



themelios

*An International Journal for Students of
Theological and Religious Studies*

Volume 33 Issue 3 December 2008

EDITORIAL <i>D. A. Carson</i>	1
MINORITY REPORT: The Way of the Christian Academic <i>Carl Trueman</i>	5
The Gospel and the Poor <i>Tim Keller</i>	8
Shared Intentions? Reflections on Inspiration and Interpretation in Light of Scripture's Dual Authorship <i>Jared M. Compton</i>	23
The Center of Biblical Theology in Acts: Deliverance and Damnation Display the Divine <i>James M. Hamilton Jr.</i>	34
Salvation History, Chronology, and Crisis: A Problem with Inclusivist Theology of Religions, Part 2 of 2 <i>Adam Sparks</i>	48
PASTORAL PENSÉES: Ezra, According to the Gospel: Ezra 7:10 <i>Philip Graham Ryken</i>	63
Book Reviews	69



THE GOSPEL COALITION

themelios

DESCRIPTION

Themelios is an international evangelical theological journal that expounds and defends the historic Christian faith. Its primary audience is theological students and pastors, though scholars read it as well. It was formerly a print journal operated by RTSF/UCCF in the UK, and it became a digital journal operated by The Gospel Coalition in 2008. The new editorial team seeks to preserve representation, in both essayists and reviewers, from both sides of the Atlantic.

Themelios is published three times a year exclusively online at www.theGospelCoalition.org. It is presented in two formats: PDF (for citing pagination) and HTML (for greater accessibility, usability, and infiltration in search engines). *Themelios* is copyrighted by The Gospel Coalition. Readers are free to use it and circulate it in digital form without further permission (any print use requires further written permission), but they must acknowledge the source and, of course, not change the content.

EDITORS

General Editor: D. A. Carson
Trinity Evangelical Divinity School
2065 Half Day Road
Deerfield, IL, 60015, USA
Themelios@theGospelCoalition.org

Consulting Editor: Carl R. Trueman
Westminster Theological Seminary
Chestnut Hill, P.O. Box 27009
Philadelphia, PA 19118, USA

Managing Editor: Charles Anderson
Oak Hill Theological College
Chase Side, Southgate, London
N14, 4PS, UK
charlesa@oakhill.ac.uk

Administrator: Andrew David Naselli
Trinity Evangelical Divinity School
2065 Half Day Road
Deerfield, IL, 60015, USA
Themelios@theGospelCoalition.org

BOOK REVIEW EDITORS

Old Testament
Rodrigo de Sousa
Faculdade de Letras
Universidade Federal de Goiás - Campus II
Caixa Postal 131 - CEP 74001-970
Goiânia - Goiás - Brazil
Rodrigo.deSousa@theGospelCoalition.org

New Testament
Alistair I. Wilson
Dumisani Theological Institute
PO Box 681
King William's Town 5600
South Africa
Alistair.Wilson@theGospelCoalition.org

History and Historical Theology
Shawn Wright
Southern Baptist Theological Seminary
2825 Lexington Road
Louisville, KY 40299, USA
Shawn.Wright@theGospelCoalition.org

Systematic Theology and Bioethics
Hans Madueme
Trinity Evangelical Divinity School
2065 Half Day Road; D-632
Deerfield, IL 60015, USA
Hans.Madueme@theGospelCoalition.org

Ethics (but not Bioethics) and Pastoralia
Dominic Smart
Gilcomston South Church
Union Street
Aberdeen
AB10 1TP, UK
Dominic.Smart@theGospelCoalition.org

Mission and Culture
Daniel Strange
Oak Hill College
Chase Side, Southgate
London N14 4PS
Daniel.Strange@theGospelCoalition.org

ARTICLES

Articles should generally be about 4,000 to 7,000 words and should be submitted to the Managing Editor of *Themelios*, which is peer-reviewed. Articles should use clear, concise English, following *The SBL Handbook of Style* (esp. for abbreviations), supplemented by *The Chicago Manual of Style*. They should consistently use either UK or USA spelling and punctuation, and they should be submitted electronically as an email attachment using Microsoft Word (.doc or .docx extensions) or Rich Text Format (.rtf extension). Special characters should use a Unicode font.

REVIEWS

The book review editors generally select individuals for book reviews, but potential reviewers may contact them about reviewing specific books. As part of arranging book reviews, the book review editors will supply book review guidelines to reviewers.

EDITORIAL

— D. A. Carson —

*D. A. Carson is research professor of New Testament at Trinity Evangelical
Divinity School in Deerfield, Illinois.*

The apostle Paul writes, “Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind” (Rom 12:2). Elsewhere he tells the Corinthians, “We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ” (2 Cor 10:5).

Thinking differently from the “world” has been part of the Christian’s responsibility and agenda from the beginning. The language Paul uses intimates that this independence of thought will not be easy. The assumption seems to be that the world has its own patterns, its own structured arguments, its own value systems. Because we Christians live in the world, the “default” reality is that we are likely to be shaped by these patterns, structures, and values, unless we consciously discern how and where they stand over against the gospel and all its entailments, and adopt radically different thinking. More: our response must not only be defensive (Rom 12:2), but offensive, aiming to “demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God,” aiming to “take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ” (2 Cor 10:5).

Neither Scripture nor experience suggests that this will be an easy task. Transparently, one of the things needed is substantial discernment, since some things the world thinks are not intrinsically bad (in the Reformed heritage, this is commonly seen to be the fruit of “common grace”). More difficult yet, the challenges are not vanquished once, enabling us to coast. Until the end of the age, the “world” continues to exist, and it keeps launching its challenges from constantly changing angles. When Christians who had suffered through two centuries of waves of Roman persecution faced the stunning reality that the Emperor now declared himself to be a convert, they were faced with the temptation to re-think what political “victory” looked like, what structures controlling Christian influence in the corridors of power might achieve—and thus to re-think the nature of the kingdom. Doubtless Matt 20:20–28 seemed less relevant than reflections on the life and times of King David. Moreover, decisions of the same sort played out again and again, across centuries, until there was an imperial papacy, and beyond.

Choose your own historical examples. Probably the most difficult “patterns” of thought to identify as things to which we should not be “conformed” are those in any culture that the overwhelming majority in the culture think are pretty obvious, but which stand either tangentially skewed with respect to, or totally opposed to, the gospel. Most of us look back on the temptations toward ascetic and gnostic movements in the second and third centuries and marvel that so many people who called themselves Christians were taken in. But the most dangerous movements in any age are those that are so widely assumed that it is very hard to see them. It is easy to discern and denounce yesteryear’s blind spots, and even feel vaguely superior because we are able to do so; it is far more difficult to discern our own. And to these big “world-viewish” structures of thought must be added the rippling recurrence of the many temptations to avarice, pride, sexual libertinism, and lust for power.

All this is the common reflection of Christians across the centuries. Certainly I have tried to think about these matters periodically throughout my adult life; most of us have. Recently, however, two things have forced me to probe them more than I have before.

(1) Writing the book *Christ and Culture Revisited* forced me to ponder a little more seriously the way Christians are simultaneously part of a culture and set over against it, how they are influenced by the culture for good and ill, and influence it in return, likewise for good and ill.

(2) Increasing reflection on the sheer speed, volume, and democratic openness of the Internet prompts guarded thanks for access to useful information, and sheer horror at the potential for abuse and corruption.

(a) One cannot help but be thankful for the way the Internet can disseminate vast quantities of useful information, how books and other sources once available only in the best libraries are now, for countless hundreds of millions of people, only a click away.

(b) Equally we ought to be thankful for the way independent voices on the Internet sometimes puncture the pretentious or plainly false claims of the major traditional media. Granted, as Lord Acton insisted, that all power corrupts, and that absolute power corrupts absolutely, one does not like to see too many news sources falling into too few hands. The Internet is gloriously irreverent to the major traditional media. I am not suggesting that Internet information is intrinsically more reliable than information disseminated on television or in newspapers and weekly journals; I'm merely saying that multiplication of sources of information is more likely to ensure freedom and truth than entrusting all the sources of information distribution into too few hands.

(c) But there are many downsides as well. The sleaze and trash on the net are stupefying. Porn, for example, was certainly not invented by the Internet, but the Internet makes it constantly accessible to everyone. Some reports say that more money is now spent in western countries on porn than on tobacco, alcohol, and hard drugs combined. What is this doing to human relationships, to marriages, to the gift of godly imagination?

(d) Because the Internet is spectacularly accessible, almost anyone can voice an opinion or make a claim. In this sense, it is the most "democratic" of the media. Occasionally this means that voices otherwise silenced, voices that should be heard, are indeed heard. Much more commonly, voices multiply that are ill-informed, opinionated, often pretentious and arrogant. A higher percentage of these voices were weeded out when the distribution was via print, radio, or television; by democratizing the delivery system, every voice can be published, and it becomes culturally unacceptable even to suggest that some voices are not worth publishing. This does nothing to enhance either discernment or self-discipline. As Michael Kinsley likes to ask, "How many blogs does the world need?"

(e) Much more interesting, and more difficult to predict, is the phenomenon called "groundswell" (see esp. Charline Li and Josh Bernoff, *Groundswell: Winning in a World Transformed by Social Technologies* [Boston: Harvard Business Press, 2008]). Opinions and responses coagulate and drive topics and evaluations in uncontrollable and largely unpredictable directions. This can foster openness; alternatively, what is perceived to be a cultural consensus on some matter or other may simply be wrong.

(f) The speed of the Internet is stunning. A few years ago I was attending a meeting of pastors, most of us with our laptops out taking notes during the complex discussions, when the chap next to me turned his screen to me and invited me to read what was there. About fifteen minutes earlier he had said something to the group. What he had said was summarized and sent by another member of the group to his associate back home. The associate blogged the information, and that blog was picked

up by an RSS feed that brought the information to the blog of one of the assistants of the chap beside me. That assistant emailed his boss, and there was the question on the screen: “Did you really say that?” Amusing, even fun—but such speed is encouraging us to bash out responses before we’ve heard another side, before we’ve had time to evaluate, before we’ve pondered whether or not it is wise and godly to respond at all, before we’ve cooled down and been careful in our choice of words. When you set out to write a book, a good editor fosters such virtues, but most blogs pass through the hands of no editors, and graceful communication is not thereby enhanced.

(g) Scarcely less important than speed of access is the Internet’s sheer intoxicating addictiveness—or, more broadly, we might be better to think of the intoxicating addictiveness of the entire digital world. Many are those who are never quiet, alone, and reflective, who never read material that demands reflection and imagination. The iPods provide the music, the phones constant access to friends, phones and computers tie us to news, video, YouTube, Facebook, and on and on. This is not to demonize tools that are so very useful. Rather, it is to point out the obvious: information does not necessarily spell knowledge, and knowledge does not necessarily spell wisdom, and the incessant demand for unending sensory input from the digital world (says he, as he writes this on a computer for an electronic theological journal) does not guarantee we make good choices. We have the potential to become world citizens, informed about every corner of the globe, but in many western countries the standards of geographical and cross-cultural awareness have seriously declined. We have access to spectacularly useful information, but most of us diddle around on ephemeral blogs and listen to music as enduring as a snowball in a blast furnace. Sometimes we just become burned out by the endless waves of bad news, and decide the best course is to turn the iPod volume up a bit.

One more example of a slightly different sort: In a recent fascicle of *First Things*, Joseph Bottum and Ryan T. Anderson write a fascinating essay titled “Stem Cells: A Political History.” They carefully chart the way the story has been told by the media since 2001 when President Bush *allowed* the use of federal funds for embryonic stem-cell research. That’s right, he *allowed* it; no president before him, including Clinton, had done so. Bush did restrict the use of federal funds to previously established stem-cell lines, largely because he was afraid of the dehumanizing effects of simply harvesting stem cells from embryos. Meanwhile, private companies could experiment as they wanted. The next six years stirred up a torrent of opprobrium. Bush was against science, people were not going to be cured if he continued to have his way, and so forth. The detailed documentation provided by Bottum and Anderson is captivating. Then, using mice, Shinya Yamanaka demonstrated that fully pluripotent stem cells could be created directly from adult cells. By November 2007, two independent teams published the results of their work showing that human pluripotent stem cells could be produced without using embryos, cloning, or human eggs. The story dropped away from the front pages of the media. Nor do these same media now report how the small but genuine advances made in stem-cell research—for instance, in MS, lupus, and scleroderma—at least in the US, have almost without exception sprung from work with adult stem cells. The “spin” on the story has shaped public opinion: conservatives oppose stem cell research, and liberals are for it. What Carl Trueman calls “the wages of spin” shape not only what we think is newsworthy, but our ethical reflection and our perception of what is for the public good.

These precise challenges never faced Paul, Augustine, Aquinas, Luther, and Turretin. But what does it mean not to let the world squeeze us into its mold in the opening decade of the twenty-first century?

I shall not here review the Christian resources God has kindly lavished on us to enable us not to conform to the pattern of this world. If we are to be transformed by the renewing of our mind, then we must be reading the Scriptures perennially, seeking to think God’s thoughts after him, focusing on the

gospel of God and pondering its implications in every domain of life. We need to hear competing voices of information from the world around us, use our time in the digital world wisely, and learn to shut that world down when it becomes more important to get up in the morning and answer emails than it does to get up and read the Bible and pray. We may also learn much from church history, where we observe fellow believers in other times and cultures learning the shape of faithfulness. We begin to detect how easily the “world” may squeeze us into its mold. We soon learn that adequate response is more than mere mental resolve, mere disciplined observance of the principle “garbage in, garbage out” (after all, we are what we think), though it is not less than that. The gospel is the power of God issuing in salvation. Empowered by the Holy Spirit and living in the shadow of the cross and resurrection, we find ourselves *wanting* to be conformed to the Lord Jesus, wanting to be as holy and as wise as pardoned sinners can be this side of the consummation.



MINORITY REPORT

The Way of the Christian Academic

— Carl Trueman —

*Carl Trueman is Academic Dean, Vice President of Academic Affairs,
and Professor of Historical Theology and Church History at Westminster
Theological Seminary in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.*

My guess is that many of the people who read *Themelios* either are, or have aspirations to be, teachers in the world of Christian theological academia. Thus, it seems apposite once in a while to reflect briefly upon what exactly this calling entails.

The first thing to note in this regard is that being a Christian academic is no more virtuous a calling than any other. What makes a calling *Christian*, first and foremost, is not where it sits in the hierarchy of vocations as perceived by the Christian community. That was a medieval notion, where priests and monks performed functions that were considered inherently holy, while the rest of the rabble made do with inferior callings—you know, tilling the soil, growing food, raising children, and other such mundane and superfluous tasks. Luther rode a coach and horses through this kind of thinking with his understanding of justification, his reconfiguring of the place and power of the sacraments, and the shattering of the wall between the sacred and the secular. We evangelicals are heirs of Luther on this, and it should be central to our thinking about the calling of academia that we do not see it as an opportunity to make ourselves seem greater or better than others. Generally, those who have Ph.D.s and teaching jobs have enjoyed greater opportunities than others; thus they should see their calling as one which enables them to serve better, not to lord it over others.

There are tangible contexts in which this can be expressed. Most basic is the role of the local church. What role does the Ph.D. student or the professor play in the local church? Do they consider their role restricted, for example, to teaching the adult Sunday school or leading a Bible study, such that other duties—less ‘sacred’ callings—like the clean-up team or the tea rota or the nursery are considered off-limits and *infra dig*? On the contrary, the church is the church, and it is a privilege for anyone to be involved at any level in any of her manifold activities. We Protestants have, in a sense, regressed to the Middle Ages with our view that certain tasks (the ones involving brainpower and intellectual qualifications) are somehow more important than others. Just try teaching Sunday School in a classroom that’s filthy and full of litter. A Ph.D. or a place in a graduate program does not exempt you from getting your hands literally dirty for the Lord.

In addition, such involvement in the everyday tasks of the church also helps to ground theology in real life. For example, teaching Sunday school to young children can be both humbling and challenging: humbling, because sometimes young children ask in all innocence some of the most profound and searching theological questions to which the greatest minds might struggle to respond; and challenging because communicating theological truth to young minds can make exacting demands upon both our theological knowledge and our communication skills which cannot be experienced anywhere else;

indeed, I have found my poor theology and poor communication skills to have been more ruthlessly exposed in the junior SS class than in the doctoral seminar. And, of course, teaching kids can help to keep us humble: they do not understand academic qualifications, but they do understand boring, irrelevant, and pretentious—and they punish such unmercifully.

The second thing to note is that the title ‘scholar’ is not one that you should ever apply to yourself, and its current profusion among the chatterati on the blogs is a sign of precisely the kind of arrogance and hubris against which we all need to guard ourselves. Call me old-fashioned, but to me the word ‘scholar’ has an honorific ring. It is something that others give to you when, and only when, you have made a consistent and outstanding contribution to a particular scholarly field (and, no, completion of a Ph.D. does not count). To be blunt, the ability to set up your own blog site and having nothing better to do with your time than warble on incessantly about how clever you are and how idiotic are all those with whom you disagree—well, that does not actually make you eligible to be called a scholar. On the contrary, it rather qualifies you to be a self-important nincompoop, and the self-referential use of the title by so many of that ilk is at best absurd, at worst obnoxious.

Third, in training to be a Christian academic, it is important to realize a couple of facts that are part of the universal experience of all Christians engaged in higher theological study. First, at times you will undoubtedly lose to your supervisor in arguments on matters of central importance. That goes almost without saying. What is crucial is to understand that the fact that you may not be able to beat your supervisor in an argument may not mean that he or she is right and you are wrong. It may mean that; but it could also indicate simply that they know more and are better skilled in argument than you. That is, of course, one of the reasons you are studying under them: to learn the hows and whys of scholarship. So don’t despair the first time you lose such an engagement, and don’t simply throw your faith away at the first sign of difficulty. That brings me to the second point: perseverance. Nobody ever claimed that engaging one’s mind and applying it to the deepest things of the faith was ever going to be easy. In fact, it adds just one more dimension to the numerous temptations to idolatry and infidelity: the worship of the mind, or the supervisor, or the scholarly consensus, or even of a particular idea or set of ideas for their own sake. The biblical student faces critical, textual and theological questions every day; the historian faces questions of relativism and epistemology; the ethics student faces questions of morality and pragmatism. Sufficient to the discipline are the intellectual nightmares contained therein! The only way to resist such temptations is by hard work. Don’t waste time by reading the second-best book on any subject; read the best. Don’t be taken in by rhetorical tricks such as ‘Nobody believes that anymore!’ Try to establish what the arguments are, and then see how they have been addressed in the past and how they are addressed in the present. Prayer is important, but it is no substitute for hard work and deep reading and reflection on knotty problems.

Finally, to return to the local church, make sure you are involved in the local church and, when you are there, you sit under the word in listening submission, not over the word in judgment. Endless mischief has been done in churches by those who have some formal theological training and yet who think they have never been given the recognition or the strokes which they deserve. They sit in church not so much to be under the word as to rate the pastor’s sermon, assess his theology, offer him oh-so-helpful criticism as to how he might improve his performance or how he should (i.e. how they would) have preached the text. Ultimately, such people are merely divisive, and they are so because their concern is not to have themselves checked by the word of God, or to see the congregation built up in its knowledge of God; rather, it is to see themselves puffed above others, and their theological knowledge, whether real or assumed, is simply the means to this end. Real theologians know not only that they have

been given their gifts for service of others but also that they themselves are still sinners, saved only by grace, and dependent upon God's word for their daily spiritual sustenance. An emphasis upon basic daily obedience, prayer, private Bible reading, and weekly attendance at church where the word is read and preached and where fellowship with other saints can take place might seem awfully mundane; but without these things, the Christian is deprived of the very oxygen of the spiritual life. Indeed, one might add to this that the accountability that church membership involves is also critical, for it not only makes the Christian academic connect with other people but also holds the individual to a level of corporate accountability before the saints as a whole.

The calling of a Christian academic is a high one, for anyone charged with the teaching of God's truth will, as the Bible tells us, be held to a higher level of accountability than others. The path is marked with difficulties and challenges; but none are insurmountable, and the basic disciplines of the Christian life are in fact more, not less, important and useful. You want to be a Christian academic? Work hard, pray, read your Bible, and go to church.



The Gospel and the Poor¹

— Tim Keller —

Tim Keller is senior pastor of Redeemer Presbyterian Church in Manhattan, NY and an adjunct professor of practical theology at Westminster Theological Seminary in Philadelphia.

The original question I was asked to address was “How does our commitment to the primacy of the gospel tie into our obligation to do good to all, especially those of the household of faith, to serve as salt and light in the world, to do good to the city?” I will divide this question into two parts: (1) If we are committed to the primacy of the gospel, does the gospel itself serve as the basis and motivation for ministry to the poor? (2) If so, how then does that ministry relate to the proclamation of the gospel?

1. Does the Gospel Itself Move Us to Do Ministry to the Poor?

The Primacy of the Gospel

What does “the primacy of the gospel” mean? I will answer that question from Don Carson’s keynote address delivered at The Gospel Coalition’s first conference in May 2007.² Carson clarifies the gospel from 1 Cor 15:1–19 with eight summarizing words:

1. *Christological*: The gospel centers on the person and work (the life, death, and resurrection) of Jesus Christ.
2. *theological*: The gospel tells us that sin is first and foremost an offense against God and that salvation is first to last the action of God, not our own.
3. *biblical*: The gospel is essentially the message of the whole Bible.
4. *apostolic*: The gospel is passed on to us by Jesus’ disciples as authoritative eyewitnesses.
5. *historical*: The gospel is not philosophy or advice on how to find God, but rather *news* of what God has done in history to find and save us.
6. *personal*: The gospel must be personally believed and appropriated.
7. *universal*: The gospel is for every tongue, tribe, people, and individual.
8. *eschatological*: The gospel includes the good news of the final transformation, not just the blessings we enjoy in this age.

From these exegetical inferences, Carson infers more broadly that the gospel is normally disseminated in proclamation. The overwhelming majority of references to the gospel in the New Testament speak of communicating the gospel through words. However, as a steward of the gospel, Paul’s respon-

¹ I use the term ‘crisis’ in the sense of ‘a crucial stage or turning point in the course of something, esp. in a sequence of events’ (*The Collins Concise Dictionary*).

² D. A. Carson, “The Gospel of Jesus Christ (1 Cor 15:1–19),” a sermon preached on May 23, 2007 at The Gospel Coalition’s conference in Deerfield, IL, available at http://www.thegospelcoalition.org/resources/a/what_is_the_gospel_1.

sibility was not exhausted simply by disseminating it to non-believers. Paul also “found it necessary to hammer away at the outworking of the gospel in every domain of the lives of the Corinthians.”³ After stressing that the gospel is disseminated primarily through proclamation, Carson writes:

Yet something else must also be said. This chapter [1 Cor 15] comes at the end of a book that repeatedly shows how the gospel rightly works out in the massive transformation of attitudes, morals, relationships, and cultural interactions. As everyone knows, Calvin insists that justification is by faith alone, but genuine faith is never alone; we might add that the gospel focuses on a message of what God has done and is doing, and must be cast in cognitive truths to be believed and obeyed, but this gospel never properly remains exclusively cognitive.⁴

The rest of the Corinthian letters demonstrate this over and over. When Paul denounces the Corinthians’ divisions and party spirit (1 Cor 1:10–17), he says that they come from pride and boasting, a betrayal of the gospel of sovereign grace (1:26–31). When Paul deals with the issue of sexual sin and discipline in chapters 5–6, he gives directions for behavior and grounds his appeal in the gospel of justification (6:11) and the fact that they were ransomed by the death of Christ (6:19–20). In chapter 7, the questions of singleness, divorce, and remarriage “are worked out in the context of the priorities of the gospel and the transformed vision brought about by the dawning of the eschatological age and the anticipation of the end.”⁵ In 2 Cor 8–9, Paul eloquently appeals for financial generosity on the basis of the gospel. Radical, humble generosity is being “submissive to the confession of the gospel” (2 Cor 9:13), that is, materialism fails to take seriously the gospel of Christ’s sacrificial death for us. Similarly, Paul challenges Peter’s attitudes toward Gentile Christians by insisting that he was not “walking in line with the truth of the gospel” (Gal 2:14).

[T]he gospel must also transform the business practices and priorities of Christians in commerce, the priorities of young men steeped in indecisive but relentless narcissism, the lonely anguish and often the guilty pleasures of single folk who pursue pleasure but who cannot find happiness, the tired despair of those living on the margins, and much more. And this must be done, not by attempting to abstract social principles from the gospel, still less by endless focus on the periphery in a vain effort to sound prophetic, but precisely by preaching and teaching and living out in our churches the glorious gospel of our blessed Redeemer.⁶

So what does it mean to be committed to the *primacy* of the gospel? It means first that the gospel must be proclaimed. Many today denigrate the importance of this. Instead, they say, the only true apologetic is a loving community; people cannot be reasoned into the kingdom, they can only be loved. “Preach the gospel. Use words if necessary.” But while Christian community is indeed a crucial and powerful witness to the truth of the gospel, it cannot replace preaching and proclamation. Nevertheless, the primacy of the gospel also means that it is the basis and mainspring for Christian practice, individually and corporately, inside the church and outside. Gospel ministry is not only proclaiming it to people so that they will embrace and believe it; it is also teaching and shepherding believers with it so that it shapes the

³ Carson, “The Gospel of Jesus Christ.”

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid.

entirety of their lives, so that they can “live it out.” And one of the most prominent areas that the gospel effects is our relationship to the poor.

I know of no better introduction to how the gospel moves us to minister to the poor than Jonathan Edwards’s discourse “Christian Charity.”⁷ Edwards concludes that giving and caring for the poor is a crucial, non-optional aspect of “living out the gospel.” There are two basic arguments Edwards puts forth for this conclusion.

(1) Believing the Gospel Will Move Us to Give to the Poor

Edwards repeatedly shows us how an understanding of what he calls “the rules of the gospel”—the pattern and logic of the gospel—inevitably moves us to love and help the poor. While Edwards believes that the command to give to the poor is an implication of the teaching that all human beings are made in the image of God,⁸ he believes that the most important motivation for giving to the poor is the gospel: Giving to the poor “is especially reasonable, considering our circumstances, under such a dispensation of grace as that of the gospel.”⁹

One of the key texts to which Edwards turns to make this case is 2 Cor 8:8-9 (within the context of the entirety of chapters 8 and 9). When Paul asks for financial generosity to the poor, he points to the self-emptying of Jesus, vividly depicting him as becoming poor for us, both literally and spiritually, in the incarnation and on the cross. For Edwards, Paul’s little introduction “I am not commanding you... for you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ” is significant. The argument seems to be that if you grasp substitutionary atonement in both your head and your heart, you will be profoundly generous to the poor. Think it out! The only way for Jesus to get us out of our spiritual poverty and into spiritual riches was to get out of his spiritual riches into spiritual poverty. This should now be the pattern of your life. Give your resources away and enter into need so that those in need will be resourced. Paul also implies here that all sinners saved by grace will look at the poor of this world and feel that in some way they are looking in the mirror. The superiority will be gone.

Another text Edwards looks to more than once is Gal 6:1–10, especially verse 2, which enjoins us to “bear one another’s burdens.”¹⁰ What are these burdens? Paul has in view, at least partially, material and financial burdens, because Gal 6:10 tells us to “do good to all men, especially the household of faith.” Edwards (rightly, according to modern exegetes) understands “doing good” as including the giving of practical aid to people who need food, shelter, and financial help. Most commentators understand “burden-bearing” to be comprehensive. We share love and emotional strength with those who are sinking under sorrow; we share money and possessions with those who are in economic distress. But what does Paul mean when he says that burden-bearing “fulfills the law of Christ” (Gal 6:2)? Edwards calls this “the rules of the gospel.”¹¹ Richard Longenecker agrees, calling this “prescriptive principles stemming from the heart of the gospel.”¹² As Phil Ryken points out, the ultimate act of burden-bearing

⁷ Jonathan Edwards, “Christian Charity: or, The Duty of Charity to the Poor, Explained and Enforced,” in *The Works of Jonathan Edwards* (rev. and corrected by Edward Hickman; 1834; reprint, Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth, 1974), 2:163–73.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 2:164.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 2:165.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 2:165.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 2:171.

¹² Richard N. Longenecker, *Galatians* (WBC 41; Dallas: Word, 1990), 275.

was substitutionary atonement in which Jesus bore the infinite burden of our guilt and sin.¹³ Again we see Paul reasoning that anyone who understands the gospel will share money and possessions with those with less of the world's goods.

And if it is the *gospel* that is moving us to help the poor, Edwards reasons, our giving and involvement with the poor will be significant, remarkable, and sacrificial. Those who give to the poor out of a desire to comply with a moral prescription will always do the minimum. If we give to the poor simply because "God says so," the next question will be "How much do we have to give so that we aren't out of compliance?" That question and attitude shows that this is not gospel-shaped giving. In the last part of his discourse, Edwards answers the objection "You say I should help the poor, but I'm afraid I have nothing to spare. I can't do it." Edwards responds,

In many cases, we may, by the rules of the gospel, be obliged to give to others, when we cannot do it without suffering ourselves . . . else how is that rule of *bearing one another's burdens* fulfilled? If we never be obliged to relieve others' burdens, but when we can do it without burdening ourselves, then how do we bear our neighbor's burdens, when we bear no burdens at all?¹⁴

Edwards is arguing that if the basis for our ministry to the poor was simply a moral prescription, things might be different. But if the basis for our involvement with the poor is "the rules of the gospel," namely substitutionary sacrifice, then we must help the poor even when we think "we can't afford it." Edwards calls the bluff and says, "What you mean is, you can't help them without sacrificing and bringing suffering on yourself. But that's how Jesus relieved you of *your* burdens! And that is how you must minister to others with their burdens."

In the most powerful part of the discourse, Edwards answers a series of common objections he gets when he preaches about the gospel-duty of giving to the poor. In almost every case, he uses the logic of the gospel—of substitutionary atonement and free justification—on the objection. In every case, radical, remarkable, sacrificial generosity to the poor is the result of thinking out and living out the gospel. To the objection "I don't have to help someone unless he is destitute," Edwards answers that "the rule of the gospel" means that we are to love our neighbor as Christ loved us, literally entering into our afflictions. "When our neighbor is in difficulty, he is afflicted; and we ought to have such a spirit of love to him, as to be afflicted with him in his affliction."¹⁵ He then goes on to reason that, if we do this, we will *need* to relieve the affliction even if my neighbor's situation is short of destitution. To wait until people are utterly destitute before you help them shows that the logic of the gospel has not yet turned you into the socially and emotionally empathetic person you should be.

Edwards takes on two other objections: "I don't want to help this person because he is of an ill temper and an ungrateful spirit" and "I think this person brought on their poverty by their own fault." This is an abiding problem with helping the poor. We all want to help kindhearted, upright people, whose poverty came on without any contribution from them and who will respond to your aid with gratitude and joy. Frankly, almost no one like that exists. And while it *is* important that our aid to the poor really helps them and doesn't create dependency (see my last section), Edwards makes short work of this objection by again appealing not so much to ethical prescriptions but to the gospel itself.

¹³ Philip Graham Ryken, *Galatians* (Reformed Expositor's Commentary; Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian & Reformed, 2005), 248.

