting them to eat his flesh (meaning to receive his Word, as explained in John 6:63). Third, Jesus expanded the parable of the bread of life (as his flesh) to be eaten, and the living water (as his blood) to be drunk (John 6:35). Thus, this rhetoric process and framework (blending of real and symbolic concepts) generates a catastrophic confusion,

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<sup>45</sup> Raymond E. Brown, *The Gospel According to John (I–XII)* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1966): 391–398.

disturbance, and controversy, especially among the Jews (as noted in John 6:41, 52, 60, 66) as the story unfolded with a partial interpretation and with additional materials in the form of a metaphor.

This new perspective provides a fresh new insight to the understanding of Jesus' metaphorical "I am" sayings found in John. These "I am" sayings are used as the keys to revealing the true identity of the metaphorical figures presented by Jesus in the form of self-claims. These metaphorical "I am" figures include: the bread of life, the living water, the gate for the sheep, and the good shepherd. Further, somewhat similar, yet different presentations of the metaphorical "I am" sayings are found in John 8:12 ("I am" the light of the world), John 11:25 ("I am" the resurrection and the life), John 14:6 ("I am" the way and the truth and the life), and John 15:1 ("I am" the true vine).

First, there is no preceding parable (that is, a metaphorical story or a proverbial teaching in figure of speech), in an explicit form, as noted in John 10:1–5 or John 6:31–34. However, a real-life case (experience as a story) is used to support the self-claim of Jesus. For example, the self-claim of "I am" the light of the world in John 8:12 is clearly substantiated with the story of a man born blind gaining his sight in John 9, and the self-claim of "I am" the resurrection and the life in John 11:25 is clearly manifested in the resurrection of the dead Lazarus in John 11.

Second, the message of the "I am" saying encountered various responses and reactions varying from hostility to loyalty with regard to the accusation in John 8:13 or the affirmation in John 11:27.

Third, the discourse in John 8:12–59 is engaged by the Jews with hostility and aggression. In contrast, Jesus and his disciples engage the discourses in John 11, John 14, and John 15, with the result of the disciples' faith being enhanced.

Finally, the setting of the discourse in John 8:12–59 is totally open to the public. In contrast, the setting of the discourse in John 14–15 is that of an intimate and closed fellowship, whereas the setting of John 11:25 is in public, but Jesus addressed his "I am" saying to one person (Martha) in particular. Jesus' audience (the Jews) understood relatively well the "I am" the light of the world message in John 8:12. They challenged and accused him of self-claiming (in contrast to John 6:41, 52, 60, 66). In addition, the rich thematic topics in John 8:12–59 are observed with an array of the dualistic (mutually negating or bipolar) concepts of: (1) light versus darkness, (2) life versus death, (3) freedom in the Son versus slavery under the sin, (4) truth versus lies, and (5) God the Father versus Devil the father.

This concludes a brief survey of the metaphorical "I am" sayings in John. As noted, John contains two classes of metaphorical "I am" sayings. The first class consists of metaphorical "I am" sayings with a preceding metaphorical (or typological) story of which the identity (of the key figure or object) is to be interpreted (revealed) with "I am" as the key, as noted in John 6:31–34 (with John 6:35–71) and John 10:1–5 (with John 10:6–18). The second class (pattern) consists of metaphorical "I am" sayings without a preceding metaphorical story. However, the story is assumed to be well-known to the audience (as a background theory or as common sense). Therefore, there is no need for Jesus to repeat the well-known story, but rather to reveal the true identity of the key figure of the well-known story with "I am" as the key.

This rhetorical pattern seems to keep recurring in John 8:12 ("I am" the light of the world), John 11:25 ("I am" the resurrection and the life), John 14:6 ("I am" the way and the truth and the life), and John 15:1 ("I am" the true vine). All the predicates of these "I am" sayings are well-known to the audience with their familiarity with the Old Testament stories. Some of the well-known examples in the Old Testament with the metaphorical "I am" sayings in John include: (1) the bread from heaven in John 6:31 with Exodus 16:15, (2) the light of the world in John 8:12 with Psalm 36:9, Isaiah 9:1–3 (also noted in Matthew 4:14–16), and Isaiah 42:6–7, and (3) the good shepherd in John 10:11 with Psalm 23, Isaiah 40:10–11, Jeremiah 23:1–6, and Ezekiel 34:11–16.

#### 4. Grace in John 1:16 in the Light of the Promise and its Fulfillment (Galatians 3:16–18)

The phrase of grace (χάριν ἀντὶ χάριτος) in John 1:16 presents an interesting challenge and difficulty in exegesis and interpretation.<sup>46</sup> The lexical pattern (A + ἀντὶ + A) is clearly circular and frequently found in the Bible (the New Testament and LXX).

Edwards (1988) provides a thorough analysis and summary for the five possible meanings for the preposition "ἀντὶ" in the phrase "χάριν ἀντὶ χάριτος."<sup>47</sup> The first two meanings are frequently found in the Bible. First, its most common meaning is "instead of" or "in place of." For example, Abraham offered the ram in place of his son, Isaac (Genesis 22:13), or no father gives a snake instead of a fish to his beloved child who asks for a fish (Matthew 11:11). The lexical pattern (A + ἀντὶ + B) is used for one thing "instead of" the other thing (even though these two things in the expression could refer to the same thing). Second, the very common meaning is "in return for." Some well-known examples are "life for life," "eye for eye," "tooth for tooth," "hand for hand," and "foot for foot" (Exodus 21:23–24; Matthew 5:38). The lexical pattern (A + ἀντὶ + A) is the same with the lexical pattern in John 1:16. The third meaning of "in front of" or "opposite" in the local sense is found in Classical Greek, is very rare in Hellenistic papyri, is never found in the NT or LXX, and is safely to be ruled out for this case. The fourth meaning (proposed by Thomas Aquinas) is a theological meaning as the grace received by Christians is "corresponding to" the grace of Christ. However, the preposition has never been used for this meaning (except for a few compound-constructs possibly) to be ruled out without further consideration. The fifth meaning is "upon" or "in addition to," which has been most popular in the most popular modern interpretation of the phrase. However, no parallel is found for this usage in all of Greek literature. The preposition, "ἐπὶ" is used for this meaning. Further, Edwards provides a thorough examination on various proposals for this meaning, and a conclusion to rule out this option. Based on this summary, we explore the lexical pattern (A + ἀντὶ + A) of grace as circular rhetoric for its possible meaning(s).

The first question for our investigation is whether a substantial difference exists between the first meaning ("instead of" or "in place of") and the second meaning ("in return for") in this circular pattern (A + ἀντὶ + A) with the case of grace in John 1:16. The lexical pattern (A + ἀντὶ + A) is very familiar to any reader of the Bible, as it is frequently found in the Bible, and is used in daily lives (e.g., Exodus 21:23–24; Matthew 5:38). John may mean simply "grace for grace" here. As noted in this study, similar techniques of rhetoric employed by John (e.g., John 1:15; 6:56; 8:14; 10:38) should be taken into consideration. Here, John may use and take advantage of a confusing circular expression of grace, which is potentially ambiguous.<sup>48</sup> Its goal is for a naïve reader to be serious and curious, to keep meditating on the Scripture for one's salvation, leading ultimately to Jesus Christ (John 5:39; 20:31). Another possibility for the "grace" in this phrase is meant to be generic, abstract, or even a place-holder for an open-ended and comprehensive view of grace in John. One case for the two graces in the phrase "χάριν ἀντὶ χάριτος" in John 1:16 is the Gospel of Jesus Christ for the first grace and the Mosaic Law for the second grace. This interpretation is the major and leading opinion by the Greek-speaking church fathers (e.g., Chrysostom, Cyril of Alexandria, Origen, and Jerome).<sup>49</sup> This opinion seems to be supported by the following statement in John 1:17 with its opening conjunction (ὅτι), to present a parallel between the Law through Moses and the grace and truth by Jesus Christ. In contrast to the early church fathers, many modern New Testament scholars reject this meaning. The opinion is based on the negative view of the Law, which could not be the grace in this phrase. However, many positive aspects are present on the Law to be good, holy, and worthy to be upheld in the Bible (e.g., Romans 3:31; 7:12) and to be a witness of Jesus Christ (John 5:39). The aspect on the Law should not be restricted in a one-sided negative view only, but in a two-sided modal aspect.

The second question for our investigation is whether the lexical pattern (A + ἀντὶ + A) and the usage in Exodus 21:23–24 and Matthew 5:38 can be also applied for the case of grace in John 1:16. A similar objection

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<sup>46</sup> Ruth B. Edwards, "XAPIN ANTI XARITOS (John 1.16) Grace and the Law in the Johannine Prologue," *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 32 (1988): 3–15; and Nigel Turner, "The Style of John," in *Style*, ed. James Hope Moulton, 4 vols., 64–79 (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1976).

<sup>47</sup> Edwards, "XAPIN ANTI XARITOS (John 1.16)," 3–7.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, 11–12.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, 7–9.

(against the case of the Gospel for the Mosaic Law) is voiced for the case of grace, questioning on what grace is in return for (or instead of) what grace was. If it is so (for the case of the Gospel in return for the Mosaic Law), then the Christians under the new grace of God by Jesus Christ are still under the old grace of the God through Moses (e.g., Romans 3:31; 7:12–16; Galatians 3:21–22). Hence, it seems to be neither permissible, nor satisfactory (as the objection voices) to say that the new grace is in return for (or instead of) the old grace. As we noted with the first question, the Law should be viewed in the modal aspect, still active in its presence and effect to all men under the sins. Further, the Law was given to lead all men to Jesus Christ (John 5:39; Galatians 3:24), but has now completed its function as the promise of the coming savior is fulfilled by Jesus Christ (John 1:14; Galatians 3:19, 25).<sup>50</sup>

The next question is then, what would be a viable meaning for grace (*χάρις ἀντὶ χάριτος*) in John 1:16? As Paul speaks in Galatians 3:16–18, it is the promise of Jesus Christ, the seed of Abraham. The promise is given to Abraham, and it is given as a free gift (that is, a grace) of God (*δι' ἐπαγγελίας κεχάρισται ὁ θεός* in Galatians 3:16). The promise of the coming savior is then fulfilled by Jesus Christ. The fulfillment (of the promise for Jesus Christ) is the grace in return for the grace that has been the promise (for the coming Jesus Christ who is the seed of Abraham). Thus, the content of both graces is the same Jesus Christ. The first grace in the phrase "*χάρις ἀντὶ χάριτος*" is in the timeframe for its fulfillment ("already"), whereas the second grace is in the timeframe for its promise ("not yet"), but has now passed away through its fulfillment. With this understanding, we conclude that the phrase "*χάρις ἀντὶ χάριτος*" in John 1:16 is expressed, in circular rhetoric, for the two-fold temporal aspect of the grace of God (that is, Jesus Christ). The grace of God in the past time is the promise given to Abraham and the faithful. The grace of God in the present time is the fulfillment of the promise. This conclusion further clears any objection against the meaning of "in return for" for the preposition "*ἀντὶ*" in this phrase.

## 5. Circular Rhetoric in the Johannine Epistles and the Revelation

A brief survey on the Johannine Epistles and the Revelation reveals a few interesting patterns with respect to the "I am" sayings and circular in-relationships.<sup>51</sup> First, the metaphorical "I am" saying as noted in John is observed only in the Revelation (1:8, 17; 21:6; 22:13). Second, the circular in-relationships (of "be-in" and "dwell-in") are observed only in the Johannine Epistles (especially in 1 John). These patterns are somewhat expected within the corresponding literary genre of each book. For example, 1 John is an epistolary work where, as the author, John is addressing his fellow Christian brothers, expressing and reflecting in first-person monologue his own understanding of God the father and his son (as both persons are expressed in third person). In the Johannine epistles, no intervening external event or engaging multi-person discourse is present (in contrast to John or the Revelation). The Revelation is a prophetic and apocalyptic document (Revelation 1:1; 22:18–19) containing a vivid eyewitness report from John's perspective. John often witnessed and vividly recorded the "I am" sayings of Jesus in first person.

The circular in-relationships (with the verb "be" or "dwell," or without a verb but understood in context) are found in abundance in 1 John with rich and insightful theological assertions and implications about Christians (as being born of God and in God). For example, one in Jesus or being born of God does not sin and cannot do sin (1 John 3:6–9; 5:18). Similar claims regarding sinlessness or impeccability (1 John 3:9; 5:18) are also noteworthy for everyone "born of God." As the author of 1 John addressed his words to "my children" (1 John 2:1), the purpose of 1 John is distinctively pastoral and exhortative (1 John 2:1), to build and maintain a strong and effective Christian identity and fellowship, and to guard against those who deceive (1 John 2:26) and who are antichrists (1 John 2:22).

Dodd (1946), followed by Malatesta (1978) and Brown (1982), notes about this "remain in" (or "abide in") formula in 1 John 2:5, as characteristic of the Fourth Gospel, "not found (verbally) in the sources which are our authorities for Hellenistic mysticism."<sup>52</sup> Brown (1982) further elaborates this concept of divine indwelling as an

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<sup>50</sup> Walter C. Kaiser, Jr. *Toward an Old Testament Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1978); Walter C. Kaiser, Jr. *The Promise-Plan of God: A Biblical Theology of the Old and New Testaments* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2008).

<sup>51</sup> Raymond E. Brown, *The Epistles of John* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1982): 195–96; Edward Malatesta, *Interiority and Covenant: A Study of εἶναι ἐν and μένειν ἐν in the First Letter of John*. [Analecta Biblica 69] (San Francisco: Biblical Institute Press, 1978): 34–36.

<sup>52</sup> Dodd, C. H. *The Johannine Epistles*. (London: Hodder and Stoughton. 1946): 32.

"important Johannine idea in the Old Testament and intertestamental Jewish writing" and "to keep the Johannine view of divine immanence distinctive," noting that "this formula avoids that identification with divinity that marked many Hellenistic systems" by Hauck (Kittel 4:576). Moreover, the circular indwelling relationships should be recognized to enhance this line of argument for the Johannine characteristics and distinctiveness toward the authorship of John.

### 5.1 Everyone "Born of God" in 1 John 3:9

One of the difficult problems in 1 John is a paradox of: (1) the Christian as a sinner in need of confession of one's own sin, and thus in need of God's forgiveness (1 John 1:8–10); and (2) the impeccability of the Christian who does not sin and is not even able to sin (1 John 3:9 and 5:18). Stott (1964), followed by Brown (1982), presents various solutions, including seven different approaches for the harmony of 1 John 1:8–10 versus 3:9.<sup>53</sup> These proposed solutions include: (1) two different writers (of 1 John) in contradiction, (2) two different groups of adversaries with different polemics to be addressed, (3) two specific kinds of sin (for example, forgivable or unforgivable) in the author's understanding, (4) two groups of Christians (for example, immature or mature) in the author's understanding, (5) two modes of sinning with grammatical emphasis (for example, continual or habitual sin or not), (6) two different levels of Christians (real versus ideal), and (7) two literary contexts (for example, *kerygmatic* or apocalyptic). Further, for "sin unto death," along with a prayer of petition (for a Christian brother's sin) in 1 John 5:16, Brown (1982) groups various solutions into four classifications: (1) different types of petitions, (2) different types of penalties, (3) different types of sins, and (4) different types of people. As noted, these arguments or classifications are characterized by modal reasoning (with different aspects). Five points are to be noted.