¹⁴ Edwards, "Christian Charity," 2:171 (emphasis in original).

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 2:170.

Christ loved us, was kind to us, and was willing to relieve us, though we were very evil and hateful, of an evil disposition, not deserving of any good . . . so we should be willing to be kind to those who are of an ill disposition, and are very undeserving. . . .

If they are come to want by a vicious idleness and prodigality; yet we are not thereby excused from all obligation to relieve them, unless they continue in those vices. If they continue not in those vices, the rules of the gospel direct us to forgive them [For] Christ hath loved us, pitied us, and greatly laid out himself to relieve us from that want and misery which we brought on ourselves by our own folly and wickedness. We foolishly and perversely threw away those riches with which we were provided, upon which we might have lived and been happy to all eternity.¹⁶

Edwards goes on to argue, wisely, that for the sake of children within families, sometimes we will need to sustain aid to families in which the parents do not turn away from their irresponsible behavior.¹⁷

In short, Edwards teaches that the gospel requires us to be involved in the life of the poor—not only financially, but personally and emotionally. Our giving must not be token but so radical that it brings a measure of suffering into our own lives. And we should be very patiently and nonpaternalistically open-handed to those whose behavior has caused or aggravated their poverty. These attitudes and dimensions of ministry to the poor proceed not simply from general biblical ethical principles but from the gospel itself.

(2) Ministry to the Poor Is a Crucial Sign That We Believe the Gospel

Edwards also deals with a cluster of texts that seems to make our care of and concern for the poor the basis for God’s judgment on the Day of the Lord. Matt 25:34–46 famously teaches that people will be accepted or condemned by God on the last day depending on how they treated the hungry, the homeless and immigrant, the sick, and the imprisoned. How can this be? Does this contradict Paul’s teaching that we are saved by faith in Christ, not our works?

Edwards notices that in the Old Testament giving to the poor is an essential mark of godliness. The famous verse Micah 6:8 requires that a man “do justice, love mercy, and walk humbly with your God.” Edwards concludes (rightly, according to Bruce Waltke) that this requires the godly man to be involved with the poor.¹⁸ Waltke says that both “do justice” and “love mercy” mean to be kind to the oppressed and marginalized and active in helping people who are financially and socially in a weaker condition.¹⁹ But this emphasis is not only in the Old Testament. Care for the poor is “a thing so essential, that the contrary cannot consist with a *sincere* love to God” (1 John 3:17–19).²⁰ From this (and 2 Cor 8:8, which speaks of generosity to the poor as a *proof* of a grace-changed, loving heart), Edwards concludes that doing justice and mercy is not a meritorious reason that God will accept us.²¹ Rather, doing justice and mercy for the poor is an inevitable sign that someone has justifying faith and grace in the heart.

¹⁶ Ibid., 2:171–72.

¹⁷ Ibid., 2:172 (Objection IX.4).

¹⁸ Bruce K. Waltke, *A Commentary on Micah* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007), 164. Waltke points out that helping the poor is sometimes called “justice” and sometimes “mercy.” I will use both terms and give a bit of an explanation of their difference later in the essay.

¹⁹ Ibid., 390–94.

²⁰ Edwards, “Christian Charity,” 2:166 (emphasis in original).

²¹ Ibid.

Another version of the teaching of Matt 25:34–46 is found in the book of James. Protestants who have wrestled with the teaching of Jas 2 have concluded, “We are saved by faith alone—but not by faith that remains alone; faith without works is dead, not true justifying faith.” Absolutely right. But notice that, in the context, all the “works” James says are the marks of saving faith are caring for widows and orphans (1:27), showing the poor respect and treating them equally (2:2–6), and caring for the material needs of food and clothing (2:15–16). James says, point blank, that those who say that they have justifying faith but close their hearts to the poor are mistaken or liars (2:15–18). James concludes, “judgment will be without mercy for those who have shown no mercy!” (2:13). The “mercy” James speaks of here is strong concern and help for the poor.²² Here again we have the teaching: you will not find mercy from God on judgment day if you have not shown mercy to the poor during your lifetime. This is not because caring for the poor saves you, but because it is the inevitable outcome of saving, justifying faith.

The principle: a sensitive social conscience and a life poured out in deeds of service to the needy is the inevitable outcome of true faith. By deeds of service, God can judge true love of himself from lip-service (cf. Isa 1:10–17). Matt 25, in which Jesus identifies himself with the poor (“as you did it to the least of them, you did it to me”) can be compared to Prov 14:31 and 19:17, in which we are told that to be gracious to the poor is to lend to God himself and to trample on the poor is to trample on God himself. This means that God on judgment day can tell what a person’s heart attitude is to him by what the person’s heart attitude is to the poor. If there is a hardness, indifference, or superiority, it betrays the self-righteousness of a heart that has not truly embraced the truth that he or she is a lost sinner saved only by free yet costly grace.

Edwards’s appeal and argument is very powerful. He begins his study asking, “Where have we any command in the Bible laid down in stronger terms, and in a more peremptory urgent manner, than the command of giving to the poor?”²³ He concludes his survey of the biblical material with Proverbs 21:3: “Whoso stoppeth his ears at the cry of the poor, he shall cry himself and not be heard.” Edwards adds, “God hath threatened uncharitable persons, that if ever they come to be in calamity and distress they shall be left helpless.”²⁴ Edwards brings home the Bible’s demand that *gospel-shaped Christians must be remarkable for their involvement with and concern for the poor*. We should literally be “famous” for it. That is the implication of texts such as Matt 5:13–16 and 1 Pet 2:11–12.

The Place of Eschatology

Notice that Edwards does not appeal to eschatology to make his case for ministry to the poor. It has often been argued (including by me!) that because Jesus’ saving work has as its ultimate end the restoration of the material world, therefore, God cares about the body as well as the soul, so we should relieve the hungry and the sick as well as saving souls. Many counter that this physical world is all going to be burned up (2 Pet 3:10–11; Rev 21:1), so we should simply save souls and not worry too much about improving the material conditions of people here.

Below we will tackle the relationship between the ministries of word and deed, but for the moment let’s observe that it is possible to make an extremely strong case for significant ministry to the poor without any reference to questions of eschatology. People debate whether this world is renewed by

²² Douglas J. Moo, *The Letter of James* (Pillar New Testament Commentary; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 117.

²³ Edwards, “Christian Charity,” 2:164.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 2:169.

burning or destroyed and replaced.²⁵ But, as we can see from Edwards's exposition and argument, the case for the importance of ministry to the poor does not rest on these controversial issues. As he says, the mandate to care for the poor is as strong as any in the Bible, and in the New Testament (and even the Old Testament), it is usually grounded in the gospel of substitution, ransom, and grace.²⁶ Uncertainty as to whether the physical world will be replaced or not should not undermine our embrace of the scores of positive biblical demands that we open our hearts to the poor.

Edwards's study is rhetorically powerful, but a much more complete and accessible exegetical survey of all the relationship of the gospel and the poor is Craig Blomberg's *Neither Poverty Nor Riches*.²⁷ No one can read Blomberg's study or Edwards's discourse and not be struck by how relatively absent—in comparison with its power and prominence in the Bible itself—is this emphasis on the poor in evangelical preaching today, especially among conservative and Reformed churches. Why would this be? We come to this under the next heading.

What Is the Relationship of Gospel Proclamation to Ministry to the Poor?

How should the church respond to such remarkably strong biblical teaching about the importance of giving to the poor? It is obvious to nearly everyone that the Bible does teach this. The debates, however, are about *to whom* and *how* the church should go about giving its help.

To Whom?

Some believe that all the texts enjoining believers to give to the poor are given only to individual believers, not to the church as an institution or body. But it is difficult to square this view with the power of the statements we have read. If it is really true that justice and mercy to the poor is not optional for a Christian and is in fact the inevitable sign of justifying faith, it is hard to believe that the church is not to reflect this duty corporately in some way. But we do not have to go on surmise and inference here.

God gave Israel many laws of social responsibility that were to be carried out corporately. The covenant community was obligated to give to the poor member until his need was gone (Deut 15:8–10). Tithes went to the poor (Deut 14:28–29). The poor were not to be given simply a “handout,” but tools, grain (Deut 15:12–15), and land (Lev 25) so that they could become productive and self-sufficient. Later, the prophets condemned Israel's insensitivity to the poor as covenant-breaking. They taught that materialism and ignoring the poor are sins as repugnant as idolatry and adultery (Amos 2:6–7). Mercy to the poor is an evidence of true heart-commitment to God (Isa 1:10–17; 58:6–7; Amos 4:1–6; 5:21–24). The great accumulation of wealth, “adding of house to house and field to field till no space is left” (Isa 5:8–9), even though it is by legal means, may be sinful if the rich are proud and callous toward the poor (Isa 3:16–26; Amos 6:4–7). The seventy-year exile itself was a punishment for the unobserved Sabbath and jubilee years (2 Chron 36:20–21). In these years the well-to-do were to cancel debts, but the wealthy refused to do this.

²⁵ For the case that the world will be renewed rather than replaced, see Douglas J. Moo, “Nature in the New Creation: New Testament Eschatology and the Environment,” *JETS* 49 (2006): 449–88; and Herman Bavinck, “The Renewal of Creation,” chap. 18 in *Reformed Dogmatics* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2008), 4:715–30.

²⁶ E.g., “And you are to love those who are aliens, for you yourselves were aliens in Egypt” (Deut 10:19).

²⁷ Craig L. Blomberg, *Neither Poverty Nor Riches: A Biblical Theology of Possessions* (New Studies in Biblical Theology 7; Downers Grove: IVP, 2001).

But that was Israel. What about the church? The church reflects the social righteousness of the old covenant community, but with the greater vigor and power of the new age. Christians too are called are to open their hand to the needy as far as there is need (1 John 3:16–17; cf. Deut 15:7–8). Within the church, wealth is to be shared very generously between rich and poor (2 Cor 8:13–15; cf. Lev 25). Following the prophets, the apostles teach that true faith will inevitably show itself through deeds of mercy (Jas 2:1–23). Materialism is still a grievous sin (Jas 5:1–6; 1 Tim 6:17–19). Not only do individual believers have these responsibilities, but a special class of officers—deacons—is established to coordinate the church’s ministry of mercy. We should not be surprised then that the first two sets of church leaders are word-leaders (apostles) and deed-leaders (the *diakonoi* of Acts 6). By the time of Phil 1:1 and 1 Tim 3, officers oversee word-ministry (elders) and deed-ministry (deacons). This is because the ministry gifts of Jesus have come to us (Eph 4:7–12). The Body of Christ gets both speaking gifts and *diakonia* gifts (1 Pet 4:10). All this shows that the ministry of mercy is a required, mandated work of the church just as is the ministry of the word and discipline (cf. Rom 15:23–29). Second Cor 8:13–14 and Gal 2:10 show actual case studies of corporate *diakonia*, in which the church gives offerings and relief to the poor (administered by those appointed by the church). So not only individuals but the church as a body is to be involved in caring for and giving to the poor.

Other issues remain. Even if it is recognized that the congregation (as well as individuals) are to give to the poor, the vast majority of the references to such ministry are within the Christian community—caring for believers. Some conclude that while individual Christians should be involved in caring for all kinds of poor people, the church should confine its ministry to the poor only within the church. Again, there are many texts that militate against this view. Both Israel (Lev 19:33–34) and the new covenant community (Heb 13:2; 1 Tim 5:10) are directed to show hospitality to strangers and aliens, those not of the believing community. The main thrust of Jesus’ famous parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25–37) is that the ministry of mercy should not be confined to the covenant community, but should also be extended to those outside. Also, Jesus in Luke 6:32–36 urges his disciples to do deed-ministry to the ungrateful and wicked because that is the pattern of the common grace of God, who makes the rain to fall and the sun to shine on the just and the unjust (Matt 5:45). This final exhortation cannot be read to mean that we give to anyone who asks, even if the gift would make it easy for them to sin. Nevertheless, these texts clearly warn the church against restricting its mercy ministry only to its own community.

Perhaps the most useful passage is the brief statement by Paul in Gal 6:10 (written to be read to a church as a body, not just as individuals), which explicitly sets up a prioritized list for ministering to practical and material needs. First of all, we are to minister to “the household of faith” and secondly, “*all* people” without regard to distinctions of ethnicity, nationality, or belief.

How?

But what about the relationship of ministry to the poor to the ministry of evangelism and the preaching of the gospel?

(1) Evangelism is distinct.

The modernist church of the early twentieth century reduced gospel ministry to social ethics and social action. The quaint saying “preach the gospel; use words if necessary” fits in with this idea that the gospel is basically “a way of life” and that gospel ministry is “making a better world.” But this not only contradicts the Bible’s teaching that the gospel must be verbally proclaimed and responded to in repentance and faith. It essentially denies the gospel of *grace* through God’s saving acts in history and

replaces it with good works and moral improvement. In the social gospel, evangelism simply disappears. Loving the poor *is* “communicating the good news.” In response to this, the conservative church is deeply suspicious of too much emphasis on ministry to the poor. They hear many in the “Emerging Church” talking about doing justice and working for peace as the main way we do apologetics and evangelize people. Considering the disaster of modernist, liberal theology, the suspicion is warranted. But as I argue above, conservative evangelical preaching consequently does not give the emphasis to the poor that we have in the Bible itself. Why? It is the legacy of the social gospel. Both those who accepted and rejected the social gospel distorted the Bible’s emphasis on the poor (though in different ways).

In light of the biblical material, many today are seeking for some sort of balance. On the one hand, some say that while both are necessary, social concern is the means to the end of evangelism. That is, we should do mercy and justice only because and as it helps us bring people to faith in Christ.²⁸ This does not seem to fit in with Jesus’ Good Samaritan parable, which calls us to care even for those who are “ungrateful and wicked” (Luke 6:35). The means-to-an-end view opens Christians to the charge of manipulation. Instead of truly loving people freely, we are helping them only to help ourselves and increase our own numbers. One of the great ironies of this approach is that it undermines itself. I have known many evangelicals who evaluate mercy ministries by the number of converts or church attenders/members it produces. The sociologist Robert Putnam describes such church-based initiatives as church-centred *bonding* (or exclusive) social capital, as opposed to community-centred *bridging* (or inclusive) social capital.²⁹ That is, the ministry of these kinds of churches is not really designed to build up the neighbors but only to expand the church. But this approach is perceived as selfish and tribal by the people around the church, and so they don’t glorify God (Matt 5:13–16) because they don’t see us expressing God’s sacrificial, unconditional grace. They see us giving only where we get something in return (Luke 6:32–35).

On the other hand, others such as John Stott see evangelism and social concern as equal partners:

[S]ocial action is *a partner of evangelism*. As partners the two belong to each other and yet are independent of each other. Each stands on its own feet in its own right alongside the other. Neither is a means to the other, or even a manifestation of the other. For each is an end in itself.³⁰

This seems to detach ministry too much from the ministry of the Word. It opens the possibility of it standing on its own without the preaching of the gospel. I propose something else, an asymmetrical, inseparable relationship.

(2) Evangelism is more basic than ministry to the poor.

Evangelism has to be seen as the “leading edge” of a church’s ministry in the world. It must be given a priority in the church’s ministry. It stands to reason that, while saving a lost soul and feeding a hungry stomach are both acts of love, one has an infinitely greater effect than the other. In 2 Cor 4:16–18, Paul speaks of the importance of strengthening the “inner man” even as the outer, physical nature is aging

²⁸ See C. Peter Wagner, *Church Growth and the Whole Gospel: A Biblical Mandate* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1981), 101–4.

²⁹ Robert D. Putnam, *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2000), 22–24.

³⁰ John R. W. Stott, *Christian Mission in the Modern World: What the Church Should Be Doing Now!* (Downers Grove: IVP, 1975), 27.

and decaying. Evangelism is the most basic and radical ministry possible to a human being. This is true, not because the “spiritual” is more important than the physical (we must be careful not to fall into a Greek-style dualism!), but because the eternal is more important than the temporal (Matt 11:1–6; John 17:18; 1 John 3:17–18).

(3) But ministry to the poor is inseparably connected to evangelism.

We all know the dictum: “we are saved by faith alone, but not by faith that is alone.” Faith is what saves us, and yet faith is inseparably connected with good works. We saw in Jas 2 that this is also the case with the gospel of justification by faith and mercy to the poor. The gospel of justification has the priority; it is what saves us. But just as good works are inseparable from faith in the life of the believer, so caring for the poor is inseparable from the work of evangelism and the ministry of the Word. In Jesus’ ministry, healing the sick and feeding the hungry was inseparable from evangelism (John 9:1–7, 35–41). His miracles were not simply naked displays of power designed to prove his supernatural status, but were signs of the coming kingdom (Matt 11:2–5.)

The renewal of Christ’s salvation ultimately includes a renewed universe. In the meantime, there is no part of our existence that is untouched by His blessing. Christ’s miracles were miracles of the kingdom, performed as signs of what the kingdom means. . . .

His blessing was pronounced upon the poor, the afflicted, the burdened and heavy-laden who came to Him and believed in Him. . . .

The miraculous signs that attested Jesus’ deity and authenticated the witness of those who transmitted the gospel to the church are not continued, for their purpose is fulfilled. But the pattern of the kingdom that was revealed through those signs must continue in the church. We cannot be faithful to the words of Jesus if our deeds do not reflect the compassion of His ministry. Kingdom evangelism is therefore holistic as it transmits by word and deed the promise of Christ for body and soul as well as the demand of Christ for body and soul.³¹

Several times Acts makes a very close connection between economic sharing of possessions with those in need and the multiplication of converts through the preaching of the Word. The descent of the Holy Spirit and an explosive growth in numbers (Acts 2:41) is connected to radical sharing with the needy (2:44–45). Acts 4 is a recapitulation: after the filling of the Spirit, the economic sharing of the people inside the church accompanies the preaching of the resurrection with great power (4:32–35). After the ministry of *diakonia* is more firmly established, Luke adds, “so the word of God spread. The number of disciples in Jerusalem increased rapidly” (6:7). Luke is again pointing out the extremely close connection between deed-ministry and word-ministry. The practical actions of Christians for people in need demonstrated the truth and power of the gospel. Acts of mercy and justice are visible to non-believers and can lead men to glorify God (Matt 5:13–16). The Roman emperor Julian the Apostate noted that Christians were remarkably benevolent to strangers, “The impious Galileans [i.e., Christians] support not only their poor, but ours as well, everyone can see that our people lack aid from us.”³²

³¹ Edmund P. Clowney, “Kingdom Evangelism,” in *The Pastor-Evangelist: Preacher, Model, and Mobilizer for Church Growth* (ed. Roger S. Greenway; Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian & Reformed, 1987), 22.

³² Quoted in Rodney Stark, *The Rise of Christianity: How the Obscure, Marginal, Jesus Movement Became the Dominant Religious Force in the Western World in a Few Centuries* (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1997), 84.

(4) Inseparable does not mean a rigid, temporal order.

What do we mean by “inseparable”? Ministry to the poor may precede the sharing of the gospel as in Jesus’ ministry to the blind man. Though the deed-ministry led to the blind man’s spiritual illumination, there is no indication that Jesus gave the aid conditionally. He did not press him to believe as he healed him; he just told him to “go and wash” (John 9:7). Even so when Jesus spoke of giving money and clothing to those who ask, he insisted that we should give without expecting anything in return (Luke 6:32–35). We should not give aid only because the person is open to the gospel, nor should we withdraw it if he or she does not become spiritually receptive. However, it should always be clear that the motivation for our aid is our Christian faith, and pains should be taken to find non-artificial and non-exploitative ways to keep ministries of the Word and gatherings for teaching and fellowship closely connected to ministries of aid.

Summary

Jesus calls Christians to be “witnesses,” to evangelize others, but also to be deeply concerned for the poor. He calls his disciples *both* to “gospel-messaging” (urging everyone to believe the gospel) *and* to “gospel-neighboring” (sacrificially meeting the needs of those around them whether they believe or not! The two absolutely go together.

1. They go together theologically. The resurrection shows us that God not only *created both* body and spirit but will also *redeem* both body and spirit. The salvation Jesus will eventually bring in its fullness will include liberation from *all* the effects of sin—not only spiritual but physical and material as well. Jesus came both preaching the Word and healing and feeding.

2. They go together practically. We must be ever wary of collapsing evangelism into deed ministry as the social gospel did, but loving deeds are an irreplaceable witness to the power and nature of God’s grace, an irreplaceable testimony to the truth of the gospel.

2. Some Thoughts on the Practice of This Ministry

I don’t think that this essay is the place to lay out all the details of what ministry to the poor looks like in practice.³³ But there are two practical balances I would urge churches to strike in their ministry to the poor.

A Balance of Analysis: Justice and Mercy

It is one thing to want to help the poor. It is another thing to go about it wisely. It is extremely easy to become involved in the life of a poor family and make things worse rather than better. One of the main reasons this happens so often is because of the two unbiblical political ideologies and reductionisms that reign in our culture today. Conservatives, in general, see poverty as caused by personal irresponsibility. Liberals, in general, see poverty as caused by unjust social systems; poor individuals have no ability to escape them.

The Bible moves back and forth in calling ministry to the poor sometimes “justice” and sometimes “service” (*diakonia*) or mercy. Perhaps the most famous biblical appeal to help the poor is the parable of the Good Samaritan, in which this aid is called “mercy” (Luke 10:37). But elsewhere, sharing food, shelter, and other basic resources with those who have fewer of them (Isa 58:6–10; cf. Lev 19:13, Jer

³³ Editor’s note: Cf. Timothy J. Keller, *Ministries of Mercy: The Call of the Jericho Road* (2d ed.; Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian & Reformed, 1997).

22:13) is called “doing justice.” To fail to share is considered not simply a failure to be compassionate, but also a failure to be fair.

I think that the reason for this usage of both the terms “justice” and “mercy” is that the biblical explanation of the causes of poverty is much more complex than our current ideologies.³⁴ The wisdom literature provides a remarkably balanced and nuanced view of the “root causes” of poverty. In Proverbs we see the familiar statements to the effect that “All hard work brings a profit, but mere talk leads only to poverty” (Prov 14:23). And yet we are also told, “A poor man’s field may produce abundant food, but injustice sweeps it away” (Prov 13:23). Both personal and social, systemic factors can lead to poverty.

Actually, the Bible reveals at least three causal factors for poverty.

1. *Injustice and oppression*: This refers to any unjust social condition or treatment that keeps a person in poverty (Ps 82:1–8; Prov 14:31; Exod 22:21–27). The main Hebrew word for “the poor” in the Old Testament means “the wrongfully oppressed.” Examples of oppression in the Bible include social systems weighted in favor of the powerful (Lev 19:15), high-interest loans (Exod 22:25–27), and unjustly low wages (Eph 6:8–9; Jas 5:4).

2. *Circumstantial calamity*: This refers to any natural disaster or circumstance that brings or keeps a person in poverty. The Scripture is filled with examples such as famines (Gen 47), disabling injury, floods, and fires.

3. *Personal failure*: Poverty can also be caused by one’s own personal sins and failures, such as indolence (Prov 6:6–7) and other problems with self-discipline (Prov 23:21).

These three factors are intertwined. They do not usually produce separate “categories” of poverty (except in acute situations, such as a hurricane that leaves people homeless and in need of immediate short-term material care). Rather, the three factors are usually interactively present. For example, a person raised in an ethnic/economic ghetto (factor #1) is likely to have poor health (factor #2) and also learn many habits from their community that do not fit with material/social progress (factor #3).

Yet factor #3 can be seen as a version of factor #1. For example, the failure of a child’s parents to read to them, nurture them, or teach them habits of honesty, diligence, and delayed gratification is factor #3 (personal irresponsibility) for the adults but factor #1 (injustice) for the children. Inner-city children, through no fault of their own, may grow up with vastly inferior schooling and with an overall environment extremely detrimental to learning. Conservatives may argue that this is the parents’ fault or the “culture’s” fault while liberals see it as a failure of government and/or the fruit of systemic racism. But no one argues that it is the *children’s* fault! Of course, it is possible for youth born into poverty to break out of it, but it takes many times more fortitude, independence, creativity, and courage simply to go to college and get a job than it does for any child born into a middle-class world. In short, some children grow up with about a two-hundred-times better opportunity for academic and economic success than others do. (You can’t ask an illiterate eight-year-old—soon to be an illiterate seventeen-year-old—to “pull himself up by his bootstraps”!) Why does this situation exist? It is part of the deep injustice of our world. The problem is simply an unjust distribution of opportunity and resources.

In summary, many “conservatives” are motivated to help the poor mainly by compassion. This may come from a belief that poverty is mainly a matter of individual irresponsibility. It misses the fact that the “haves” have what they have to a great degree because of unjust distribution of opportunities and resources at birth. If we have the world’s goods, they are ultimately a gift. If we were born in other circumstances, we could easily be very poor through no fault of our own. To fail to share what you have

³⁴ Cf. D. A. Carson, *How Long, O Lord? Reflections on Suffering and Evil* (2d ed.; Grand Rapids: Baker, 2006), 51–59, which discusses six “Kinds of Poverty.”

is not just uncompassionate but unfair, unjust. On the other hand, many “liberals” are motivated to help the poor mainly out of a sense of indignation and aborted justice. This misses the fact that individual responsibility and transformation has a great deal to do with escape from poverty. Poverty is seen strictly in terms of structural inequities. While the conservative “compassion only” motivation leads to paternalism and patronizing, the liberal “justice only” motivation leads to great anger and rancor.

Both views, ironically, become self-righteous. One tends to blame the poor for everything, the other to blame the rich for everything. One over-emphasizes individual responsibility, the other under-emphasizes it. A balanced motivation arises from a heart touched by grace, which has lost its superiority-feelings toward any particular class of people. Let’s keep something very clear: it is the gospel that motivates us to act *both* in mercy *and* in justice. God tells Israel, “The alien living with you must be treated as one of your native-born. Love him as yourself, for you were aliens in Egypt. I am the Lord your God” (Lev 19:34). The Israelites had been “aliens” and oppressed slaves in Egypt. They did not have the ability to free themselves—God liberated them by his grace and power. Now they are to treat all people with less power or fewer assets as neighbors, doing love and justice to them. So the basis for “doing justice” is salvation by grace!

We said at the beginning of this section that this balance of mercy and justice—of seeing both the personal and social aspects and causes of poverty—is necessary for a church’s ministry to the poor to be *wise*. A conservative ideology will be far too impatient and probably harsh with a poor family and won’t be cognizant of the more invisible social-cultural factors contributing to the problems. A liberal ideology will not put enough emphasis on repentance and personal change.

A Division of Labor: Individual and Church

The church’s gospel ministry includes *both* evangelizing non-believers *and* shaping every area of believers’ lives with the gospel, but that doesn’t mean that the church as an institution under its elders is to carry out corporately all the activity that we equip our members to do. For example, while the church should disciple its members who are film-makers so that their cinematic art will be profoundly influenced by the gospel, the church should not operate a film production company. Here is where Abraham Kuyper’s “sphere sovereignty” can be of some help (though I recognize its limits and problems). Kuyper rightly insists that the church *qua* church is to preach the gospel (evangelize and disciple), worship and observe the sacraments, and engage in church discipline. In these activities it is producing members who will engage in art, science, education, journalism, film-making, business, and so on. But the church itself should not itself engage in these enterprises. Kuyper would, for example, not even allow a local congregation to operate a Christian school, since he believed that the education of children belonged to the family, not to the church.

With this in mind, the church’s ministry to the poor makes great sense as a corporate vehicle for Christians to fulfill their biblical duty to the poor, as a corporate witness to the community of Christ’s transforming love, and as an important “plausibility structure” for the preaching of the gospel. However, the church should recognize different “levels” of ministry to the poor and should know its limits.

1. *Relief*: This is direct aid to meet physical/material/social needs. Common relief ministries are temporary shelter for the homeless, food and clothing services for people in dire need, medical services, crisis counseling, and so on. A more active form of relief is “advocacy,” in which people in need are given active assistance to get legal aid, help them find housing, and find other kinds of aid. Relief programs alone can create patterns of dependency.

2. *Development*: This is what is needed is to bring a person or community to self-sufficiency. In the OT, when a slave's debt was erased and he was released, God directed that his former master send him out with grain, tools, and resources for a new, self-sufficient economic life (Deut 15:13–14). "Development" for an individual includes education, job creation, and training. But development for a neighborhood or community means reinvesting social and financial capital into a social system—housing development and home ownership, other capital investments, and so on.

3. *Reform*: Social reform moves beyond relief of immediate needs and dependency and seeks to change social conditions and structures that aggravate or cause that dependency. Job tells us that he not only clothed the naked, but he "broke the fangs of the wicked and made them drop their victims" (Job 29:17). The prophets denounced unfair wages (Jer 22:13), corrupt business practices (Amos 8:2, 6), legal systems weighted in favor of the rich and influential (Lev 19:15; Deut 24:17), and a system of lending capital that gouges the person of modest means (Exod 22:25–27; Lev 19:35–37; 25:37). Daniel calls a pagan government to account for its lack of mercy to the poor (Dan 4:27). This means that Christians should also work for a particular community to get better police protection, more just and fair banking practices, zoning practices, and better laws.

But should the church be doing reform or even development? For theological and practical reasons, the answer is, in general, that the institutional church should concentrate on the first and part of the second level—on relief and some individual development. When it comes to the second and third level, on community development, social reform, and the addressing of social structures, believers should work through associations and organizations rather than through the local church. It is not easy to dogmatically draw lines here. Different social and cultural conditions can affect how directly the church is involved in addressing issues of justice. As we look back on it now, we applaud white-Anglo churches that preached against and worked against the evils of African slavery in America. So, too, the African-American church, under the extreme conditions of slavery and near-slavery, took on all three levels of ministry to the poor, and this continues to this day.

As a general rule, however, I believe that the church should be involved in the first of these, but voluntary associations, organizations, and ministries should be organized to do the second and the third. Why?

1. Many would argue that the second and third levels are too expensive and would take away financial resources from the ministry of the Word.

2. Others say that they are too political and would require that the congregation be too allied with particular civil magistrates and political parties in ways that would compromise the church.

3. Others say that the second and third levels are too complex and that it is not within the skill-set or mandate of the elders of the church to manage them; their job is the ministry of the Word of God and prayer (Acts 6:1–7).

All of these arguments have some merit but would need to be nuanced and worked out in order to do justice to my thesis. I cannot here give that process the time and space it would require. I would observe only that most of the churches in the U.S. who are deeply involved in caring for the poor have found it wisest to spin off non-profit corporations to do community development and reform of social structures, rather than seek to do them directly through the local congregation under the elders.

3. Jesus, the Poor Man

Proverbs tells us that God identifies with the poor. "If you do it to the poor, you do it to me." Matt 25 says the same thing. I showed above that this means that on judgment day God will be able to

judge a person's heart attitude toward *him* by the person's heart-attitude toward the poor. It also means, however, something more profound.

In Proverbs and Matt 25, God identifies with the poor symbolically. But in the incarnation and death of Jesus, see God identifies with the poor and marginal literally. Jesus was born in a feeding trough. At his circumcision Jesus' family offered what was required of the poor (Luke 2:24). He said, "Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lay his head" (Matt 8:20). At the end of his life, he rode into Jerusalem on a borrowed donkey, spent his last evening in a borrowed room, and when he died, he was laid in a borrowed tomb. They cast lots for his only possession, his robe, for there on the cross he was stripped of everything.

All this gives new meaning to the question: "Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or naked or in prison?" The answer is—*on the cross*, where he died amidst the thieves, among the marginalized. No wonder Paul could say that once you see Jesus becoming poor for us, you will never look at the poor the same way again.



Shared Intentions? Reflections on Inspiration and Interpretation in Light of Scripture's Dual Authorship

— Jared M. Compton —

*Jared Compton is a Ph.D. student in New Testament at Trinity Evangelical
Divinity School in Deerfield, Illinois.*

1. Introduction

It was not too long ago that Kevin Vanhoozer answered the question *Is There a Meaning in This Text?* by relocating meaning in authorial intention,¹ doing so even more robustly (not to mention, evangelically) than E. D. Hirsch had done.² The difficulty, however, with any general hermeneutical theory, including speech-act, is that on the surface Scripture's dual authorship seems to fit uncomfortably within any set of interpretive rules, particularly since one of its authors is God.³ While the inherent complexity in and exceptionality of Scripture's authorship are well noted by evangelicals,⁴ hermeneutical rules are nevertheless still proposed and, quite often, even mandated. In fact, two particular rules are prescribed with some frequency. On the one hand, some evangelicals (as we shall see) suggest that inspiration demands that what one author intends the other must as well. To suggest, therefore, that God could intend more in a text than the human author runs the risk of being labeled *hermeneutical Docetism*, for such a proposal denies the full humanity of the text. Moreover, many of these same interpreters also suggest that interpretation demands that what one author intends so too must the other. Suggesting

¹ Kevin J. Vanhoozer, *Is There a Meaning in This Text? The Bible, the Reader, and the Morality of Literary Knowledge* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1998), 230, 262. For a similar proposal, see Robert H. Stein, "The Benefits of an Author-Oriented Approach to Hermeneutics," *JETS* 44 (2001): 456.

² E. D. Hirsch, *Validity in Interpretation* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1967). Among other problematic statements, Hirsch affirms in a later essay, "[I]f our current moral sense disagrees with the explicit law or the canonical literary text, then we ought to abandon the canonical text or repeal the law. The absolute cry, 'Save the Text!' . . . is a slogan to be resisted" ("Transhistorical Intentions and the Persistence of Allegory," *New Literary History* 25 [1994]: 565). He also asserts, "Truth [is] that which we happen to believe now" (564).

³ Hirsch's proposal has been critiqued for this very reason. See Raju D. Kunjummen, "The Single Intent of Scripture—Critical Examination of a Theological Construct," *Grace Theological Journal* 7 (1986): 87; Peter Enns, "Apostolic Hermeneutics and an Evangelical Doctrine of Scripture: Moving Beyond a Modernist Impasse," *WTJ* 65 (2003): 274. Hirsch, however, does talk about dual authorship and even progressive revelation (of sorts, "progress of knowledge") in his essay on "Transhistorical Intentions," though his suggestions amount to the claim that past great texts can be forward-looking (i.e., transhistorical). In other words, he says nothing specifically about the relationship between the two authors of Scripture ("Transhistorical Intentions and the Persistence of Allegory," 562). NB Vanhoozer is not oblivious to this issue; rather, he devotes brief, though insightful, attention to it (*Is There a Meaning in This Text?*, 263–65).

⁴ See, e.g., Walter C. Kaiser, *The Uses of the Old Testament in the New* (Chicago: Moody, 1985) and Darrell L. Bock, "Scripture Citing Scripture: Use of the Old Testament in the New," in *Interpreting the New Testament Text: Introduction to the Art and Science of Exegesis* (ed. Darrell L. Bock and Buist M. Fanning; Wheaton: Crossway, 2006), 255–76. Bock, reflecting on two decades of inquiry, notes that two issues (roughly approximating the two-fold division of the present essay) continue to dominate this discussion: "language referent issues and the concept of the progress of revelation" (265; also 264n13).

that God could intend more in this case runs the risk of being labeled *hermeneutical nihilism*, for one has removed the only means for interpretive control and stability. Despite the risks, other evangelicals (as we shall also see) are uncomfortable with this line of argumentation and suggest that these rules are ill-fitting, not least because the apostles themselves, they claim, do not seem to be preoccupied with following them.⁵ These evangelicals insist that our assumptions about general hermeneutics and dual authorship must be open to revision if Scripture and God's hermeneuticians consistently transgress our rules.⁶

The following essay will seek to enter this debate, freshly sketching the issues involved and seeking to justify these latter assertions, though not absolutely and not by directly exploring the apostles' use of the OT. Rather, the essay will proceed at a preliminary step to that discussion and will argue that (1) inspiration does not suggest that the divine and human authors must share intentions and (2) shared intentions are not the sole means of interpretive stability.

2. Inspiration and Authorial Intention

Two prefatory remarks are necessary. First, Paul introduces the idea of inspiration when he locates the origin of Scripture with God: "all Scripture is God-breathed" (2 Tim 3:16, NIV). Peter further notes the method of this work: "Men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit" (2 Pet 1:21, NIV). Other texts could be noted; the point is that Scripture signals that its origin involves God and men in a dynamic relationship, so much so, that a passage can be equally said to be from God and the human agent (e.g., Heb 1:6). This relationship is routinely labeled *concurrent*.⁷ Second, most evangelical interpreters, regardless of their views on shared/unshared intentions, are careful to insist upon the inherent perspicuity of Scripture.⁸ This insistence requires some basic relationship between the words of the text and the cognition of the human agent; otherwise identifying a text's meaning (not least its

⁵ E.g., Peter Enns notes, "[W]hat has been a recurring problem . . . for many Christians is how the New Testament authors themselves handled the Old Testament. This phenomenon is somewhat troubling, for it seems to run counter to the instinct that context and authorial intention are the basis for sound interpretation. To observe how the New Testament authors handle the Old Testament is to conclude that their notions of what constitutes a proper handling of the Old Testament do not always square with our instincts—in fact, quite often, the differences are striking" (*Inspiration and Incarnation: Evangelicals and the Problem of the Old Testament* [Grand Rapids: Baker, 2005], 114). See also Dennis Stamps, "Use of the Old Testament in the New Testament as a Rhetorical Device," in *Hearing the Old Testament in the New Testament* (ed. Stanley E. Porter; McMaster New Testament Studies; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006), 22. For broader reflections on this topic, see G. K. Beale, ed., *The Right Doctrine from the Wrong Text? Essays on the Use of the Old Testament in the New* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1994); Richard N. Longenecker, *Biblical Exegesis in the Apostolic Period* (2nd ed.; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), esp. xxi–xli; and *Three Views on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament* (ed. Kenneth Berding and Jonathan Lunde; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2008).

⁶ The apostles use the OT in a variety of ways, and Douglas J. Moo notes that not all of them "depend for their legitimacy on the quotation being given an interpretation or application completely in accord with the original context" ("The Problem of *Sensus Plenior*," in *Hermeneutics, Authority and Canon* [ed. D. A. Carson and John D. Woodbridge; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1986], 188). There are, therefore, a number of cases of the NT's use of the OT that lie outside the domain of this particular inquiry.

⁷ Cf. D. A. Carson, "Recent Developments in the Doctrine of Scripture," in *Hermeneutics, Authority, and Canon* (ed. D. A. Carson and John D. Woodbridge; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1986), 45. This relationship is also called *double agency discourse*. Cf. Nicholas P. Wolterstorff, "Authorial Discourse Interpretation," in *Dictionary for the Theological Interpretation of the Bible* (ed. Kevin J. Vanhoozer; Grand Rapids: Baker, 2005), 78–80.

⁸ See the classic definition in *Westminster Confession of Faith* 1.7. See also, more recently, Vanhoozer, *Is There a Meaning in This Text?*, 315; and Mark D. Thompson, *A Clear and Present Word: The Clarity of Scripture* (New Studies in Biblical Theology 21; Downers Grove: IVP, 2006), 169–70.

language⁹) would be quite difficult.¹⁰ In other words, no one completely denies at least some form of human agency.¹¹ The disagreement centers, rather, on the precise level of this agency.

Returning to our inquiry, some evangelicals do suggest that inspiration implies a level of human agency in which God means no more than the human author means;¹² in fact, some explicitly raise the charge of hermeneutical Docetism if the authors' intentions are separated.¹³ Others are not similarly persuaded, variously suggesting that this "idea of confluence in authorial intention is not a biblical one,"¹⁴ that B. B. Warfield cautioned against pressing the incarnational analogy too far, and that other theologians, both past and present, have allowed for divided intentions.¹⁵ Douglas Moo speaks for these when he asks, "Could God have intended a sense related to but more than that which the human author intended? I cannot see that the doctrine of inspiration demands that the answer to that question be negative."¹⁶ He goes so far as to suggest in another place, "[O]nly if the meaning of Old Testament texts *must* be confined to what we can prove their human authors intended does . . . a problem arise" for "inspiration and inerrancy."¹⁷

⁹ *Is There a Meaning in This Text?*, 234.

¹⁰ Robert Stein, "The Benefits of an Author-Oriented Approach to Hermeneutics," 456–57; Dan McCartney and Charles Clayton, *Let the Reader Understand: A Guide to Interpreting and Applying the Bible* (Wheaton: Victor, 1994), 277; Elliott E. Johnson, "A Traditional Dispensational Hermeneutic," in *Three Central Issues in Contemporary Dispensationalism: A Comparison of Traditional and Progressive Views* (ed. Herbert W. Bateman; Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1999), 70.

¹¹ Most on both sides will admit that the single-intention paradigm works in most cases. Difficulties arise only when it is made to fit every case (cf. Moo, "The Problem of *Sensus Plenior*," 199; Oss, "The Interpretation of the 'Stone' Passages," 192n33). S. Lewis Johnson, therefore, helpfully puts the matter in perspective: "[A]lmost all of the serious problems of the use of the Old Testament in the New Testament find their solution" when studied in light of the citation's OT context ("A Response to Patrick Fairbairn and Biblical Hermeneutics as Related to the Quotations of the Old Testament in the New," in *Hermeneutics, Inerrancy, and the Bible* [ed. Earl D. Radmacher and Robert D. Preus; Grand Rapids: Academie, 1984], 793).

¹² Cf. Stein, "The Benefits of an Author-Oriented Approach to Hermeneutics," 456; Walter C. Kaiser, "A Response to Author's Intention and Biblical Interpretation," in *Hermeneutics, Inerrancy, and the Bible* [ed. Earl D. Radmacher and Robert D. Preus; Grand Rapids: Academie, 1984], 442; Walter C. Kaiser and Moisés Silva, *An Introduction to Biblical Hermeneutics: The Search for Meaning* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), 41; Jack R. Riggs, "The 'Fuller Meaning' of Scripture: A Hermeneutical Question for Evangelicals," *Grace Theological Journal* 7 (1986): 226.

¹³ Earl D. Radmacher, "A Response to Author's Intention and Biblical Interpretation," in *Hermeneutics, Inerrancy, and the Bible* (ed. Earl D. Radmacher and Robert D. Preus; Grand Rapids: Academie, 1984), 436: "Is it not possible that the claim of authorial ignorance [and, thus, divided intentions] makes the Bible something less than a truly human document. Just as we do not want to describe the person of Christ as less than truly human, so we do not want to describe the Scriptures as less than truly human." Moo mentions the connection only to dismiss it ("The Problem of *Sensus Plenior*," 203). Interestingly, D. A. Carson (correctly) adduces just the opposite christological analogy in a critique of Peter Enns's *overemphasis* on the humanness of the text, suggesting that such an emphasis tends toward hermeneutical Arianism ("Three More Books on the Bible: A Critical Review," *TJ* 27 [2006]: 32).

¹⁴ Kunjummen, "The Single Intent of Scripture," 100. His rationale, however, is somewhat dubious, due to the fact that he uses Balaam's donkey to prove that God can communicate through irrational agents. This is a less subtle example than the one normally referenced, namely Caiaphas's unwitting prophecy in John 11:49–52. Both cases miss the point since neither agent is writing Scripture (cf. Moo, "The Problem of *Sensus Plenior*," 204, who calls the latter example "not quite parallel").

¹⁵ W. Edward Glenny, "The Divine Meaning of Scripture: Explanations and Limitations," *JETS* 38 (1995): 484–85; B. B. Warfield, *The Inspiration and Authority of the Bible* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian & Reformed, 1948), 162. Warfield's caution nowhere specifically addresses this idea of shared or unshared intentions.

¹⁶ "The Problem of *Sensus Plenior*," 204.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 201. Vern Poythress suggests that paying exclusive attention to the human author "distorts the nature of the human author's intention. Whether or not they were perfectly self-conscious about it, the human authors intended that their words should be received as the words of the Spirit" ("What Does God Say through Human Authors?," in *Inerrancy and Hermeneutic: A Tradition, A Challenge, A Debate* [ed. Harvie M. Conn; Grand Rapids: Baker, 1988], 98).

These latter interpreters argue their case by suggesting two lines of evidence that point slightly away from a complete equation of divine and human intentions: (1) there are some cases where we should not expect divine and human intentions to be coextensive, and (2) there are some cases where coextension of intentionalities is denied.

2.1 Shared Intentions not Expected

Raju Kunjummen says that because the human author was at times simply a reporter, there is no reason to think his intentions should match God's.¹⁸ He lists several instances and reflects particularly upon Moses' relaying of Gen 3:15, a text (now recognized to be) bursting with messianic implications.¹⁹ He says, "The meaning of God's words in Gen 3:15 was determined by God when they were spoken [to Adam and Eve]. . . . [Therefore, Moses'] 'authorial intention' is not what *determines* their truth-intention."²⁰ Vern Poythress agrees, noting "cases of visionary material (Dan 7; 10; Zech 1–6; Rev 4:1–22:5)" and "historical records of divine speech (e.g., the Gospel records of Jesus' parables)." He asks, "Why should we have to say, in the face of Dan 7:16, Zech 4:4–5, Rev 7:14, and the like, that the prophets came to understand everything that there was to understand, by the time that they wrote their visions down?"²¹

Still, the argument rests upon a minor premise that is difficult to prove:

Some have suggested that the way the NT authors (ostensibly) disregard the OT authors' intentions has negative implications for inerrancy. This charge has been addressed in a number of places, see esp. "The Chicago Statement on Biblical Hermeneutics," *JETS* 25 (1982): 398 (Article 17); Moo, "The Problem of *Sensus Plenior*," 187; S. Lewis Johnson, "Response to Patrick Fairbairn," 799n22, also 791; Kaiser, "A Response to Author's Intention and Biblical Interpretation," 445–46; Douglas A. Oss, "The Interpretation of the 'Stone' Passages by Peter and Paul: A Comparative Study," *JETS* 32 (1989): 192. Interestingly, Darrell Bock notes that one of John Walvoord's fears about moving away from single-meaning hermeneutics was the potential of abandoning inerrancy, as his opponent G. E. Ladd had done ("Why I Am a Dispensationalist with a Small 'd,'" *JETS* 41 [1998]: 387).

¹⁸ "The Single Intent of Scripture," 94. Cf. also Marshall Wicks, "Toward a Missions Hermeneutic," *Journal of Ministry and Theology* 4 (2000): 64; Johnson, "Dual Authorship," 221–22; Philip Barton Payne, "The Fallacy of Equating Meaning with the Human Author's Intention," in *The Right Doctrine from the Wrong Texts? Essays on the Use of the Old Testament in the New* (ed. G. K. Beale; Grand Rapids: Baker, 1994), 70; Glenn, "The Divine Meaning of Scripture," 482n5, 483; Douglas A. Oss, "Canon as Context: The Function of *Sensus Plenior* in Evangelical Hermeneutics," *Grace Theological Journal* 9 (1988): 114–15.

¹⁹ Cf. McCartney and Clayton, *Let the Reader Understand*, 156; T. Desmond Alexander, "Messianic Ideology in the Book of Genesis," in *The Lord's Anointed: Interpretation of Old Testament Messianic Texts* (ed. P. E. Satterthwaite, R. S. Hess, and G. J. Wenham; Grand Rapids: Baker, 1995), 19–40; James M. Hamilton Jr., "The Skull Crushing Seed of the Woman: Inner-Biblical Interpretation of Genesis 3:15," *SBIT* 10 (2006): 30–54.

²⁰ "The Single Intent of Scripture," 97. Following this, he asks how God's intention is to be known and answers, "through the progress of revelation" (98).

²¹ "What Does God Say through Human Authors," 85; see also idem, "Divine Meaning in Scripture," *WTJ* 48 (1986): 256. Darrell Bock rejects an absolute equation of the two intentions specifically because "theological revelation had not yet developed to the point where the full thrust of God's intention was capable of being understood by the human author" ("Part 2: Evangelicals and the Use of the Old Testament in the New," *BSac* 142 [1985]: 308). Moo agrees, noting that the success of the single-intention paradigm "depends on the extent and nature of the 'informing theology' that [the single-intention view] claims as the undergirding context of many texts." However, he wonders at some of the sophisticated assumptions this demands ("The Problem of *Sensus Plenior*," 199–200). Cf. J. I. Packer, "Upholding the Unity of Scripture Today," *JETS* 25 (1982): 411; and Robert L. Thomas, "The New Testament Use of the Old Testament," *MSJ* 13 (2002): 90.

A: <i>Major Premise:</i> God knows all he intends in, e.g., Gen 3:15.
B: <i>Minor Premise:</i> The human author simply records the divine speech without fully sharing in the divine intention.
∴ C: <i>Conclusion:</i> Human and divine textual intentions are not coextensive.

In fact, this is precisely where some urge caution. For instance, Paul Feinberg, reflecting on Walter Kaiser’s warning, says, “[I]t is not unreasonable to think [that our] understanding would be more circumscribed than that of the biblical authors.”²² Perhaps this is the tenor of texts such as John 8:56 and others. Nevertheless, there does seem to be something to this argument, particularly as it relates to the prophetic visions noted above, both because such visions speak of future realities (of which only God is fully aware) and because prophetic language is often highly symbolic.²³

2.2 Shared Intentions Denied

Those arguing against fully shared intentions also adduce a handful of texts that they claim specifically predicate some level of ignorance of the human author. The most often cited are Dan 12:6–12 and 1 Pet 1:10–12, the latter occurring in nearly every discussion of this sort.²⁴ The germane section of this text says,

Concerning this salvation, the prophets, who spoke of the grace that was to come to you, searched intently and with the greatest care, trying to find out the time and circumstances to which the Spirit of Christ in them was pointing when he predicted the sufferings of Christ and the glories that would follow (NIV).

Kaiser, an advocate of the single-intention paradigm, suggests that the prophetic ignorance mentioned in this text relates only to the temporal implications of OT prophecies. He insists that the prophets’ search “was not a search for the meaning of what they wrote; it was an inquiry into the temporal aspects of the

²² “Hermeneutics of Discontinuity,” 115. Cf. also Swanson, “Can We Reproduce the Exegesis of the New Testament?” 69; and Riggs, “The ‘Fuller Meaning’ of Scripture,” 226.

²³ As Poythress notes, “It would . . . be presumptuous to limit dogmatically a prophet’s understanding to what is ‘ordinarily’ possible. On the other hand, it seems to me equally presumptuous to insist that at every point there must be complete understanding on the part of the prophet” (“What Does God Say through Human Authors?” 85).

²⁴ Glenny, “The Divine Meaning of Scripture,” 486. He calls this the key argument against the single-intention paradigm. Kaiser agrees, calling this the *crux interpretum* and saying, “[N]o text has appeared more frequently in the argument against” his view (*The Uses of the Old Testament in the New*, 19). Cf. also idem, “The Single Intent of Scripture,” in *The Right Doctrine from the Wrong Texts? Essays on the Use of the Old Testament in the New* (ed. G. K. Beale; Grand Rapids: Baker, 1994), 56; also see Darrell L. Bock, review of Walter C. Kaiser Jr., *The Uses of the Old Testament in the New*, *JETS* 29 (1986): 489–90; idem, “Part 2: Evangelicals and the Use of the Old Testament in the New,” 308; Johnson, “Dual Authorship,” 219; idem, *Expository Hermeneutics: An Introduction* (Grand Rapids: Academie, 1990), 52; Feinberg, “Hermeneutics of Discontinuity,” 113; Kunjummen, “The Single Intent of Scripture,” 101; Riggs, “The ‘Fuller Meaning’ of Scripture,” 224–25; Payne, “The Fallacy of Equating Meaning with the Human Author’s Intention,” 76. Another text occasionally cited is Num 12:6–8; cf. Tremper Longman III, “What I Mean by Historical-Grammatical Exegesis—Why I Am Not a Literalist,” *Grace Theological Journal* 11 (1990): 150.

subject, which went beyond what they wrote.”²⁵ To this Elliott Johnson responds, asking what happens when the temporal referent itself is the meaning of the prophecy as, for example, in Dan 9:24–27. He says, “It seems clear that Daniel was ignorant of the date of ‘the decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem,’ even though he wrote about it. So it must be that Daniel wrote more than he understood.”²⁶

What makes this matter more complicated is that *meaning* is something of a catch-all for several components, namely sense, referent, significance, and implication.²⁷ As such, some advocates for shared intentions will concede that the prophets did not, in fact, always know to whom their prophecies referred; still, these will also insist that the prophets shared with God the sense of what their prophecies said about the unknown referent.²⁸ In other words, not all who argue for shared intentions require that all the components of meaning be shared. In fact, none requires the complete sharing of a text’s significances²⁹ and implications.³⁰ The key disagreements turn on whether God ever intends (1) fuller (or more) referents and (2) a fuller sense (a *sensus plenior*).³¹

Making matters still more complex is that the distinction between sense and referent is somewhat artificial. That is, normally, as Kaiser notes, “the two are identical”³²; therefore, it is difficult to speak simply of an expanded referent without simultaneously talking about an expanded sense, though certain

²⁵ “The Single Intent of Scripture,” 57. Cf. also discussion in Darrell L. Bock, “Part 1: Evangelicals and the Use of the Old Testament in the New,” *BSac* 142 (1985): 211.

²⁶ *Expository Hermeneutics*, 52; also “Dual Authorship,” 219.

²⁷ For a useful discussion of these and related issues, see Moisés Silva, *Biblical Words and Their Meaning: An Introduction to Lexical Semantics* (rev. ed.; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994).

²⁸ Kaiser illustrates this when he says, “One must quickly add, however, that this [i.e., his position] is not to say that the divinely intended referents were limited to those that the author saw or meant” (Kaiser and Silva, *An Introduction to Biblical Hermeneutics*, 41).

²⁹ Most follow the distinction between meaning and significance outlined by Hirsch, *Validity in Interpretation*, 8: “Meaning is that which is represented by a text; it is what the author meant by his use of a particular sign sequence; it is what the signs represent. Significance, on the other hand, names a relationship between that meaning and a person, or a conception or a situation, or indeed anything imaginable.” To put it another way, significance denotes what a text means *for me* and my “situation, beliefs . . . values, and so on” (M. H. Abrams, *A Glossary of Literary Terms* [6th ed.; Fort Worth: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1993], 92).

Some are not entirely happy with Hirsch’s distinction. See, e.g., Enns, “Apostolic Hermeneutics and an Evangelical Doctrine of Scripture,” 275. Enns claims that this “was not a distinction that Second Temple interpreters were intent to maintain.” Others simply want to make sure that the two are not completely distinguished, e.g., Kunjummen, “The Single Intent of Scripture,” 84–85; Oss, “Canon as Context,” 126; Stein, “The Benefits of an Author-Oriented Approach to Hermeneutics,” 460. Therefore, with McCartney and Clayton, it is better to say “although meaning and significance may not be *separable*, they are still *distinguishable*” (*Let the Reader Understand*, 276). Or, as Bock puts it, the line between the two is not completely clear (“Part 2: Evangelicals and the Use of the Old Testament in the New,” 310n11).

³⁰ Poythress, “Divine Meaning in Scripture,” 247; Kunjummen, “The Single Intent of Scripture,” 92; “The Chicago Statement on Biblical Hermeneutics,” 398 (Article 18).

³¹ This term is used in a number of ways. For a concise introduction, see Raymond E. Brown and Sandra M. Schneiders, “Hermeneutics,” in *The New Jerome Biblical Commentary* (ed. Raymond Edward Brown, Joseph A. Fitzmyer, and Roland Edmund Murphy; Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1990), 1157. Cf. also Moo, “The Problem of *Sensus Plenior*,” 201–04.

³² Kaiser and Silva, *An Introduction to Biblical Hermeneutics*, 37. Paul Feinberg demurs, noting a few examples (“Hermeneutics of Discontinuity,” 117–19).

cases of a merely expanded (or narrowed³³) referent are nevertheless frequently suggested.³⁴ While some do suggest that the fuller meaning later texts find in earlier texts singularly results from such expanded referents, this too is disputed. The most compelling counterexample is the NT's descriptions of Jesus using OT $\Upsilon\text{H}\text{W}\text{H}$ texts. For instance, in Rom 10:13, Paul uses Joel 2:32 to speak of the availability of salvation in Jesus: "Everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord [$\Upsilon\text{H}\text{W}\text{H}$] will be saved" (NIV; cf. vv. 9, 11). Paul does not appear simply to identify a referent of which the OT author was unaware.³⁵ Rather, as Moo notes, "there is no evidence either from Joel or from 'antecedent theology' that the prophet would have intended his words to refer to Christ The meaning of the word *Yahweh* . . . is being expanded and, implicitly, more precisely defined by Paul."³⁶

In short, while inspiration denotes human and divine agency, the level of the former does appear to be occasionally variegated and this in a variety of ways (i.e., involving both expanded senses and referents). The question that remains is whether objective criteria exist for validating interpretation in such cases where the divine meaning is not coextensive with the human author's intentions.

3. Interpretation and Authorial Intention

Here a preliminary remark is again necessary. Most admit that completely severing the intentions of Scripture's authors introduces the potentiality of massive amounts of subjectivity, effectively undermining the grammatical-historical approach. In other words, not only is the human author necessary to underwrite Scripture's perspicuity, but he is similarly necessary to validate our interpretations. How can the interpreter identify, for instance, verbal definitions if not by an appeal to a semantic domain available to the text's human author? Moreover, what else may prevent arbitrary (not to mention anachronistic) readings if not the human author and his context?

This potential for subjective and/or arbitrary interpretations has indeed led some to suggest that positing unshared intentions *necessarily* affects interpretation adversely. Kaiser, for instance, says that a

work like the Bible can have one and only one correct interpretation and that meaning must be determined by the human author's truth-intention; otherwise all alleged

³³ Paul's discussion of Abraham's seed in Gal 3:16 is routinely mentioned in this respect. See, e.g., W. Edward Glenny, "Typology: A Summary of the Present Evangelical Discussion," *JETS* 40 (1997): 638; Bock, "Why I Am a Dispensationalist with a Small 'd,'" 390; G. K. Beale and D. A. Carson, "Introduction," in *Commentary on the New Testament use of the Old Testament* (ed. G. K. Beale and D. A. Carson; Grand Rapids: Baker, 2007), xxvi; and especially Klyne Snodgrass, "The Use of the Old Testament in the New," in *Interpreting the New Testament: Essays on Methods and Issues* (ed. David Alan Black and David S. Dockery; Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2001), 214–15.

³⁴ E.g., "son" in 2 Sam 7:14; Ps 2:7. Even in these, though, "son" becomes an ontological designation in the NT and thus seems to expand the sense of the OT text. Cf. Moo, "The Problem of *Sensus Plenior*," 200; Bock, "Part 1: Evangelicals and the Use of the Old Testament in the New," 210–12. Cf. also the following authors' discussions of flexible referential categories, Glenny, "The Divine Meaning of Scripture," 490n52 (who lists three instances where the referent can change without changing the sense); Bock, "Part 2: Evangelicals and the Use of the Old Testament in the New," 307–8; Hirsch, "Transhistorical Intentions and the Persistence of Allegory," 554; McCartney and Clayton, *Let the Reader Understand*, 156.

³⁵ Contra Bock, "Part 2: Evangelicals and the Use of the Old Testament in the New," 307–8.

³⁶ "The Problem of *Sensus Plenior*," 200. Whatever one might say about the nature of Jewish monotheism (see esp. Richard Bauckham, *Jesus and the God of Israel: God Crucified and Other Studies on the New Testament's Christology of Divine Identity* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008]), the burden of proof lies with those who would suggest Joel (or any other pre-Christian author) intended $\Upsilon\text{H}\text{W}\text{H}$ to be an expandable category.

meanings would be accorded the same degree of seriousness, plausibility, and correctness with no one meaning being more valid or true than others.³⁷

Earl Radmacher claims that “hermeneutical nihilism” inevitably follows if we “separate the words of the text from the [intentions of] the author.” In fact, doing so, he insists, will result “in multiple meanings and thus no ‘meaning.’”³⁸ Some disagree. Peter Enns suggests that a desire for control is actually what “incline[s] evangelicals to try to find some other way of explaining apostolic hermeneutics.”³⁹ Douglas Oss goes so far to say that problems arise “if we contend that the NT writers had a univocal view of meaning in texts and used only a narrow, so-called scientific, twentieth-century-style, historico-grammatical exegesis in determining what that single, one-dimensional meaning was.”⁴⁰

While Moo is surely right when he says that the “difficulties created by a theory are never sufficient to falsify that theory, if it is well-enough established on other grounds,”⁴¹ we must nevertheless explore whether the difficulty of interpretive validity without the assumption of shared-intentions is as great as those arguing for shared-intentions indicate. Here we will (1) explore the role of the canon as an alternative criterion for interpretive validity and (2) briefly illustrate how at least one phenomenon in the NT implies such a criterion.

3.1 Canon as Control⁴²

Most of those who allow for fuller meaning suggest that such meaning is controlled (validated) by the canon’s trajectory (i.e., progressive revelation),⁴³ an approach that variously describes the relationship

³⁷ “A Response to Author’s Intention and Biblical Interpretation,” 441.

³⁸ Ibid., 433. Riggs indicates agreement (“The ‘Fuller Meaning’ of Scripture,” 222). Moo notes that Kaiser raises a similar concern (“The Problem of *Sensus Plenior*,” 199).

³⁹ *Inspiration and Incarnation*, 116.

⁴⁰ “The Interpretation of the ‘Stone’ Passages,” 199. One wonders if Oss could state his opponent’s view any less sympathetically. Cf. also Enns, “Apostolic Hermeneutics and an Evangelical Doctrine of Scripture,” 268–69, 283; and *Inspiration and Incarnation*, 158; Norman R. Ericson, “The NT Use of the OT: A Kerygmatic Approach,” *JETS* 30 (1987): 338–39. Further, Silva argues that precluding a fuller sense (and, thus, insisting on strict, grammatical-historical exegesis) eliminates large swaths of Christian interpretation (review of Water C. Kaiser, *The Uses of the Old Testament in the New*, *JETS* 29 [1986]: 493); similarly Jens Zimmermann, *Recovering Theological Hermeneutics: An Incarnational-Trinitarian Theory of Interpretation* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2004), 22

⁴¹ “The Problem of *Sensus Plenior*,” 202. Following this comment, he also notes, “if *sensus plenior* [is] . . . demonstrated to be viable, we will simply have to live with the difficulties, much as we live with the difficulties inherent in a teleological view of world history” (202).