First, concerning the passages of 1 John 1:8–10 and 5:16, the primary goal is for the repentance and forgiveness of the sins of Christians with two modes of prayer: (1) by one's own prayer of confession, and (2) by other Christians' prayers of petition (intercession). In these two modes of prayer, both prayers are addressed by and to Christians (whether their faith is real or apparent), with one purpose in mind—for God's forgiveness of one's personal sin. Further non-Christians (those yet to be saved) are excluded as the object-person of one's intercessory prayer, that is, as intended for "brothers only" (1 John 5:16).

Second, concerning the passages of 1 John 1:8–10 and 2:1–2, one presumption (with the propitiation of Jesus Christ, the righteous advocate for all the sins of the entire world) is that no sin is unforgivable for those who confess in repentance and faith in Jesus Christ. This qualification of the unlimited and unconditional divine pardon should be the scope of forgiveness with respect to sin, which is also applied to the Christian's prayer of petition for the sins of other Christians. The only sin excluded from both the confession and petition of Christians then is the sin of making God a liar (1 John 1:10; 5:10), which occurs when one refuses to believe in God (as explained in 1 John 5:10), and not believing in God's witness about Jesus: (1) who is Christ and the son of God and who came in flesh (1 John 4:2, 9–10, 14–15; 5:10), (2) who died for our sins to save us, for God so loved the world and desired them to be saved through his son (1 John 3:16; 4:7–10), (3) who is the righteous advocate before God (1 John 2:1–2), (4) for all Christians who believe in him and thus to obey his commandments (1 John 2:3), (5) to hold steadfast and victorious in faith, truth, and love until his second coming (1 John 2:28), (6) as the propitiation, not only for "our" sins, but also for sins of the entire world (past, present, and future) (1 John 2:1–2), and (7) to destroy the works of Satan (1 John 3:8). Thus, those who claim to be Christians, but who still commit this "sin unto death" throughout their lives unto their death are then referred to in 1 John (1 John 2:18, 22, 26; 4:1, 3) with terms such as antichrists, liars, false prophets, and deceivers (of Christians and the world).

Third, this understanding about the sin (unto death) in 1 John is also consistent with the conviction of the Spirit of the truth (John 16:7–11), first on the sin (John 16:9) of not believing in Jesus Christ as the savior of the world (John 12:32–33; 1 John 4:14–15). The second conviction of the Holy Spirit is in regard to righteousness (John 16:10) with faith in Jesus Christ in his ascension, and thus about his physical absence here-and-now in this world, being seated at the right hand of the father as the righteous Son of God and Christ (Psalm 110:1; Matthew 22:41–46), and thereafter for the second coming of Jesus Christ (1 John 2:28) as the savior and the judge of the world. The third conviction of the Holy Spirit is about the judgment (John 16:11), that the prince of the world (Satan) has been

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<sup>53</sup> John R. W. Stott, *The Epistles of John: An Introduction and Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI, 1964), 135–136; Raymond E. Brown, *The Epistles of John* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1982): 195–196;

judged (John 12:31, 1 John 3:8). Additionally, this is consistent with 1 John 2:2, for Jesus died not only for the sins of Christians to be forgiven, but also for the forgiveness of the sins of the whole world as Jesus Christ is the judge of the world (Psalm 2:9), including the root cause of the evil of this world, that is, the prince of the world (Satan) and to destroy the works of Satan (1 John 3:8).

For Christian apologetics and the defense of one's faith, these three convictions in John 16:7–11 could be used very effectively and practically (with the messages side-by-side in 1 John). For example, the conviction is against false faith (1 John 1:1–2) for one's salvation, as one may ask why one has to believe in the son of God (Jesus Christ), that is, why not in God (the father) and "only" in God (without the son) for one's salvation. If one wants to obey God, the will of God is for every individual to believe in the son of God (1 John 3:16; 4:2, 9–10, 14–15; 5:10). The second conviction is against the demand for the presence of Jesus Christ on this earth, here and now, if Jesus is truly real and alive. The third conviction is against a human rationale to postpone one's conversion until the time of one's death (even to the last minute of one's deathbed) as long as it takes one to believe. However, as the prince of the world, Satan is pre-judged, the entire world of sinners are now awaiting the imminent and final judgment of God at any moment (John 3:18). Furthermore, this understanding of the sin unto death, with the conviction of the Holy Spirit, is then consistent with the blasphemy against the Holy Spirit (Matthew 12:31–32). For example, both Judas (Matthew 26:14–16; John 13:21–31; John 18:5) and Peter (John 13:37; 18:16–27) betrayed Jesus. Judas regretted his actions, which led him to commit suicide (Matthew 26; Acts 1:16–20), which was against God's will for all sinners to repent and follow Jesus Christ, whereas Peter even betrayed Jesus three times, but repented in order to follow Jesus and become his entrusted disciple (John 21:15–17).

Fourth, 1 John 3:9 declares that everyone who is "born of God" does not sin, for his seed dwells in him and he is unable to sin for he is "one born of God" (Πᾶς ὁ γεγεννημένος ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ ἁμαρτίαν οὐ ποιεῖ, ὅτι σπέρμα αὐτοῦ ἐν αὐτῷ μένει, καὶ οὐ δύναται ἁμαρτάνειν, ὅτι ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ γεγέννηται). Here the subject-person (1 John 3:9) is expressed as "one born of God" (ὁ γεγεννημένος ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ). This phrase "one born of God" is reused as the reason or the basis for "one born of God," being unable to sin. This is clearly a circular reasoning as noted. That is, "one born of God" cannot sin because of the sheer nature of being "one born of God." This line of reasoning is circular, in order to explain one personal characteristic of being sinless or impeccable as being "one born of God" (1 John 3:9). As a case for the paradox of circularity, this circularity gives a basis from which to apply modal and nonmonotonic reasoning to examine the passages in 1 John 3:9 and 5:18 with respect to 1 John 1:8–10.

Indeed, "sin" possesses a very different meaning for a person before and after being born of God. For each sin committed before being born of God, the wage is death (Romans 6:23). Being born of God abolishes the death penalty. One being born of God is then subjective to and accountable for the personal sins he or she has committed with respect to Christian discipline, to be forgiven (1 John 1:1–10) and sinless (1 John 3:9; 5:18) through confession of the committed sin to be forgiven (1 John 1:8–10), or with petition (intercessory prayer) for the sins of others (1 John 5:16), not to sin again or to commit habitual sins (1 John 2:1), and for one's sanctification and perfection in purity (1 John 3:3).

## 5.2 Other Noteworthy Circular Expressions in 1 John

A few noteworthy patterns of circularity (circular expression) exist in Johannine Literature where similar patterns are noted in Section 2 with the selected examples. The first noteworthy circular expression is that of self-defining or self-explaining a term where a term is defined, expressed, or explained by itself. One example in 1 John 3:7 is: "whoever does righteous is righteous" (ὁ ποιῶν τὴν δικαιοσύνην δίκαιός ἐστιν). The second noteworthy circular expression is that of a phrase or a statement referring to the whole. For example, a phrase (for example, "this book" in Revelation 22:7) refers to the entire book, which contains the phrase. Another example is for a phrase of a letter to refer to the whole letter (for example, 1 John 5:13). This pattern (that is, a member of a group points to the group itself) is noted in Section 2 for the selected examples with Titus 1:12. Many times no obvious paradox or contradiction is imposed to both speaker and readers as these expressions are commonly used and understood in one's daily lives. The third noteworthy case is found in 1 John 4:12–16 where four occurrences of "abide" in-relationship are present, and are worthy to be noted as a Johannine "flower-bouquet" of circular "abide" in-relationships.

## 6. Critical Method to Circular Rhetoric and Logic of Paradox

This paper has presented and explored the new paradigm of coinductive reasoning and its application to the selected literary circular-constructs found in the Bible. Many difficult classical problems associated with these examples are identified, clarified, analyzed, and explained in a sound framework of logic using coinductive, modal, and nonmonotonic reasoning. A simple diagram on a lexical, syntactic, conceptual, or semantic level is used to detect and analyze circular construct. As a result, many of the apparent confusions or contradictions inherently built into these passages are now clearly understood and resolved in a sound framework of logic. The current approach and method to handling the biblical paradox of circularity has been demonstrated to be very promising and fruitful in the study of the New Testament. In addition, a few unexpected and delightful outcomes of this study should be observed, for example, (1) the parallel between Exodus 3:14–15 and John 8:12–20, and (2) a unifying interpretive framework of the metaphorical "I am" sayings in John.

### 6.1 A New Look at Matthew 22:15–46

After working through many difficult and challenging cases in this paper, we should pause and reflect to ask what we may have missed in the past. These paradoxical cases are well-known to present difficult problems. After working with several problems in this paper, we now possess sufficient knowledge about these problems and their common characteristics. We have come to understandings on these problems as they are closely related and should be considered to be a class of problems dealing with circularity in paradox. Some of the key identifying characteristics in logic are circularity, modality, and nonmonotonicity. Another interesting issue is how easy it is to verify an available solution, given the problem of paradox. For example, three paradoxical problems are presented in Matthew 22:15–46, with or without their solutions.<sup>54</sup>

In an attempt to set a trap for Jesus, the Pharisees and the Herodians presented the first problem (Matthew 22:15–22) to him concerning paying taxes to Caesar. In a second attempt to set a trap for Jesus, the Sadducees presented an additional problem (Matthew 22:23–33) concerning resurrection and marriage. In order to shut their mouths, Jesus presented the third problem to the Pharisees (Matthew 22:41–46) concerning the Christ who is addressed by David as his lord in Psalm 110.

We note several interesting points as follows. First, to assume that each problem is unsolved, and more likely unsolvable, by the contemporary Jews (notably by the Pharisees, the Herodians, and the Sadducees) at the time of Jesus is reasonable. Second, each problem is difficult, but its solution (provided by Jesus) is almost trivial, intuitive, and easily verifiable by anyone, including the Jews at that time. Third, no way exists to know how Jesus solved these problems, but a clear indication exists that Jesus possessed the solutions. Fourth, we (the contemporary biblical scholarship in the past, including the Jews at the time of Jesus) have treated each problem (with its solution if given) case-by-case (as if these problems are unrelated and mutually independent). Fifth, seemingly, we possessed no clear understanding or explanation as to how these problems are solved (for example, by Jesus) or even constructed.

Let us take another look at the paradox in Matthew 22:23–33, concerning the problem of resurrection with regard to marriage. As discussed, a vicious circle exists (in the state of being alive, dead, and to be alive again after resurrection), which meant to be linear (from being alive to being dead). Meant to be exclusive, it is mixed with the competing legal demand of each brother in this marriage relationship (as a legitimate husband) after the resurrection, in the absence of any compromise for the exclusive legal right of each husband upon the woman.

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<sup>54</sup> W. D. Davies and D. C. Allison, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to Saint Matthew* 3 (Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1997), 210–57.

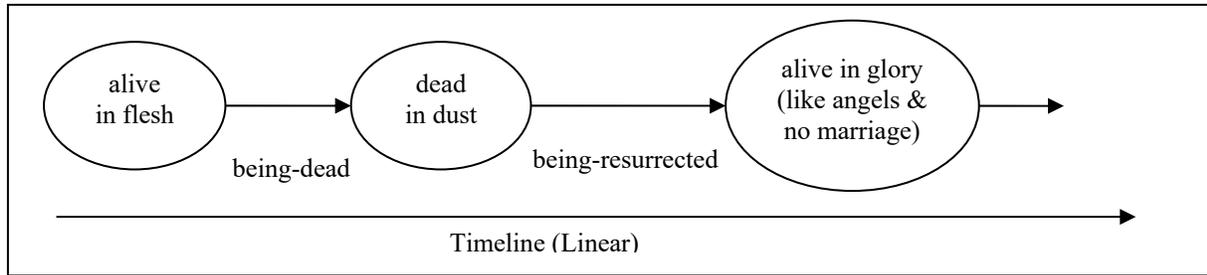


Figure 8. Life-Status (alive, dead, and resurrected) in Matthew 22:23–33

The Sadducees, who did not believe in the resurrection, presented this controversial problem to Jesus. Most likely the Pharisees at the time of Jesus heard the same question asked many times by the Sadducees, spending many sleepless nights praying for an answer. Thus, one may wonder how the Pharisees would respond if they were challenged with the same question. The Pharisees would say that they have no idea or do not know all the details, but that they believe in God almighty who would take care of all these things. The Pharisees might have added one more comment, saying that the Sadducees should cast away their doubts and simply trust God. In reply, the Sadducees would have accused the Pharisees of their stubbornness and blind faith, questioning how one could believe that which is untrue (contradictory).

Contemporary Christians are seemingly repeating the same old *vicious circle*, in which the Pharisees preside on one side, and the Sadducees preside on the other side, with consideration being given to some of these difficult theological problems of paradox. However, once we understand the inherent nature of some of these problems, that is, paradox of circularity, we then have a good handle with which to work toward viable solutions, hopefully in a manner satisfactory to both sides. To reconstruct some of the early Christian understanding of paradox, and finally to be able to solve some of these difficult and controversial problems in biblical scholarship since Jesus and the apostles, took almost two thousand years.

All three paradoxical examples in Matthew 22:15–46 could be identified as the discourse model of "question-answering" or "*yelammedenu rabbenu*" ("let our master teach us") midrashim, in form-critical framework.<sup>55</sup> Each discourse in this framework begins with an interrogative opening to pose a question or a problem, followed by an answer which is an exposition with a scripture to the question, or a counter-question followed by an answer.

Considering the three examples of Matthew 22:15–46, each paradox is presented with a mind-boggling or controversial question as a challenge begging for a radical paradigm shift. It seems so naïve at first sight, but so profound theologically in reality after all. The primary purpose is meant to place the challenged in a cognitive dissonance or fatal dilemma. Usually it is used as an offensive means to provoke a storm of crisis and conflict, with an impending suspension and thrill followed by breathtaking silence from the audience waiting for a decisive moment of glory or shame, and then to reveal a hidden divine wisdom, after which a divine sage provides a novel answer to resolve the paradox so effortlessly. Through this occasion, the divine sage sent by God is then identified and authenticated, followed by a public acknowledgment and praise to the wisdom and authority of God, with wonder and amazement. As a discourse model and means of rhetoric, many biblical paradoxes generate a series of life-and-death crises and conflicts, breathtaking suspension and thrill, unexpected resolution and enlightening excitement, and out-bursting joy and praising finale through stimulation and unrest among the intellectuals, as noted in Matthew 22:15–46.

Each discourse in Matthew 22:15–46 is concluded by an overwhelming response to reveal and demonstrate divine wisdom and biblical authority through a divine messenger to reveal its "hidden" message with a view for "a conception of Scripture as a hidden Word of God" (Ellis, 1990).<sup>56</sup> In this regard, one may find a unifying motif and theme of biblical revelation as the "secret" and "mystery," being hidden or concealed even before the creation of the

<sup>55</sup> E. Earle Ellis, *The Old Testament in Early Christianity* (Tubingen: Mohr, 1990) 96–101; J. W. Bowker, "Speeches in Acts: A Study in Proem and Yelammedenu Form" *NTS* 14 (1967-1968): 96-111.