⁴² *Control* is used in contrast to the instability and subjectivity suggested by the idea of hermeneutical nihilism and because the term is commonly used in the literature on this particular subject (see, e.g., Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard, *Introduction to Biblical Interpretation*, 172, 177, 178n34, 179; McCartney and Clayton, *Let the Reader Understand*, 150, 164; Vanhoozer, *Is There a Meaning in This Text?*, 264). It is not intended to imply absolute hermeneutical control, only adequate control.

⁴³ The approach, while advocated under various names (e.g., “canonical approach,” *sensus plenior*, “analogy of faith,” “Christological,” et al.), is suggested in the following: Oss, “Canon as Context,” 105, 112; Bock, 490; Kunjummen, “The Single Intent of Scripture,” 94; Darrell L. Bock, “Hermeneutics of Progressive Dispensationalism,” in *Three Central Issues in Contemporary Dispensationalism: A Comparison of Traditional and Progressive Views* (ed. Herbert W. Bateman; Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1999), 86, 90, 91; Glenny, “The Divine Meaning of Scripture,” 483–84, 495, 498; Dan G. McCartney, “The New Testament’s Use of the Old Testament,” in *Inerrancy and Hermeneutic: A Tradition, a Challenge, a Debate* (ed. Harvie M. Conn; Grand Rapids: Baker, 1988), 112.

between the OT and NT as an acorn to an oak tree,⁴⁴ a bud to a flower⁴⁵ or a seed to an apple,⁴⁶ among others.⁴⁷ Darrell Bock puts it this way:

Progressive hermeneutics argues for stability of meaning while also honoring the dimensions that dual authorship brings to the gradual unfolding of promise. The literary-theological argument is that God reveals the outworking of His promise gradually as Scripture unfolds its meaning and introduces new promises and connections.⁴⁸

He says later: “Often promises by their nature show their outworking by how God responds and directs as time passes. Intention becomes revealed through subsequent action and disclosure.”⁴⁹ Even those who advocate shared intentions, albeit expanded referents, suggest a canonical control. For instance, Paul Feinberg says, “Where a promise or prediction is expanded or amplified, the amplification is justified in the text itself or in antecedent theology or both. This grows out of the belief that God has a unified plan and that plan is known to him, even if he reveals it to his creatures progressively.”⁵⁰

The justification for this approach is that progressive revelation’s fuller meaning depends on the occurrence of events—whether the historical identification of a known/unknown (or fuller) referent, the historical fulfillment of a previous promise or the historical filling up of a now-identified type or shadow.⁵¹ In other words, the obliqueness of old revelation is almost entirely due to the fact that new events were necessary before clearer revelation was possible. Moo concludes similarly, noting that in this approach

⁴⁴ McCartney and Clayton, *Let the Reader Understand*, 156.

⁴⁵ Herbert W. Bateman, “Dispensationalism Yesterday and Today,” in *Three Central Issues in Contemporary Dispensationalism: A Comparison of Traditional and Progressive Views* (ed. Herbert W. Bateman; Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1999), 40–41.

⁴⁶ Beale and Carson, “Introduction,” xxvii.

⁴⁷ Moo suggests the idea of “*sensus praegnans*” (“The Problem of *Sensus Plenior*,” 206). In this regard, none argues that God’s fuller meaning contradicts the sense shared by the human author. See, e.g., Swanson, “Can We Reproduce the Exegesis of the New Testament?,” 69n7; J. I. Packer, “Infallible Scripture and the Role of Hermeneutics,” in *Scripture and Truth* (ed. D. A. Carson and John D. Woodbridge; Grand Rapids: Baker, 1992), 350; Moisés Silva, “Old Testament in Paul,” DPL 639–40; G. K. Beale, “Did Jesus and His Followers Preach the Right Doctrine from the Wrong Texts? An Examination of the Presuppositions of Jesus’ and the Apostles’ Exegetical Method,” in *The Right Doctrine from the Wrong Texts? Essays on the Use of the Old Testament in the New* (ed. G. K. Beale; Grand Rapids: Baker, 1994), 398; Darrell L. Bock, “Current Messianic Activity and OT Davidic Promise: Dispensationalism, Hermeneutics, and NT Fulfillment,” TJ 15 (1994): 66. Others are careful to note, however, that fulfillment may look different if the original recipient of the promise failed to meet stipulated conditions, see, e.g., Kenneth L. Barker, “False Dichotomies Between the Testaments,” JETS 25 (1982): 9n28; John S. Feinberg, “Systems of Discontinuity,” in *Continuity and Discontinuity: Perspectives on the Relationship between the Old and New Testaments: Essays in Honor of S. Lewis Johnson Jr.* (ed. John S. Feinberg; Westchester, IL: Crossway, 1988), 79–81.

⁴⁸ “Hermeneutics of Progressive Dispensationalism,” 94–95.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 96.

⁵⁰ “Hermeneutics of Discontinuity,” 128. Cf. also Johnson, *Expository Hermeneutics*, 52–53.

⁵¹ Typology is routinely mentioned in discussions of this sort, especially as alleged support for the NT’s finding fuller meaning in the OT (see, e.g., Oss, “Canon as Context,” 121). This, of course, is debated. It seems an equally plausible case can be made that types simply prove that God works in patterns (analogically?), which itself does not require the type be prospective. Cf. David L. Baker, *Two Testaments, One Bible: A Study of the Theological Relationship between the Old and New Testaments* (Downers Grove: IVP, 1991), 193–94. And, in fact, the line between prospective type and analogy is not at all clear. See, e.g., D. A. Carson, *Matthew* (EBC 8; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1984), 91–93; “Mystery and Fulfillment: Toward a More Comprehensive Paradigm of Paul’s Understanding of the Old and the New,” in *Justification and Variegated Nomism: The Paradoxes of Paul* (ed. D. A. Carson, Peter T. O’Brien, and Mark A. Seifrid; Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2001), 405–6; Beale and Carson, “Introduction,” xxv; Feinberg, “Hermeneutics of Discontinuity,” 122–23.

appeal is made not to a meaning of the divine author that somehow is deliberately concealed from the human author in the process of inspiration—a “*sensus occultus*”—but to the meaning of the text itself that takes on deeper significance as God’s plan unfolds—a “*sensus praegnans*.” To be sure, God knows, as He inspires the human authors to write, what the ultimate meaning of their words will be; but it is not as if he has deliberately created a *double entendre* or hidden a meaning in the words that can only be uncovered through a special revelation. The “added meaning” that the text takes on is the product of the ultimate canonical shape—though, to be sure, often clearly perceived only on a revelatory basis.⁵²

3.2 Mystery and Canon

This dependence on further revelatory insight is implicit in Paul’s understanding and use of the term *mystery*. As D. A. Carson notes in a recent essay, Paul’s category of mystery suggests simultaneously that what he finds in the OT is really there, but also that what he finds was hidden until Christ’s advent and consequent revelatory insight.⁵³ Carson discusses several occurrences of mystery (1 Cor 2; Rom 11:25–27; 1 Cor 15:50–55; Rom 16:25–27; et al.), in each demonstrating that “the content of [the] mystery is a component, perhaps even an entailment, of the Christian gospel, and . . . the basic ingredients are grounded in Scripture itself,”⁵⁴ while at the same time each is “something that has been hidden in times past, and now revealed.”⁵⁵ He refers to this paradoxical phenomenon quite appropriately as something “hidden in plain view”⁵⁶ and observes that the hiddenness operates on two axes. First, the mystery “was hidden salvation-historically,”⁵⁷ and second, it was (and is still) hidden “to the person without the Spirit (1 Cor 2:14).”⁵⁸ Both, he suggests, demand revelation and in both there is “moral culpability” for incorrect perception.⁵⁹ He then adds, “In the wise providence of God the first of these two forms of hiddenness, that which prevailed across history until the coming of Christ, so worked in and through and behind the culpable blindness that the passion and resurrection of the Messiah was brought about simultaneously by human sin and by the wise plan of God (compare Acts 2:27–28 with 1 Cor 2:7–8).”⁶⁰ “This is why,” he says,

⁵² “The Problem of *Sensus Plenior*,” 206.

⁵³ He introduces the subject by saying, “Whenever one speaks of *new* revelation—i.e. revelation whose material has been hidden in the past but only now revealed—one must ponder its relation to antecedent revelation. Implicitly, there is at least some kind or measure of discontinuity, or it would not in any sense be ‘new.’ The nature of that discontinuity is precisely what must be probed, especially if (as is the case for both Second Temple Judaism and for Christianity) it is simultaneously claimed that this recent disclosure is somehow in line with the long-held revelation” (“Mystery and Fulfillment,” 415). As for the “revelatory insight,” Carson notes that the new meaning is “genuinely there in the text . . . but not yet revealed. And that, perhaps, is why a ‘mystery’ *must* be revealed, but also why it *may* be revealed *through the prophetic writings*” (ibid., 427). Cf. also Beale and Carson, “Introduction,” xxvii. For a more comprehensive discussion of *μυστήριον*, see esp. Markus Bockmuehl, *Revelation and Mystery in Ancient Judaism and Pauline Christianity* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997); and Chrys C. Caragounis, *The Ephesian Mysterion: Meaning and Content* (Lund: Gleerup, 1977).

⁵⁴ “Mystery and Fulfillment,” 422.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 425.

⁵⁶ Ibid., 427; Caragounis calls it “concealment in openness” (*The Ephesian Mysterion*, 34).

⁵⁷ “Mystery and Fulfillment,” 432.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Ibid. Cf. also idem, “Three More Books on the Bible,” 43–44

⁶⁰ “Mystery and Fulfillment,” 432.

Paul's handling of the Scriptures, as penetrating as it is, can never partake of scholarly one-upmanship. He is never saying to his Jewish peers, 'You silly twits! Can't you see that my exegesis is correct? I used to read the Bible as you still do, but I understand things better now. Can't you see I'm right?' Rather, while insisting that his exegesis of the old covenant Scriptures is true and plain and textually grounded, he marvels at God's wisdom in hiding so much in it, to bring about the unthinkable: a crucified Messiah, whose coming and mission shatters all human arrogance, including his own . . . Unless one simultaneously preserves the mystery and fulfillment, then both the sheer Godhood of God and the despoiling of human pretensions are inexcusably diluted.⁶¹

The significance of these observations is simply that textual meaning went beyond the OT author's intentions, and necessarily so. If this is denied, we risk, as Carson notes "draw[ing] the lines of continuity . . . [too] tightly,"⁶² and potentially spoiling the mystery. Thus, while interpretation depends on the existence of overlap between the divine and human authors, its stability does not demand complete overlap.

4. Conclusion

We may therefore reaffirm that neither inspiration nor interpretive validity demands an unvarying degree of human agency in the production of Scripture. A few lines of evidence, namely, certain genres of revelation and a few specific texts, suggest that inspiration does not require that the divine and human intentions be absolutely coextensive. Moreover, shared intentions do not seem to be the only appropriate means for hermeneutical stability; the completed canon and the progressive revelation it comprises proves sufficient for the interpretive task when necessary. Still, the evidence adduced does point, by and large, to exceptional instances. Thus, the instincts behind the warnings of hermeneutical Docetism and nihilism are well-intentioned and nearly right, even while the charges themselves sketch boundaries Scripture itself admits are not quite precisely drawn.



⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 433.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 434.

The Center of Biblical Theology in Acts: Deliverance and Damnation Display the Divine

— James M. Hamilton Jr. —

Jim Hamilton is associate professor of biblical theology at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky. He previously served as assistant professor of biblical studies at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Houston, Texas, from 2003 to 2008. His publications are listed on his website: www.JimHamilton.info.

1. Reflecting on the Center of Biblical Theology in Acts

Acts 1:1 opens with a reference to what Jesus “began to do and teach”¹ recounted in the Gospel of Luke, indicating that this second volume will carry the narrative of Jesus’ actions and teachings forward. The risen Lord spends some forty days instructing his disciples (1:3–8) before he ascends his throne (1:9–10), where he takes his place at the right hand of God and pours out the Spirit upon his disciples (2:1–4, 33). Clothed in the Spirit with power from on high, these witnesses to the resurrection continue the teaching and healing ministry of Jesus. The signs and wonders done by Jesus continue to be done “through the apostles” (2:43; 4:16). Just as Jesus poured out the Spirit on the Apostles, the Spirit is given to the Samaritans “through the laying on of the Apostles’ hands” (8:18) and to the Gentiles through the preaching of Peter (10:34–48).² Barnabas and Paul relate that God did signs and wonders through them just as he did through Jesus (15:12; cf. 21:19). This pattern of Jesus continuing his ministry through these witnesses to his resurrection seems to inform the prominent theme of things being done or taught in the “name” of Jesus in Acts.³

We could list a number of themes that are emphasized in the book of Acts: the resurrection of Jesus; the human responsibility for his death; the availability of the forgiveness of sins; the healing ministry of the early church; the opposition to the new movement; and the praise afforded to God and Jesus, to name just a few. It might seem that these themes are isolated, or perhaps disconnected, but this essay argues that there is an organic connection between them. Moreover, there is a root from which these branches grow, a central theme that holds the others in orbit as planets around the sun. This central theme of Acts, in my judgment, is also the center of biblical theology.⁴

¹ Unless otherwise noted all translations are my own. A previous version of this essay was presented at the annual meeting of the Evangelical Theological Society, Valley Forge, PA, November 2005.

² Note the verbal correspondence between Acts 2:11 and 10:46:

2:11: ἀκούομεν λαλούντων αὐτῶν ταῖς ἡμετέραις γλώσσαις τὰ μεγαλεῖα τοῦ θεοῦ.

10:46: ἤκουον γὰρ αὐτῶν λαλούντων γλώσσαις καὶ μεγαλυνόντων τὸν θεόν.

³ See Acts 2:38; 3:6, 16 (2x); 4:7, 10, 12, 17, 18, 30; 5:28, 40, 41; 8:12, 16; 9:14, 15, 16, 21, 27, 28; 10:43, 48; 15:17; 16:18; 19:5, 13, 17; 21:13; 22:16. Cf. David Peterson, “The Worship of the New Community,” in *Witness to the Gospel: The Theology of Acts* (ed. I. Howard Marshall and David Peterson; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 381: “In simple terms it was the exalted Lord Jesus who healed the lame man” (referring to Acts 3:6).

⁴ For a discussion that seeks to account for the whole Bible, see James M. Hamilton Jr., *The Center of Biblical Theology: The Glory of God in Salvation Through Judgment* (Wheaton: Crossway, forthcoming).

Such an argument is warranted since several “centers” have been suggested for the theology of Acts. I. Howard Marshall writes, “The theological centre of Acts lies in God’s gift of salvation through Jesus Christ, the task of proclaiming it, and the nature of the new people of God empowered by the Holy Spirit.”⁵ This “centre” is somewhat diffuse, but in another place Marshall writes, “The main theme [of Acts] is that God has raised and exalted the crucified Jesus to be the Messiah and Lord through whom forgiveness and the Holy Spirit are offered to all who call on the Lord.”⁶ Marshall elsewhere states, “[T]he main storyline of Acts is concerned with the spread of the message.”⁷

Meanwhile, John Squires writes regarding the book of Acts that another “theme—the plan of God—functions as the foundational theological motif for the complete work.”⁸ This is not far from Frank Thielman’s description of “salvation history as Luke’s organizing theological principle.”⁹ More broadly, Darrell Bock writes that Jesus “is at the centre of God’s plan as the new era arrives.”¹⁰ Joel B. Green, however, claims “that salvation is the theme of Acts that unifies other textual elements within the narrative.”¹¹ Ben Witherington writes, “Christ’s death and resurrection are at the very heart of God’s saving plan for humankind.”¹² Brian Rosner asserts, “That Acts contains a series of summaries that report the progress of the gospel is unmistakable evidence that it is a central theme in the book.”¹³ David Peterson speaks of Jesus as “the eschatological centre of true worship” and “the focal point of God’s plans for Israel in the End time.”¹⁴

David Peterson’s summary essay in *Witness to the Gospel: The Theology of Acts* observes that contributors to this collection of essays propose a number of “centers.” Peterson notes (1) salvation and (2) the plan of God,¹⁵ but we may add (3) Jesus, (4) Jesus’ death and resurrection, and (5) the progress of the gospel. With at least five proposals on the table from just one volume of essays, is there hope for another proposal?

I am convinced that there is and that it will stand against the complaint that proposed centers of biblical theology are either too broad to communicate anything meaningful or too narrow to encompass all the evidence.¹⁶ Some may object that my proposed formulation captures the message of Acts but

⁵ I. Howard Marshall, “How Does One Write on the Theology of Acts?” in *Witness to the Gospel*, 3.

⁶ I. Howard Marshall, *New Testament Theology: Many Witnesses, One Gospel* (Downers Grove: IVP, 2004), 180.

⁷ I. Howard Marshall, *The Acts of the Apostles: An Introduction and Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980), 26; quoted by Brian S. Rosner, “The Progress of the Word,” in *Witness to the Gospel*, 216.

⁸ John Squires, “The Plan of God in the Acts of the Apostles,” in *Witness to the Gospel*, 23.

⁹ Frank Thielman, *Theology of the New Testament: A Canonical and Synthetic Approach* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2005), 113–16.

¹⁰ Darrell L. Bock, “Scripture and the Realisation of God’s Promises,” in *Witness to the Gospel*, 48; cf. 42, 46–47.

¹¹ Joel B. Green, “Salvation to the End of the Earth’ (Acts 13:47): God as Saviour in the Acts of the Apostles,” in *Witness to the Gospel*, 83, cf. 85–86.

¹² Ben Witherington, “Salvation and Health in Christian Antiquity: The Soteriology of Luke-Acts in Its First Century Setting,” in *Witness to the Gospel*, 159.

¹³ Rosner, “The Progress of the Word,” 221; cf. 233.

¹⁴ Peterson, “The Worship of the New Community,” 374; cf. 377, 394.

¹⁵ Peterson, “Luke’s Theological Enterprise: Integration and Intent,” in *Witness to the Gospel*, 523, 525.

¹⁶ Discussing OT theology, Eugene H. Merrill (*Everlasting Dominion: A Theology of the Old Testament* [Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2006], 20) writes, “As critics of a ‘center centered’ approach have noted repeatedly, centers often fail to be narrow enough to avoid tautology (e.g., God is the center of theology) or broad enough to incorporate all the multitudinous variety of the biblical texts and teachings.”

does not use Luke's own language, but Marshall justifies such a formulation in his discussion on the theology of Acts:

[I]t would be possible, at least in theory, to draw up a systematic presentation of what is offered piecemeal as the beliefs of the early church, to draw out the theological significance of what its leaders and members did (or give the theological reasons why they did it) and to reconstruct the underlying set of theological assumptions which may be necessary to fill the gaps and give coherence to what is actually said.¹⁷

This essay seeks the central, ultimate, foundational theme out of which all the other themes flow and into which they feed. Each of the proposals listed above stops one step short of being ultimate in that none of them mentions the way that everything terminates in the glory ascribed to God. Moreover, there is a formulation that brings each of the elements enumerated above together into an organically connected statement that is both broad enough to account for everything and focused enough to be helpful.

The message of Acts is that Jesus has been raised from the dead, that his kingdom is inaugurated and soon to be consummated, and that the work of kingdom-building is continuing through the disciples.¹⁸ As N. T. Wright argues, "For a first-century Jew, most if not all the works of healing, which form the bulk of Jesus' mighty works, could be seen as the restoration to membership in Israel of those who, through sickness or whatever, had been excluded as ritually unclean."¹⁹ The upshot of this for Acts is that just as Jesus was portrayed as pushing back the curses as he brought in his kingdom in the gospels, so the disciples carry this program forward in the book of Acts. In Luke's narrative, the Apostles continue to do the mighty deeds of Jesus, and readers of Acts behold the triumph of the crucified one over the forces of sin and death. These firstfruits of the victory of the kingdom of God display the organic connection between the teachings of the Apostles, the signs and wonders God continues to do through them and their associates, and the center of biblical theology. I have argued that the glory of God in salvation through judgment is the center of biblical theology,²⁰ and this essay argues that this theme is also the center of the theology of the book of Acts.

We begin where the early Christian proclamation in Acts begins: the resurrection of Jesus. From there we take up the cross. This movement "backwards" from the resurrection to the cross follows the order of the presentation in Acts. The burden of the sermon presented in Acts 2 is the resurrection, and only later in Acts is the death of Jesus interpreted. The triumph of God in Christ through the cross and resurrection makes the healings recounted in Acts possible.²¹ As the ravages of sin are reversed in these healings, the opposition from those who fight against God (cf. 5:39) is repeatedly thwarted. God delivers through Jesus, and he damns those who gather together against him and his Messiah (cf. Ps 2:2; Acts 4:25–31). This essay contends that the intended result and natural outcome of the resurrection, the forgiveness of sins available through the cross, the healings, and the overcoming of opposition to the

¹⁷ Marshall, "How Does One Write on the Theology of Acts?" 5.

¹⁸ I use the present tense here because when the curtain falls on Luke's narrative in Acts 28, Paul and others are still proclaiming the kingdom. Luke's account ends, but the drama continues.

¹⁹ N. T. Wright, *Jesus and the Victory of God* (Christian Origins and the Question of God 2; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1996), 191. Cf. John Nolland, "Salvation History and Eschatology," in *Witness to the Gospel*, 69.

²⁰ James M. Hamilton Jr., "The Center of Biblical Theology: The Glory of God in Salvation through Judgment?" *TynBul* 57 (2006): 57–84.

²¹ Cf. 3:16, where the lame man is healed by faith in Jesus.

church, is the ascription of glory to the God who has accomplished salvation through judgment (e.g., 2:47; 3:8–10).²² There are several direct notices that God receives glory:²³

1. 2:11: “we hear them speaking the magnificent deeds of God” (of those filled with the Spirit on the day of Pentecost)
2. 2:47: “praising God” (in a summary description of the early church)
3. 4:21: “all were glorifying God for what had happened, for the man was more than 40 years old” (healing of the lame man in 3:1–10)
4. 7:2: “the God of glory” (at the beginning of Stephen’s speech)
5. 7:55–56: “he saw the glory of God and Jesus standing at the right hand of God” (Stephen as he is martyred)
6. 10:46: “speaking in tongues and declaring the greatness of God” (of those filled with the Spirit at Cornelius’ home)
7. 11:18: “and they glorified God saying, so then also to the Gentiles God has granted repentance unto life” (Spirit poured out at Cornelius’ home)
8. 12:23: “And immediately the angel of the Lord struck him because he did not give the glory to God” (Herod’s death)
9. 13:48: “the Gentiles were rejoicing and glorifying the word of the Lord” (at Pisidian Antioch in response to the gospel coming to them)
10. 21:20: “they were glorifying God” (the brothers in Jerusalem hearing Paul’s report)

There are likewise several direct notices that Jesus is glorified, exalted, or magnified:²⁴

1. 2:33: “having been exalted to the right hand of God” (Peter speaking of Jesus in his Pentecost sermon)
2. 2:36: “God made him both Lord and Messiah, this Jesus whom you crucified” (Peter speaking of Jesus in his Pentecost sermon)
3. 3:13: “the God of our fathers glorified his servant Jesus” (Peter preaching after the healing of the lame man)
4. 5:31: “God exalted him to his right hand as Champion and Savior” (Peter and the apostles before the Sanhedrin)
5. 5:41: “rejoicing . . . that they were counted worthy to be dishonored for the name” (the apostles after being beaten, their reaction clearly glorifies Jesus)
6. 8:8: “and it came about that there was much joy in that city” (joy over Philip’s proclamation of Christ [cf. 8:4–7])
7. 8:39: “he was going on his way rejoicing” (the Ethiopian Eunuch rejoicing in “the good news about Jesus” [8:35])

²² Though I do not discuss them in detail below, the same can be said for the themes of salvation history, the fulfillment of God’s plan, the progress of the gospel, and, in my view, any other theme in Acts.

²³ Indirect ascriptions of glory to God include the statements that people feared God (2:43; 5:5, 11; 9:31), God’s assertions that he will display wonders (4:30; 5:12; 14:3), and the many statements of Scriptural fulfillment, which show that God has kept his word.

²⁴ Indirect ascriptions include all the references to the “name of Jesus” (see note 3 above).

8. 19:17: “and the name of Jesus was magnified” (when people hear of the demonic response to the seven sons of Sceva)
9. 22:11: “I could not see from the glory of that light” (the glory of Jesus when he appeared to Paul on the road to Damascus)

One of Luke’s missionary companions once declared that since all things are from God, through God, and for God, glory should therefore be ascribed to him forever (Rom 11:36). Luke seems to have shared this perspective.²⁵

2. Tracing the Center of Biblical Theology in Acts

We proceed inductively, starting with the proclamation of the resurrection, then moving to the interpretation of the cross, the healings and mighty works the cross makes possible, and the way that the gospel advances in spite of opposition. As we proceed, we will attempt to trace the inner logic reflected in what Luke records.

2.1. The Resurrection: A False Verdict Overturned

People Killed Jesus, but God Raised Him

When the apostles reconstitute themselves as a complete twelve, they are portrayed as stating that “it is necessary” to have someone take the place of Judas as “a witness to the resurrection” (Acts 1:21–22). Jews did not expect the Messiah to be crucified by the Romans, so many concluded that the dead man could not be the Messiah.²⁶ Acts opens in the first weeks, months, and years after the crucifixion that Luke narrates in his first volume. He portrays the early church explaining that the crucifixion of Jesus was an act of wicked injustice. The witnesses to the resurrection hold their contemporaries, the Gentiles, and the leadership of the Jewish people responsible for the death of Jesus, and they proclaim again and again that after people killed Jesus, God raised him up. This proclamation of the resurrection has the appearance of an intentional, careful, direct response to the reproach of the crucifixion. These announcements “offer confirmation that Jesus is the Messiah.”²⁷ This explains, Ladd writes, why “the resurrection stands as the heart of the early Christian message.”²⁸

Luke portrays Peter and Paul as consistently articulating the responsibility borne by the inhabitants of Jerusalem for the death of Jesus. Implicit in this assertion is the claim that the death of Jesus is not evidence of divine displeasure, and this implicit assertion is supplemented by the asseverations that God planned the events to turn out this way (2:23; 4:28).²⁹ Further, God attested to Jesus by signs and wonders (2:22). The prayer in Acts 4:30 is that the signs and wonders by which God showed Jesus to be the Messiah would now continue through his name. These statements are accompanied by the declaration that God has raised Jesus from the dead. The crucifixion fails to prove that Jesus was not the

²⁵ Pursuing a “canonical” reading of Acts, Robert Wall writes, “If one of the roles that Acts performs within the NT is to introduce the letters of the NT, we presume that the narrative of Acts will yield clues to the deeper logic of the Pauline letters, beginning with Romans” (“Israel and the Gentile Mission in Acts and Paul: A Canonical Approach,” in *Witness to the Gospel*, 440).

²⁶ See the examples of Theudas and Judas the Galilean in Acts 5:37–38.

²⁷ Thielman, *Theology of the New Testament*, 123.

²⁸ George Eldon Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament* (rev. ed.; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993), 353.

²⁹ Cf. John B. Polhill, *Acts* (NAC 26; Nashville: Broadman, 1992), 63; Squires, “The Plan of God,” 26.

Messiah; the people are responsible for it. Thus, God was not the one who rendered the false verdict, but instead he has reversed it by raising Jesus from the dead.³⁰ These main elements—that people are responsible for the death of Jesus and that God has raised him from the dead—are asserted side by side five times in the Gospel of Luke and six times in Acts. Table 1 below set these statements of human responsibility for the death of Jesus next to the statements of God’s vindicating resurrection of Jesus.

Jesus speaks each of the statements in the Gospel of Luke, so when Peter (Acts 3:15; 4:10; 5:30; 10:39–40) and Paul (13:28–30) continue to proclaim virtually the same message, it is clear that they are continuing the ministry of Jesus. The repeated assertion of human responsibility for the death of Jesus in Acts establishes that God is justly calling men to account for the miscarriage of justice that resulted in the death of the righteous one. Those who crucified Jesus did what they wanted to do, and what they did was evil. God has not overlooked this, nor is the early church silent: “God made him both Lord and Messiah, this Jesus, whom you crucified” (2:36). Even as the word of condemnation comes to those responsible, however, full pardon is offered.

People Can Repent and Receive Forgiveness of Sins

The forgiveness of sins proclaimed by the early church is a forgiveness that comes to people who realize that they stand condemned. The condemnation announced is intended to provoke them to repent and trust in the mercy of God. This forgiveness that follows repentance is first presented as what Jesus announced (Luke 24:46), and it is offered in Acts along with each mention of human responsibility for the death of Jesus and God’s response in raising him. Table 1 below highlights the note of forgiveness sounded in each of the passages. The only slight deviation is where Acts 4:12 speaks of “salvation” in place of “forgiveness of sins.”

Table 1 below shows that each time the Apostles call their contemporaries to account for the death of Jesus, they accompany the condemning word with an offer of forgiveness and salvation. The death and resurrection of Jesus results in the proclamation of the forgiveness of sins. Salvation comes through judgment. Those who are guilty are condemned, judged, and if their condemnation brings about repentance and faith, they are forgiven and saved.

Forgiven People Rejoice in God

The final element of what I am arguing (i.e., that salvation through judgment results in glory for God) occurs in each of the contexts under discussion: those who receive the good news respond by rejoicing in God. See the final column in the table 1 below.

³⁰ Luke portrays Stephen describing a similar pattern in the lives of Joseph and Moses (Acts 7:9, 35). Both were rejected by their kinsmen but affirmed by God, providing a typological pattern that would be fulfilled in Jesus. For my attempts to trace out typological readings of Scripture, see “The Virgin Will Conceive: Typological Fulfillment in Matthew 1:18–23,” in *Built upon the Rock: Studies in the Gospel of Matthew* (ed. John Nolland and Dan Gurtner; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008), 228–47; and my Julius Brown Gay Lecture presented at Southern Seminary on March 13, 2008, “The Typology of David’s Rise to Power: Messianic Patterns in the Book of Samuel,” available online at http://www.sbts.edu/pdf/JBGay/the_typology_of_davids_rise_to_power2008-03-101.pdf.

Table 1: God glorified in salvation through judgment in Luke-Acts

	1. People killed Jesus	2. God raised Jesus	3. People can repent and receive forgiveness of sins	4. Forgiven People Rejoice in God
1	The Messiah would suffer at the hands of men (Luke 9:22; 18:33; 24:7, 26, 46)	And rise from the dead on the third day (Luke 9:22; 18:33; 24:7, 26, 46)	Thus it has been written that the Messiah should suffer and rise from the dead . . . and for <i>repentance</i> unto <i>forgiveness of sins</i> to be proclaimed in his name to all the nations (Luke 24:46–47; this forgiveness is not announced in Luke until after the resurrection)	And having worshiped him they returned to Jerusalem with great joy (Luke 24:52)
2	You killed him (Acts 2:23)	God raised him (Acts 2:24)	And Peter said to them, “ <i>Repent!</i> ” He said, “And each one of you must be baptized in the name of Jesus the Messiah <i>for the forgiveness of your sins</i> and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit” (Acts 2:38)	And daily they continued in the temple with one accord . . . praising God (Acts 2:46–47)
3	And you killed the Champion of life (Acts 3:15)	Whom God raised from the dead, of which we are witnesses (Acts 3:15)	<i>Repent</i> , then, and turn so that <i>your sins might be wiped away</i> (Acts 3:19)	All were praising God for what had happened (Acts 4:21)
4	Jesus the Messiah of Nazareth, whom you crucified (Acts 4:10)	Whom God raised from the dead (Acts 4:10)	And there is no <i>salvation</i> in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men in which it is necessary for us <i>to be saved</i> (Acts 4:12)	they went to their own and reported . . . and having heard they raised their voice to God with one accord (Acts 4:23–24)
5	Whom you put to death (Acts 5:30)	The God of our Fathers raised Jesus (Acts 5:30)	God exalted this one as Champion and Savior to his right hand to grant <i>repentance</i> to Israel and <i>forgiveness of sins</i> (Acts 5:31)	rejoicing . . . that they were counted worthy to be dishonored for the name (Acts 5:41)
6	Whom also they killed, having hung him upon a tree (Acts 10:39)	This one God raised on the third day (Acts 10:40)	In this one all the prophets bear witness that everyone who believes in him receives <i>forgiveness of sins</i> through his name (Acts 10:43)	speaking in tongues and declaring the greatness of God (Acts 10:46)
7	They asked Pilate for him to be put to death (Acts 13:28)	But God raised him from the dead (Acts 13:30)	Therefore let it be known to you, men, brothers, that through this one <i>forgiveness of sins</i> is proclaimed to you (Acts 13:38)	the Gentiles were rejoicing and glorifying the word of the Lord (Acts 13:48)

Conclusion

There is a clear pattern in these texts:

1. The apostles declare that wicked people are responsible for Jesus’ death.
2. God raised Jesus from the dead.
3. God offers forgiveness to the guilty if they repent and believe.

4. Those who repent and receive forgiveness glorify and praise God.³¹

From the pattern in these texts, we conclude that in Luke–Acts, God is glorified in salvation through judgment. Moreover, this message seems to be the main concern of the two-volume work.³² Put differently, the glory of God in the salvation through judgment accomplished by Jesus and offered to those who repent and believe is the center of the theology of Acts (and Luke and the whole Bible).

The Scriptural Necessity of the Messiah's Death and Resurrection

These explanations of the crucifixion are necessary because of the astonishing nature of the events of the Messiah's life. Luke not only insists on the innocence of Jesus, he seeks to show that however surprised readers of the OT might be by a crucified Messiah, the OT necessitated just this.³³ Four texts in particular highlight this:³⁴

1. Luke 24:25–27: “And he said to them, ‘O fools and slow in heart to believe in all that the *prophets* spoke. *Were not these things necessary for the Messiah to suffer* and to enter into his glory?’ And beginning from *Moses* and from *all of the prophets* he interpreted for them in *all the Scriptures* the things concerning himself.”
2. Acts 3:18: “But God, the things he proclaimed *through the mouth of all the prophets for his Messiah to suffer*, he *fulfilled* in this way (cf. 3:21).”
3. Acts 17:2–3: “And according to custom for Paul, he went to them and on three Sabbaths disputed with them from *the Scriptures*, opening and setting side by side that *it was necessary for the Messiah to suffer* and to rise from the dead, and that this is the Messiah, Jesus, whom I proclaim to you.”
4. Acts 26:22b–23: “I stand testifying to both small and great, saying nothing except what *both the prophets and Moses said would take place*, that **the Messiah would suffer**, that being first from the resurrection of the dead he would proclaim light both to the people and to the Gentiles.”

The *necessity* these texts point to results from what the OT indicated would take place. Since the OT predicted this, it had to happen. Luke puts the statement in Luke 24 on the lips of Jesus; the one in Acts 3 is ascribed to Peter; and the ones in Acts 17 and 26 describe Paul's activity. This further underscores the continuity between the message of Jesus, Peter, and Paul.

³¹ Cf. Joel B. Green, “Salvation to the End of the Earth,” 106: “All of this is to say . . . that the God of Israel is portrayed in Acts as the Great Benefactor, Jesus as Lord of all, and that the nature of this benefaction, of this lordship, embodies, enables, and inspires new ways of living in the world.”

³² Obviously, neither this claim regarding Luke nor the one that follows in parentheses in the next sentence above regarding the whole Bible can be demonstrated in this brief essay. For the argument for this thesis for both the gospel of Luke and the rest of the Bible, see my forthcoming study, *The Center of Biblical Theology* (note 4 above).

³³ Cf. Thielman, *Theology of the New Testament*, 148: “[N]one of these developments was accidental. God had planned for his saving purpose to be accomplished in this way, and Luke tells his readers in many ways that these events correspond to the expectation expressed in Israel's Scriptures . . .”

³⁴ *Italics* indicate OT prediction and the resulting necessity. **Bold print** highlights the Messiah's suffering.

In Acts, salvation through judgment is primarily expressed in the death and resurrection of Jesus. As Schreiner states, “In Acts Jesus Christ and his death and resurrection are still central.”³⁵ The focus of the early Christian proclamation is on the judgment of God that reverses the evil verdict of those who crucified Jesus. God’s justice is manifested as he raises Jesus from the dead and also as he calls the perpetrators of that injustice to account through the preaching of the apostles. God’s salvation is put on display in the proclamation that Jesus was raised from the dead. Significantly, this is not a deliverance *from* the cross but *through* death on the cross. No death, no resurrection.

There are several ways that this salvation through judgment glorifies God:

1. God’s power is demonstrated in his victory over sin and death.
2. God’s holiness is honored in the atoning sacrifice of Jesus so that forgiveness can be offered to the guilty.
3. God’s love is shown in his willingness to send Jesus to redeem sinful men.
4. God’s wisdom is displayed in his elaborate and surprising plan that reveals his character and accomplishes salvation.
5. This salvation through judgment is worked out through the lives of people who are judged for the way they live, become convicted, and are saved through that experience of judgment. God is glorified as those who formerly scorned him show him due reverence.
6. The in-breaking kingdom also manifests deliverance through damnation as the outworkings of the curse—disease, disability, and demonic oppression—are overcome. Here again, the salvation comes through the judgment of the evil forces and the triumph over them accomplished by the victorious Christ.

In Schreiner’s words, “God works out his saving plan so that he would be magnified in Christ, so that his name would be honored.”³⁶

2.2. The Cross: The Display of God’s Justice

There is a prior salvation through judgment on which the salvation through judgment experienced by the repentant is based. This is the salvation accomplished by Jesus on the cross as he is judged by the holy God on behalf of his people. Jesus is judged, and he suffers the penalty due his people that they might be saved. He is damned, and they are delivered. Luke established this interpretation of the death of Jesus in his Gospel as he portrayed Jesus explaining his death to his disciples on the night he was betrayed:

And having taken bread, having given thanks, he broke it and gave it to them saying, “This is my body which is given for you; this do in remembrance of me.” And the cup likewise after the supper, saying, “This cup is the new covenant in my blood which is poured out for you” (Luke 22:19–20).³⁷

³⁵ Thomas R. Schreiner, *New Testament Theology: Magnifying God in Christ* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2008), 289.

³⁶ Schreiner, *New Testament Theology*, 14.

³⁷ Joseph A. Fitzmyer (*The Gospel According to Luke X–XXIV*, AB [Garden City: Doubleday, 1985], 1391) writes of “a vicarious dimension” and “a sacrificial nuance” with “a soteriological nuance” that “implies a soteriological value to Jesus’ own ‘suffering.’” See also Robert H. Stein, *Luke* (NAC 24; Nashville: Broadman, 1992), 543–44.

This presents the death of Jesus on the cross as him *being given on behalf of* (ὑπέρ) his disciples. The fact that it is the *new covenant* in the *blood of Jesus* matches the way that the *old covenant* was also entered into with *the blood of sacrificial animals* (Exod 24:5–8).

Jesus' death on the cross is the place where God's justice is satisfied so that those who are represented by Jesus can be forgiven. This understanding of the cross is also articulated in Acts 8 when Philip explains Isa 53 to the Ethiopian Eunuch (8:30–35).³⁸ Several features of the context in Acts 8 indicate that the Eunuch is reading more than the isolated verses of Isaiah that Luke cites. While Luke only quotes Isa 53:7b–8a, the whole passage—and probably the whole section and book of Isaiah—is in view.³⁹ The Eunuch seems to be reading the Greek translation of Isaiah.⁴⁰ Right before Philip arrived at his chariot to hear him reading Isa 53:7b–8a, the Eunuch would have been reading these words: “to whom it has not been proclaimed concerning him, they will see, and those who have not heard, they will understand” (Isa 52:15b).⁴¹ He would then have read,

He bore our sins and was pained for us And he was wounded on account of our sins, and he was made weak on account of our sins; the punishment of our peace was upon him; by his stripes we are healed. We all like sheep have gone astray, a man has wandered in his own way; and the Lord gave him over for our sins (53:4a, 5–6).

John Walton has recently proposed a stimulating ancient Near-Eastern background for this text,⁴² and this background fits very well with the interpretation of the text Luke shows Philip giving to the Ethiopian Eunuch. Just as the substitute king ritual of the ancient Near-East satisfied the wrath of the

³⁸ For Luke's use of the OT in Acts, see Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *The Acts of the Apostles* (AB; New York: Doubleday, 1998), 90–95; and I. Howard Marshall, “Acts,” in *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament* (ed. G. K. Beale and D. A. Carson; Grand Rapids: Baker, 2007), 513–606, which surveys scholarship and interpretive issues (513–27) and discusses Acts 8:26–40 (573–75). See also Darrell L. Bock, *Proclamation from Prophecy and Pattern: Lucan Old Testament Christology* (JSNTSup; Sheffield: JSOT, 1987), 225–30; C. K. Barrett, “Luke/Acts,” in *It Is Written: Scripture Citing Scripture* (ed. D. A. Carson and H. G. M. Williamson; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 231–44. Unfortunately there are only scattered references to and not a discrete discussion of Isa 53 in Acts 8:30–35 in David W. Pao, *Acts and the Isaianic New Exodus* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2002), but this volume should be consulted for the wider issue of Luke's use of Isaiah and for a survey of Luke's use of Scripture (see 5–17).

³⁹ (1) Luke describes Philip coming upon the Eunuch “reading Isaiah the prophet” (ἀνεγίνωσκεν τὸν προφήτην Ἰσαΐαν [8:28]; αὐτοῦ ἀναγίνωσκοντος Ἰσαΐαν τὸν προφήτην [8:30]). In verse 28, the verb “reading” is an imperfect tense-form, and in verse 30 it is a participle, both of which communicate ongoing action. (2) If the Eunuch is reading before Philip arrives and hears the words quoted by Luke, he has presumably read all of Isaiah to that point and has probably just read the whole passage beginning from at least Isa 52:13. (3) The Eunuch's question regarding of whom the prophet speaks (Acts 8:34) appears to be informed by the use of the word “servant” in Isaiah 40–66, where at points the servant appears to be the nation, at points an individual, and at points Isaiah himself. The Eunuch's question naturally arises in the mind of an attentive reader of these chapters of Isaiah. (4) Before quoting Isa 53:7a–8b, Luke states, “Now the *passage* of Scripture which he was reading was this” (Acts 8:32). The term translated “passage,” περιοχὴ, refers to a “section of a book” (LSJ, 1381; cf. BDAG, 803).

⁴⁰ The wording of Acts 8:32–33 in the NA²⁷, except for the bracketed pronoun (which is in some witnesses to the Greek translation of Isaiah; for the evidence see Ziegler's apparatus), corresponds exactly to the wording of both the Rahlfs text and the text of the critical edition of Isa 53:7b–8a. See *Septuaginta* (ed. Alfred Rahlfs; Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1979; and Joseph Ziegler, *Septuaginta: Vetus Testamentum Graecum Auctoritate Societatis Litterarum Göttingensis editum XIV: Isaias* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1983).

⁴¹ Here I have translated the Greek of Isaiah presented in the Rahlfs text. The only differences in the text of the critical edition are the lack of the final ν on the verbs ἀκηκόασιν συνήσουσιν, and the apparatus presents no major variants (see Ziegler, *Septuaginta*). My translations can now be compared with those of the *New English Translation of the Septuagint* (NETS), which is available online at <http://ccat.sas.upenn.edu/nets/edition/>.

⁴² John H. Walton, “The Imagery of the Substitute King Ritual in Isaiah's Fourth Servant Song,” *JBL* 122 (2003): 734–43.

god(s) against the king and the people he represented, so Isa 53 seems to be interpreted by the early Christians as an indication that Israel's King-Messiah suffered for his people.⁴³ The view that early Christians interpreted the death of Jesus through the lens of Isa 53 is communicated as Luke recounts that "having begun from that Scripture, Philip proclaimed the gospel of Jesus to him" (Acts 8:35).

There are other points of contact between Acts and Isa 53,⁴⁴ and as Luke Timothy Johnson has written, "It is reasonable to suppose . . . that Luke expected his readers to have a reading competence sufficient to catch these allusions and echoes."⁴⁵ Places where the influence of Isa 53 can be felt in Acts include Acts 3:13,⁴⁶ where Luke recounts Peter claiming that "The God of our fathers glorified (ἐδόξασεν) his servant (τὸν παῖδα αὐτοῦ) Jesus, whom you handed over (παρεδώκατε) . . ." This matches Isa 52:13: "Behold my servant (ὁ παῖς μου) will be wise and exalted and exceedingly glorified (δοξασθήσεται)." Isa 53:6 and 12 use the verb "handed over" (παρέδωκεν [v.6], παρεδόθη [v.12, 2x]) with reference to the servant being delivered up for the sins of his people.⁴⁷ Later in the speech, Luke has Peter saying, "Having raised up his servant (τὸν παῖδα αὐτοῦ), God sent him to you first, blessing you when each one of you turns from your sins" (3:26). The verbal connection to Isaiah through the use of the term παῖς is here accompanied by the thematic link to the references to what the servant would accomplish by his death in Isa 53:10c–12:⁴⁸

And the Lord was pleased to take from the pain of his soul, to show to him light and to form for understanding, for the Righteous one (δικαίον) to justify (δικαιῶσαι), serving well for the many, and he himself will bear their sins. On account of this, he will inherit many, and the plunder of the strong he will divide because his soul was given over to death, and he was reckoned among the lawless; and he bore the sins of many, and on account of their sins he was handed over.

Just as the servant will see "light," Jesus was raised up (Isa 53:11; Acts 3:26). Just as the servant would serve the many, Jesus blesses those who repent at Peter's word (Isa 53:11; Acts 3:26). The servant is referred to as "the Righteous one" in Isa 53:11, and Luke refers to Jesus as "the Righteous one" in Acts 3:14 and 22:14.

⁴³ For similar analyses, see Schreiner, *New Testament Theology*, 296–97; Thielman, *Theology of the New Testament*, 120.

⁴⁴ For the best discussion of criteria for discerning the presence of intertextual echoes, see Richard B. Hays, *The Conversion of the Imagination: Paul as Interpreter of Israel's Scripture* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005), 34–45.

⁴⁵ Luke Timothy Johnson, *Septuagintal Midrash in the Speeches of Acts*, The Père Marquette Lecture in Theology 2002 (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 2002), 47. While I am not sure about the use of the term "midrashic," what Johnson goes on to say is instructive: "It has become clear as well that the full force of Luke's exposition is rarely obvious within a single speech. Rather, through the entire set of speeches in Acts, a sort of midrashic argument is constructed. The argument is properly called messianic . . ."

⁴⁶ Similarly Polhill, *Acts*, 131.

⁴⁷ In Isa 53:6, the Lord "handed over" the servant, while in Acts 3:13, Luke shows Peter charging the people who gather to hear what he has to say with "handing over" Jesus. This tension is also present in Acts 2:23, where the killing of Jesus by the people is stated to be "by the ordained plan and foreknowledge of God." God ordained the crucifixion, but the people are nevertheless responsible for it. That Isa 53:6 attributes the handing over to God is reflected in Rom 3:25, where Paul states that God put Jesus forward as a sacrifice of propitiation.

⁴⁸ Παῖς is also used of Jesus in Acts 4:27, 30.

The statement in Isa 53:11 that the Lord was pleased “for the Righteous one to justify, serving well the many,”⁴⁹ also corresponds to the words Luke shows Paul proclaiming in the synagogue at Pisidian Antioch:

Let it be known to you, men who are brothers, that on account of this one forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you, and from all which you were not able to be justified (δικαιωθῆναι) in the law of Moses, in this one everyone who believes is justified (δικαιοῦται) (Acts 13:38–39).

The forgiveness of sins proclaimed by the early church in Acts (2:38; 5:31; 10:43; 13:38; 26:18) is available because of the death of Jesus. God’s justice is demonstrated as the due penalty for sin is paid and the sins of those who believe in Jesus are borne by him on the cross. The salvation proclaimed by the early church is available because of the judgment of sin at the cross. Salvation comes through judgment for the glory of God as his righteousness is upheld and his mercy is freely offered.

2.3. Healings and Mighty Works: Deliverance and Damnation

In biblical theology, the activity of unclean spirits, the corruption, decay, and death of the human body, and the ravages of the forces of nature are all outworkings of the alienation introduced by the rebellion of creatures against the Creator. Gen 3:15 recounts the words of God’s judgment against the serpent. In this judgment, however, we also receive intonations of a promise of life that would overcome death.⁵⁰ Though God had promised that the man would die in the day he ate of the tree, in the announcement that the woman’s seed would crush the head of the serpent, Adam hears a promise of life, and so he names Eve the mother of all living (Gen 3:20). There appears to have been some hope for a reversal of the other curses as well, as evidenced by Lamech’s words at the birth of Noah. Echoing the language of the curse in Gen 3:17, Lamech is presented as saying, “This one will give us rest from our work and from the pain of our hands from the ground that Yahweh cursed” (Gen 5:29).

As Jesus comes driving out unclean spirits, healing, and even overcoming death in the Gospel of Luke, it seems that the hope for the one who would open the way to Eden has been realized.⁵¹ He is

⁴⁹ It seems to me that my translation is more satisfying grammatically and better fits the context of the passage than the *NETS* translation of this phrase: “to justify a righteous one who is well subject to many” (Isa 53:11). My translation takes δίκαιον as the accusative subject of the infinitive (rather than as the object of the infinitive, as *NETS* has it), and in my translation the participle δουλεύοντα is taken adverbially and in an active sense (rather than substantively and in a passive sense as *NETS* has it). I have not done an exhaustive analysis of translation technique in the Greek Isaiah, which may inform the *NETS* rendering, but my rendering is as natural a reading of the Greek (if not superior) as that found in *NETS*.

⁵⁰ See further James M. Hamilton Jr., “The Skull Crushing Seed of the Woman: Inner-Biblical Interpretation of Genesis 3:15,” *SBJT* 10:2 (2006): 30–54, and James M. Hamilton Jr., “The Seed of the Woman and the Blessing of Abraham,” *TynBul* 58 (2007): 253–73.

⁵¹ Much could be said about this in Luke, but a few brief comments must suffice: Luke’s genealogy is structured such that it ends with Adam, who is referred to as “the son of God” (Luke 3:38), and this is immediately followed by the temptation narrative (4:1–13), in which Jesus is referred to as “the son of God” (4:3). Thus, the mention of the son of God, Adam, who failed when tempted, is juxtaposed to the mention of the son of God, Jesus, who overcame when tempted. See esp. E. Earle Ellis, *The Gospel of Luke* (NCB; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974), 93–95. Ellis writes, “Elsewhere Adam is viewed as a type of Messiah, the one who restores the Paradise that Adam lost” (93, citing his comments on 23:43, and referring to Rom 5:12; 1 Cor 15:45; Heb 2:6). Jesus is presented as saying to the thief on the cross, “Today you will be with me in paradise” (Luke 23:43), and παράδεισος can refer to the Garden of Eden (BDAG, s.v.). Ellis writes, “Paradise, i.e. park or garden, refers in the Old Testament to the Garden of Eden, which then becomes a type of the future kingdom of God (cf. Isa. 51:3)” (*Luke*, 268). Beale writes that Jesus’ statement in Luke 23:43 “suggests further that Jesus’ death was in fact a pathway leading to a new creational Eden, apparently beginning to fulfil the intention of the primeval garden sanctuary” (G. K. Beale, *The Temple and the Church’s*

crucified, but death has no power to hold him (Acts 2:24). He ascends his throne and continues the work of inaugurating his kingdom through his witnesses. Thus, the apostles and their associates drive out unclean spirits (e.g. Philip, 8:6; Paul, 18:12), heal the lame (Peter, 9:34; Paul, 14:8–10), and raise the dead (Peter, 9:40; Paul, 20:9–10). These mighty works point to the salvation that has come through the judgment of the forces of evil and death. Jesus the risen Lord has triumphed over them, and the exercise of his authority over the forces he has judged results in praise for God from those who are redeemed from the futility of the fallen order.⁵²

2.4. Fighting Against God: Vain Opposition to the Messiah's Kingdom

Yet another way in which God triumphs in judgment in Acts has to do with those who, in the words of Gamaliel, find themselves “fighting against God” (Acts 5:39). The opposition to and martyrdom of Stephen illustrates this motif of people fighting against God by opposing the church (6:9–8:1). The opposition scatters the church, and leading the charge against the Messiah and his people is Saul (8:3; 9:1–2, 4–5). Herod joins the campaign by killing James and imprisoning Peter (12:1–3). The Jews also oppose the new movement when Paul begins to proclaim Jesus as Messiah (13:45; 14:19, etc.).

The opposition to the early church meets the outcome of all attempts to fight against God. The church relentlessly grows because God is the one adding to its numbers (see 1:15; 2:41, 47; 4:4; 5:14; 6:1, 7). Frank Thielman rightly refers to “the certain triumph of God’s saving purpose” as “one of Luke’s settled theological convictions.”⁵³ The scattering of believers from Jerusalem results in the Samaritans (8:12) and the Ethiopian Eunuch (8:27–38) coming to faith.⁵⁴ Saul’s opposition to the church results in his conversion (9:1–22).⁵⁵ Herod’s attempt to take glory that belongs to God results in his death (12:23). Tellingly, Luke follows the notice of Herod’s death with the statement that the Word of God continued to triumph (12:24). Fighting against God results in conversion in Saul’s case and death in Herod’s. The war on God has no chance of success. As Thielman writes, “Luke wants his readers to know that God’s saving purposes will be accomplished despite all efforts to stop them, whether invisible or visible.”⁵⁶ And yet, as Brian Rosner notes, “It is not progress in the triumphalistic sense that Acts portrays . . . , for opposition and persecution are pervasive and enduring.”⁵⁷ The non-triumphalistic progress by God’s power through every affliction is unstoppable: the Jews try with no avail to stop the advance of the gospel by opposing Paul. The Romans lock him up, but the Word continues to roam freely as jailers get converted (16:25–34) and people come to where Paul is held to hear the good news of the kingdom (28:30–31).

Mission: A Biblical Theology of the Dwelling Place of God [New Studies in Biblical Theology 17; Downers Grove: IVP, 2004], 190, cf. 190n40).

⁵² See §1 and the table in §2.1 for texts.

⁵³ Thielman, *Theology of the New Testament*, 125, cf. 125–35.

⁵⁴ See also 10:44–48; 11:21, 24; 12:24; 13:43, 48–49; 14:1, 21; 16:5; 18:10; 19:20. Marshall notes, “[T]he triumph of God, or rather of his Word, and the suffering of his messengers of the Word go hand in hand in the pattern of the book” (“How Does One Write on the Theology of Acts?” in *Witness to the Gospel*, 13).

⁵⁵ Cf. Brian Rapske, “Opposition to the Plan of God and Persecution,” in *Witness to the Gospel*, 255.

⁵⁶ Thielman, *Theology of the New Testament*, 134.

⁵⁷ Rosner, “The Progress of the Word,” 233; similarly Polhill, *Acts*, 71–72.

3. Conclusion: The Glory of God in Salvation Through Judgment

God's justice is seen in his righteous reversal of the unjust condemnation of Jesus, in his just calling to account of those who perpetrated that crime, and in the proclamation that forgiveness of sins is available through Jesus. Forgiveness is available through Jesus because Jesus has satisfied God's justice in his death on the cross.

Thus, the justice of God is of a piece with the salvation of God. God demonstrates his mercy by making a way for sins to be forgiven through the death of Jesus. Upholding his justice through the death of Jesus, God can extend mercy to guilty people who deserve only justice. This mercy is offered to those who crucified the Messiah, and the redemptive mercy of God is put on display through the healings and teachings that the witnesses to the resurrection do in Acts.

God's justice and his mercy balance one another. The justice keeps the mercy from becoming insipid sentimentality, while the mercy keeps the justice from crushing all with just punishment.⁵⁸ Justice and mercy serve a higher aim, as well, for both display God and evoke the glory that God rightly deserves. Deliverance and damnation display the Divine. Or, we might say, the center of the theology of Acts is the glory of God in salvation through judgment.



⁵⁸ See R. W. L. Moberly, "How May We Speak of God? A Reconsideration of the Nature of Biblical Theology," *TynBul* 53 (2002): 177–202.

Salvation History, Chronology, and Crisis: A Problem with Inclusivist Theology of Religions

PART 2 OF 2¹

— Adam Sparks —

Adam Sparks completed his PhD (Theology of Religions) at Bristol University in 2007, under the supervision of Professor Gavin D'Costa. He has been a part-time tutor at Bristol University and is currently a part-time sessional lecturer at the University of London (Birkbeck College). This article is an updated section of his thesis.

Abstract

A fundamental requirement in an inclusivist understanding of the relationship between Christianity and other religions is evidence of God's salvific activity outside of any knowledge of Christ. Evidence for such redemptive activity is commonly identified (rightly) in the people of Old Testament Israel. On this basis an analogy (the 'Israel analogy') is drawn between these Old Testament believers and contemporary followers of other religions. The Israel analogy relies on a correspondence between what is chronologically pre-messianic (Israel) and epistemologically pre-messianic (other religions), and in so doing considers the 'b.c. condition' to continue today. This two-part essay maintains that the analogy undermines the significance of the Christ-event in the unfolding plan of redemption by failing to appreciate the decisive effect of this event on history. The Christ-event is the midpoint of salvation history and is of universal significance for all space and time and for all people living both before and after the Christ-event itself.

2. Being Pre-Messianic Is Impossible in Post-Messianic Times

The preceding discussion has asserted the decisive cosmic impact of the Christ-event. The implications of this assertion on the Israel analogy and fulfilment model will now be considered. I will argue here that the concept of 'pre-messianic' is invalid this side of the cross, and therefore the Israel analogy and fulfilment model are rendered implausible. I will focus my initial analysis on Acts 14:16–17 and 17:30–31, for these two texts are widely cited by those who consider the pre-messianic condition to be an ongoing condition.² Two issues need examining: (1) What is *the nature* of the times of ignorance? (2) What is *the duration and extent* of these times, i.e., do they continue today, and if so, for whom?

¹ Part 1 of this article is published in *Themelios* 33:2 (2008): 7–18.

² See the references in the following discussion, particularly those in Section 2.2.

2.1. The Nature of the Times of Ignorance

The reference in Acts 14:16, 'In past generations he [God] allowed the nations to walk in their own ways,' parallels the statement in 17:30, 'The times of ignorance God overlooked.' With regard to the nature of these times, it is commonly argued, for example by Clark Pinnock, that God did not consider culpable, those who failed to trust him and come to terms with him out of ignorance.³ I dispute this interpretation, however, and maintain that the Scriptures suggest all people everywhere (including the 'ignorant') are considered culpable.⁴ As A. C. McGiffert explains:

The 'overlooking' of ignorance which is here referred to does not imply that in pre-Christian days God regarded the idolatry of the heathen with indifference or saved them from the consequences of their sins, denounced so vigorously in Rom. i., but simply that the time for the final judgement had not come until now, and that they were, therefore, summoned now to prepare for it as they had not before.⁵

Rather than indicating non-culpability these two addresses suggest that even in these former times, God held accountable all who rejected him, for he did not leave himself without witness (14:17). This witness is evident in the works of creation and providence which testify to the existence and nature of the true God.⁶ Therefore, any ignorance that did exist should not have been as great as it was.

What Paul is arguing in these passages is that until the full revelation of God came to the Gentiles, God 'overlooked' the errors which arose through ignorance of his will. However, this overlooking 'betokened not indifference but patience.'⁷ Therefore, although God did allow the nations to 'go their own way,' this should *not* be taken as an indication that he condoned their guilt, but rather an acknowledgement that his redemptive plan was targeted in the former times, at Israel.⁸ During these former times, there is a strong distinction between Israel as the covenant people of God and Gentiles outside God's covenant.⁹ C. K. Barrett explains that God was unknown to the Gentiles because with the exception of his own people, Israel, he had withdrawn from human affairs to the extent of leaving the Gentiles to manage their

³ Pinnock, *Wideness*, 101. Many Acts commentators also suggest this. For example, I. Howard Marshall writes, 'In time past he had let the Gentiles live in their own ways, the implication being that he did not regard their ignorance of himself as culpable' (*Acts* [Leicester: IVP, 1980], 239). Cf. David Williams, *Acts* (NIBC; Peabody: Hendrickson, 1990), 250: 'The implication seems to be that their ignorance of God in the past was not culpable . . . though this would no longer be so now that the Good News had been announced.'

⁴ For example, all are subject to the wrath of God (John 3:19; Eph 2:3) and are already under condemnation (Rom 3:19).

⁵ A. C. McGiffert, *History of Christianity in the Apostolic Age* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh Printing Company, 1897), 260, quoted in Christopher Little, *The Revelation of God Among the Unevangelized* (Pasadena: William Carey Library, 2000), 27.

⁶ F.F. Bruce, *The Book of The Acts* (NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 277. Cf. Dennis Johnson, *The Message of Acts in the History of Redemption* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian & Reformed, 1997), 193, 198.

⁷ Bruce, *Acts*, 277.

⁸ Reymond writes 'In Old Testament times God had "let the nations go their own way" (Acts 14:16) as he prepared Israel to be the repository of special revelation and the racial originator of the Messiah, and he had "overlooked the nations' ignorance" (Acts 17:23) in the sense that he had taken no direct steps to reach them savingly. But now that Christ has come God commands all people everywhere to repent (Acts 17:30) and to put their faith in Christ' (*Systematic Theology*, 1091n40). Cf. Ben Witherington, *The Acts of the Apostles* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 427.