<sup>56</sup> E. Earle Ellis, *The Old Testament in Early Christianity* (Tubingen: Mohr, 1990) 101.

world then, but now to be revealed and known (Matthew 13:35 with Psalms 78:2, and Romans 16:25-26).<sup>57</sup> This motif is not only inherent in the distinctive genre of parable, dream-vision, and paradox, but also is clear and abundant in the prophetic writings (for example, Psalm 110:1 with Matthew 22:41-46). Some of the well-known and landmark (paradoxical) examples of "mystery" (hidden, but now revealed and known in the New Testament) include: (1) the mystery of God in Christ (John 10:31, 38; John 14:10–11; Colossians 2:2), (2) the mystery of the Gospel of Jesus Christ (Matthew 11:25–30 and 16:20–21; Romans 16:25-27), (3) the mystery of God's will, set before the creation (John 6:38–40; Ephesians 1:9), and (4) the mystery of the corporate unity and relationship of Christ and the church (John 17:22–23; Ephesians 5:29-32).

## 6.2 A New Approach to Circular Rhetoric and Logic of Paradox

In this paper, we have developed and presented a few ways to detect or identify circularity as a potential root cause in the problem of paradox. To summarize, three ways can detect circularity as a potential cause of a paradox under investigation.

First, a simple diagram on a lexical, syntactic, conceptual, or semantic level is applied to detect a circular-construct of the passage under investigation. From this initial investigation, one may detect or relate a problem, which could be caused by or rooted in this circularity with modal and nonmonotonic reasoning. One example for this approach is the circular in-relationship of the father and the son in John 14:10 or the paradoxical examples in Matthew 22:15–46.

Second, it is to detect a real or apparent contradiction presented in the text to trigger a possibility of circular, modal, and nonmonotonic reasoning. Many of these problems are well-known and are traditionally classified as very difficult or even unsolvable problems. One example for this approach is the well-known, aged problem of sin-states versus sinless-states of Christians presented in 1 John, to detect and apply the circularity in 1 John 3:9, thus to be resolved with circular, modal, and nonmonotonic reasoning. Another noteworthy example is the conflicting statements by Jesus in John 5:31 versus John 8:16 for the validity (truth) of his own testimony. With multi-modal layers, one can easily resolve the contradiction imposed in these passages.

Third, the biblical passage presents two distinctive proofs with one including distinctively coinductive reasoning. Found in John 8:12–20, one example is the "I am" saying with two-proof methods. As closely investigated, the passage presents two distinctive proof methods, which have been undermined or overlooked by the majority of past biblical scholarship. Further, this discovery of coinductive proof method by Jesus then opens up new insight, innovative breakthrough, and a novel (hermeneutical) solution to the "I am" sayings in John. This provides fresh ground from which to understand and unify all of the metaphorical "I am" sayings of Jesus in John. In addition, it is noted that a close parallel exists between Exodus 3:14–15 (by God) and John 8:12–20 (by Jesus) with respect to two distinctive proof-methods.

As noted (for example, with Matthew 22:23–33), a (model) set of two conflicting solutions (models or interpretations) could be valid. Thus, to have two conflicting answers is not necessarily a contradiction, but rather a possibility of two valid modal solutions. Furthermore, as a word of caution, circular reasoning can be used in wrong or invalid manners. For example, if one's assumption in an argument is invalid, then one's entire argument is invalid—whether deduction, induction, or coinduction is used. Consider a case of a stranger demanding one to trust him "simply because he says so". This rationale is indeed circular, but not to be taken seriously by any mature and responsible person. The scholarly tradition against modal reasoning can be retraced to Kant (1781) and to the omission of modality by Frege (1879) in his pioneering groundwork of modern logic for propositional and higher-order logic.<sup>58</sup> For an excellent introduction to coinduction, the reader is referred to Kripke (1975) and Barwise and

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<sup>57</sup> "Μυστήριον, μύεω," by Bornkamm in Kittel, TWNT IV 803–828; Raymod E. Brown, *The Semitic background of the term "mystery" in the New Testament*. Fortress Press, Philadelphia, 1968; A. H. Harvey. "The Use of Mystery Language in the Bible." *Journal of Theological Studies* 31 (1980) 320–336; D. A. Carson, "Mystery and Fulfillment: Toward a More Comprehensive Paradigm of Paul's Understanding of the Old and the New," In *Justification and Variegated Nomism*. Vol. 2: *The Paradoxes of Paul*. Ed. D. A. Carson, Peter T. O'Brien, and Mark A. Seifrid. (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2004) 393–436.

<sup>58</sup>*Immanuel Kant's Critique of Pure Reason*. (London: Macmillan & Co.:1964), Translation by Norman Kemp Smith; *Translations from the philosophical Writings of Gottlob Frege*. (Oxford: Basil Blackwell. P. Geach

Moss (1996), and to Fitting and Mendelsohn (1998) for an excellent introduction to modal logic (including the brief introduction to Aristotle's work in modal logic).<sup>59</sup>

One may wonder what difference it would make with or without circular rhetoric and logic of paradox in biblical exegesis and interpretation. First, it is the first critical step to acknowledge and understand the subtle difference between the two methods in logic (induction and coinduction), and thus in one's exegesis. Second, each method (induction or coinduction) implies its own semantics (meanings), and thus in one's exegesis. In inductive reasoning, circularity has no meaning (nonsense), but is treated as a purely literary metaphor which has no sense (that is, nonsense), to be neglected, ignored, or deconstructed by the reader to give it new meaning (personal and subjective). Third, coinductive, modal, and nonmonotonic reasoning provide a new perspective and paradigm to biblical exegesis. In this paper, it has been demonstrated to be effective and novel in solving many difficult problems with the selected passages, and further to provide a unifying solution (in possible world semantics) to the conflicting or contradicting opinions when presented with the traditional method of biblical exegesis. Fourth, it is distinctively computational. Further, a simple diagramming method to detect literary circularity (which is simple and intuitive to those with some lexical or syntactic diagramming) can be implemented without additional training or learning. Next, we will give a brief description of two methods in logic (induction and coinduction) as they have been used somewhat informally in this paper.

### 6.3 Circular Rhetoric and Logic

Circular rhetoric and its logic is discussed and contrasted in this paper, as a critical method in biblical exegesis and hermeneutics. As surveyed and discussed, these examples of circular rhetoric and paradoxes are found in abundance in the Bible (and in our daily lives). Along with deduction, induction, and coinduction (e.g., circular logic including self-reference) are *a priori* methods in logic. Let us take another look at induction and coinduction.<sup>60</sup>

Induction is a familiar term, along with inductive reasoning, inductive logic, or even inductive Bible study. Induction corresponds to well-founded structures from which a basis serves as the foundation for building more complex structures. An object constructed in inductive definition is called a "well-founded" object, for a well-founded base is present, and a set of such objects is referred to as a well-founded set. Hence, the set of natural numbers constructed by induction (starting with zero and adding one, repeatedly and finitely many times) is a well-founded set. It does not include any infinite number, because the many infinite iterations of adding one to zero will never be terminated in finite steps. Thus, minimality implies that any infinite numbers are not members of the set of lists of numbers that are inductively defined. This is why any circularly constructed objects are not allowed in the framework of inductive reasoning. Inductive definitions correspond to the "least fixed point interpretation" of so-called "recursive" definitions. In summary, inductive definitions possess three components: initiality, iteration, and minimality.

In contrast, coinduction eliminates the initiality condition, and replaces the minimality condition with maximality. No requirement for initiality means that no need exists for a base-case in coinductive definitions. Coinductive definitions possess two components: iteration and maximality. Any object constructed in coinductive definition is referred to as a "not-well-founded" object, because no base is present. Further iteration of coinductive definition without a base is achieved by circular construct (as an infinite loop, being applied infinitely many times). Thus, while these examples and definitions may appear to be circular (or meaningless, as it seems to be), the definition is well-formed, since coinduction corresponds to the "greatest fixed-point interpretation" to allow infinite objects. The resulting formal system of reasoning (logic) is termed as "coinduction" (in coinductive reasoning or logic), in contrast to the traditional "induction" (in inductive reasoning or logic).

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and M. Black editors: 1952).0000

<sup>59</sup>Saul A. Kripke, "Outline of a Theory of Truth," *Journal of Philosophy* 72, no. 19 (1975): 690–716; Jon Barwise and Lawrence S. Moss, *Vicious Circles* (Stanford, CA: Center for the Study of Language and Information Lecture Notes, 2004); Melvin Fitting and Richard L. Mendelsohn, *First-Order Modal Logic*, softcover reprint of the original 1st ed. 1998 (New York: Springer, 1999).

<sup>60</sup>D. Goldin and D. Keil, "Interaction, Evolution and Intelligence" In *Proc. Congress on Evolutionary Computing* (2001).

One descriptive example of inductive reasoning in the Bible is found in the genealogy of Jesus Christ, which is presented generation-by-generation in Luke 3:23–38. Here is the first man (Adam) who was created by God (initiality), with a "begot" relationship generation-by-generation (iteration), and finally down to Jesus Christ in a "finite" lineage (in finite steps of "begot"), no more and no less (minimality) as anyone in the genealogy can be traced from God step-by-step in finite steps. Similarly, one descriptive example of coinductive reasoning in the Bible is found in Hebrews 7:1–3. This example is in regard to Melchizedek who is described as: (1) without father or mother, without genealogy, without beginning of days (that is, no initiality), (2) without end of life (maximality), and (3) being a priest (that is, iteration, of a priestly ministry year-by-year) forever. The "be-like" relationships (Hebrews 7:3, 15) should be identified as the key circular construct connecting Melchizedek and the Son of God.

#### 6.4 A Semantic Difference with Circular Logic

As surveyed in this paper, the presence and usage of circular rhetoric and paradox is pervasive and persistent throughout the Bible, but what difference does it make or how significant is it in exegesis or hermeneutics? Has circular rhetoric and paradox been handled in one way or another with the conventional paradigm of language, metaphor, exegesis, hermeneutics, semantics, or logic in biblical studies? This is not so intuitive and is very difficult to answer for those who are not trained in circular rhetoric and logic.

To cast some insight, let us consider the famous riddle of the chicken (hen or bird) or the egg first. The story begins with three facts: (1) a chicken comes out of an egg, (2) an egg comes out of a chicken, and (3) the reproductive cycle between chicken and egg goes on forever. The question then becomes, which one would be first: the chicken or the egg?

Trying one option or the other, one may soon realize that none of the choices could be an answer. If one says the egg, then the other may use a counter-argument challenging where that egg came from except from the chicken. On the other hand, if one says the chicken is the answer, then the other may provide again a counter-argument challenging the origin of the chicken. After several trials and errors, one would finally figure out there is no way to escape this vicious circle, would conclude that no answer exists, and would discard this entire question as invalid or nonsensical. This is exactly what the conventional logic (of the language and its paradigm based on induction) could say at best. The logic is based on induction (inductive reasoning) where all things are based on what is finite, no matter how close to infinity. This type of logic and paradigm of language does not allow what is infinite. Even though one may express what is infinite or eternal, the expression has no meaning or is nonsensical in this frame of logic or paradigm. That is, one may have an expression in syntax for infinite or circular object, possibly using circular rhetoric, but it has no meaning in semantics.

One may extend one's language to allow not only to express what is infinite (for example, through circular rhetoric), but also its meaning of what is infinite. For example, let us consider the problem of the chicken versus the egg. When one says the answer is the chicken, the other may challenge with the counter-argument of where the chicken came into being without an egg, to conclude that it should be an egg. However, one may continue one's defense to say in reply that that the egg also came from a chicken. Thus, one's answer of the chicken is still defensible and true (until it is proven to be false). After a few rounds of this, one does not stop or yield, but rather continues on this vicious circle of argument forever, defending oneself forever. That is, rather than being false, the answer of the chicken would be true forever. Likewise, the other answer is the egg. Allowing what is not only circular rhetoric (in syntax) but also its meaning (in semantic), we now have two answers: (1) one for the chicken, and (2) the other for the egg.

This "chicken-or-egg" type of problem is very close in its pattern to the paradox in Matthew 22:15-23 (to pay tax to Caesar or not). First, it seems a classical decision problem of two-valued logic, to demand either "yes for yes" or "no for no" (cf. Matthew 5:37). Then, no matter whether one says yes or no, it ends in a logical dilemma and deadlock. This situation may force one to reply "no answer," which illustrates a classical example of three-valued logic (Matthew 21:23–27). However, once the infinite is allowed in one's semantic, then the problem in this example has a valid solution, which is a model-set of two contradicting answers (both "what is Caesar's to Caesar" and "what is God's to God"), thus illustrating an example of four-valued logic to allow "both yes and no" as the answer.

One misleading view associated with induction and its minimality is a tendency for a "one-and-only-one" best interpretation or valid model. The reflection of this misconception in biblical scholarship is the pervasive and

persistent tendency toward one best interpretation in contemporary biblical exegesis. Allowing the *possible world* semantics, it is possible to justify an array of valid interpretations in exegesis where some valid interpretations could be even in conflict with (contradictory toward) some other valid interpretations. For example, when Jesus was faced with the question of whether one should pay taxes to Caesar, his solution is a model-set consisting of two contradicting solutions (Matthew 22:21). At first glance, the decision problem (demanding yes for yes or no for no) seems so simple and innocent. However, the difficulty and its scope turn out to be so immense and deep—not only in a political dimension, but also in a theological dimension. Clearly, each solution may be viewed as tautological, expressed in circular rhetoric, and combined as a model-set of two contradicting solutions, in order to present not a partial, but rather a complete two-fold solution (of what is God's versus what is not God's).

## 7. A New Interpretive Paradigm for Melchizedek in Hebrews 7

Albeit difficult to understand, Hebrews is another literary treasure and masterpiece with noteworthy circular rhetoric and paradoxes. The author of Hebrews is aware not only of the difficulty of his materials in teaching, but also the level of his readers in learning (Hebrews 5:10–14). He points out clearly that they should have been competent teachers by now, but rather are still slow to learn, and he compared their stage of learning to that of an infant. Expressed on behalf of the community (of "we"), the author's pedagogical assessment is not only a personal opinion, but also a communal consensus. In order to effect spiritual awakening and introspection, he directly and authoritatively addressed his concern to his readers, even at the risk of embarrassing them (Hebrews 5:11–14). However, just as any good teacher might do, the author takes his time and space for his students to review the basic materials in order that they will be prepared (Hebrews 6:1–20). After a lengthy pedagogical digression (Hebrews 5:10–6:20), the author then returns to the main course of discussion in Hebrews 7.

### 7.1 The Difficult Lesson Regarding Melchizedek

The difficult lesson with which the author is so eager engage is in regard to Jesus who is the high priest forever in the order of Melchizedek (Ἰησοῦς, κατὰ τὴν τάξιν Μελχισέδεκ ἀρχιερεὺς γενόμενος εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα in Hebrews 6:20; 8:1). The key thesis in progression is centered in the correct understanding of this key passage in Psalm 110:4. The Son of God is both divine and human, preexistent and yet to be born as a man to be the priest according to the order of Melchizedek (Psalm 110:1, 4; Hebrews 7:3, 15). This priesthood is ordained by the oath of God, sworn by himself in an act of self-reference, for no higher authority exists whereby to swear (Hebrews 6:13; 7:21). According to the Scripture, as it is written as in due time, the Son of God has come to fulfill what had been written about himself to do the will of God (Psalm 40:6–8; Hebrews 10:5–9). Here the Son is reading the scroll, which was written to speak about him. This is one remarkable and mysterious example of circular reasoning and literary construct, noteworthy in biblical prophecy and logic. The Son is not only the high priest of God, but also the sacrifice himself with his own body (or blood) in circularity, once for all to set aside the first to establish the second (Hebrews 10:8–10). This is another remarkable and mysterious example of circular and literary wonder and mystery of the Son of God.