⁹ This former division between Jew and Gentile and the overcoming of it in the events described in Acts is a fundamental theme in redemptive history and has great significance for how these passages should be understood. It should be noted that although Gentiles were not formerly the target of God's redemptive program and were generally ignorant of God's purposes, they were not excluded from redemption. Examples recorded in the Old Testament such as Ruth make it clear that through faith Gentiles could also become part of the covenant community.

own, and *to this extent* they may be excused.¹⁰ God did not fully reveal himself to the Gentiles, but neither did he completely annihilate them, as their sins deserved.¹¹

This interpretation is confirmed by the first three chapters of Romans, which make it clear that even before Christ all were subject to God's wrath.¹² In Rom 1:19–20, Paul explains that if humankind had paid heed to the works of God in creation, they might have found indications of his existence and nature. Therefore, no one has ever been absolutely ignorant. God has made himself known through general revelation, providing sufficient evidence of himself to hold accountable all who reject that revelation.¹³ Knowledge of God's eternal power and divine nature is manifest, but is suppressed and the truth exchanged for a lie (Rom 1:21–26).¹⁴ With regard to Acts 17, Barrett writes:

From nature the Greeks have evolved not natural theology but natural idolatry. That this should have been permitted was a mark of God's forbearance (cf. 14.16; also and especially Rom. 3:26). God did not will or approve this ignorant idolatrous worship, but he did not suppress it; he overlooked it.¹⁵

The guilt of humanity, therefore, is not due to absence of the truth, but to its suppression. 'If guilt were due to ignorance it would be an intellectual problem, but in reality it is a problem of the will which is sin.'¹⁶ Although all are culpable, God's judgement is impartial and proportionate. Those with the Mosaic law (the Jews) and those without it (Gentiles) will both be judged impartially (Rom 2:12–16). 'The Mosaic legislation will play no part in the judgement of those who have not heard.'¹⁷ However, those without the Mosaic law, still have 'law' (in the sense of a moral conscience) written on their hearts (2:14–15), and they will be judged according to this. Neither the Jews nor Gentiles keep their respective

¹⁰ C. K. Barrett, *Acts*, ICC (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1994), 1:681. Cf. Gordon Lewis and Bruce Demarest, *Integrative Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 1:306.

¹¹ Little, *The Revelation of God Among the Unevangelized*, 22. Cf. Matthew Henry, *Matthew Henry's Commentary* (Basingstoke: Marshall Morgan & Scott, 1960), 489; Everett Harrison, *Acts: The Expanding Church* (Chicago: Moody, 1975), 223.

¹² See particularly Rom 1:18 ('the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and wickedness of men') and 2:12 ('those who have sinned without the law will also perish without the law'). Douglas J. Moo writes, 'Rom. 1:18–2:20 has sketched the spiritual state of those who belong to the old era: justly condemned, helpless in the power of sin, powerless to escape God's wrath' (*The Epistle To The Romans*, NICNT [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996], 221).

¹³ Robert Mounce, *Romans*, NAC (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1995), 77. Cf. James R. Edwards, *Romans*, NIBC (Peabody: Hendrikson, 1992), 50–52.: 'Verses 19–21 . . . assert that the problem of human guilt is not God's hiddenness and therefore humanity's ignorance, but rather God's self-disclosure and humanity's rejection of it.' Cf. C. E. B. Cranfield, *Romans: A Shorter Commentary* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1985), 32–33: 'The result of God's self-manifestation in His creation is not a natural knowledge of God on men's part independent of God's self-revelation in His Word, a valid though limited knowledge, but simply the rendering excuseless of their ignorance' (32). Cf. Grant Osborne, *Romans*, IVPNT (Leicester: IVP, 2004), 46–48.

¹⁴ See, for example, Greg Bahnsen, 'The Encounter of Jerusalem with Athens' (1980), available at <http://www.cmfnow.com/articles/pa045.htm> (accessed 12 August 2006), 11. Paul identifies the 'basic schizophrenia in unbelieving thought when he described in the Athenians both an awareness of God (v. 22) and ignorance of God (v. 23). . . . Knowing God, the unregenerate nevertheless suppresses the truth and follows a lie instead.'

¹⁵ Barrett, *Acts*, vol 2: 851.

¹⁶ Edwards, *Romans*, 51. Cf. Rom 1:18–23 indicates that the natural human relation to God is more than a simple straightforward *agnoia*. Cf. Francis Watson, *Text And Truth: Redefining Biblical Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 248; Bahnsen, 'The Encounter of Jerusalem with Athens', 13. The unbeliever is 'responsible because he possesses the truth, but he is guilty for what he does with the truth.'

¹⁷ Mounce, *Romans*, 93

laws, and therefore this universal sinfulness demands judgement (1:18–3:20).¹⁸ Terrance Tiessen rightly argues that judgement is in accordance with the revelation an individual receives. With regard to Acts 14:16–17, Tiessen explains:

It is highly implausible that Paul is suggesting that God accepted all the various forms of worship and conduct that the nations chose in their ignorance of God through lack of revelation. His point is twofold: First, God had given them some revelation in the form of his providential care for them. As indicated in Rom 1:21, this left them culpable if they did not respond by honouring God as God and giving him thanks. And second, in Paul's generation, they were receiving a clearer revelation of God's truth and of his will, so their obligation was increasing accordingly.¹⁹

Pinnock adopts a different position on this, suggesting Paul was positive about the religious practices of the Lystrans and Athenians and by extension is similarly positive about the potential of contemporary non-Christian religious practices. He suggests Paul's Lystran sermon

represents a gracious and understanding appreciation of their past and their culture. In a later vignette, Paul is described in Athens as acknowledging the good intentions of the Greeks in worshipping the unknown God. . . . Evidently Paul thought of these people as believers in a certain sense, in a way that could be and should be fulfilled in Jesus Christ.²⁰

In the same way, Karl Rahner also suggests Paul's speech shows he held a positive view of pagan religion.²¹ Similarly, Jacques Dupuis interprets this passage as evidence that

Paul praises the religious spirit of the Greeks and announces to them the 'unknown God' whom they worship without knowing. . . . [T]he message surely seems to be that the religions of the nations are not bereft of value but find in Jesus Christ the fulfillment of their aspirations.²²

Pinnock, Rahner and Dupuis, however, are mistaken here. Paul argues that God was worshipped in ignorance precisely because he was *unknown*, not that God was known but was somehow worshipped in ignorance. There are clear indications in the text that this is what Paul meant. William Larkin asserts that the use of neuter instead of masculine pronouns here shows that Paul is not simply going to proclaim to them the identity of the one whom they worship ignorantly. 'Here is no basis for contending that non-Christian religionists, who are seeking him but don't know his name, are in a saving relation with God.'²³ Similarly, Simon Kistemaker maintains,

They worship without knowledge, which in Athens, the bastion of learning, was a contradiction in terms. They concede that this unknown god exists, but they have no

¹⁸ Edwards, *Romans*, 70.

¹⁹ Tiessen, *Who Can Be Saved?*, 128–29. Tiessen is referring to general revelation in his use of the expression 'some revelation.'

²⁰ Pinnock, *Wideness*, 32.

²¹ Rahner, 'Christianity and the Non-Christian Religions', 122, 125.

²² Dupuis, *Toward*, 49.

²³ William Larkin, 'The Contribution of the Gospels and Acts to a Biblical Theology of Religions,' in *Christianity and the Religions: A Biblical Theology of World Religions* (ed. Edward Rommen and Harold Netland; Pasadena: William Carey Library, 1995), 82–83. Cf. Chrys Caragounis, 'Divine Revelation,' *Evangelical Review of Theology* 12 (1988): 229–230.

knowledge of him. And they must acknowledge that their approach to proper worship is deficient because of their ignorance. Paul, however, does not equate the unknown god of the Athenians with the true God. Notice that he says ‘what you worship,’ not ‘whom you worship.’ Paul calls attention only to their lack of knowledge and thus takes the opportunity to introduce God as Creator and Judge of the universe. Paul intimates that the Athenians’ ignorance of God is blameworthy and this ignorance demands swift emendation.²⁴

This interpretation may be supported by the word ‘ignorance’ (ἀγνοοῦντες), which occurs here in the present participle active form thus suggesting the Athenians were continually worshipping without knowledge, that is, in ignorance. Bultmann explains that the verb is

used with all the nuances of knowledge [and] denote[s] ‘being mistaken’ or ‘in error’ as the character of action (cf. 1 Tim. 1:13). Ignorance of self is meant in Heb. 5:2. ‘Not recognizing’ in 1 Cor. 14:38 means rejection (‘not being recognized’ by God). Not knowing God is meant in Rom. 10:3, and Christ in 1 Tim. 1:13. This ignorance entails disobedience (Rom. 10:3); hence it is not just pardonable lack of information but a failure to understand that needs forgiveness.²⁵

The statement ‘if perhaps they might grope for Him and find Him’ (17:27 NIV) should not be understood as suggesting individuals are able to reach a true knowledge of God unaided by special revelation, for the words ‘grobe’ and ‘find’ are in the optative mood, that is the mood of strong contingency or possibility.²⁶ ‘It contains no definite anticipation of realization, but merely presents the action as conceivable. Hence it is one step further removed from reality than the subjunctive.’²⁷ So this statement does not suggest a divine pattern for successfully finding God and salvation apart from special revelation. Rather, it points to the effect of sin causing all to become as those who are blind in their search for God.²⁸

According to Paul however, non-Christian religious worship is rebellious. It is evidence of each culture going its own way, autonomously developing its religion without reference to the one true God.²⁹ If this were not so, the times of ignorance would not have to be overlooked, and Paul’s message would

²⁴ Simon Kistemaker, *Exposition of the Acts of the Apostles* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1990), 632. Cf. G. E. Ladd, *The Wycliffe Bible Commentary* (Chicago: Moody, 1962), 1157; Witherington, *Acts*, 524.

²⁵ Rudolf Bultmann, ‘Ignorance,’ in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament Abridged in One Volume* (ed. Geoffrey Bromiley; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1986), 18. Cf. John Calvin: ‘God cannot be worshipped rightly unless he be first known’ (*Commentary on the Acts of the Apostles* [Edinburgh: Edinburgh Printing Company, n.d.], 2:157, quoted in Little, *The Revelation of God Among the Unevangelized*, 26 Cf. Darrell Bock, ‘Athenians Who Have Never Heard,’ in *Through No Fault of Their Own?* (ed. William Crockett and James Sigountos; Grand Rapids: Baker, 1991), 124. Bock writes, ‘Ignorance and “God-fearing devotion” in themselves provide no hope that one can enter God’s presence outside of Jesus, as the New Testament shows. Devotion to God must be according to knowledge.’

²⁶ The Greek reads εἰ ἄρα γε ψηλαφήσειαν αὐτὸν καὶ εὑροίεν.

²⁷ H. E. Dana and Julius Mantey, *A Manual Grammar of the Greek New Testament* (New York: Macmillan, 1955), 172, quoted in Little, *The Revelation of God Among the Unevangelized*, 26–27. Cf. Bahnsen, ‘The Encounter of Jerusalem with Athens,’ 13. Cf. Marshall, *Acts*, 288.

²⁸ Larkin suggests the fact that God is ‘not very far away’ (v. 27) shows that the human lack of success is not a function of how God has set up the search but of an intervening factor: sin. Larkin, ‘The Contribution of the Gospels and Acts,’ 82. Cf. Caragounis, ‘Divine Revelation,’ 227–229; Bahnsen, ‘The Encounter of Jerusalem with Athens,’ 13. Bahnsen argues that this groping is not an innocent matter but unrepentant ignorance.

²⁹ Larkin, ‘The Contribution of the Gospels and Acts,’ 83. Paul’s negative attitude toward pagan worship is also shown

not have climaxed in a call to repentance.³⁰ Further confirmation of Paul's negative assessment of non-Christian religious practices is seen in the description that 'his spirit was provoked within him' (17:16) which 'at the least . . . means that Paul was very irritated by what he saw.'³¹

In conclusion, the texts examined here indicate that the 'times of ignorance' are not to be interpreted as a period during which sin was not punished or as a period when non-biblical religions functioned as instruments of salvation. Rather, all people at all times are culpable for their sin, and worshippers of non-biblical religions are worshipping in ignorance and rebellion.

2.2. Duration of the Times of Ignorance

Having established the *nature* of the times of ignorance, the next matter for consideration is the *duration* of these times, namely, have they ended with the objective act of the Christ-event, or is their end associated with an individual's existential encounter with the gospel? Proponents of the Israel analogy and fulfilment model believe the latter to be the case. For example, Rahner asserts that non-Christian religions are 'overtaken and rendered obsolete by the coming of Christ and by his death and resurrection.' This moment in time, however, 'is arrived at the point at which Christianity in its explicit and ecclesiastical form' becomes 'an effective reality, making its impact and asserting its claims in history in the relevant cultural sphere to which the non-Christian religions concerned belonged.'³²

Normally [in Catholic theology] the beginning of the objective obligation of the Christian message for all men—in other words, the abolition of the validity of the Mosaic religion *and* of all other religions—is thought to occur in the apostolic age. Normally, therefore, one regards the time between this beginning and the actual acceptance or the personally guilty refusal of Christianity in a non-Jewish world and history as the span between the already given promulgation of the law and the moment when the one to whom the law refers takes cognizance of it.³³

Rahner wants to 'leave it . . . an open question (at least in principle) at what exact point in time the absolute obligation of the Christian religion has in fact come into effect for every man and culture.'³⁴ I shall argue in this section that the times of ignorance have ended objectively, coinciding with the Christ-event.

The place of the events of Acts in the unfolding history of redemption provides the necessary framework for a proper understanding of these times.³⁵ Luke, in his second volume, recounts the historical origins of the Christian movement, the founding of the Church, and the spread of the gospel. He addresses the universal claims of the gospel and the nature of the Church—a Church for both Jew and

by the meaning of the word 'provoke' in v. 16. Little asserts that its meaning is 'to rouse to wrath' (*The Revelation of God Among the Unevangelized*, 25).

³⁰ Larkin, 'The Contribution of the Gospels and Acts', 83.

³¹ Witherington, *Acts*, 512. Cf. Bahnsen, 'The Encounter of Jerusalem with Athens', 6.

³² Karl Rahner, 'Church, Churches and Religions', in *Theological Investigations* (New York: Herder & Herder, 1973), 10:47.

³³ Rahner, 'Christianity and the Non-Christian Religions', 119. Rahner uses the expression 'law' here to refer to Christianity.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 120.

³⁵ Cf. Gaffin, *Resurrection and Redemption*, 13. Gaffin rightly states that dealing with the biblical writers in terms of their respective places in redemptive history is necessary.

Gentile. He writes concerning the climax of God's redemptive acts in history³⁶ and has been described as *par excellence* the 'theologian of redemptive history'.³⁷ Redemptive history is fundamental in Paul, too. While Reformed Pauline studies have rightly placed much emphasis on the doctrine of justification by faith, this emphasis has at times overshadowed the centrality of redemptive-history in Paul. Ridderbos maintains that a redemptive-historical or eschatological orientation governs Paul's theology.³⁸

It is this great redemptive-historical framework within which the whole of Paul's preaching must be understood and all of its subordinate parts receive their place and organically cohere. . . . It is from this principle point of view and under this denominator that all the separate themes of Paul's preaching can be understood and penetrated in their unity and relation to each other.³⁹

Whatever treatment Paul gives to the application of salvation to the individual (the *ordo salutis*) is controlled by his redemptive-historical outlook, that is, how salvation was accomplished (the *historia salutis*).⁴⁰

The center of Paul's teaching is not found in the doctrine of justification by faith or any other aspect of the *ordo salutis*. Rather, his primary interest is seen to be in the *historia salutis* as that history has reached its eschatological realization in the death and especially the resurrection of Christ.⁴¹

Michael Horton cautions that separating the *ordo salutis* from the *historia salutis* results in a 'failure to recognize the revolutionary logic of biblical (especially Pauline) eschatology, in which the future is semirealized in the present and the individual is included in a wider eschatological activity'.⁴²

³⁶ See, for example, Johnson, *Message of Acts*, "Luke invites us again and again to walk back and forth across the bridge linking Old Covenant promise with New Covenant fulfilment in Christ—to see, compare and discover afresh the manifold wisdom of God in his plan of redemption, glimpsed in many parts and ways in the words of the prophets, but now blazing from the glorious face of the Son" (122).

³⁷ Bruce, 'Salvation History in the New Testament', 78. Bruce is quoting Lohse, 'Lucas als Theologe der Heilsgeschichte', *EvT* 14 (1954–55): 254. Cf. Helmut Flender, *St. Luke: Theologian of Redemptive History* (trans. Reginald Fuller and Ilse Fuller; London: SPCK, 1967).

³⁸ Ridderbos uses the designations redemptive-historical and eschatological interchangeably. Ridderbos states, 'The central motive of justification by faith can be understood in its real pregnant significance only from this redemptive-historical viewpoint' (*Time Fully Come*, 50). Cf. Ridderbos, *Paul and Jesus* (trans. David H. Freeman; Philadelphia: Presbyterian & Reformed, 1958), 64–65: 'Before everything else, he [Paul] was the proclaimer of a new time, the great turning point in the history of redemption.' Cf. Robert Yarbrough, 'Paul and Salvation History', in *The Paradoxes of Paul*, vol. 2 of *Justification and Variegated Nomism* (ed. D. A. Carson, Peter T. O'Brien, and Mark A. Seifrid; Grand Rapids: Baker, 2004), 297–342.

³⁹ Ridderbos, *Paul*, 39. Cf. 44, 49, 65, 162, 208, 429–30, 516.

⁴⁰ Gaffin (*By Faith*, 18n2) notes that this distinction (*historia salutis*—*ordo salutis*) appears to originate with Herman Ridderbos, being found first in his *Time Fully Come* (48–49).

⁴¹ Gaffin, *Resurrection and Redemption*, 13. Gaffin notes the term '*ordo salutis* can have two distinct senses, one more general, the other more elaborated. The latter sense, more detailed and technical, is its usual, more common usage. It has in view the logical and/or causal, or even chronological "order" or sequence of various discrete saving acts and benefits, as these are unfolded in the life of the individual sinner. However, the expression *ordo salutis* may also be used . . . more generally, to the ongoing application of salvation, in distinction from its once-for-all accomplishment'. It is this latter sense that is being used here. Cf. Gaffin, *By Faith*, 18; Horton, *Covenant and Eschatology*, 6. Horton rightly observes that often (even in Reformed theology) the various loci of the *ordo salutis* (calling, regeneration, repentance and faith, justification, sanctification, and glorification) have been separated from the *historia salutis*.

⁴² Horton, *Covenant and Eschatology*, 6–7.

However, when the *ordo salutis* is seen in relationship to the *historia salutis*, then ‘that which God is doing in the experience of believers will be treated as derivative of that which God is doing in the world, in history.’⁴³ Paul’s redemptive-historical outlook is clear in the Paul of Acts and is more fully expounded in Romans.⁴⁴ There are clear parallels between Paul’s speeches in Acts 14 and 17 and Rom 3:21–26, and these three texts will be considered in unison in the following discussion.⁴⁵

Paul’s speeches in Acts 14 and 17 embrace the ideas of the creation (the past), of God’s dominion over the world (the present) and of the judgement (the future).⁴⁶ Paul presents the Christ-event as an event of acute temporal decisiveness. Referring to Acts 17, F.E. Bruce rightly observes: ‘The claim that the fact of Jesus marks the end of the time of ignorance and the irrevocable declaration of God’s will, with the accompanying summons to repentance, is underlined by the framework of universal history in which it is set.’⁴⁷ Paul’s reference to the ‘times of ignorance’ was, as Francis Watson states, motivated by the need to assert the radical newness of the present moment.⁴⁸ The former times correspond to the ages in which the mystery of Christ has been kept secret, the period before the fullness of time was revealed.⁴⁹ But now, the Lordship of Christ is a present reality, extending over the whole world, as Cullmann explains:

The result of Christ’s death and resurrection is that the Lordship over all things is committed to him. The entire creation is affected by this redemptive event. Ever since the ascension Christ sits at the right hand of God, and everything is put under his feet. With this is connected the fact that since reaching this mid-point the world process is drawn into the redemptive history in a decisive manner.⁵⁰

In the cross an eschatological process is taking place. The Kingdom of God becomes manifest in Christ’s resurrection which marks the boundary where the two aeons collide. The Eschaton has come and the world has been opened up for the Kingdom of God.⁵¹

⁴³ Ibid., 7

⁴⁴ Bruce, ‘Salvation History in the New Testament’, 81, 84. Bruce suggests that this is true for his speeches at Pisidian Antioch and Athens. While it is true that the precise focus on Paul in Acts can be differentiated from the precise focus on Paul in Paul’s own writings, it is a methodological mistake to set these foci against each other as if they were mutually incompatible.

⁴⁵ My use of Rom 3:21–26 is given further weight by the importance it plays in Romans. Luther notes in his Bible margin that it was ‘the chief point, and the very central place of the Epistle, and of the whole Bible’ (quoted in Moo, *Romans*, 218). Cf. C. E. B. Cranfield, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1975), 1:199. Cranfield notes it is ‘the centre and heart of the whole of Romans’.

⁴⁶ Conzelman, *The Theology of Saint Luke*, 168. Cf. Bahnsen, ‘The Encounter of Jerusalem with Athens’, 17.

⁴⁷ Bruce, ‘Salvation history in the New Testament’, 81.

⁴⁸ Watson, *Text and Truth*, 248.

⁴⁹ See §1.1 of this article in *Themelios* 33:2.

⁵⁰ Oscar Cullmann, *Christ and Time* (London: SCM, 1962), 185. Cf. Cullmann, *Salvation in History* (London: SCM, 1967), 163.

⁵¹ Ridderbos, *Time Fully Come*, 17. Cf. idem, *The Coming of the Kingdom* (ed. Raymond O. Zorn; trans. H. de Jongste; St. Catherine’s: Paideia, 1978), xxviii: ‘The coming of the kingdom of God is most certainly to be looked upon as the realization of the great drama of the history of salvation. . . . This realization is not merely a matter of the future, however, it has started. The great change of the aeons has taken place. The center of history is in Christ’s coming, in his victory over the demons, in his death and resurrection.’ Ridderbos states that the cosmic and historical meaning of the kingdom of heaven must be fully acknowledged (xxiv). The idea of the kingdom of heaven implies the participation of all created life in the coming of the kingdom. The proportions of the kingdom are universal (46).

There is therefore a dichotomy of ‘before’ and ‘after’ the Christ-event, and a radical newness to the present age.⁵² The ‘but now’ (τὰ νῦν) of Acts 17:30b balances ‘the times’ (τοὺς χρόνους) in the first part of the sentence. It is the ‘now’ that is the subject of the last part of the sentence. All has changed *now* that Christ has come with the full knowledge of God. Through Christ, God has dealt definitively with the problem of sin, but for that very reason, he has laid humanity under a new accountability. The day of the gospel begins with the resurrection, and the time of the old covenant ends here. Now that Christ has come, God calls the unbelieving world into judgment through the One whom he raised from the dead.⁵³ God ‘overlooked’ sin during the former times, but this overlooking was possible only because these times were for a period only, a period allocated by God from eternity, to be followed by a course of action which would deal with sin finally and fully through the cross.⁵⁴ As Bruce argues,

God’s overlooking people’s earlier ignorance of himself is seen to have had in view the full revelation now given in the advent and work of Christ. ‘But now’ in the present context is parallel to ‘but now’ in Rom. 3:21. If ignorance of the divine nature was culpable before, it is inexcusable now.⁵⁵

Rom 3:21–26 also testifies to the radical newness of the current age, an age inaugurated when ‘this righteousness from God’ was made known in Christ. The ‘but now’ of verse 21 indicates a change of tone from the preceding section (1:18–3:20).⁵⁶ This change is both logical and temporal, marking a decisive shift, not just in Paul’s argument, but in God’s economy. It is logical because of its place in the strategy of Paul’s argument, concluding the teaching of the previous section. It is temporal, shifting the emphasis from the old situation of Jews and Gentiles under sin to the new age of salvation inaugurated by Christ. Osborne considers the temporal sense to be most important:

Paul tells us here that as a result of Christ’s sacrificial act a new era, one of salvation, has dawned. As Schreiner says, this indicates ‘a salvation-historical shift between the old covenant and the new’. God’s ‘saving righteousness’ has been ‘actualized in history.’⁵⁷

The temporal sense is reinforced by the expression ‘has been made known’ (πεφανέρωται).⁵⁸ The perfect tense used here specifies something which began in the past but which is still valid now—that which was made manifest in Christ’s redemptive work has ever since remained manifest and

⁵² Vern Poythress, *Understanding Dispensationalists* (2d ed.; Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian & Reformed, 1994), 43.

⁵³ Lewis and Demarest, *Integrative Theology*, 2:87.

⁵⁴ Cranfield, *Romans: A Shorter Commentary*, 74. John Calvin points out that Paul gives no explanation for why God allowed the times of ignorance to last so long, but that even during this time ignorance cannot be excused because of the reality of general revelation (*The Acts of the Apostles* [trans. John Fraser; Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1966], 2:12, 124).

⁵⁵ Bruce, *Acts*, 340. Cf. Witherington, *Acts*, 535. ‘Both the Paul of his letters . . . and the Paul of this speech (17:31) see the resurrection as a decisive divine demonstration or proof of God’s intentions in regard to humankind, and the decisive shift in the ages which turns times of ignorance or sin into the age of accountability.’

⁵⁶ Osborne, *Romans*, 92.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 92. The reference is to T. R. Schreiner, *Romans*, BECNT (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998), 180. Cf. Mounce, *Romans*, 114n2. Mounce notes, ‘Most contemporary writers take *Νῦν δὲ* as temporal rather than logical and emphasize that it marks the transition to a new stage in salvation history’. Cf. Moo, *Romans*, 221: ‘This contrast between two eras in salvation history is one of Paul’s most basic conceptions, providing the framework for many of his key ideas’. Cf. D. A. Carson, ‘Atonement in Romans 3:21–26’, in *The Glory of the Atonement* (ed. Charles Hill and Frank James; Downers Grove: IVP, 2004), 121: The ‘but now’ is ‘salvation-historical’.

⁵⁸ Edwards, *Romans*, 98.

is the means of salvation for all people henceforth.⁵⁹ At a given point in history, God intervened to consummate the plan of redemption.⁶⁰ The decisive once-for-all redemptive act of God, the revelation both of righteousness and wrath, has taken place. Thus, verse 21 ‘points to the decisiveness for faith of the gospel events in their objectiveness as events which took place at a particular time in the past and are quite distinct from and independent of the response of men to them.’⁶¹

This does not mean that God failed to punish sins committed before the Christ-event or that God was unable fully to forgive sins committed by old covenant believers. According to Douglas Moo, ‘Paul’s meaning is rather that God “postponed” the full penalty due sins in the Old Covenant, allowing sinners to stand before him without their having provided an adequate “satisfaction” of the demands of his holy justice (cf. Heb. 10:4).’⁶²

The reference to passing over former sins (Rom 3:25) refers to sins committed before the Christ-event—not sins committed before a person’s individual justification.⁶³ This is clear from the context, which Paul presents as the *historia salutis* rather than the *ordo salutis*. This is indicated by the reference to the revelation of the *righteousness of God* that is now revealed (v. 26), rather than the righteousness that is given to those who believe. This latter sense cannot be what Paul intends since in Rom 4 he demonstrates that Abraham and all true believers, whether Jew or Gentile, are reckoned righteous by faith. ‘If in 3:21 Paul is talking about individual soteriology, there would be no “but now” about it. Justification has always and ever been by faith.’⁶⁴ Rather, what is new or ‘now’ is that God has revealed his righteousness through Christ.

The temporal decisiveness of the Christ-event is given further weight by Paul’s assertion that the divine act of righteousness has now been made known ‘apart from the law’ (v. 21a). In one sense this refers to the fact that righteousness cannot come by keeping the law (3:20 cf. 2:1–3:8), but the primary meaning here is given by the salvation-historical orientation of Paul’s argument. That is, it refers to the new era inaugurated by Christ. ‘Paul’s purpose is to announce the way in which God’s righteousness has been manifest rather than to contrast two kinds of righteousness.’⁶⁵ This is clear from the developing argument: Paul has already established that the law is powerless to save (Rom 2:12–3:20), and Rom 4 makes clear that justification has always been by faith apart from the law. For the argument to make sense, the reference has to be to the manner in which God’s righteousness is manifested, not the manner in which it is received.⁶⁶

⁵⁹ Cranfield, *Romans: A Shorter Commentary*, 70. Cf. Edwards, *Romans*, 98.

⁶⁰ Edwards, *Romans*, 98.

⁶¹ Cranfield, *Romans: A Shorter Commentary*, 69.

⁶² Moo, *Romans*, 240.

⁶³ A different interpretation is offered by Glenn Davies, *Faith and Obedience in Romans: A Study of Romans 1–4* (Sheffield: JSOT, 1990), 110. Davies suggests it was the sins of the righteous that God formerly passed over, thus enabling the Old Testament saints to enjoy the experience of forgiveness. However, this minority view among commentators seems unlikely given the redemptive-historical framework of Paul’s argument here.

⁶⁴ Paul J. Leithart, ‘Paul on God’s Righteousness,’ available at <http://www.leithart.com/archives/print/0000437.php> (accessed 19 August 2006).

⁶⁵ Moo, *Romans*, 222. Moo notes that this is how most English translations interpret this verse. Cf. Osborne, *Romans*, 93: ‘*apart from the law* modifies *made known* more than it does *a righteousness from God* and so refers to the process by which it is revealed rather than the way it is received by us.’

⁶⁶ Moo, *Romans*, 222f. Cf. Carson, ‘Atonement in Romans 3:21–26,’ 123. Carson states that the reference ‘focuses attention not on the *reception* of righteousness . . . but on the disclosure of this righteousness.’

This then indicates that the ‘law’ (νόμος, v. 21a) is not primarily a set of rules required by God for humans to keep, but a system, that is, a stage in God’s unfolding plan. If this is so, then it refers to the Mosaic covenant, a temporary administration established by God for the period leading to its fulfilment in Christ.⁶⁷ There is, therefore, a discontinuity between the former times and the present times.⁶⁸ However, as Paul proceeds, the emphasis changes from discontinuity to continuity. For while this righteousness comes apart from the law, the ‘Law and Prophets bear witness to it’ (v. 21b). Paul understands the Old Testament as a whole to anticipate and prepare for this new age of justification and fulfilment.⁶⁹

On the basis of the discussion outlined above, it is clear that the ‘times of ignorance’ are a period in the *historia salutis* and therefore have ended with the objective, historical, and decisive Christ-event. These times should not therefore be understood in reference to a person’s existential encounter with the gospel or to any other time after the Christ-event. If one does not accept the definite turning point of the Christ-event, it leads to speculative and rather arbitrary predictions of when the ‘times of ignorance’ might have ended. The focus of many commentators on when these times might have ended is due in part, I suggest, to a misunderstanding of the nature of the times of ignorance and the nature of saving faith. Many consider saving faith to have changed between the Old Testament and New Testament eras, and this leads them to speculate how this change affects the existential circumstances of individuals. I maintain that the nature of saving faith has always and everywhere been essentially constant, that is, trust in the covenant-making God made possible by his special revelation. This revelation is Christocentric, and consequently saving faith has always been Christ-focussed and has not changed at any point in terms of its object and essential characteristics.⁷⁰

Scripture gives no grounds for suggesting that saving faith has changed or for suggesting that a believer who lived during the ‘times of ignorance’ will no longer be saved after the Christ-event for failing to respond to the ‘new content’ of saving faith. But this is exactly what is discussed by some theologians.⁷¹ For Pinnock, the times of ignorance end only when an individual receives the gospel.⁷² Similarly, Tiessen argues that Acts 17:30–31 indicates that there is an ignorance that is not culpable, but that when the gospel is preached and the Spirit illumines the hearers, the ignorance is dispelled and God’s overlooking is therefore no longer appropriate.⁷³ Tiessen concurs with Howard Marshall, who writes,

Until the coming of the revelation of God’s true nature in Christianity, men lived in ignorance of him. But now the proclamation of the Christian message brings this time to an end *so far as those who hear the gospel are concerned*; they no longer have an excuse for their ignorance. God was prepared to overlook their ignorance, but now he will do so no longer.⁷⁴

⁶⁷ Moo, *Romans*, 223 Cf. Carson, ‘Atonement in Romans 3:21–26’, 121, 123.