In order for the audience to be alert prepared (Hebrews 5:11–6:12), Hebrews 1–6 is building up the majestic exposition toward this climactic theme for the revelation of the high priesthood and sacrifice of Jesus Christ in Hebrews 7–9. By the time of Hebrews 7:1, the audience is well-prepared and alert spiritually. Additionally, they are now familiar with the key phrase, "according to the order of Melchizedek" with regard to the eternal high priesthood of Jesus Christ. Hebrews 7:1–3 is a passage somewhat like a handle to the divine scroll yet to be unrolled to reveal the hidden mystery of the Son of God regarding his high-priesthood. The majestic exposition in Hebrews 7–9 settles the mind-boggling and difficult theological controversies and challenges. The discussion begins with Melchizedek in Hebrews 7:1–3. He is the king of Salem and the priest of God Most High in Genesis 14:18–20, superior to Abraham and all of his descendants including Levi. Here Melchizedek is presented and interpretively applied to the Son of God in the continuing framework of King-Priest Christology (Psalm 110:1, 4).

### 7.2 Melchizedek in Hebrews 7:3 and 7:15

In Hebrews 7:3, Melchizedek is presented and to be understood as the one "without father, without mother, without genealogy, without beginning of days or end of life." Recent "Hebrews" scholars have been engaged in a heated and controversial discussion over this one critical passage. The major and critical issue in the debate is: (1)

whether Melchizedek is either divine or human (or supra-human), or (2) whether the passage is being influenced by Jewish or Hellenistic tradition. Each scholarly opinion seems in contention with each other, with its own strong and substantial basis and supporting evidences to their own position against others. The author refers the reader to many excellent and recent surveys on the passage and the related debate and discussions.<sup>61</sup> Here, the text itself rhetorically presents a strong and continuing impression about Melchizedek who (or whose priesthood) seems eternal and mysterious.

Continuing and even elevating this rhetorical thrust still in Hebrews 7:3, Melchizedek is said to be (made) "like" (ἄφομοιωμένος) or to resemble the Son of God as he remains a priest forever.<sup>62</sup> Furthermore, the Son of God is the other priest "like" or "to the likeness of" Melchizedek (κατὰ τὴν ὁμοιότητα Μελχισέδεκ) in Hebrews 7:15, and in the priestly order of Melchizedek (κατὰ τὴν τάξιν Μελχισέδεκ) in Hebrews 7:17.<sup>63</sup> Thus, this "be-like" relationship in its full cycle connects these two historical figures in a vicious circle. After the introduction in Hebrews 7:1–3, the following arguments and exegesis in Hebrews 7 present Melchizedek as the type and basis of the priesthood, apart from the priestly order of Aaronic lineage, ultimately established and fulfilled by the coming Christ (Hebrews 7:4–28; Psalm 110:1,4). Hebrews 8:1 is the majestic conclusion of the preparatory and foundational argument in Hebrews 7. It serves as the basis and opening statement of the following main thesis of this letter: now we do have this high priest who is the Son of God (Psalm 110:1, 4), who is already seated in his seat at the right hand of God, who is currently engaged in his full ministry for all the believers, and who is superior and perfect in all aspects (Hebrews 8:6).

### 7.3 The Son of God in the Order of Melchizedek

A few distinctive and significant characteristics of Melchizedek in Hebrews 7 further shed light on a deeper understanding on the Son of God and his superiority. First, it is the priestly superiority of Melchizedek over Abraham and all of his descendants, including Levi and the Levite priests. This is clearly evidenced by two facts in Genesis 14:18–20 and further elaborated in Hebrews 7:4–10. As the priest of God most high, Melchizedek blessed Abraham, and Abraham gave Melchizedek a tithe of all in due respect. Second, it is the priestly perfection (of the Son of God, according to the order of Melchizedek) independent of and in contrast with the priestly order of Aaron (Hebrews 7:11–19). Pointedly being asked and challenged in Hebrews 7:11, why a need existed or the necessity to dismantle the order of Aaronic priesthood, to be replaced by the other priest according to the order of Melchizedek? The answer is yes, as the change in priesthood occurred through the perfect priest and his perfect sacrifice (Hebrews 7:27; 4:15–16; 10:9–14). Further this event brought about the change in the law because of the perfection in the eternal priesthood and the atoning sacrifice of the Son of God. Third, it is the oath by God, made and fulfilled in Jesus to be the priest forever, according to the order of Melchizedek, and to be the guarantee of the new covenant (Psalm 110:4; Hebrews 7:20–22). Fourth, it is the eternal priesthood of the Son of God who is the savior and interceder for all believers forever (Hebrews 7:23–25). In a summary and commencement, the Son of God, the high priest of all believers, is perfect and necessary for all believers (Hebrews 7:26–28). He is holy, blameless, pure, and set apart from the sinners, exalted above the heavens.

The description of Melchizedek in Hebrews 7:3 fits so well within the rhetorical framework of the coinduction of what is forever: (1) without father or mother, without genealogy, without beginning of days (that is, no initiality), (2) without end of life (that is, maximality), and (3) being a priest forever (that is, iteration, of a priestly ministry year-by-year and never-ending). The description of "without father or mother, without genealogy" may fit well to the framework of the "human" Melchizedek for the absence of any written historical record about Melchizedek from the contemporary perspective. However, it does not fit nicely for the human Christ, who had an earthly father and mother, and a genealogy revealing his birth as the son of David. For the "divine" Melchizedek, the

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<sup>61</sup> Harold W. Attridge, *The Epistle to the Hebrews: a Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews*, Hermeneia – a Critical and Historical Commentary on the Bible (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1989) 186–195; Craig R. Koester, *Hebrews: a New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, 1st ed, The Anchor Bible v. 36 (New York: Doubleday, 2001) 24–42, 338–350; Gareth Cockerill, *The Epistle to the Hebrews* (Eerdmans, 2012) 338–350; Paul Ellingworth, *The Epistle to the Hebrews* (Eerdmans, 1993) 349–360; William L. Lane, *Hebrews 1-8*, vol. 47A, Word Biblical Commentary (Word Books, 1991) 163–165.

<sup>62</sup> Koester 347–350; Cockerill 298–306; Ellingworth 269; Lane 165; ἀφομοιώω TDNT 5.198.

<sup>63</sup> Attridge 192–195, 202; Ellingworth 378; Kobelski 118; Cockerill 314, 321; Koester 355; Lane 183; ὁμοιότης TDNT 5.189–190; τάξις BDAG, 989, 3-4.

clearly stated restriction of being a human being to be a priest seems to be a major obstacle to overcome (Hebrews 5:1–3). Further, Melchizedek—as a human being who was destined to die, but like Abraham in this regard (cf. Galatians 3:11–12; Hebrews 11:2), received the witness that he lives in contrast to the Levite priests who received tithes—died (καὶ ὧδε μὲν δεκάτας ἀποθνήσκοντες ἄνθρωποι λαμβάνουσιν, ἐκεῖ δὲ μαρτυρούμενος ὅτι ζῆ), as argued in Hebrews 7:8.

#### 7.4 Two Paradoxes of the Son of God in Psalm 110

Truly, as warned by the author of Hebrews, two passages in Psalm 110 generate the enormous controversies and difficulties in New Testament study and exegesis.<sup>64</sup> The first controversy and paradox about the Son of God is the problem of the lordship of Christ. He is the son of David. Yet he is being addressed by David as "my lord" (Psalm 110:1). The paradox deals with the extended human "father-son" relationship in the law, with the divine-human relationship (of lord-servant). This divine lordship of the Son of God is professed by David who is the very author of this psalm and the father of the son of David. All synoptic gospels deal with the passage (Psalm 110:1) as having great significance (Matthew 22:41–46; Mark 12:35–37; Luke 20:41–44). A circular construct is noted as to the cause of the paradox and controversy. Once the circularity and its constituent links are understood, the confusion and contradiction then disappear.

The second controversy and paradox of the Son of God in Psalm 110:4 is the problem of the priesthood of the Son of God who is from the tribe of Judah (Hebrews 7:14–15). According to the law, to have a priest outside of the tribe of Levi and according to the order of Aaronic lineage is impossible. The legal question is how it could be possible for Christ, the son of David, to be a priest of God. This controversy has never been dealt with or resolved in any part of the New Testament except in Hebrews. As discussed, the writer has engaged in lengthy and delicate discussions with great care and thorough discussion; otherwise, he could easily mislead his audience. A careful lexical analysis has revealed a circular construct built around the "be-like" relationship between Melchizedek and the Son of God (Hebrews 7:3, 15). This circularity is the underlying core concept of understanding of the key phrase: "according to the order of Melchizedek." Again, as shown in this example, the circular relationship is clear or vivid at a syntactic level, but rather requires a careful lexical analysis to check for each rendering word (κατὰ τὴν τάξιν, ἄφομοιωμένος, and κατὰ τὴν ὁμοιότητα Μελχισέδεκ).

### 8. Circular Rhetoric and Exegetical Challenges in Romans

The letters of Paul provide yet another rich source of circular rhetoric and paradox. In order to explore various patterns of circular rhetoric and exegetical challenge, we begin with Romans. The critical method developed in this study will be applied and refined. The exegetical and rhetorical justification of the critical method is based on the two distinctive proof-methods of the divine "I am" saying in John 8:12–20. The selected passages in Romans are: (1) "from faith to faith" in Romans 1:17, (2) Romans 3:4 with the Liar paradox in Titus 1:12, (3) "in Christ" and "Christ in you" in Romans 8:10, (4) "already" and "not yet" in Romans 8:29–30, and (5) the tautological assertions in Romans 9:15–18 in the light of Matthew 22:21 and Exodus 33:19.

#### 8.1. "From Faith to Faith" in Romans 1:17

The first passage of our investigation is the well-known phrase "from faith to faith (ἐκ πίστεως εἰς πίστιν)" in Romans 1:17. The lexical construction of the phrase is clearly circular, as the noun (πίστις) is repeated in a series of prepositions. The exegesis and proposed meaning of the phrase has been one major source of difficulty and debates, including recent debates on faith versus faithfulness.<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>64</sup> Oscar Cullmann, *The Christology of the New Testament* (rev. ed.; New Testament Library; Philadelphia: Westminster, 1964), 83–89.

<sup>65</sup> C. E. B. Cranfield, *Romans*, ICC, 2 vols. (Edinburgh: Clark, 1975), 99–100; Everett Harrison, "Romans," in *Romans-Galatians*, Expositor's Bible Commentary, vol. 10, ed. Frank Gaebelein (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1976), 20; Douglas Campbell, "Romans 1:17—A *Crux Interpretum* for the ΠΙΣΤΙΣ ΧΡΙΣΤΟΥ Debate," *JBL* 113 (1994): 271–85; Richard B. Hays, *The Faith of Jesus Christ* (Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1983), 158–62; Richard B. Hays, "ΠΙΣΤΙΣ and Pauline Christology: What Is at Stake?," in *SBL 1991 Seminar Papers*, ed. David J. Lull

The lexical pattern (ἐκ + A + εἰς + A) is frequently found in Greek texts between the Homeric era to 600 A.D., as Quarles (2003) notes in approximately 340 cases.<sup>66</sup> The idiomatic use and meaning for the pattern (ἐκ + A + εἰς + A) may vary from emphasis, repetition, range, or duration (in time or space, of thing or person), iteration, or even cycle.<sup>67</sup> Further, the same lexical pattern (ἐκ + A + εἰς + A) is found twice in 2 Corinthians 2:16 with "death" and "life," and one case in Psalm 84:7 with "strength." Two cases in 2 Corinthians 2:16 should settle the current debate for the case of Romans 1:17. As Barrett (1970) points out, "to ascribe different meanings to the same word in one phrase is very harsh," as it is similarly noted by Black (1988).<sup>68</sup> The similar idiomatic expressions of "from + A + to + A" are frequently found in the Old Testament (for example, "A + לַ + A + וְ" in Exodus 11:5; 17:16; 18:13), surveyed by Wardlaw (2012).<sup>69</sup> This extensive survey provides another strong rhetorical and exegetical justification of what is meant to be iterative or intensifying use of what Paul may have used here in Romans 1:17, twice in 2 Corinthians 2:16, and similarly for "glory" in 2 Corinthians 3:18 (ἀπὸ δόξης εἰς δόξαν).

The next question then is why so many interpretations are noted from early church fathers to the recent debates. As Cranfield notes, five alternatives are present for the meaning of the phrase (ἐκ πίστεως εἰς πίστιν): (1) from God's faithfulness to man's faith, (2) from one's faith to the other's faith (e.g., from a person to person, from preachers to hearers, from Old Testament believers to New Testament believers, from Abraham to Rahab as a panoramic or spectacular array of the faithful people from one end to the other end), (3) from faith to faith as growing and intensifying (where this meaning still keeps "from faith" as the source or the origin of faith), or (4) through faith and faith alone, or simply faith. One dispensational interpretation for "faith" in Romans 1:17 in relation to the Jews in Romans 1:16 could lead to the case for the faith of Old Testament believers to the faith of New Testament believers.

John Chrysostom provides more colorful interpretation for a range of faithful people from Abraham to Rahab.<sup>70</sup> In this case, the criteria for one end and the other end is with respect to a moral spectrum of faithful people from Abraham to Rahab, all saved by faith and faith alone.<sup>71</sup> For the case of God's faithfulness, it could be better meant if one takes it as "from God's faithfulness to Christ's faithfulness" instead of "from Christ's faithfulness to man's faith." This option (if one insists "faithfulness" as an expositional alternative) is a viable option with the three cases of 2 Corinthians 2:16 and Psalm 84:7, in the framework of circular rhetoric and logic, and in Paul's theological framework of God's sovereignty (ἐξ αὐτοῦ καὶ δι' αὐτοῦ καὶ εἰς αὐτὸν τὰ πάντα) in Romans 11:36. Moreover, we note that Jesus Christ is not only divine, but also fully a man of faith, and is faithful to God (Gal 3:25). The spectrum of the various kinds of faithful people is exemplified by those in the Old or New Testaments—those who preached (including Jesus Christ himself in Matt 4:23) or received, those prophets or the apostles, and those highly or lowly regarded moral representatives ranging from Abraham to Rahab.

The one-and-only-one answer for what this circular expression (ἐκ πίστεως εἰς πίστιν) in Romans 1:17 may mean exactly is still debatable. However, within the framework of circular rhetoric, various proposals noted by the

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(Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1991), 714–29; James D. G. Dunn, "Once More, ΠΙΣΤΙΣ ΧΡΙΣΤΟΥ," in *SBL 1991 Seminar Papers*, ed. David J. Lull (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1991), 730–44; Charles L. Quarles, "From Faith to Faith: An Examination of the Prepositional Series in Romans 1:17," *Novum Testamentum* 45 (2003): 1–21; and Robert Matthew Calhoun, "John Chrysostom on ΕΚ ΠΙΣΤΕΩΣ ΕΙΣ ΠΙΣΤΙΝ in Rom. 1:17: A Reply to Charles L. Quarles," *Novum Testamentum* 48 (2006): 131–46.

<sup>66</sup> Quarles, "From Faith to Faith," 5–13, and especially 5, fn. 5; and Thesaurus Linguae Graecae Digital Library, ed. Maria C. Pantelia, University of California, Irvine, accessed June 3, 2015, <http://www.tlg.uci.edu>.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, 2–5. Quarles notes the construction as idiomatic ("ἐκ" in *BAG*, 236, and *L&N*, 692), noted on p. 4, fn. 19, Ps 83:8 on pp. 9–11, and 2 Cor 2:16, on pp. 11–14.

<sup>68</sup> James D. G. Dunn, *Romans 1–8*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 38A (Dallas: Word, 1988), 43–44; C. K. Barrett, "I Am Not Ashamed of the Gospel," in *Foi et salu selon S. Paul*, ed. M. Barth *et al.*, AnBib 42 (Rome: Biblical Institute, 1970), 19–41, reprinted in *New Testament Essays* (London: S.P.C.K., 1972), 116–43; and Matthew Black, *Romans*, New Century Bible (London: Oliphants, 1973), 34.

<sup>69</sup> Terry Wardlaw, "A Reappraisal of 'From Faith to Faith' (Romans 1:17)," *European Journal of Theology* 21, no. 1 (2012): 107–19.

<sup>70</sup> Quarles, "From Faith to Faith," 12–13, 18–20.

<sup>71</sup> Calhoun, "John Chrysostom," 136–38; and John Chrysostom, *Homiliae in epistulam ad Romanos*, Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, vol. 2 (reprint, Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Pub., 1996), 11.343–50.

early church fathers and commentators could be considered viable within a permissible and creative framework of a preacher or a commentator (e.g., an interpretive model set). As a circular and idiomatic expression, faith (πίστις) in Romans 1:17, is then emphatic, intensive, repeating, iterative, perpetual, continuing, complete, thorough, arrayed, being panoramic, or overarching (in various aspects of faith)—that is, nothing but faith and faith alone.

### 8.2 Romans 3:4 with the Liar Paradox in Titus 1:12

The second passage of our investigation is Paul's version of the Liar paradox (πᾶς δὲ ἄνθρωπος ψεύστης) in Romans 3:4. The passage echoes the same message in Psalm 116:11 (כִּי לֹא־אֶלֶּה־אֶת־לִּי). We have explored the case of the Liar paradox in Titus 1:12, and thus brevity will be employed here.<sup>72</sup> We conclude that this type of paradox is generated in circular rhetoric with self-negation to assert what is true by denying itself. This type of self-negation could cause the reader to experience confusion or even contradiction in conventional wisdom. Further, the passage generates not only the same kind of paradox of Titus 1:12, but also possibly a global charge against Paul being a misanthropist (simply beyond a racist's charge against a few ethnic people, for example, in Crete). As Paul as an apostle declares that all men, including himself, are liars, he confesses his conviction that he is also not free of the guilt. Similar charges are noted, for example, in John 8:44 and 1 John 1:8 even for all Christians. Many paradoxes in the Bible use self-negation, which despises conventional wisdom. Much more difficult expressions of self-negation in the Bible are the paradoxes of self-denial discipleship to deny oneself and to follow Jesus Christ (Mark 8:34), saving by losing one's life or losing by saving one's life (Mark 8:35), and the first to be the last and the servant of all in servant-leadership (Mark 9:35).<sup>73</sup>

### 8.3 "Christ in You" in Romans 8:10 with "In Christ" in Romans

The third passage of our investigation is the expression of "Christ in you (χριστός ἐν ὑμῖν)" in Romans 8:10, with respect to its counterpart expression of "in Christ" or its variants abundantly found in Romans (for example, 8:1–2, 39). This pair-expression ("in Christ" and "Christ in") in Romans provides a comprehensive conception of Paul for the indwelling relationship of Christ and Christians. The pair-expression in Romans is clearly circular (at least in lexical level), comparable to what is noted in John (for example, John 14:20; 15:5; 17:23, 26). However, the phrase ("Christ in" [you/me]) has been treated essentially equivalent or parallel to the phrase ("in Christ") among the majority of the contemporary Pauline scholars, as Bultmann voiced: "It makes no difference whether Paul speaks of the believers being in Christ or of Christ's being in the believer."<sup>74</sup> In contrast, only a handful of scholars have voiced their differences or distinctions between these two phrases.<sup>75</sup> However, due to a lack of thorough examination or convincing argument for the case, the minority opinion did not receive a wider scholarly acceptance or attention, but rather was overwhelmed by the majority.<sup>76</sup>

The meanings of the "in Christ" phrase are rich and comprehensive, usually presented with six major theses in Paul's letters, as being in union with Christ (e.g., Romans 6:5) or being baptized into one body of Christ (e.g.,

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<sup>72</sup> Anthony C. Thiselton, "The Logical Role of the Liar Paradox in Titus 1:12, 13: A Dissent from the Commentaries in Light of Philosophical and Logical Analysis," *Biblical Interpretation* 2 (1994): 207–23; and William D. Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 46 (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 2000), 397–99.

<sup>73</sup> Narry Fajardo Santos, "The Paradox of Authority and Servanthood in the Gospel of Mark," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 154 (1995): 452–60.

<sup>74</sup> Rudolf Bultmann, *Theology of the New Testament*, vol. 1, trans. Kendrick Grobel (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1951), 328; and William B. Barclay, *"Christ in You": A Study in Paul's Theology and Ethics* (Lanham, MD: University of America, 1999), 1.

<sup>75</sup> Albert Schweitzer, *The Mysticism of Paul the Apostle*, trans. W. Montgomery (New York: Henry Holt and Co., 1931 [1929]), 122–25; Ernest Best, *One Body in Christ: A Study in the Relationship of the Church to Christ in the Epistle of the Apostle Paul* (London: S.P.C.K., 1955), 9, n. 2, 22; C. F. D. Moule, *The Origin of Christology* (Cambridge: University Press, 1977), 56–57; J. A. Ziesler, *Pauline Christianity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983), 50; N. T. Wright, *The Climax of the Covenant: Christ and the Law in Pauline Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992), 45; and Barclay, "Christ in You," 105–35.

<sup>76</sup> Barclay, "Christ in You," 1.

Rom 12:4–5; Gal 3:27–28; 1 Cor 12:12–13; Col 3:10–11).<sup>77</sup>

First, the "in Christ" phrase provides a corporate expression of Christians in Christ (e.g., Rom 8:1, 39). In contrast, the "Christ in" phrase emphasizes a personal indwelling of Christ in a believer. The majority of Pauline scholars seem to recognize this subtle distinctive difference between "Christ in" and "in Christ," but mostly treat this distinctiveness as of minor or insignificant importance. Second, the "in Christ" phrase provides the Christ part of the Adam-Christology or Adam-Christ anthropology or typology (e.g., Rom 5:12–21).<sup>78</sup> In this framework, Adam (the first Adam) is the head-man of all human beings born of the flesh, and the Christ (the second Adam) is the head-man of all human beings in the faith of Christ. Third, the "in Christ" phrase provides a context of one's membership in the body (church) of Christ who is the head (e.g., Rom 12:4–5; 1 Cor 12:12–30). Fourth, the Christ "in Christ" phrase is used as a typological, metaphorical, or eschatological temple (house, building, or tree) where Christians are its parts, members, priests, households, or branches (e.g., Rom 11:16–24; 1 Cor 3:9–17; John 2:19–22; 15:1–6). Fifth, the Christ "in Christ" phrase is used as the typological or eschatological husband in marriage with his wife (or the virgin), which is the church "in Christ" (e.g., 2 Cor 11:2; Eph 5:29–32; John 3:29; cf. Rom 7:1–3). All sinners are bound under the law until one's death as one's marriage is bound until the death of one's spouse (e.g., Romans 7). As being in Christ, one is dead together with the Christ, and free from the curse of the law of the flesh. Further, one in Christ is bound with Christ under the law of the Spirit (e.g., Romans 8). Finally, for being "in Christ," it is the metaphor of being clothed in Christ and having taken off the old clothes (e.g., Col 3:10–11).

Bousset provides an insightful difference between Paul's Christ mysticism and the Hellenistic religion with similar rhetoric, but pantheistic implication.<sup>79</sup> The lexical pattern ("X in the Christ" or "the Christ in X" where X is, for example, a Christian or Christians) does not grant a pantheistic or panentheistic implication (to say that "X is the Christ" or "the Christ is X") whether the expression is provided reciprocally or not. Based on this ground, four points are noted.

First, in the framework of Adam-Christ anthology (Adam-Christology), we note the pair-expression of "in Christ" and "Christ in" in Romans, but always with the phrase "in Adam." There is never a phrase such as "Adam in" or with any human being (except the Christ or Satan, or non-human object such as sin, death, or the Kingdom of God). This observation may hint the difference between "in Christ" and "Christ in" for further study.

Second, in the framework of the two-stage coming of the Kingdom of God (Luke 17:17–24), a clear difference and distinction exists between the case of the invisible Kingdom of God within a person ("the Kingdom of God in X") and the case of the visible Kingdom of God on the day of the Son of Man ("X in the Kingdom of God"). Clearly, the invisible Kingdom of God is present in all those who witness the power of the Holy Spirit (Matt 12:28; Luke 11:20).

Third, Satan (or demonic beings) enters into a man ("Satan in X"), as well as a man is in or under the rule of Satan (Eph 2:1–2; John 8:34, 44). For example, Satan enters into Judah (John 13:27). Judah was already in (under the influence of or being tempted by) Satan, who inserted an evil thought into Judah's heart to betray Jesus (John 13:2). A similar case of an evil spirit being in and later coming out of a slave girl by Paul is noted in Acts 16:16–18.

Finally, in the framework of Temple-House anthropology, a man is like a temple or a house in which the Holy Spirit or evil spirit(s) may come and dwell (Rom 8:9, 11; Matt 12:43–45). Abundant biblical examples exist of

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<sup>77</sup> Best, *One Body in Christ*, 1–225; Moule, *Origin of Christology*, 1–96; Ziesler, *Pauline Christianity*, 46–72; and Sang-Won Son, "Corporate Elements in Pauline Anthropology" (Ph.D. diss., Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1999), 45–203.

<sup>78</sup> W. D. Davies, *Paul and Rabbinic Judaism: Some Rabbinic Elements in Pauline Theology* (New York: Harper & Row, 1967); C. K. Barrett, *From First Adam to Last: A Study in Pauline Theology* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1962); and Robin Scroggs, *The Last Adam: A Study in Pauline Anthropology* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1966).

<sup>79</sup> Wilhelm Bousset, *KYRIOS CHRISTOS: A History of the Belief in Christ from the Beginnings of Christianity to Irenaeus*, trans. John E. Steely (Waco: Baylor University Press, 2013 [1913]), 164–69. Bousset notes the expressions in Hermetic prayers for being completely pantheistic (for example, "Come to me, Hermes, as children come into the body of women. . . . I know you, Hermas, and you know me. I am you and you are I," and "For you are I and I am you. Your name is mine and mine is yours. I am your image.")

a man possessed by evil spirit(s) dwelling in the man, and evil spirit(s) being cast out of a man (Matt 8:28–34). Further, John notes that the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit shall dwell in the believer (John 14:17, 23).

Based on these observations, we may conclude safely that a substantial difference and distinction exists between the phrase "in Christ" and the phrase "Christ in" in this circular rhetoric and expression in the Bible, and is consistently applied to the letters of Paul and in the framework of Romans.

#### 8.4 "Already" and "Not Yet" in Romans 8:29–30

The passage in Romans 8:29–30 presents another mystery and paradox for those in Christ.<sup>80</sup> We have already surveyed and discussed extensively with a handful of cases of "already" and "not yet" in tension. In addition, the temporal-modal mystery and paradox in Romans 8:29–30 is closely related to the cases as we surveyed, for example, the two-stage coming of the Kingdom of God (Luke 17:20–30), the human Christ who was "not yet" come in contrast to the divine Christ who was "already" existed before John the Baptist (John 1:15, 30), and the Son of God, both human and divine, in the lordship-relationship with David (Ps 110:1 in Matt 22:41–46), and in the order of priesthood-relationship with Melchizedek (Ps 110:4 in Hebrews 7).

In Romans 8:29–30, Paul presents the divine providence for those whom God foreknew, predestinated, called, justified, and glorified. These five verbs (*προέγνω*, *προώρισεν*, *ἐκάλεσεν*, *ἐδικαίωσεν*, *ἐδόξασεν*) are given in past tense (aorist) as if all are done and completed. Essentially, God is in His total control and sovereignty from the beginning to the end over all things (Rom 11:36). All the passages in Romans 8 clearly indicate for those (in Romans 8:29–30) who are either already in Christ or not yet in Christ. To avoid any potential exegetical or theological difficulty, one conventional option is to label these divine actions in past tense as *prophetic past* or *gnomic* (time-less).<sup>81</sup> Within this temporal-modal framework, one may explore viable variations or alternatives in exposition, to be flexible and consistent within the theological framework of Romans.

One appealing case for Romans 8:29–30 is a temporal-modal framework of: (1) all the five actions are being declared by God before the creation of the world, and (2) the five actions are spread over a linear timeline. For the second, the first two actions are considered to have occurred before the creation of the world, the next two actions in this present age, and the last action in the future of the eschatological timeframe. As a result, in the temporal-modal framework of what is divine versus human, various paradoxical and intriguing questions would emerge in the context of Romans. Some of these paradoxes are: God's sovereignty versus man's will or mandate to God's call, the grace of God versus man in obedience (or disobedience), the election and predestination by God versus the call for Gospel mission and evangelism by man, who is predestined and called versus who is not (or not yet), man's knowledge or awareness of who is called or not, one's contingency to change one's mind to believe or deny later, and so forth. Many times we pause our thoughts here, along with rendering a humble apology for man's helplessness and finiteness over God's infinite wisdom and power, as Paul shares his humble confession in Romans 11:33–36.

As we noted with the similar paradoxical cases, two sides of each issue seem to appear seriously in tension or contradiction, contending mutually with their supporting texts in the Bible. Even worse, as being forced to choose one-and-only-one exegetical or interpretive alternative against the other (to be lawful or inductive), we may find ourselves in the same dilemma or wonder experienced by the Jews (Matt 22:15–46, John 8:12–20, Rom 10:2–4). In contrast, Paul does not stop here in a silence, but to push further even stronger thesis in God's sovereignty in Romans. For example, Paul argues that God elected Jacob over Esau even before their birth in Romans 9:10–11. God's divine actions, including election, are not based on what they have done, but rather on God who calls as Paul explains. Paul advances this difficult concept of God's sovereignty further in Romans 9:15–18 with the metaphor of

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<sup>80</sup> Cranfield, *Romans*, 431–33; Dunn, *Romans 1–8*, 482–86; John Stott, *Romans* (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 1994), 248–53; and Michael P. Middlendorf, *Romans 1–8* (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2013), 690–98.

<sup>81</sup> Stott, *Romans*, 253; F. F. Bruce, *The Letter of Paul to the Romans* (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 1963), 168; Cranfield, *Romans*, 431, fn.1; Middlendorf, *Romans 1–8*, 697; Richard C. H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans* (Columbus: Wartburg Press, 1945), 563; A. T. Robertson, *A Grammar of the Greek New Testament in the Light of Historical Research*, 4th ed. (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1934), 837; and Daniel B. Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997), 562.

a potter in Romans 9:21–24 (Isaiah 29:16; 45:9; 64:8; Jeremiah 18:6). It is God's salvation plan in action, unfolding over time, for the Jews and the Gentiles in Romans 11:25–27. Paul speaks boldly many Jews will be hardening their hearts until the full number of the Gentiles will be in Christ. Paul adds a severe warning, especially for those Gentile Christians "already" in Christ to be humbled and grateful. Using the metaphor of the olive tree in Romans 11:13–24, Paul argues how much easier it would be for the wild olive tree (the Gentile) to be cut off (possibly "not yet"), in contrast to the olive tree (the Jews in hardening) which was cut off (possibly "already"). As God did not spare the olive tree (the Jews in God's election) to be cut off for their nonbelief, Paul reminds the Gentile Christians to be humble. Truly the discourse, the rhetoric, the logic, and the warnings in Romans are very difficult for a simple man to follow, but surely it makes sense after all.