⁶⁸ Carson, ‘Atonement in Romans 3:21–26’, 123: ‘There is a dramatic shift in salvation-history’.

⁶⁹ Moo, *Romans*, 223. Moo comments that the ‘law and prophets’ denotes the entire Old Testament. Cf. Osborne, *Romans*, 93.

⁷⁰ That is not to say that all believers at all times have known and understood the same details.

⁷¹ See below.

⁷² Pinnock, *Wideness*, 101.

⁷³ Tiessen, *Who Can Be Saved?*, 129. Cf. 178–79.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 133, quoting Marshall, *Acts*, 289–90 (emphasis in original).

For Tiessen, the ‘critical question’ is this:

When (if ever) does salvation cease to be possible for Jews with an Old Testament faith and for God-fearing Gentiles who do not know of Jesus? Ronald Nash suggests ‘that whole first century community of Believers in Yahweh was a kind of transition generation.’ But why must the transition be limited to one generation? Why may it not extend throughout this age to all who remain ignorant of Jesus and of his identity and work? Why might people today who have the faith of an old covenant believer or of a Gentile god-fearer be saved today, just as they were then?⁷⁵

Ecclesiocentrists face a particularly sticky problem in regard to Jews at the time of Jesus who had the faith of Abraham or in regard to Gentile God-fearers who did not know about Jesus. Did such people *lose* their salvation? And, if so, at what point—at the moment of Christ’s resurrection, at the ascension or at Pentecost? . . . Some theologians might cover such people under a ‘grandfather clause,’ but this is problematic within the principles of Ecclesiocentrism.⁷⁶

Likewise, John Sanders claims,

A major problem for this understanding of faith [that knowledge of Jesus Christ is necessary] is the salvation of those who lived before and just after Jesus. Those who take a restrictive approach generally allow for the salvation of those who lived before Jesus but claim that since the time of Jesus one has to know about him in order to be saved. God-fearing Jews and Gentiles who died ten minutes after Jesus died but who had no knowledge of that fact or no understanding of its atoning value are thus left in a most pitiful position—damned to hell for not living long enough for Christian theology to be developed! But if we concede that such people are exceptions, then why aren’t the rest of the unevangelized exceptions as well?⁷⁷

⁷⁵ Tiessen, *Who Can Be Saved?*, 178. The reference is to Ronald H. Nash, ‘Restrictivism,’ in *What About Those Who Have Never Heard?* (ed. John Sanders; Downers Grove: IVP, 1995), 122.

⁷⁶ Tiessen, *Who Can Be Saved?*, 199. Ecclesiocentrism is characterized by the belief that in the Christian dispensation only those who hear the gospel (at least in the case of competent adults) can be saved. Thus, the possibility of salvation is coextensive with the presence of the Church. See Tiessen, *Who Can Be Saved?*, 32–33.

⁷⁷ John Sanders, ed., *What About Those Who Have Never Heard?* (Downers Grove: IVP, 1995), 37n18. Sanders highlights here the particular problems that the dispensational system presents for the situation of those living at a time of transition between different dispensations. ‘When do the new requirements of the “specific content of salvation” take effect? For instance when did the requirement for belief in Jesus become obligatory? At the resurrection? At the ascension? . . . If a “grace period” is granted to people who are a dispensation behind (in terms of hearing), then why not a grace period for those unevangelized, who may be five or six dispensations behind?’ Sanders is right to identify this as a problem.

Clark Pinnock writes favourably regarding dispensationalism with its emphasis on the difference between the nature of saving faith in the different dispensations: ‘Charles Ryrie spoke of a dispensation where God accepted pagans like Job on the basis of faith but without knowledge of either Moses or Christ. I felt this was biblical and found it appealing. I remember thinking how helpful it would be if this arrangement were still true for today for people in the same situation. I keep hoping dispensational theology will progress in this direction too and that a dispensational inclusivist will come forward to help people burdened by restrictivism.’ Pinnock continues, however, ‘It hasn’t happened yet, and I’m not holding my breath’ (*An Inclusivist View*, 108).

The dispensational theologian Ramesh P. Richard has provided a useful critique of inclusivism, showing that even *if* the nature of saving faith in Old Testament and New Testament times differed (with Old Testament believers not confessing Christ), this no longer holds true now that Christ has come (*The Population of Heaven* [Chicago: Moody, 1994]). Dispensational inclusivists attempt to resolve the problem by proposing “transdispensationalizing”—treating people in a particular dispensation as though they live in another dispensation, in terms of the requirement of salvation. Tony Evans uses

These accounts demonstrate the problem that results if it is argued that saving faith is substantially different before and after Christ. Tiessen proposes an analogy between old covenant believers and Jews today who do not know Jesus is their Messiah: they are ‘in the same position as were their forebears who lived prior to Messiah’s coming.’⁷⁸ Tiessen makes this proposal support his thesis that knowledge of Christ is unnecessary for salvation. On the contrary, I suggest that his proposal is broadly right, but should be understood as supporting my position that saving faith has not changed. A believing Jew living at the time of Christ would have faith in the Messiah (anticipated). If such a Jew died before hearing of the advent of the Messiah, then there is no reason to suggest they would be denied saving faith now that greater information (which they have not received) about the Messiah is available. In theory then, it is possible to be saved ‘by old covenant anticipation’ after the Christ-event, if that anticipation is according to special covenantal revelation. With regard to the Gentile ‘God-fearers’ that Tiessen and Sanders refer to, I maintain that these too, were only ever saved by contact with and response to special covenantal revelation.⁷⁹

D. A. Carson responds to the suggestion that the times of ignorance end only when an individual hears the gospel by declaring:

This is an astonishing inference. It would mean that the Athenians were better off before they heard Paul’s preaching about Jesus: they were nicely spared any blame because they were ignorant, but now, poor chaps, for the first time they are held accountable.⁸⁰

While Carson is right to highlight the error of the individual-existential interpretation of the ending of the times of ignorance, his response is itself rather misleading.⁸¹ He presents a hypothetical scenario (that people would be better off not hearing the gospel), which given his wider Reformed theological convictions he does not consider valid, for he maintains that all people everywhere are culpable, and he accepts therefore that no one will be saved through their ignorance. Therefore, although the ‘times of ignorance’ should not be confused with an individual’s personal knowledge or ignorance, Scripture does seem to suggest that judgement is according to the revelation one receives (see §2.1). Indeed, Jesus speaks of greater judgement on those to whom more has been revealed (Matt 11:20–24; John 9:39–41; 15:22).

John Frame contends, ‘There is some indication in Scripture that greater knowledge can be an aggravating circumstance (Luke 12:47–48). From whom much is given, much is required.’⁸² This

this concept in *Totally Saved* (Chicago: Moody, 2004). This problem is overcome for covenantal theologians, for saving faith has been constant in its essential nature at all times.

⁷⁸ Tiessen, *Who Can Be Saved?*, 168.

⁷⁹ For an insightful critique of the concept of ‘Pagan Saints’, see Strange, *Salvation Among the Unevangelized*, 163–88.

⁸⁰ D. A. Carson, *The Gagging of God* (Leicester: Apollos, 1996), 310. Likewise, Darrell Bock suggests that if the times of ignorance end with the hearing of the gospel then ‘at Mars Hill Paul puts nonhearers at risk. In their ignorance they had a chance, but now that he has told them about Jesus they must respond or be destroyed. We are driven to the absurd conclusion that Paul should never have mentioned Jesus, because as “nonhearers” they had a chance!’ Bock, ‘Athenians Who Have Never Heard’, 122.

⁸¹ Carson and Bock possibly intend their statements to be understood rhetorically. Nevertheless, my assertion that they are misleading is warranted.

⁸² Email from John Frame, ‘Does the BC Condition still exist today?’ 22 August 2006.

indicates, suggests Frame, that it would better not to hear of Christ than to hear of him and reject him. Matt 26:24 and 2 Pet 2:21 say this in specific contexts.⁸³

Piper defends the assertion that the times of ignorance have ended with the Christ event by stating:

But ‘now’—a key word in the turning of God’s historic work of redemption—something new has happened. The Son of God has appeared. He has revealed the Father. He has atoned for sin. He has risen from the dead. His authority as universal Judge is vindicated. And the message of His saving work is to be spread to all peoples. This turn in redemptive history is for the glory of Jesus Christ. Its aim is to put Him at the center of all God’s saving work. And therefore it accords with this purpose that henceforth Christ be the sole and necessary focus of saving faith.⁸⁴

William Larkin makes a similar statement:

Formerly humankind lived in a sinful ignorance that God in his mercy passed over. Now, after sin has been judged in Jesus’ death and resurrection, comes the ‘day of salvation’ in a gospel proclaimed in his name, calling for repentance and promising forgiveness. Today there is no room in God’s economy, as Paul preaches it, for so-called B.C. Christians—persons saved without knowledge of Christ and his saving work.⁸⁵

While I concur with both Piper and Larkin that the times of ignorance have ended with the Christ-event, these quotes give the unhelpful impression that saving faith has changed. On the contrary I maintain that Christ has always been the ‘sole and necessary focus of saving faith’⁸⁶ and there has never ‘been room in God’s economy for so-called B.C. Christians.’ The intervention of God to inaugurate a new era means that all who respond in faith—not only after the cross, but as Rom 4 shows, before it also—will be transferred into the new era from the old era.⁸⁷

3. Summary

Christ is the midpoint of salvation-history. The Christ-event constitutes the centre of salvation-history and is of universal and decisive significance. It marks a radical turn in salvation-history, a crisis point, rendering the B.C. period complete and fulfilled. It ushers in the new eschatological age and forms a dividing line between ‘B.C.’ and ‘A.D.’ A new situation has been created objectively in history independent of the circumstances of individuals. The effect of the atonement cannot be limited to one strand of subsequent history, namely, that which is coextensive with the Church or knowledge of the gospel. Therefore it is impossible to exist in a ‘B.C. condition’ this side of the cross.

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ John Piper, *Let The Nations Be Glad* (Leicester: IVP, 1993), 134–35. While I agree with the general thrust of Piper’s statement, it unhelpfully infers that salvation was different before Christ. However, Piper makes it clear elsewhere that this is not what he means to suggest. He notes that there is continuity between God’s path to salvation in the OT and NT and that before Christ people were not saved apart from special revelation. General revelation was not effective in producing faith before Christ but ineffective after Christ (164n23).

⁸⁵ William Larkin, *Acts*, IVPNTC (Downers Grove: IVP, 1995), 259–60.

⁸⁶ I do accept however, that New Testament believers have greater knowledge of Christ than Old Testament believers.

⁸⁷ Moo, *Romans*, 221.

The 'times of ignorance' are a period in salvation-history and not a period before an individual's existential encounter with the gospel. They are a category in the *historia salutis*—not the *ordo salutis*. The 'times of ignorance' must not be confused with an individual's personal knowledge (or lack of it). To do so conflates ontology and epistemology. Maintaining the existence of a pre-messianic condition fails to recognise the epochal nature of the unfolding redemptive history and represents a form of under-realised eschatology. The first coming of Christ is an eschatological event around which the culmination of history centres. It is a breaking in of the future events of the day of the Lord which has yet to come. It has now been revealed that God's final wrath against sin which is to come at the end of history has been poured out upon Christ in the middle of history. It is therefore an event that allows no practical reality of any pre-cross paradigm continuing or of an alternative track being presently employed. The question of when the times of ignorance end is the question of whether the history of salvation or individual application of salvation is the ultimate governor. *Historia salutis* always underlies *ordo salutis* and never the reverse. The final and once-for-all saving act of Christ is more ultimate with its attendant historical transition than an individual's personal experience and appropriation of the benefits of this.

The Israel analogy relies on a correspondence between the chronologically pre-messianic and the epistemologically pre-messianic and in so doing requires the 'B.C. condition' to continue today. There is no sense in which the 'B.C. condition' can exist after the cross, and therefore, the Israel analogy and fulfilment model with its reliance on a present continuation of a pre-messianic paradigm is substantially weakened.



PASTORAL PENSÉES

Ezra, According to the Gospel: Ezra 7:10¹

— Philip Graham Ryken —

Phil Ryken is Senior Minister of Tenth Presbyterian Church in Philadelphia, where he has preached since 1995.

For Ezra had set his heart to study the Law of the LORD, and to do it and to teach his statutes and rules in Israel (Ezra 7:10).²

To consider Ezra the priest, according to the gospel of Jesus Christ, the way to begin is by remembering a few of the things that Ezra did and said. In this way, we can begin to appreciate what God did in his life as a scribe and then appropriate what God can do in our own lives as students, pastors, and professors.

1. Ezra's Ministry

We are introduced to Ezra at the beginning of chapter 7. There we read that he came from a long line of priests, going all the way back to Aaron himself, the first high priest. We also read that Ezra was living among the exiles in Babylon and that he “was a scribe skilled in the Law of Moses” (Ezra 7:6). Ezra had gained knowledge of the Word of God. In fact, the rabbis considered him second only to Moses. Ezra was skilled in the Scriptures, which in his day referred to the Pentateuch. He was both called and equipped to serve as Israel's priest.

In chapter 7, Ezra receives special permission to return to Jerusalem. By the authority of the king of Persia—Artaxerxes himself—Ezra was sent back to the holy city of God. Later we learn that he did not go back empty-handed, but bearing treasures of silver and gold—sacred items for worship supplied from the king's own treasury. Ezra was given everything he needed to re-establish temple worship in Jerusalem, including sacrifices of atonement. The covenant community would resume covenant worship of their covenant God in the covenant city.

Artaxerxes must have recognized Ezra's special talents because he granted the priest broad authority to take people back to Jerusalem, to levy taxes, to appoint judges, to teach God's law, and to lead the

¹ This article is a lightly edited manuscript from a chapel sermon preached on October 2, 2008 at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School in Deerfield, IL.

² “Scripture quotations are from the Holy Bible, English Standard Version, copyright 2001 by Crossway Bibles, a division of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved.”

people of Israel. At the end of chapter 7, Ezra says, “I took courage, for the hand of the LORD my God was on me, and I gathered leading men from Israel to go up with me” (7:28). Ezra had the will to lead.

He also had a heart for holiness. We see this in chapters 9 and 10, where he confronts a major sin in the life of Israel—intermarriage with women who practiced pagan idolatry. The same issue came up again when Nehemiah was governor, and Nehemiah dealt with it very decisively: “I confronted them,” he said, “and cursed them and beat some of them and pulled out their hair” (Neh 13:25). It was an interesting approach to church discipline, to say the least!

But Ezra took a very different approach. When he found out that God’s people had been faithless in matters of worship and marriage, he tore his clothes, pulled his own hair, and sat in mourning for an entire day. Then at the time of the evening sacrifice he bowed down before God and offered a prayer of confession, in which he numbered himself among the transgressors: “O my God, I am ashamed . . . for our iniquities have risen higher than our heads. . . . Behold, we are before you in our guilt, for none can stand before you because of this” (Ezra 9:6, 15).

The effect of Ezra’s public confession was dramatic. The people followed their priest’s example by making their own confession: “While Ezra prayed . . . a very great assembly of men, women, and children, gathered to him . . . for the people wept bitterly” (10:1). Ezra’s tears did more to accomplish real spiritual change than all of Nehemiah’s angry words. He had a heart for holiness, and his heart became the heart of his people.

Ezra also had a mind for biblical truth. Perhaps the best example comes from Nehemiah 8, where Ezra gathers the Israelites to renew the covenant in Jerusalem. The heart of that renewal was the reading and preaching of God’s Word. Ezra gathered people in the square in front of the Water Gate, brought out the Book of the Law of Moses, and read it from dawn until noon. He not only read the law, but he also explained it. He and the other teachers “read from the book, from the Law of God, clearly, and they gave the sense, so that the people understood the reading” (Neh 8:8). This is one of our first and best models for expository preaching. This is what faithful gospel ministry is all about: reading God’s Word and giving the sense so that people can understand.

2. The Secret of Ezra’s Success

Ezra was a great man—one of the all-time heroes of the faith. He had the will to lead; he had a heart for holiness; he had a mind for biblical truth. If we want to follow his example, we should ask what made him so great and so good. What was the secret of Ezra’s spiritual success?

In one sense, it was the grace of God, of course, and the Bible is careful to point this out. Why did Ezra find favor in the eyes of the king? “The hand of the LORD his God was on him” (7:6). How was he able to make his journey back to Jerusalem? “The good hand of his God was on him” (7:9). Where did he find the courage to lead the people of Israel? Ezra speaks of God’s “steadfast love” and testifies, “the hand of the LORD my God was on me” (7:28). Ezra was a man under the hand of God.

It is only the gracious hand of God that enables a man or a woman to fulfill his or her calling in ministry. It is the hand of God that gives courage for spiritual leadership, humility for corporate repentance, and wisdom for teaching God’s Word. Praise God for the hand of guidance that has brought you to your present place of service, for the hand of providence that will supply all your needs, for the hand of discipline that will train you in righteousness, and for the hand of comfort that will sustain you through trials. The hand of God is on you for blessing.

But there is another side to all this. Ezra had the hand of God on him, but at the same time he had to be faithful to his calling. He was not a marionette, dangling uselessly until God pulled his strings. He was a human being, with a mind, a heart, and a will that was made to glorify God. Therefore, he needed to be faithful to the sacred trust that God had given him. He needed to train his gifts for ministry and then put them to good use.

Ezra did that. This is obvious from all the good that he accomplished. But the Bible also shows us what was inside the man, giving us an intimate glimpse into Ezra's approach to life and ministry. Do you want to know what enabled him to exercise such an influential ministry? Look again at Ezra 7:10: "Ezra had set his heart to study the Law of the LORD, and to do it and to teach his statutes and rules in Israel."

3. Studying, Doing, and Teaching the Law

This verse is one of the Bible's best summaries of what it means to be a faithful servant of God's Word. It is a wonderful verse for pastors, for seminary students, for theology professors—really, it is a wonderful verse for everyone. I know this from experience because I embraced this verse early in my time at seminary. I wrote it out on a note card and tucked it into the little Bible I carried in my briefcase. From time to time I would pull it out and meditate on it or pray over it. Over time, God used it to shape my understanding of what it meant to be a student and a teacher, a husband and a pastor. By the power of the Holy Spirit, he can use it to shape your life and ministry, too.

The logic of this verse is impeccable. There were three things that Ezra was committed to doing, and he had them in the proper order, like "A-B-C" or "1-2-3." In fact, Ezra had them in the only order that makes any sense: he had his heart set on studying, doing, and teaching the Word of God. This was his heart commitment, the direction of his life, the settled intention of his soul.

3.1. Studying God's Word

Start with studying. Before we can do what God wants us to do, or teach anyone else what God wants them to do, we need to *know* what God wants us to do, and that means studying God's Word. Ezra had committed himself to doing that. We do not know his study habits, but we know that he was skilled in the Law of Moses. His "delight was in the law of the LORD, and on his law he meditated day and night" (Ps 1:2). Since he was raised in a family of priests, he had studied the Scriptures from his earliest childhood. He undoubtedly spent hours each day reading the Bible, pondering its meaning, and discussing its implications with other students and scholars. In those days, a scribe of Ezra's stature would have committed large portions of Scripture to memory. The unrelenting ambition of his life was to know the Word of God.

After seminary I spent several months as an intern with William Still, the great Scottish minister who served in downtown Aberdeen. When I met him, Mr. Still was continuing the weekly preaching ministry he had exercised in the same pulpit for more than fifty years. Every day I would go and meet with him in his home to talk about pastoral ministry and the Christian life. One of the most amazing things about Mr. Still was his voracious appetite for learning something new from the Word of God. Here was a man who was well into his eighties, yet he had a boyish enthusiasm for any fresh insight into biblical truth. "We're always learning, Philip," he would say to me, "we're always learning." That is the kind of Bible scholar that Ezra was and that I hope to become: someone who is keen to learn God's Word all the way through life.

3.2. Living by God's Word

But Ezra did not stop there. He did not want merely to learn the Bible; he wanted to live it. So the Scripture says that he set his heart to *do* the law that he had studied. This meant loving the Lord his God with all his strength and loving his neighbor as himself. It meant keeping the Ten Commandments. It meant following all the regulations for priestly holiness and public worship. It meant doing everything he could to live by God's law. Ezra understood that the only true theology is applied theology. I am reminded of the parishioner who met the preacher at the door after the service and said, "Pastor, that was a wonderful sermon." To which the pastor replied, "Well, that remains to be seen, doesn't it?" This was Ezra's approach exactly. What good is it to study the Bible, unless we also live by it?

3.3. Teaching God's Word

Then there was a third step: teaching God's statutes and rules in Israel. Ezra would have taken issue with the famous advertising slogan: Just Do It! "No," Ezra, would have said, "I can't *just* do it. If I want to learn how to do it, I have to study it first, and then if it's worth doing, I will be compelled to teach other people how to do it, too." His slogan went more like this: "Don't just do it! Study it, do it, teach it."

Notice as well the scope of Ezra's vision for ministry. He wanted to teach God's law "in Israel." He wanted to reach his entire nation with the Word of God. He saw that he had a responsibility to the wider spiritual community. It was his calling and privilege to spend long periods of time studying God's Word. But this was not for his benefit alone; it was for the edification of the people of God. Eventually God granted Ezra his heart's desire. When he read the Book of the Law to all the people in Jerusalem, he was teaching God's statutes and rules in Israel—the Bible teacher for the kingdom.

But all of that came later. Ezra did not begin as a teacher; he *became* one. Sometimes people feel called to a teaching ministry, and they get right into teaching before they have done the hard work of really mastering the Bible. Then all they have to offer is their own spiritual experience; they cannot share the deepest riches of God's Word. Or sometimes—and this is especially tempting for seminary students and pastors—they go right from studying to teaching without having the Word of God really transform their lives. It goes from the mind to the mouth without ever passing through the heart.

All of this is easy to apply. Like Ezra, you are called to be a student of God's Word. We are all called to study God's Word, and to do it, and as we have the opportunity, to teach it to others. This means spending time reading the Bible every day—not in an academic way, but in a devotional way, nurturing our love relationship with Jesus Christ. It means meditating on Scripture and memorizing it. It means devoting the very best of our powers to learning what God has said in his Word.

It also means paying special attention to new areas of personal obedience. We want to do more than study the Bible; we want to live by it. So what is God saying to you today that you need put into practice in your daily life? What will he say to you tomorrow and the day after that? Do not be content with what you have already attained, but strive to grow in godliness. Experience the fresh power of the Word of God.

Then once you start living the truth, then and only then can you be trusted to teach it to others. But bear in mind that this is the goal of all your studies. You do not study God's Word for your own benefit, but for the sake of others. The knowledge you gain is a sacred trust that God has given you in order that you might give it away. So set your heart to study the Word of God, and to do it, and to teach it to wherever God calls you.

4. Studying, Doing, and Teaching the Gospel

All of that is important, and as you continue to meditate on this verse, God will bring it to life in your personal experience. But we need to take it one step farther and consider Ezra according to the gospel. When the Bible says that Ezra studied “the Law of the LORD” (7:10), we understand this to refer to God’s Word generally. When Ezra studied the law, he was also beginning to understand the gospel, for the grace of God and the promise of Jesus Christ are taught in Ezra as much as anywhere else in the Scriptures.

Yet we also know that Ezra lived before the coming of Christ, and to that extent, we can say that he did not know the gospel—not the way we know it. He did not know the incarnation of God the Son or the Virgin Birth of Jesus Christ. He did not know the miracles and parables of our Lord. He did not know his sufferings and death on the cross, or his triumph over the grave. Nor did Ezra know that Jesus would perfectly fulfill his own agenda for ministry: studying the law from beginning to end, doing it with perfection, and then teaching its true meaning in Israel. It was the Puritan John Flavel who said that Christ “preached the doctrine, and lived the application.” Ezra 7:10 is his verse, for Jesus Christ set his heart to study the Law of the Lord, and to do it, and to teach his statutes and rules in Israel.

To put this in a provocative way, I believe that Ezra would have given his entire ministry and everything he knew about the Bible to spend even a single day at an evangelical seminary or a gospel-preaching church today. The fullness of the ages has come in the salvation of God’s Son—what Ezra was waiting for all his life. So if he could be with us today, he would be asking the questions and we would be giving the answers.

What would happen, then, if we helped Ezra take his approach to life and ministry and bring it into relationship with Jesus Christ? For example, what if we took the word “law” and replaced it with the word “gospel”? Not that we do not need the law anymore, because we do, but the gospel is our salvation. So what if we took Ezra 7:10 and said: “I have set my heart to study the gospel of Jesus Christ, and to do it, and to teach the crucifixion and the resurrection in my community.”

4.1. Studying the Gospel

First, set your heart to *study* the gospel—not just to study hermeneutics, or Old Testament, or church history, or soteriology, but to study the *gospel*. If we take this approach, then in all our thinking about the Bible and its theology, we are drawn to the person of Jesus Christ. As we study the Bible, we are seeing how the sufferings of Christ and the revelation of his resurrection glory are worked out in all of Scripture. Then the overwhelming theme of our daily meditation is the grace of God for needy sinners. And each new theological insight you gain becomes a matter for praise as we return it to the glory of God. Set your heart to study the gospel.

4.2. Living by the Gospel

Then set your heart to *do* it. Jesus said the same thing to his disciples: “If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them” (John 13:17). Doing the gospel means living by grace. This is crucial for pastors and seminary students because we are learning so much Scripture that either we will become a spiritual giant or else we will become a bigger and bigger Pharisee. Our only hope is to live by grace, not striving to serve the Lord in our own strength, but depending moment by moment on the enabling power of his Holy Spirit.

Living by grace means accepting that you are a desperately needy sinner—a selfish, arrogant, and graspingly depraved individual who can be saved only by the blood of God. It means believing that Jesus died for your sins and that now your value before God is not based on how much you know or how well you are doing in your classes or how productive you are as a scholar or by how many people hear you preach or by any other human standard, but only by the merits of Jesus Christ. It means living in deep dependence on the enabling work of the Holy Spirit. And it means living for others in a Christ-like way so that his cross becomes the pattern for your discipleship and his resurrection becomes the power in your ministry.

Nowhere is this more crucial than in your home. When a man loves a woman with the love of Christ—the sacrificial love that he showed on the cross—it changes her entire life. But if he doesn't, then even his ministry becomes bitter to her. And when a woman loves with the love of Christ—the submissive love he showed on his way to the cross when he did his Father's will instead of his own—then she becomes more fully the woman that God is calling her to become. Understand that the most important test of our seminary education or our ministry is the way we treat the people we live with when they are hard to love.

4.3. Teaching the Gospel

Finally, set your heart to *teach* the gospel. To begin with, this means teaching the gospel in the church. I always think that about half the value of a seminary education depends on what you are doing in the church for ministry. I remember Tim Keller telling us that Reformed theology was like plutonium: if all you do is ingest it, it will make you sick; but if you wire it into your life and teaching, it is explosive. So take advantage of whatever opportunities you have to share what you are learning. John Witherspoon, who served as the first president of Princeton University, said, “True religion will give unspeakable force to what a minister says. There is a piercing and penetrating heat in that which flows from the heart.”

But teaching the gospel also means teaching it to people who do not even know it. Who have you shared the gospel with this week? Who is the person you are praying to lead to Christ in the coming year? By the power of the Holy Spirit, the gospel we study is to have a transforming influence on our community, our city, and our world. I pray that your theological education and your calling to ministry will not be wasted, but that through your personal ministry of the gospel, the things you are learning from the Scriptures will help bring people to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ.

What is your heart set on this year? It is wonderful that the Bible says that Ezra had set his heart on studying and doing and teaching God's law. It would be just as wonderful if God could write something similar about us: that we had set our hearts to study the gospel of Jesus Christ, to live in the power of his crucifixion and resurrection, and then to preach the cross and the empty tomb to others. To that end, may God “equip you with everything good that you may do his will” (Heb 13:21).