#### 8.5. Romans 9:15, 18 in the light of Matthew 22:21 and Exodus 33:19

Two passages in Romans 9:15 and 9:18 present an exegetical challenge and theological difficulty in the Bible.<sup>82</sup> Both passages present God's will and action accordingly in the frame of circular rhetoric and logic. The passage in Romans 9:15 repeats what God said to Moses in Exodus 33:19 that God will have mercy on whom God has mercy, and that God will have compassion on whom God has compassion. The relational quality of God's compassion and mercy could be good and positive, especially for those in God's compassion and mercy. The passage in Romans 9:15 explicitly addresses with regard to those in God's compassion or mercy, but is silent about those not in God's compassion or mercy. In man's perspective, this declaration in Romans 9:15 could be understood as being value-neutral, negligible, irrelevant, or even ignorable by those who are not in God's compassion and mercy. However, the passage in Romans 9:18 presents not a partial view, but rather a complete view covering not only for those in God's mercy, but also for those not in God's mercy.

We have explored the similar usages of circular rhetoric and tautological logic. For example, the reply by Jesus in Matthew 22:21 satisfies two contradictory and contending quests on whether one should pay tax to Caesar or not. The circular rhetoric with a model-set in *complete* logic in Matthew 22:21 resolves so simply, instantly, and wonderfully the conflicting legal demands in a difficult dilemma and legal deadlock and to terminate any further debate. This similar effect of terminating a debate with circular rhetoric and logic of *idem per item* is also noted by Lundbom (1978) in Exodus 3:14 and 33:19.<sup>83</sup> Further, the circular rhetoric and complete logic in Romans 9:18 generates potentially an uneasy or damaging concern to question God's righteousness and fairness. Being so bold or naïve in narrative, Paul speaks aloud and states so clearly both the question ("who resists God's will?") and the answer ("no one can resist God's will") in Romans 9:19–20, to terminate any further debate or question on God's sovereignty and righteousness. The defense and justification for God's choice of action in Romans 9:15 is again solely based on God's mercy alone (and not by man's will or effort) as stated in Romans 9:16. Additionally, the same line of logic is noted in John 1:13 and summarized in Romans 11:36.

The concept of God's sovereignty and righteousness in Romans seems too much and too overwhelming to be accepted by a man (with his own will, mind, desire, interest, optimism, courage, intelligence, strength, ability, effort, achievement, love, mercy, compassion, courage, and even a conviction to stand before God sooner or later, for or against his own case and destiny, or even to plea for his own loving spouse or children, instead, in his despair or sacrifice). As stated in Luke 16:27–31, the rich man finally realized he could do nothing for himself or for his own family. It was too late for the rich man. The mind-boggling question is then whether this rich man had a chance and an ability to change his own destiny. Again, Paul provides the metaphor of the potter and his right over his own creation in Romans 11:21–23 to terminate the debate or shut the mouth of those questioning against God (cf. Job 40:1–5).

### 9. Christological Mystery in Early Christianity

The Christological claim and confession by John the Baptist (John 1:15, 30) presents an interesting enigma and challenge in exegesis. The confession in primitive Christianity is composed of three simple and distinctive

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<sup>82</sup> Cranfield, *Romans*, 431–33; Dunn, *Romans 1–8*, 482–86; Stott, *Romans*, 248–53; and Middlendorf, *Romans 1–8*, 690–98.

<sup>83</sup> Jack R. Lundbom, "God's Use of the *Idem per Idem* to Terminate Debate," *Harvard Theological Review* 71, nos. 3–4 (July–October 1978): 193–201.

prepositional phrases in an intriguing manner, presenting the mystery and supremacy of Jesus Christ, who was preexistent even before creation. We have explored and presented a new paradigm in exegesis and interpretive framework to understand and analyze various patterns of circular rhetoric and logic of paradox, especially in Christological mystery and understanding in early Christianity. In this framework, we have developed an effective method to analyze these obscure or confusing expressions in circular rhetoric, which have been generating endless debates and difficulties in exegesis and interpretation in the past.

One landmark result out of this study is the exegetical discovery that Jesus Christ himself has used various circular expressions to express himself. The two-proof method of the divine "I am" saying in John 8:12–20 has set truly the landmark and foundation in this study, to establish a new exegetical ground and justification of the framework. The allusion of John 8:12–20 to Exodus 3:14–15 has been explored and enhanced in the exegetical basis of this study, providing the solid link between the divine name of God of the Old and New Testaments. With this basis, all the "I am" sayings by Jesus can be treated under one unifying framework of circular rhetoric and divine self-reference. Further, the controversial and offensive expressions by Jesus (for example, to eat his flesh in John 6:31–34) are now well-understood and appreciated as a sound rhetorical means in early Christians. We have investigated a few landmark examples, including the two-stage coming of the Kingdom of God in Luke 17:20–30, the claim of John the Baptist in John 1:15, 30, and the two graces in John 1:16 in the rhetorical framework of "already" and "not yet" in tension. Further, we have investigated the two passages in Psalm 110 used in the New Testament, dealing with the lordship of Christ over David in Matthew 22:41–46, and Christ according to the order of Melchizedek in Hebrews 7.

The significance and mystery about Melchizedek (Genesis 14, Psalm 110, and Hebrews 7) has been surmounted throughout the centuries, well before the time of Jesus Christ, and continues even to the present days, noted by Hughes (1977).<sup>84</sup> Melchizedek came with bread and wine and blessed Abraham, and Abraham offered him a tithe (Genesis 14:18–20; Hebrews 7:4, 7). References to Melchizedek have been abundant since early Christianity. One challenging question is whether Melchizedek is a human being, an elevated supra-human being, an angelic being, or God himself. Being asked, Jerome consults and reports that many reliable church authors (Irenaeus, Hippolytus, Eusebius of Caesarea, Eusebius of Emesa, Apollinaris, and Eustathius) in their unified opinion assert Melchizedek as a human being, who lived in the land of Canaan, and was the king of Jerusalem at the time of Abraham.<sup>85</sup> Additionally, Jerome notes that Origen and his student Didymus considered Melchizedek as an angelic being. The conclusion of Jerome and the other orthodox theologians is also affirmed by Cyril of Alexandria.<sup>86</sup> Ambrose considered Melchizedek as God or the Son of God.<sup>87</sup> Epiphanius reports various gnostic sects of heresy usually identify Melchizedek (not as a human being) with the Holy Spirit or the Son of God. For example, Melchizedek is identified with the Holy Spirit in the teaching of Theodotus who lived in the second century. Hierax, who is one of the disciples of Origen, identifies Melchizedek with the Holy Spirit who appeared in a theophany.<sup>88</sup> Epiphanius notes a gnostic sect, which identifies Melchizedek with the Son of God.<sup>89</sup> To summarize, the mystery on Melchizedek has been generating a wide range of opinions and confusion from early Christianity, Judaism, and Gnosticism, and continues to be the most important topic and issue of all.

The first controversy about Jesus Christ is his preexistence before the creation as early Christians including Ignatius and Irenaeus use John 8:56 to refute any platonic, poetic, or gnostic conception of the Son of God.<sup>90</sup> The

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<sup>84</sup> Birger A. Pearson, "Melchizedek in Early Judaism, Christianity, and Gnosticism," in *Biblical Figures Outside of the Bible*, ed. Michael E. Stone and Theodore A. Bergren (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 1998), 176–202; Frank Williams, *The Panarion of Epiphanius of Salamis, Books II and III (Sects 47–80, De Fide)* (Leiden: Brill, 1990); and Philip Edgcumbe Hughes, *A Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1971), 237–45.

<sup>85</sup> Hughes, *Hebrews*, 242. Hughes refers to the works of Jerome, Epistle 73, to Evengelus.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid., 243. Hughes refers to the works of Cyril of Alexandria, *Glaphyra in Genesim* ii.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid. Hughes refers to the works of Ambrose, *De Fide ad Gratianum* iii.11; *Hexaameron* i.3; and *De Abrahamo* i.3.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid. Hughes refers to the works of Epiphanius, *Panarion* II.i.35ff.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid. Again, Hughes refers to the works of Epiphanius, *Panarion* II.i.35ff.

<sup>90</sup> Eugene Cavis McDowell, "The Contributions of Richard Hooker and His Retrieval of Greek Patristic Thought to Contemporary Theology of the Trinity," Th.D. diss., Boston University, 2002. pages 39–66; McDowell refers to the work of Ignatius, "Epistle of Ignatius to the Magnesians." in *The Ante-Nicene Fathers: Translations of*

other part of the Christological controversy is the incarnation and human-aspect of Jesus Christ, for example, by Athanasius paraphrasing the work of Irenaeus.<sup>91</sup> Further Athanasius notes a full and perfect revelation of God in Christ, and the distinction of the three persons within the one Godhead as necessary and eternal.<sup>92</sup> Gregory of Nazianzus offers an insight remark on the mechanics of the generation of the Son and the procession of the Holy Spirit, potentially to place him or any other into madness for prying into the mystery of God or inquiring too closely into God's private matter.<sup>93</sup>

For the Trinitarian formulation and defense in early Christianity, the main passage has been the mutual indwelling relationship (John 14:10–11), along with the oneness relationship (John 10:30; 17:11, 22).<sup>94</sup> Understanding the doctrine of the Trinity and its importance in early Christianity, the mutual indwelling or mutual containing relationship has been used as one major scriptural basis to support the Trinitarian claim.<sup>95</sup> The expression is used by Athanasius extensively against Arius, essentially providing the foundational basis for three persons in one God, coexisting in one another.<sup>96</sup> The term *perichoresis* (περιχώρησις) is used by Gregory of Nazianzus to express the mutual indwelling relationship of the three persons of the God.<sup>97</sup> The concept of perichoresis with the concept of oneness provides the biblical and theological basis to assert the three divine persons, fully equal in one Being with their indivisible nature.<sup>98</sup>

Gregory of Nyssa provides another rich and intriguing terms and account of the Trinitarian perichoresis.<sup>99</sup> Gregory of Nyssa uses the verb form five times with the word cycle (κύκλος) even though the credit for the first user of the term *perichoresis* goes to Gregory of Nazianzus.<sup>100</sup> Citing John 10:38 and 17:21, Gregory of Nyssa provides a rich rhetoric for the Trinity, with these terms, to express that the Father dwells in the Son, the Son dwells in the Father, and the Father in the Son substantiates the Son's eternity. Further he asserts that the Son had never or ever will be non-existent. The Persons in the Trinity contain each other fully as "the One" in his entirety dwells in "the Other" without "the One" being super-abounding or diminishing "the Other."<sup>101</sup> As Gregory of Nyssa notes, there is

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*The Writings of the Fathers down to A.D. 325*, vol.1, eds. Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975), 62.; also, Irenaeus, "Against Heresis," in *The Anti-Nicene Fathers*, vol.1, 467.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid., 47. McDowell refers to the work of Athanasius, "On the Incarnation," in *Christology of the Later Father*, ed. Edward R. Hardy, Library of Christian Classics, (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1954), 107.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid., 47. McDowell refers to the work of Athanasius, "On the Decrees of the Synod of Nyecea," in Quasten, *Patrology*, vol.3, 721-72; and "First Letter to Serapion," quoted in Quasten, *Patrology*, 3:66–67.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid., 54. McDowell refers to the work of Gregory of Nazianzus, "Orations 31 (Theologia V), 8", *Patrologica graeca* 36:141B.

<sup>94</sup> E. Pollard, "The Exegesis of John 10:30 in the Early Trinitarian Controversies" in *New Testament studies* 3 (1957), 334-349; Khaled Anatolios, *Retrieving Nicaea: The Development and Meaning of Trinitarian Doctrine* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2011); and M. John Farrelly, *The Trinity: Rediscovering the Central Christian Mystery* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishing, 2005).

<sup>95</sup> Thomas F. Torrance, *The Christian Doctrine of God, One Being Three Persons* (London: T. & T. Clark, 1996), 168–202.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid., 169, fn. 4. Here, Torrance refers to the work of Athanasius, *Contra Arianos*, 3.1-6; 4.1-5; and *De synodis*, 26.

<sup>97</sup> Thomas F. Torrance, *The Trinitarian Faith* (London: T. & T. Clark, 1993), 234, fn. 210. Here, Torrance refers to the work of Gregory of Nazianzus, *Orationes*, 18.42; 22.4; and *Epistulae*, 101.6.

<sup>98</sup> Ibid., 175, fn 24. Here, Torrance refers to the works of Gregory of Nazianzus, *Orationes*, 36.15 and of Didymus, *De Trinitate*, 1.18.

<sup>99</sup> Daniel F. Stramara Jr. "Gregory of Nyssa's Terminology for Trinitarian Perichoresis," *Vigiliae Christianae* 52 no 3 (Brill: 1998): 257-263.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid., 257. fn 4. Stramara refers to the work of Gregory of Nyssa, *Apologia in hexameron*, In *Patrologia graeca* (henceforth PG) 44:96A & 108B; *Contra Eunomium* 1.10, *Gregorii Nysseni Opera* henceforth GNO 1 54, 24; *De anima et resurrectione*, PG 46:113B; and *Oratio funebris in Flacillam imperatricem*, GNO 9 485,5.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid., 258–259. fns 12-15. Stramara refers to the work of Gregory of Nyssa. For (1) John 10:38 see *Contra Eunomium*, GNO 1 209,6; GNO 2 208,7; 230,20; 233,26; 269,13; 322,26; and *Adversus Arium et Sabellium* 12, GNO 3.1 82,23-24; (2) for John 17:21 see *Contra Eunomium*, GNO 1 208:17; *In illud: Tunc et ipse filius*, GNO 3.2 22,18-20; and *In Canticum* 15, GNO 6 467,3-5; (3) For the Son's eternity, see *Contra Eunomium* 3.7 (CE 9.3), GNO 2 230, 15-23; (4) For Equality, see *Refutatio confessionis Eunomii*, (CE 2.4), GNO 2 322,27-323,2.

a paradox in this mystery of the Trinity as each Person of the Trinity is contained and containing, citing Isaiah 45:15 as Gregory of Nissa understood for God (the savior of Israel) dwells within God (You).<sup>102</sup>

In Romans 16:25–27, Paul speaks about the revelation of the mystery, which was hidden for a long time, but now revealed—the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Indeed, this letter presents abundant examples in circular rhetoric as we surveyed and investigated. Many of them are still in debates since the early church fathers. For example, the circular expression (ἐκ πίστεως εἰς πίστιν) in Romans 1:17 presents a difficulty in exegesis and interpretation. We have noted the struggle among the church fathers to make sense out of this phrase, seemingly so simple and a novel expression at a first look. We have found a colorful array of various interpretations, for example, from the faith in the law to the Gospel (Tertullian), the faith in the prophets to the Gospel (Theodoret and Origen), a range of faithful people from Abraham to Rahab (John Chrysostom), and the faith of those preachers to those believers (Augustine).<sup>103</sup> Similarly, the case for the "grace" (χάρις ἀντὶ χάριτος) in John 1:16 presents another noteworthy case in circular rhetoric, noted by the early church fathers. The major opinion among the early church fathers (e.g., Chrysostom, Cyril of Alexandria, Origen, and Jerome) took the Gospel of Jesus Christ with the Mosaic Law to be replaced.<sup>104</sup>

## 10. A Model for Secure Communication

Shannon pioneered a contemporary model of communication (1948-49).<sup>105</sup> Many scholarly disciplines now widely accept Shannon's model, which includes biblical scholarship and preaching. The model consists of an information source and destination with a message being transmitted by a sender to a receiver through a channel. A message in transmission may include a process of encoding by a sender and decoding by a receiver. Further, it may add a layer of encryption by a sender and decryption by a receiver for secrecy or a secure channel of transmission. Shannon's model further elaborates on many critical issues in communication such as noise or loss of information in communication, message length, and information density (on how concise or redundant a message is), the concept of "entropy" (on how random or predictive a message is), and two properties of confusion and diffusion in secret communication. With Shannon's model, we explore and analyze a few selected means and modes of biblical revelations as a means and mode of secure communication.<sup>106</sup>

The Gospels present at least three distinctive modes in communication: to speak in clear (plain or public), metaphoric (parabolic or proverbial), and secret (hidden or private) message in public or private communication. For example, the texts in John 16:25–29 and John 18:20 present clearly these three modes in communication (ἐν παρηρησίᾳ λαλεῖς καὶ παροιμίαν, and ἐν κρυπτῷ). The discourse in John 10:1–18 provides an excellent example of a modal transition in speech, noted in John 10:6 ("Ταύτην τὴν παροιμίαν εἶπεν αὐτοῖς ὁ Ἰησοῦς, ἐκεῖνοι δὲ οὐκ ἔγνωσαν τίνα ἦν ἃ ἐλάλει αὐτοῖς"). Here Jesus spoke a proverb of the Good Shepherd in a figure of speech (parabolic proverb or proverbial parable) in John 10:1–5. As his audience did not understand the proverb, Jesus then switched his speech-mode to a partially interpretative mode, revealing the hidden identity of the gate and the Good Shepherd. Here Jesus did not provide a complete interpretation, and he continued the story to be expanded further. In contrast, we note the parable of seed-sower and its complete interpretation in all three synoptic gospels (Matthew 13:3–23, Mark 4:2–20, and Luke 8:4–15). First, we note that the mode of the communication is parabolic (ἐν παραβολαῖς

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<sup>102</sup> Ibid., 259. Stramara refers to the work of Gregory of Nyssa, *Adversus Arium et Sabellium* 12, GNO 3.1 82,25-84,3; and *Contra Eunomium* 3.9 (CE 11.2), GNO 2 269,11-14.

<sup>103</sup> Quarles, "From Faith to Faith," 12–13, 18–20; Calhoun, "John Chrysostom," 131–46; and John Chrysostom, *Homiliae in epistulam ad Romanos*, 11.343–50.

<sup>104</sup> Edwards, "XAPIN ANTI XARITOS (John 1.16)," 7–9.

<sup>105</sup> Claude E. Shannon, "A Mathematical Theory of Communication," *Bell System Technical Journal* 27 (July-October 1948): 379–423, 623–56; and Claude E. Shannon, "Communication Theory of Secrecy Systems," *Bell System Technical Journal* 28, no. 4 (1949): 656–715.

<sup>106</sup> Raymond Brown, *The Semitic Background of the Term "Mystery" in the New Testament* (BS 21; Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1968); Craig A. Evans, *To See and Not Perceive: Isaiah 6.9-10 in Early Jewish and Christian Interpretation* (Sheffield: GB, 1989); G. K. Beale and Benjamin L. Gladd, *Hidden but Now Revealed: A Biblical Theology of Mystery* (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 2014). Alan Lenzi, *Secrecy and the Gods: Secret Knowledge in Ancient Mesopotamia and Biblical Israel* (Helsinki: Neo-Assyrian Text Corpus Project, 2008).

λαλεῖς αὐτοῖς) and is meant to conceal the intended message in secrecy. Next, we note that the basis and goal of the parabolic mode in communication is clearly stated and explained by Jesus to the disciples (citing Isaiah 6:9–10) in Matthew 13:10–17, Mark 4:10–13, and Luke 8:9–10. The passage in Matthew 11:25–27 presents a challenge in this multimodal framework in the biblical communication and revelation. In this light, the passages in John 6:45–46, 65, present an interesting parallel, worthy to be investigated.

Further, a secure communication system has been well-noted in the model of dream-vision and its interpretation. Here a dream is viewed as a vision while one is in a state of sleep. Then a dream or a vision is understood as a secure means of transmission channel of a message. A secure message of a dream-vision is then securely transmitted to a particular person. At the time of reception, the person with a dream or a vision may or may not understand its concealed meaning of the message. In case of a secure message under encryption, the dream-vision is further interpreted by a qualified mediator or interpreter to reveal its hidden message. Thus, the means of dream-vision effectively provides a trustworthy communication system of confidentiality and integrity. As a result, a dream-vision with its means of transmission and channel is securely guarded and protected against any communication breach or leak (cf. Genesis 40:1–8; Daniel 2:27–30).

For example, King Nebuchadnezzar had a dream in Daniel 2. Truly, the king was a wise king and a guardian of security. He took this opportunity to call and consult his royal counsel (of the magicians, enchanters, sorcerers, and astrologers) about his dream. Instead of disclosing the content of the dream, he further demanded and challenged them to prove their claimed-titles worthy by disclosing his dream and its meaning. First, they requested the king to disclose the dream and then the dream could be interpreted. Then they pleaded the king's mercy because of the difficulty or the impossibility of the king's demand, stating that no one on earth can disclose the king's dream (except the gods not living among the humans). Truly, except for God Himself, it is impossible to disclose one's inner thought as vindicated by Solomon in 1 Kings 8:30 (cf. Psalm 44:21; Proverbs 15:11; Jeremiah 17:9–10; John 16:30) or to disclose the content of the king's dream as asserted by Daniel (2:26–30). As Daniel confirmed further, the king's dream is a revealed object of communication message in "secrecy" or "mystery" (with  $\kappa\rho\rho$  and  $\mu\upsilon\sigma\tau\eta\rho\iota\omicron\nu$  in the Old Testament along with  $\mu\upsilon\sigma\tau\eta\rho\iota\omicron\nu$  in LXX and the New Testament).<sup>107</sup>

The Bible provides many well-known examples of dream-vision as means of a divine revelation and communication (i.e., Genesis 40, Daniel 2, 4, and 7–12, Matthew 1:20–25, 2:19–21, Acts 10:1–8, and Revelation of John). These abundant examples provide a sufficient basis for the model of secure communication in the Bible of a perfectly secure transmission and channel, absolutely with no possibility of interception or breach. Many of these dreams and visions do require one more step of interpretation, in communication process, to reveal its concealed message or intended meaning. That is, as the original message is encrypted in a visual or oral language symbolically or cognitively incomprehensible. The message of the initial revelation is then to be decrypted or interpreted to reveal its hidden message. An interpreter could be a messenger from God—either human or an angelic agent.

For example, in the case of two dreams in Genesis 37:5–11, Joseph is the recipient of each dream of which its message is symbolic and Joseph himself is the authorized interpreter of each dream to bring its concealed message into light. In case of two dreams in Genesis 40, each dream is given to an official of Pharaoh where the interpreter of each dream is the third person, Joseph. Some dreams are presented in clear or plain messages and do not require further interpretation. For example, the two dreams of Joseph in Matthew 1:20–25 and 2:13 provide this type of dream. These two dreams provide the case of the dreams in plain message. Here in each dream, the angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph and spoke to him in a clear and plain manner. In these cases, no need exists for any further interpretation as each message is delivered clearly and understood clearly. In this framework, there is no room for a so-called reader-response model of interpretation without the divine author-intended message in revelation. This initial understanding provides a basis of one and two-layer models of communication in dream-

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<sup>107</sup> Raymond Brown, *The Semitic Background of the Term "Mystery" in the New Testament* (BS 21; Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1968); G. Bornkamm, " $\mu\upsilon\sigma\tau\eta\rho\iota\omicron\nu$ ,  $\mu\upsilon\epsilon\omega$ ," *TDNT* 4:802–28; F. F. Bruce, "The Book of Daniel and the Qumran Community," in *Neotestamentica et Semitica: Studies in Honour of Matthew Black*, ed. E. Earle Ellis and Max Wilcox (Edinburgh: T.&T. Clark, 1969): 221–35; Markus N. A. Bockmuehl, *Revelation and Mystery in Ancient Judaism and Pauline Christianity* (WUNT 36; Tübingen: Mohr [Siebeck], 1990); and G. K. Beale, *The Use of Daniel in Jewish Apocalyptic Literature and in the Revelation of St. John* (Lanham, MD: University Press, 1984), 23–42.

visions.

This model of the secure communication is then further extended and applied to the case of the parables (cf. Matthew 13:10–17), including the case for parabolic proverb (παροιμία) in John 10:5 and 16:29–30.<sup>108</sup> Similar to the case of dream-vision, both sides (sender and receiver) of the communication process clearly understood the two or three-layers of communication in clarity, metaphor, or secrecy (ἐν παρρησίᾳ λαλεῖς καὶ παροιμίαν in John 16:29, and παρρησία and ἐν κρυπτῷ in John 18:20). The "I am" discourse in John 10:1–18 begins with a figure of speech (a parabolic proverb) of the good shepherd and the door of the sheep in verses 1–5. The two-layers of "clarity and secrecy" could be understood as the two-layers of public (open) versus private (secret) communication depending on various settings of the narrative. We note further a temporal two or three-stages of a message in secrecy and revelation. It was then hidden before the revelation and is now revealed. In some cases, the meaning of a revealed message is yet to be understood or revealed further (that is, "not yet" for its full meaning or understanding in its full extent). For example, Daniel encountered a divine messenger from God in a vision in Daniel 10:5. In Daniel 12:8, Daniel said to the angel that he did hear the lengthy message (αἱ παραβολαὶ αὐταὶ) but did not understand. Thus, Daniel asked for the end or the conclusion of all these things. The angel concluded these words to be concealed and sealed until the end-time and kept in secrecy (Daniel 12:9). We read a similar provision in Revelation 10:4, not to write what the seven thunders have said and to be sealed in secrecy.

The secure system of communication is further extended to the case of biblical paradoxes, similar to the case for dreams or parables. The rhetoric and logic of paradox is used as a means of communication of a hidden message and divine wisdom to reveal the hidden wisdom of God in paradox. The true and intended message is then sought and disclosed dramatically through the process of identification and authentication of a wise and chosen divine messenger (interpreter) sent by God. The paradoxical examples in Matthew 22:15–46 clearly demonstrate the model of the secure biblical message and communication in paradox. Additionally, a concealed message in paradox may not be known to both sides (source or destination) of communication. For example, in Matthew 22:15–46, both the Pharisees and the Sadducees do not know the solutions of three paradoxes in Matthew 22:15–46. Further, they did not expect Jesus to solve these paradoxes or to be used to bring out a new meaning in revelation (for example, to reveal the hidden messages in Exodus 3:6 or in Psalm 110:4). Many times, conventional wisdom or common sense may dictate one facing paradoxical challenge: (1) to declare it as a nonsense or a contradiction, or (2) to remain in silence to avoid any further trouble, as noted in Matthew 22:15–46. Further, the claim of Jesus in Matthew 11:25–27 presents a sound basis for this multimodal-layer of the divine and secure communication and revelation. In this light, similar passages (John 6:45, 6:65; and John 12:37–41 with Isaiah 6:9–10) present an interesting parallel, worthy to be investigated. That is, the Gospels present a richer multimodal system of communication and revelation where the secure communication is clearly intended and explicit, selective and discriminative, and effective and guarded. Lenzi (2008:233) provides an insightful observation that the various texts in divine communication are "secret before, during, and after the time of revelation, and even secret if a revelation is only hypothetical."<sup>109</sup>

In summary, a secure communication is clearly noted in the case of the biblical dream-vision (cf. Matthew 1:20). It is used as a secure means of transmission of a hidden message to a particular person who may or may not know its concealed message at the time of conception. A similar argument is applicable to the case of the parables (cf. Matthew 13:10–17) and further to the case of the paradoxes (cf. Matthew 22:15–46). As expressed by the disciples in and by Jesus in John 16:29 and John 18:20, Jesus and the disciples in the Gospels clearly understood the two or three-layer means of communication in clarity, metaphor, or secrecy.

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<sup>108</sup> John Dominic Crossan, "Parable, Allegory and Paradox," in *Semiotics and Parables: An Exploration of the Possibilities Offered by Structuralism for Exegesis*, Pittsburgh Theological Monographs 9, ed. Daniel Patte (Pittsburgh: Pickwick Press, 1976), 247–81; Robert H. Stein, *An Introduction to the Parables of Jesus* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1981), 27–35; and Robert Kysar, "Johannine — Meaning and Function: A Literary Case Study of John 10:1–18," *Semeia* 53 (1991): 81–111.

<sup>109</sup> Alan Lenzi, *Secrecy and the Gods: Secret Knowledge in Ancient Mesopotamia and Biblical Israel* (Helsinki Neo-Assyrian Text Corpus Project, 2008) 233; and G. K. Beale and Benjamin L. Gladd, *Hidden but Now Revealed: A Biblical Theology of Mystery* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2014), 60–64.

## Conclusion

Selected examples of biblical paradoxes of circularity in the Bible and "I am" sayings in John have been investigated to shed new insight on the paradoxes of circularity presented in this paper. The new perspective and paradigm of circular (coinductive) reasoning and its application to biblical texts are presented and analyzed.

Various literary structures in paradoxical circularity have been noted and analyzed. These circular patterns include: (1) one concept in self-referencing (e.g., "I am who I am" in Exodus 3:14), (2) two concepts in mutual-referencing (e.g., "I am in the father and the father is in me" in John 14:10), (3) many concepts in a cycle with a directed relationship (e.g., lord-servant relationship, from David to his descendants, including Christ, back to David in Matthew 22:41–46), and (4) one concept as an element, referring to a set or a group of which the concept is a member (e.g., "all Cretans are always liars" by a Cretan prophet, in Titus 1:12).

Two proof methods in John 8:12–20 are examined and compared. This provides a clear case of both lawful (inductive) reasoning based on the Law and circular (coinductive) reasoning, which is based on divine self-testimony being used as proof methods in the Bible. The discovery and presence of circular reasoning in John 8:12–20 offers a concrete basis for a new critical method in New Testament study and a new interpretive paradigm for Jesus' "I am" sayings in John. Furthermore, it is noted that Jesus' "I am" sayings in John 10:1–39 are used to identify the true identity of the gate and the good shepherd in the metaphoric story found in John 10:1–5. With this understanding, it is noted that each of Jesus' metaphorical "I am" sayings in John functions as (self-identifying) interpretive keys to the true identity of the central symbolic figure, as each story unfolds and blends with what is real and what is symbolic, and thus reveals the true meaning of the parable (that is, its hidden and intended message). This new insight provides a unified framework of interpretation to the understanding of some of the very difficult sayings of Jesus in John (e.g., "eat my flesh" and "drink my blood" in John 6). Further, the difficult passage and paradox of 1 John is discussed. It is about the sin and sinless states of the believers. The paradoxical dual-reality of the believers has been discussed and resolved with circular reasoning. Finally, the difficult lesson in Hebrews on Psalm 110:4 has been analyzed and noted for circular "be-like" relationship (Hebrews 7:3, 15).

The approach of this paper is distinctively computational, in order to explore a new critical method toward computational literary criticism in biblical study as selected examples of the paradoxes of circularity are surveyed and analyzed. Distinctive and inherent characteristics of circularity, modality, and non-monotonicity are noted with the selected paradoxes. By no means is the scope of this paper complete or comprehensive; rather, further investigation and study are called for in the future. However, the current study does demonstrate a promising new prospective and novel approach, along with some groundbreaking results to solve many classical and difficult problems dealing with the biblical paradoxes of circularity. The writer's hope is to bring renewed interest, understanding, and excitement toward the study of biblical paradox in the twenty-first century.

## Appendix A: A Computational Model for Circular Rhetoric and Logic of Paradox

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Coinductive logic has been used in many contemporary systems which require 24x7 operations for an infinite process designed to run forever. Some of these exemplar systems include: web server, wireless mobile telecommunication system, 24x7 life-support system in hospitals, GPS satellite systems for navigation, computer operating systems, network systems, and so on. These systems are designed to run forever without an end once they are up and running. The process of these systems is characterized as an infinite loop or cycle. First, we present a brief informal introduction to a logic-based programming language and its extension to coinductive logic. The reader is referred to Lloyd (1987) for logic programming, Simon *et al* (2006) for coinductive logic programming (co-LP), Min and Gupta (2009) for co-LP with negation, for a detailed account.

Logic (or logic-based) programming language was first proposed by McCarthy (1959). The proposal was to use logic to represent declarative knowledge to be processed by an automated theorem prover. The major breakthrough and progress in automated theorem proving for first order logic is marked by *resolution principle* by Robinson (1965) along with its subsequent developments. In 1972, the fundamental idea that "logic can be used as a programming language" is conceived by Kowalski and Colmerauer (Lloyd, 1987), with the proposal of logic programming language (Kowalski, 1974) and the implementation of Prolog (PROgramming in LOGic) interpreter by Colmerauer and his students in 1972 (Colmerauer and Roussel, 1996). We term this type of logic programming as traditional (or "inductive") *logic programming* (LP) for its basis of "induction" as a proof method, in contrast to *coinductive logic programming* (co-LP) due to its extension with "coinduction", following the terminology of Simon (2006).

A logic program consists of rules (called *Horn's clauses*) of the form:

$$A_0 \leftarrow B_1, \dots, B_m, \text{not } B_{m+1}, \dots, \text{not } B_n.$$

for some  $n \geq 0$  where  $A_0, B_1, \dots, B_n$  are called *atoms* (or *predicates*),  $A_0$  is called the *head* (or *conclusion*) of rule (4.1), and  $B_1, \dots, B_n$  is called the *body* (or *premises*) of rule (4.1). The body is the conjunction of atoms  $B_1, \dots, B_n$  where each atom is separated by a comma corresponding to the logical operator " $\wedge$ " (that is, "and"). Each clause is terminated by a period and the connective " $\leftarrow$ " between the head and the body is corresponding to the logical operator of implication (that is, "if"). For a convenience of our notation, we also use ":-" with " $\leftarrow$ " interchangeably. A rule without a body is called a *fact* (or a *unit clause*) (for example,  $\{A_0\}$ ). One may view a program as a theory (of a formal system) with a semantics assigning a collection of sets (or models where each model is a valid interpretation, and referred to as a solution of the program) to a theory.

For example, consider a parent relationship,  $\text{parent}(X, Y)$  where it means "X is a parent of Y". For example, the parent ("begot") relations of Genesis 5:3-9 can be represented as the following facts.

<pre>parent(adam, seth). parent(seth, enosh). parent(enosh, kenan). parent(kenan, mahalalel).</pre>
---

Table 1. parent program in Genesis 5:3-9

Next, let's consider an ancestor relationship,  $\text{ancestor}(X, Y)$ , where X is an ancestor of Y. Then the ancestor relationship can be defined as two rules: (1) a parent X of Y is an ancestor X of Y, and (2) an ancestor X of Y is a parent of X of Z where Z is an ancestor of Y, as follows.

<pre>ancestor(X, Y) :- parent(X, Y). ancestor(X, Y) :- parent(X, Z), ancestor(Z, Y).</pre>
--

Table 2. ancestor program

The "ancestor" relations are inductive, not coinductive (circular). If a circular definition of "ancestor" is allowed, then it would be invalid (nonsense). The query to this knowledgebase (combining parent program and ancestor program) is expressed as ":- p" where p is a predicate (or a sequence of predicates such as ":- p, q, r, ..."). For example, a query of ":- parent(adam, seth)" will be true as there is a fact, "parent(adam, seth)" found in Table 1. Another query of ":- parent(adam, cain)" would result in a failure (to be false) for there is no fact or rule to satisfy the current query in the current knowledgebase of the "parent and ancestor" program in Table 1 and Table 2. This says something about the knowledgebase (of the facts and the rules) with respect to a "closed-world" semantics (in contrast to a "possible-world" semantics to allow "the possibility of something that one does not know").

The query of "parent(adam, cain)" results in a failure (that is, false). This is equivalent to say that a negation of "parent(adam, cain)" is true, with respect to the current knowledgebase based on Genesis 5:3-9. One may note that this type of negation is "negation by failure". However, "parent(adam, cain)" is true if one may expand the current knowledgebase to those facts in Genesis 4. In fact, one may add many more parent-facts from Genesis 4: "parent(adam, cain)", "parent(adam, abel)", "parent(eve, cain)", "parent(eve, abel)", and so on.

Next, consider the query of "parent(adam, X)" where X is a variable to be instantiated with a constant if there is any matching fact to accommodate this query. This query will be true as there is a fact of "parent(adam, seth)" where X is instantiated by "seth". Further the query of "parent(eve, seth)" will be failed ("false", that is, "not true") because the current knowledge of the parent program does not warrant this fact. From this, one should notice that the known world of the parent program is restricted by the "closed-world assumption" (CWA). That is, "the things that I do not know" means "the truth value of these things are false".

Further the query of "ancestor(adam, enosh)" is true for "ancestor(adam, enosh)" will be replaced by the second rule of ancestor, "ancestor(X,Y) :- parent(X, Z), ancestor(Z,Y)" with X for "adam", Y for "enosh", and Z for "seth", resulting in the next goal of "ancestor(seth, Y)" to be resolved. Next, "ancestor(seth, Y)" will be resolved by the first rule of ancestor program, "ancestor(X, Y) :- parent(X,Y)" with the current goal of "ancestor(seth, Y)" where current X of the head will be replaced by "seth" and current Y will be replaced by "enosh", resulting in a successful inference to be well-founded.

Extending the traditional LP, one may declare a coinductive predicate. For example, consider the following program with a coinductive predicate "i\_am" with the following coinductive definition.

```
i_am :- i_am.
```

Table 3. i\_am program with a coinductive predicate "i\_am".

This program seems to capture and represent the circular construct and meaning of "I am who I am" in Exod. 3:14, even though the predicate "i\_am" is somewhat simplified and seems in need of further refinement. Note that "i\_am" is a coinductive predicate; otherwise, the computational evaluation (execution) of "i\_am" results in an infinite loop. Moreover, this program can be refined with a coinductive predicate "who(X)" to represent "who is X" where "X" is "i\_am" as follow.

```
i_am :- who(i_am).
who(i_am) :- i_am.
```

Table 4. i\_am 1 program: the revised i\_am program with two coinductive predicates for "i\_am" who "i\_am".

Moreover, the predicate "i\_am" is propositional, to be further refined by making the coinductive predicate "i\_am" with "i\_am(X)" to be predicated, that is, in First-order logic, as follows.

```
i_am(X) :- who(i_am(X)).
who(i_am(X)) :- i_am(X).
```

Table 5. i\_am 2 program: another revised coinductive predicates for "i\_am" who "i\_am".

Thus one may further qualify the variable X to be a certain person (for example, "Jesus Christ") for an instance of X in "i\_am(X)". Next we consider the "in" relationship of the son and the father, in John 14:10, as follow.

```
in(the_son, the_father).
in(the_father, the_son).
in(X, Y) :- in(Y, X).
```

Table 4. in(X,Y) program with a coinductive Predicate "in(X, Y)"

With negation "not", one may express the friend and enemy relations with the following coinductive definitions.

```
friend(X, Y) :- not enemy(X, Y).
enemy(X, Y) :- not friend(X, Y).
```

Table 5. friend-enemy program, with two coinductive predicates friend(X,Y) and enemy(X,Y).

The coinductive predicate "friend(X, Y)" means that X is a friend of Y, and enemy(X, Y) means that X is an enemy of Y. One may extend the friend-enemy program by adding a few facts, as follows.

```
friend(X, Y) :- not enemy(X, Y).
enemy(X, Y) :- not friend(X, Y).
friend(ester, mordecai).
enemy(ester, haman).
friend(ester, xerxes).
```

Table 6. friend-enemy program with a few facts.

Three facts of friend or enemy are added to the program. Based on the fact of "friend(ester, mordecai)" alone, it is known (in this theory) that "ester" is a friend of "mordecai". However, whether "mordecai" is a friend of "ester" is not known for there is no known fact or rule of inference to deduce this fact. Thus one may add two more rules of friendship so that friendship is commutative and transitive, as follows.

```
friend(X, Y) :- not enemy(X, Y).
enemy(X, Y) :- not friend(X, Y).
friend(X,Y) :- friend(Y,X).
friend(X,Y) :- friend(X, Z), Y is not = Z, friend(Z, Y).
friend(ester, mordecai).
enemy(ester, haman).
friend(ester, xerxes).
```

Table 7. friend-enemy program with a few facts.

From this program (theory), one may deduce that "ester" is a friend of "mordecai" and vice versa, based on the rule of "friend(X,Y) :- friend(Y,X)", and that (1) "ester" is a friend of "mordecai", (2) "mordecai" is a friend of "xerxes", and thus (3) "ester" is a friend of "xerxes" based on (1) and (2) with the transitive rule of "friend(X,Y) :- friend(X, Z), Y is not = Z, friend(Z, Y)". Moreover, one may assert (1) that "ester" is an enemy of "haman", (2) that "ester" is not a friend of "haman", and so on. One may try the "love-hate" relationship similar to "friend-enemy" relationship. Next we present the following four examples to illustrate some of the important features and characteristics of co-LP.

Example 1. Consider the first program NP1 with one coinductive predicate of "p".

NP1:            p :- p.

Each query of "p" and "not p" succeed with the program NP1. The program NP1 has two models. One model holds for "p" and the other model holds for "not p". That is, "p" is true in the first model whereas nothing is true in the second model (that is, "not p" is true). This type of the behavior seems to be confusing (seemingly contradictory) and thus counter-intuitive. However, as noted earlier, this type of behavior is indeed advantageous as we extend traditional LP into the realm of modal reasoning. Clearly, the addition of a circular clause (e.g., "p :- p." as in the program NP1) to a program extends each of its initial models into two models where one includes "p" and the other does not include "p" (that is, "not p"). Further, co-LP enforces the consistency of the query result causing the query of "p and not p" to fail. However, the query of "p or not p" will succeed (in fact, there are two models: one for "p" and the other for "not p").

Example 2. Consider the second program NP2 with two coinductive predicates "p" and "q".

NP2:        p :- not q.  
              q :- not p.

Each query of "p" and "q" succeeds with the program NP2. In fact, the program NP2 has two models where one model holds for "p" and "not q", and the other model holds for "not p" and "q". Further they are mutually exclusive to each other. That is, they are not consistent with each other. Thus the query "p" is true with the first model of "p" and false with the second model of "q" while the query "not p" is true with the second model of "q" but not true with the first model of "p". The results of these two queries are "seemingly" contradictory, if conjoined carelessly. Thus one should be careful not to join these results as one query holds with one model but not with the other model. Computing with the "possible world" semantics in presence of negation can be troublesome and seemingly lead to contradictions, similar to the first program NP1. Moreover, the query of "p and not p" will never succeed if we are aware of the context (of a particular model) because there is no model that holds for both "p" and "not p".

Example 3. Consider the following program NP3 with one coinductive predicate "p".

NP3:        p :- not p.

The program NP3 has no model, in contrast to the program NP1 which has two models. Further, the query of "p or not p" provides a validation test for NP3 with respect to the predicate "p" whether the program NP3 is consistent or not.

Example 4. Consider the following program NP4 with the two coinductive predicates "p" and "q".

NP4:        p :- not q.

The program NP4 has a model of "p" whereas the program NP1 has two models of "p" and "q" as we noted earlier. Further the program NP4 has a definition of "p" (that is, p is defined as the left-hand of the rule with its body) but not for "q", whereas the program NP2 has the definition for "p" and "q". The query of "p" succeeds with the program NP2 and NP4 whereas the query of "q" succeeds with the program NP1 but not with the program NP4. To put it simply, we have some facts and rules defined for "p" and "q" in the program NP2. But only "p" is defined in the program NP4. That is, there is nothing known about "q" in NP4, except through "p". In a "closed-world" semantics, "q" is "not true (that is, false)" with the program NP4 for "q" not defined (not known). This is an example of "negation as failure" with closed-world assumption (CWA) as noted earlier.

To summarize, co-LP is a recent and first attempt to implement coinductive reasoning as a formal programming language. By no means can the current state of coinductive reasoning and co-LP handle or solve all the problems and challenges in the problems of circular rhetoric and paradoxes of circularity.

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Title: Circular Rhetoric and Logic of Paradox

- (1) Biblical Paradox and "I am" Sayings in John
- (2) A New Interpretive Framework for "I am" sayings in John
- (3) Circular Rhetoric and Logic of Paradox in Matthew 22:15-46
- (4) A New Critical Method toward the Validity and Interpretation of Paradox of Circularity
- (5) A New Interpretive Paradigm for Melchizedek in Hebrews 7
- (6) Circular Rhetoric and Paradox in John 1:15 and 1:30
- (7) "Already and Not Yet" in Salvation History of Oscar Cullmann
- (8) A Semantic Difference in Circular Rhetoric
- (9) Circular Rhetoric and Exegetical Challenges in Romans (1:17; 3:4; 8:10; 8:29–30; 9:15, 18)
- (10) Grace in John 1:16 in the Light of the Promise and its Fulfillment (Galatians 3:16–18)
- (11) Christological Mystery in Early Christianity
- (12) A Model for Secure Communication

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### Abstract.

In the early twentieth century, Russell pioneered the formal study of paradox in logic. Understanding the cause of the paradoxes, the proposed remedy was to avoid any circular logic or to treat any circular logic as invalid. Following this scholarly trend, the study of biblical paradox has been one of the most controversial and confusing areas in contemporary biblical scholarship for the latter half of the twentieth century. However, a renewed interest has ensued due to the innovative approach pioneered by Kripke in the study of paradox and circularity. This paper presents and explores this new paradigm to facilitate an understanding of the paradoxes of circularity and various circular constructs in the Bible. The selected examples in this paper include three paradoxes in Matthew 22:15–46, the Liar paradox in Titus 1:12, the divine "I am" sayings in Exodus 3:14, the circular indwelling relationships in John 14:10–11, and two proof methods in John 8:12–20. One proof method in John 8:12–20 is distinctively self-referential to the validation of a personal claim to be the light of the world. The approach of this paper is computational, providing a key to understanding circular rhetoric and paradoxes in the Bible.

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