Book Reviews

— OLD TESTAMENT —

- Bob Becking and Eric Peels, eds. *Psalms and Prayers*. Reviewed by Leslie C. Allen 72
- Rami Arav, ed. *Cities Through the Looking Glass: Essays on the History and Archaeology of Biblical Urbanism*. Reviewed by John Goldingay 73
- Richard S. Hess and Elmer A. Martens. *War in the Bible and Terrorism in the Twenty-First Century*. Reviewed by John Goldingay 74
- S. A. Brayford. *Genesis*. Reviewed by Myrto Theocharous 76

— NEW TESTAMENT —

- Kenneth Berding and Jonathan Lunde, eds. *Three Views on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*. Reviewed by D. A. Carson 78
- Andreas J. Köstenberger and Scott R. Swain. *Father, Son and Spirit: The Trinity and John's Gospel*. Reviewed by Philip R. Gons 80
- PHEME PERKINS. *Introduction to the Synoptic Gospels*. Reviewed by Daniel M. Gurtner 82
- Kenneth E. Bailey. *Jesus Through Middle Eastern Eyes: Cultural Studies in the Gospels*. Reviewed by Mark Jason 84
- James W. Aageson. *Paul, the Pastoral Epistles, and the Early Church*. Reviewed by I. Howard Marshall 85
- Gerald O'Collins. *Jesus: A Portrait*. Reviewed by Michael W. Pahl 87

— HISTORY AND HISTORICAL THEOLOGY —

- Stephen Hampton. *Anti-Arminians: The Anglican Reformed Tradition from Charles II to George I*. Reviewed by Graham A. Cole 89
- John Wolffe. *The Expansion of Evangelicalism: The Age of Wilberforce, More, Chalmers and Finney*. Reviewed by Nathan A. Finn 90
- Andreas J. Köstenberger, ed. *Quo Vadis Evangelicalism? Perspectives on the Past, Direction for the Future: Nine Presidential Addresses from the First Fifty Years of the Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society*. Reviewed by David Roach 92

— SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY AND BIOETHICS —

Bruce L. McCormack, ed. <i>Engaging the Doctrine of God: Contemporary Protestant Perspectives.</i> Reviewed by Graham A. Cole	93
Andy Crouch. <i>Culture Making: Recovering Our Creative Calling.</i> Reviewed by William Edgar	94
Jerry L. Walls, ed. <i>The Oxford Handbook of Eschatology.</i> Reviewed by Kent Eilers	97
Charles E. Rosenberg. <i>Our Present Complaint: American Medicine, Then and Now.</i> Reviewed by Sharon A. Falkenheimer	100
David T. Williams. <i>Vinculum Amoris: A Theology of the Holy Spirit.</i> Reviewed by David G. Firth	102
Bonnie Steinbock, ed. <i>The Oxford Handbook of Bioethics.</i> Reviewed by David B. Fletcher	103
Derek Tidball, David Hilborn, and Justin Thacker, eds. <i>The Atonement Debate: Papers from the London Symposium on the Theology of Atonement.</i> Reviewed by Kevin D. Kennedy	104
Alan Spence. <i>Incarnation and Inspiration: John Owen and the Coherence of Christology.</i> Reviewed by Mark McDowell	105
Richard A. Muller. <i>Christ and the Decree: Christology and Predestination in Reformed Theology from Calvin to Perkins.</i> Reviewed by James R. A. Merrick	107
Fred Sanders and Klaus Issler, eds. <i>Jesus in Trinitarian Perspective: An Introductory Christology.</i> Reviewed by James R. A. Merrick	109
Graham A. Cole. <i>Engaging with the Holy Spirit: Real Questions, Practical Answers.</i> Reviewed by Steve L. Porter	111
John Piper. <i>The Future of Justification: A Response to N. T. Wright.</i> Reviewed by Stephen B. Smith	113
Peter Conrad. <i>The Medicalization of Society: On the Transformation of Human Conditions into Treatable Disorders.</i> Reviewed by S. Elizabeth Whitmore	115
Michael S. Horton. <i>Covenant and Salvation: Union with Christ.</i> Reviewed by Stephen N. Williams	117

BOOK NOTES

David Lovelace. <i>Scattershot: My Bipolar Family.</i> Reviewed by Hans Madueme	118
George Marsden. <i>A Short Life of Jonathan Edwards.</i> Reviewed by Hans Madueme	119

— ETHICS AND PASTORALIA —

THEOLOGY FOR KIDS: RECOMMENDING SOME RECENT BOOKS
FOR YOUNGER CHILDREN Reviewed by Andrew David Naselli and Jennifer J. Naselli

— BIBLE STORY BOOKS —

- Sally Lloyd-Jones. *The Jesus Storybook Bible: Every Story Whispers His Name.* 121
- David Helm. *The Big Picture Story Bible.* 121
- ESV Illustrated Family Bible: 270 Selections from the Holy Bible.* 122

— OTHER STORY BOOKS —

- Starr Meade. *Keeping Holiday.* 122
- Randy Alcorn. *Tell Me About Heaven.* 122
- R. C. Sproul. *The Prince's Poison Cup.* 123
- R. C. Sproul. *The Lightlings.* 123
- R. C. Sproul. *The Priest with Dirty Clothes: A Timeless Story of God's Love and Forgiveness.* 123
- John Bunyan. *Dangerous Journey: The Story of Pilgrim's Progress.* 124
- Paul L. Maier. *Martin Luther: A Man Who Changed the World.* 124
- Kel Richards. *Gumtree Gully.* 124

— SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY BOOKS —

- Bruce A. Ware. *Big Truths for Young Hearts: Teaching and Learning the Greatness of God.* 125
- John MacArthur. *A Faith to Grow On: Important Things You Should Know Now That You Believe.* 125

— MISSION AND CULTURE —

- Quentin J. Schulze and Robert H. Woods Jr., eds. *Understanding Evangelical Media: The Changing Face of Christian Communication.* Reviewed by James Cary 126
- John Corrie, ed. *Dictionary of Mission Theology: Evangelical Foundations.* Reviewed by Andrew Curry 127

— OLD TESTAMENT —

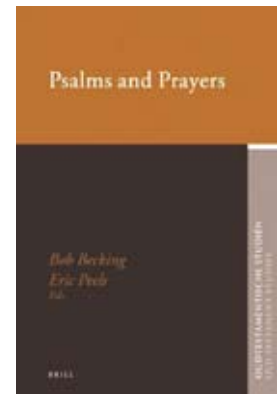
Bob Becking and Eric Peels, eds. *Psalms and Prayers*. Oudtestamentische Studiën 55. Leiden: Brill, 2007. vi + 306 pp. £99.00/\$135.00.

This diverse and stimulating volume of fifteen papers by Dutch and British scholars has a general focus on Israel's response to God's revelation. (These papers were read at the Joint Meeting of the Society of Old Testament Study and Het Oudtestamentisch Werkgezelschap in Nederland en België, Appeldoorn, in August 2006.)

Four papers deal with particular Psalms. Alistair G. Hunter explores the lexical and structural links between Ps 55 and the book of Jonah and hypothesizes that the psalm was the literary inspiration for the story, the name "Jonah" or "dove" playing on Ps 55:6. Christiane de Vos and Gert Kwakkel maintain the coherence of the complex Ps 69, or at least vv. 1–32, from the particular perspectives of the psalmist's understanding of himself as both sinner and zealous saint and of God as both punisher and savior, who is on his enemies' side and also on his own side. Jan Fokkelman tackles the much-debated issue of structure in Ps 103, refining an earlier study. He finds three stanzas, vv. 1–8, 9–16, and 17–22, which subdivide into eight strophes. The fifth strophe, vv. 11–13, functions as the heart of the psalm; it has two surrounding rings of strophes, vv. 9–10 and 14–16 and vv. 6–8 and 17–19. Jan Holman, who has written much on Ps 139, here examines the difficult v. 20. He supplements his plausible earlier find of a reference to idols in v. 24 with a carefully argued suggestion that two terms for idols occur in v. 20, so that the verse charges that the psalmist's enemies use Yahweh's name for idolatrous ends.

There are five general studies of the Psalter. The first is John Elwolde's contribution, which asks what text-critical light the Qumran Hodayot shed on Pss 1–41 in seventeen cases of possible usage. He engages carefully with previous scholarship and his meager results in no way detract from the worthwhileness of his investigation. There are four thematic studies. Adrian H. W. Curtis ponders the rarity of divine fatherhood in the Psalter. John Day discusses where the ark and the cherubim are referred to in the Psalms and where not. Roger Tomes asks what is new in the formula "sing a new song" in the six psalms in which it appears and in Isa 42:10 and also in Judith 16 and Rev 5 and 14, where it is echoed. Paul Sanders examines a series of arguments used to persuade God to help in the Psalms against the background of the arguments brought to the Hittite gods in the prayers of the fourteenth-century king Mursili II and discusses their manifold similarities and a few significant differences. He also adduces some parallels in Mesopotamian and Egyptian texts. He suggests that the similarities are due to the influence of the older Babylonian tradition on both Hittite and Israelite religion.

Two papers are concerned with the later use of the Psalter. Howard N. Wallace enquires into aspects of the book that built bridges enabling faith-communities to appropriate its contents. He finds a complex process of shaping in the Psalms to encourage later use and illustrates it with a number of examples from the beginning of the Psalter, such as the linking of Ps 2 with Ps 1 that opened up its royal content to a general readership. Gordon Wenham approaches the same concern from an ethical standpoint. Using other examples of religious compilations and their intended impact on readers and



drawing on speech-act theory, he maintains that reading the Psalms is a speech-act that commits the reader to following a God-approved life.

Marjo C. A. Korpel's paper is devoted to cases in prophetic literature, the hymn of Isa 12:2–6 and the prayer of Jer 10:23–25. His interest is in evidence of textual delimitation as an aid to understanding the relation between the texts and their contexts. The remaining three papers deal with prayers set in narrative texts of the OT. The first, by Jaap van Dorp, studies Isaiah's prayer in 2 Kgs 20:11 and in particular "the dial of Ahaz" (NRSV). He uses the precise language of the text to identify it not as a staircase but indeed a sundial, a type that employed retrogradation, a reproducible but essentially mysterious phenomenon that the text attributes to divine intervention. Pancratius C. Beentjes makes an extensive examination of all the prayers and psalms in Chronicles and shows that they reflect the Chronicler's distinctive theological emphases. Finally, Eep Talstra engages in a careful study of the prayer in Nehemiah 1 and finds that it uses traditional texts and truths to create a new discourse of prayer suitable for the situation in which God's people now found themselves.

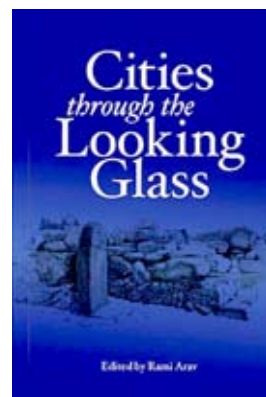
Leslie C. Allen
Fuller Theological Seminary
Pasadena, California, USA

Rami Arav, ed. *Cities Through the Looking Glass: Essays on the History and Archaeology of Biblical Urbanism*. Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2008. x + 134 pp. £22.00/\$34.50.

This symposium has its background in a conference on Urbanism in the Biblical World in 2003 that was designed to make it possible for "text scholars" and "material culture scholars" to interact. (The essays are described as "inspired by" the papers at the conference. I am still wondering what that means. It sounds like a quasi-soundtrack CD of songs that never made it into the movie.) The collection is subtitled "Essays on the History and Archaeology of Biblical Urbanism," and I expected to find it focusing on Israel in Old Testament times, though it actually ranges much wider.

It does begin with a paper by Nicholae Roddy on "the image of city in the Hebrew Bible." Given that he dissociates himself from the theological impetus of Jacques Ellul's *The Meaning of the City*, it is the more significant that Dr. Roddy agrees with Ellul that the Old Testament's estimate of the city is overwhelmingly negative; "from the vantage point of Israel's exiled seers and visionaries, the city remains little more than an inherently incomplete, human-made construct of magnificent emptiness and fleeting shadow" (p. 21). (I am puzzled at the emphasis on the exile here and elsewhere in the paper, since other parts of the paper show that this is not a uniquely exilic stance.)

Paul Allen Williams then suggests that the attitude to cities in the Gospels is similar. Cities are powerful places and dangerous places. On the other hand, the picture changes in the Epistles, where Christian communities are an urban-focused phenomenon even while defining themselves in opposition to the cities' social and political structures. Laura Grams's paper on "The City and the Philosopher in Ancient Greece" demonstrates that attitudes are rather different in Greek thinking as represented by Socrates and his descendants. Leonard Greenspoon's paper on "Text and the City" at first also seems rather more tangentially related to the symposium's theme, but it interestingly shows how the text of the



Septuagint, presumed to have been translated in Alexandria, reflects the life of the translator's city and the need to communicate with the Jewish community there.

John T. Greene focuses on cities in Galilee, not in New Testament times but in the Iron Age, and reports on excavations at Kinneret, Hazor, Dan, and Bethsaida (Tzer)—two cities well-known from the Old Testament text, two not so well-known in that connection. He notes the great significance of these cities in that region but also how these four main “pearls of the Upper Galilee” were thus “doomed” once Assyria decided to campaign in the area (p. 79). The last city in these four, Bethsaida, is then the subject of the book's longest chapter by the editor, who is one of its senior excavators. The essay offers a thorough account of this fortified city's environment, landscape, flora and fauna, layout, buildings, and religious life. Finally, the last chapter is another “case study” of a city, Jerusalem itself, by leading Israeli geographer and archeologist Dan Bahat; he was for a long period the official archeologist of the city of Jerusalem and has been called “Israel's Indiana Jones.” He describes the development of Jerusalem between the Hasmoneans and Herod the Great, illustrating the possibilities and the challenges involved in bringing together written sources and archeological discoveries.

John Goldingay
Fuller Theological Seminary
Pasadena, California, USA

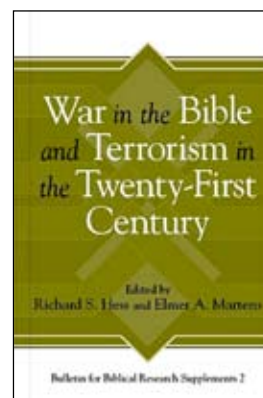
Richard S. Hess and Elmer A. Martens. *War in the Bible and Terrorism in the Twenty-First Century*. Bulletin for Biblical Research Supplement 2. Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2008. xii + 164 pp. £22.00/\$34.50.

This collection of essays results from a conference at Denver Seminary in 2004. It must have been an interesting event because the symposium represents a wide range of views. I would like to have overheard the conversations over dinner.

It begins with a paper on “Christianity and Violence” by my former colleague, theologian Miroslav Volf, whose qualifications include his experience of the terrible conflicts that followed the breakup of Yugoslavia. I appreciated the way he argues against the idea that religion by nature is violent, the idea that monotheism entails violence, and the misuse of Christian faith to underwrite violence. I was less sure about his argument against the idea that neither creation nor new creation involve violence, since there is significant scriptural material that suggests that the contrary is true.

The subsequent chapter by Richard Hess brings out this problem in its own way as it provides an overview of warfare in the Hebrew Bible and thus considers themes such as Yahweh the warrior. It closes with the observation that the Bible “recognizes battle as a necessary evil in the context of a greater struggle between good and evil” (p. 32). That again seems a modern way to frame the issue. The Bible is more accepting of warfare than this implies.

Elmer Martens then argues that (contrary to one of the views Volf contests) *shalom* is the legacy of biblical monotheism. But he too has to comment that if this is so, “texts in which God instructs Israel to annihilate her enemies . . . represent a conundrum” (p. 43), and he surveys ways of seeking to resolve it. In my view, one of the considerations that help with the conundrum is that the peoples Dr. Martens



mentions as ones God instructs Israel to annihilate (such as the Hittites and Canaanites) are not Israel's enemies. They are people whom God chooses to treat as enemies (because of their wrongdoing).

Daniel Carroll then discusses "Impulses Toward Peace in a Country at War: The Book of Isaiah Between Realism and Hope"; he too writes against the background of personal involvement in the issues he discusses, having lived in Guatemala from 1982 to 1996. It is a promising place to start if we want to think about faith and warfare, given that like other prophets, Isaiah has no place for Israel fighting.

Daniel Heimbach then provides an interesting reflection on the Gulf War, writing as someone who affirms the notion of "Just War," though a key point he wishes to emphasize is that the claim that in our context the notion of just war can justify pre-emptive war is a harmful modification of this notion. Tony Pfaff, a lieutenant colonel in the U.S. Army, then reflects on the moral dilemmas involved in attacking terrorist groups with the attendant risk of harming civilians. While the risk cannot be avoided, he concludes that, in the midst of justifiable U.S. anger, "its leaders must take care not to become like the enemy it opposes" (p. 112). Ian Durie, a former major general in the British army, continues the discussion of terrorism and just war, asking how far just war theory can be applied to attacks on terrorism. (I found this an especially moving chapter because Ian Durie was a student at the seminary where I taught in the U.K. but was killed in a traffic accident in Romania while in that country to teach the ethics of leadership.)

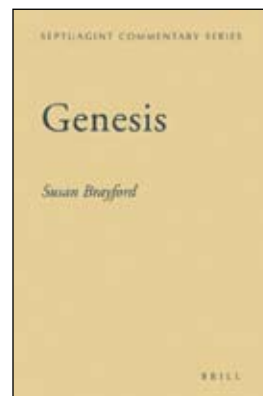
The final chapter by my colleague Glen Stassen abjures discussion of whether war can be justified in favor of arguing for the way just peacemaking can reduce terrorism and suggests ten just peacemaking practices such as using cooperative conflict resolution, fostering just and sustainable economic development, and reducing the weapons trade. I would like to think he is right, though I am not sure that we have the evidence, and he reminded me of G. K. Chesterton's saying: "The Christian ideal has not been tried and found wanting. It has been found difficult and left untried."

I think much of the symposium reflects an unresolved and often unrecognized problem about biblical interpretation in connection with issues related to war and peace. It was only in the context of modernity that war became a problem, something whose existence people were no longer willing simply to accept as a reality of human life and something they believed could be overcome. The nature of war in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries and the frighteningly war-making nature of our lifetime then made it even more impossible to come to terms with the reality of war as "just one of those things." In this context I can quite believe that God calls the church to pacifism and just peacemaking. But the problem in connection with biblical interpretation is that we then read into Scripture such concerns that God gives us, when these concerns are not present in Scripture where the context was so different and where the nature of the faith's interaction with war was so different. We assume that Scripture should and does operate with the same framework as we do. It does not, and this is all right. But we need to come to think in its framework if we are to learn from it.

John Goldingay
Fuller Theological Seminary
Pasadena, California, USA

S. A. Brayford. *Genesis*. Edited by Stanley E. Porter, Richard S. Hess, and John Jarick. Septuagint Commentary Series. Leiden: Brill, 2007. x + 470 pp. £177.00/\$264.00.

The Genesis commentary of E. J. Brill's Septuagint Commentary Series responds to the need for the study of the Septuagint in its own right. The commentary departs from two objectives that generally govern the philosophy behind such an attempt: (1) It pursues the original meaning as intended by the translator. Simply stated, this approach is based on the best available eclectic text which represents, as far as possible, the original Greek translation of a given book, and thus is closely compared to the extant Hebrew text in order to observe the translator's responses to his presumed *Vorlage*. The NETS translation and the IOSCS-SBL Septuagint Commentary Series follow this approach. (2) It pursues the interpretation of the translation as it was subsequently received by Jews and Christians. This approach chooses not to be 'hindered' by comparison of the Septuagint with its corresponding Hebrew text for the understanding of the sense of the Greek, but instead seeks to interpret the Greek in its own right, and, if appropriate, through contemporary Greek texts. *La Bible d'Alexandrie* is the first major commentary series to produce its translation according to these principles; it considers the Hebrew text only in order to establish divergencies between the two. Regarding the understanding of these divergencies, Marguerite Harl states, 'We limit ourselves to establishing the meaning that a "divergency" receives in the LXX context and translate the new meaning acquired by the verse or by the whole pericope' ("La Bible d'Alexandrie," in *X Congress of the International Organisation for Septuagint and Cognate Studies, Oslo, 1998* [SBLSCS 51; Atlanta: SBL, 2001], 193).



The approach of this commentary series marks a new path; it is not based on an eclectic text but, in this volume, has Codex Alexandrinus (a fairly complete 5th-century text of the Greek Genesis) as its base text, supplemented by Codex Cottonianus Geneseos (Codex D, 5th or 6th century). The reason for this approach is 'to produce a text that actually existed in a particular reading community' (p. 24).

Brayford begins by offering a concise introduction on Septuagint origins (pp. 1–5) and the early history of the Greek translation (pp. 5–7). She then focuses on the textual history of the Greek Genesis and the development of various editions (pp. 7–12) before progressing to discussion of modern LXX scholarship (pp. 12–24). She closes this section by introducing the philosophy and methodology of the Series, summarised in this statement: 'the guiding principle for the comments is that of reflecting on the manner in which the readers of ALEX (Alexandrinus) might have understood and interpreted their Greek Genesis' (p. 26).

The first major part of the book displays the Greek text on the left-hand page with the English translation on the right (pp. 32–201); comments follow, occupying the second half of the book (pp. 205–452).

This work can be best described as a commentary for the 21st century community of Codex Alexandrinus. It addresses the contemporary reading community of this Codex, comprised of educated readers who are in possession of a larger quantity of information than the previous Alexandrinus communities have been. Today's readers have greater access to both Greek and Hebrew manuscripts, they are more familiar with the world of the Ancient Near East and how it sheds light on the understanding of the Hebrew Bible in its original context (e.g., pp. 251, 263–64, 271, 417), and they are aware of the Hellenistic ideologies (e.g., pp. 205–7, 257), rabbinic interpretations (e.g., pp. 223, 257),

patristic interpretations (e.g., pp. 206, 232, 259), source criticism (documentary hypothesis) (e.g., pp. 263, 266–67, 284), and feminist theology (e.g., pp. 242–44). It is this educated ‘awareness’ of Brayford’s readers that allows her to juxtapose the Hebrew and the Greek text and to examine how the sense differs between one and the other. This same ‘awareness’ allows her to use equally Claus Westermann’s and Nahum Sarna’s commentaries with Wevers’ notes and Marguerite Harl’s *La Genèse*.

The richness of material that Brayford provides us with is, paradoxically, both the strength and the weakness of her work. She finds it ‘impossible to ascertain the intention of the author or the translator’ (p. 26), yet she reflects, at times, on his theology and his Alexandrian milieu, a practice which is not any different in nature from reflecting on what the readers of Alexandrinus might have understood. Although Brayford adopts Alexandrinus, a Christian text, because it ‘actually existed in a particular reading community’, she does not examine its 5th-century Christian reception (historically the closest possible reading community of Alexandrinus). Rather, attention is placed on interpretations from an Ancient Near Eastern perspective (which were probably unknown and irrelevant to Alexandrinus’ Christian community) rather than on Christian Patristic reflections. The possible meanings that can be derived from Alexandrinus today are not identical to those that its 5th-century community could have derived from it. Aiming to reflect on an historical community’s understanding of a text would necessarily discourage one from retrojecting later interpretations on to it.

While bringing together in one commentary all interpretative levels (including that of the original translator) in the reception-history of the text cannot avoid the risk of being ‘ahistorical’ and thus endangering the guiding principle on which Codex Alexandrinus was selected in the first place. Nevertheless, the reader who wants a polyphony of interpretation on the Greek Genesis, all in one commentary, will find this work very useful.

Myrto Theocharous
University of Cambridge
Cambridge, England, UK

— NEW TESTAMENT —

Kenneth Berding and Jonathan Lunde, eds. *Three Views on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*. Counterpoints. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2008. 256 pp. \$16.99.

The three views to which the title refers are upheld, respectively, by Walter C. Kaiser Jr. (“Single Meaning, Unified Referents: Accurate and Authoritative Citations of the Old Testament by the New Testament”), Darrell L. Bock (“Single Meaning, Multiple Contexts and Referents: The New Testament’s Legitimate, Accurate, and Multifaceted Use of the Old”), and Peter Enns (“Fuller Meaning, Single Goal: A Christotelic Approach to the New Testament Use of the Old in Its First-Century Interpretive Environment”). The book follows the format now made familiar by other volumes in the series: each writer contributes a major essay and responds to the other two contributors. One editor, Jonathan Lunde, writes an opening chapter introducing the central questions raised by the New Testament use of the Old, and Kenneth Berding, the other editor, offers a concluding analysis of the three views.



Each of the three contributors was asked to comment specifically on five topics (set forth by Lunde and summarized by Berding) that have a bearing on the book’s subject:

(1) *Sensus plenior*: Is there a “fuller meaning” to the Old Testament text than the Old Testament prophet himself understood, a meaning that doubtless God intended and the New Testament author discloses? Kaiser says no. He insists that only “that which stands written in the text” is Scripture. Bock is willing to approve *sensus plenior* in some limited sense, for God’s knowledge of the future contexts and referents was transparently greater than that of the Old Testament writer. Even so, the Old Testament passages reused in the New Testament reflect central ideas that are stable across the Testaments. Sometimes at the narrow exegetical level contemporary interpreters may have difficulty discerning the connections, but the connections become clear at the canonical level of interpretation. Enns holds that *sensus plenior* is a helpful “theological construct” not only because it deals fairly with the fact that the Old Testament texts in question have both a human and a divine author, but also because this approach handles the instances when there is some sort of “disconnect” between the Old Testament passage and its use by the New Testament. New Testament writers were not limited by “grammatical-historical principles” but broadly mirrored the techniques of other first-century Jews. What made them different was their conviction that “Christ is somehow the *end (telos)* to which the OT story is heading” (and hence the “Christotelic Approach” of Enns’s subtitle).

(2) Typology: Is typology a valid category, and if so how are we to understand it? Kaiser accepts that there are repeatable patterns in the Old Testament that belong to the “promise-plan of God,” and that these are sometimes fulfilled in the New Testament. He insists, however, that these are invariably in some way or other designated as such within the Old Testament itself—i.e., it will not do to recognize them as predictive “types” only after the fact, for then they are not properly predictive at all. Bock holds that “typological patterns in history” are central to understanding the relationships between the Old Testament and the New. Some of these are clearly predictive, he says, but in other cases the pattern is not recognized or anticipated until it is fulfilled. This, however, is perfectly acceptable, since God designed the pattern, even if the human authors did not recognize it before its fulfillment. Enns affirms that

typology is a helpful way to understand how the New Testament uses the Old, but doubts that typology provides “an adequate *hermeneutical* explanation for the way New Testament writers actually cite Old Testament texts. Typology, in other words, does not explain their actual usage of Old Testament texts. For this, one must observe how the New Testament writers are simply deploying the commonly shared hermeneutics of Second Temple Judaism, the environment in which they did their work.

(3) Context: Do the New Testament authors observe and respect the contexts of the Old Testament texts they cite, or do they treat them atomistically, ripping them out of their (literary or historical) contexts? Kaiser offers numerous examples to demonstrate his conviction that New Testament writers commonly reckon with the context of the Old Testament texts they cite, but that context includes all divine revelation that *precedes* the text in question. Bock denies that New Testament authors offer atomistic readings, but argues that they bear in mind *two* contexts, the exegetical and the canonical. The latter in particular generates “a grand synthetic reading” that shows the New Testament writers do their work “in light of the progress of revelation.” Enns asserts that only sometimes do the New Testament writers read Old Testament texts contextually, but even when they do, this must not be seen as a resolution of obvious tensions between the Testaments. The New Testament writers are simply participating in all the exegetical and interpretive practices common to the Judaism at the time of the Second Temple.

(4) Exegetical methods: Do the New Testament authors simply share the interpretive assumptions and methods of their unconverted Jewish contemporaries, or do they deploy distinctive exegetical and interpretive grids? If the latter, what are they? Kaiser holds that it is unwise to appeal to ostensible Jewish parallels. For a start, such approaches would not be apologetically convincing when it comes to proving that Jesus truly is the promised Messiah. Bock provides a list of six “presuppositions” that guide the New Testament authors (a list substantially worked up by Lunde in his opening chapter), but insists that only the three of them are shared with Judaism. In other words, as Berding points, Bock “resists any appeal to Jewish methods that involves a rupture in the essential unity between OT and NT meanings.” By contrast, Enns insists that no wedge can legitimately be driven between the New Testament authors’ “interpretive practices” and those of Second Temple Judaism; the same could be said for the New Testament’s “interpretive traditions.” The only thing that distinguishes the interpretation of the New Testament authors is their certainty that all of the Old Testament points to Christ.

(5) Replication: Can contemporary readers of the Bible properly duplicate the exegesis of the Old Testament exemplified by the New Testament writers? All three scholars answer in the affirmative, though what they think we are to replicate varies considerably. Kaiser holds that the New Testament authors’ interpretive method is essentially grammatical and historical, and we may safely—indeed, we must—follow their lead in careful reading of the biblical text. Bock claims that we tend to read the Bible the way the apostles did even when we think we do not. In other words, as Christians we adopt a “theological-canonical” reading of Scripture, and so our specific exegeses are worked out within this grid. In principle, then, the apostles become not only the primary witnesses to the gospel but also “our hermeneutical guides.” Enns says we should duplicate what the New Testament writers do, but “more in terms of their hermeneutical goal than in terms of their exegetical methods and interpretive traditions.”

The book is thoughtfully set out, and the writing is clear. Many more details are evaluated than can show up in this brief review. One wishes that the editors had set the three principal writers not only five questions that they had to answer, but also, say, ten specific instances, of various kinds, where the New Testament cites the Old. One would have had a much better grasp of the outworking of theory in the

less forgiving terrain of exegesis. In any case, the volume is useful for students first breaking into these debates, though they should be warned in advance that the three positions advocated here are far from being the only ones. It is doubtful that any informed reader will change his or her mind as a result of reading this book.

Inevitably, I kept wanting to ask my own questions to one writer or another. For example: Even if we accept that (at least some kinds of) types in the Old Testament are clearly predictive, would the human author of the first entry in a series of events/institutions that become a repeated pattern (i.e., a type) have understood that he was laying the cornerstone for a type? Doubtless God would know, and presumably the more discerning of later human authors would sooner or later discern the pattern, but why is it necessary or even plausible to assert that the author of the first entry would be so discerning? Or again: Is it not the case that the more one insists that the New Testament authors' interpretive methods exactly mirror those of Second Temple Judaism, the harder it is to explain why their understanding of what *Tanakh* (the Hebrew Bible) actually says differs so much from theirs? If one responds that this difference is entirely explained by "Christotelic" commitments that are themselves entirely independent of distinctive exegesis, then neither the Jewish nor the Christian exegesis has much to do with the determination of meaning. More questions spring to mind, but perhaps it is unfair to give the impression the authors should have written a different sort of book.

D. A. Carson
Trinity Evangelical Divinity School
Deerfield, Illinois, USA

Andreas J. Köstenberger and Scott R. Swain. *Father, Son and Spirit: The Trinity and John's Gospel*. Edited by D. A. Carson. New Studies in Biblical Theology 24. Downers Grove: IVP, 2008. 224 pp. £12.99/\$22.00.

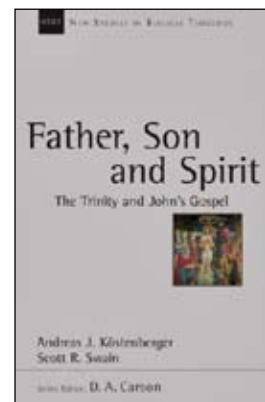
In the midst of the Trinity debates in evangelicalism today, *Father, Son and Spirit* (FSS) is a welcome contribution that provides a solid biblical-theological study of one of the most important biblical books on the triune nature of the Godhead.

FSS proceeds in three sections: the historical context of John's theology of the Trinity (chap. 1), the biblical data on the key trinitarian terminology (chaps. 2–6), and theological implications (chaps. 7–10). The following points summarize the main contours of each chapter.

1. FSS relies heavily on Bauckham in affirming the historical reliability of John's Gospel as eyewitness testimony, but—contra Bauckham—defends that the author was the apostle John. The notion of Jesus as θεός "did not violate . . . Jewish monotheism" (pp. 33, 37; but cf. p. 35, on which see below), though it did stretch its boundaries.

2. As a character, θεός (in contrast to πατήρ), who appears most often in John 1–12, "remains in the background" and is the subject of comparatively few active terms (p. 59; cf. p. 47). John's Gospel is not so much his telling the story of Jesus as it is Jesus' telling the story of God.

3. Very little attention has been given to the study of the Father in John's Gospel. God's Fatherhood is properly understood only when set within the context of Jewish patricentrism.



4. Pervading the Gospel in its absolute and combination forms, *υἱός* is at the heart of John's Christology—most notably with Jesus using the term of Himself.

5. The Spirit comes to the fore once the Son's return to the Father approaches. As another "helping presence," He continues—and advances—Jesus' presence with the disciples by reminding, testifying, convicting, and guiding and "fulfills similar roles in believers today" (p. 98).

6. John presents the relationships among Father, Son, and Spirit in "a clearly defined relational as well as salvation-historical framework," within which they exist in perfect unity while maintaining "distinctions of person and role" (pp. 105–6).

7. John's Christology finds proper explication only in trinitarian terms. The father-son relationship, where both equality and taxis (order) exist in harmony, provides the only sure means of reconciling Jesus' equality with and His dependence upon the Father. While "the Father enjoys *personal* priority in the taxis of the triune life," all three persons share equally the divine essence (p. 123). Only the Son was fit to be the God-man in order to fulfill the role of "Servant of Yahweh" (p. 126).

8. The Spirit relates to Jesus' followers similarly to how He related to Jesus. The Father sends the Spirit, who rests and remains upon the Son, and then, through the Son, rests and remains upon Jesus' disciples. This analogous relationship is the result of Jesus' brothers having a share in His filial relationship with the Father.

9. John's missiology is not a function of his trinitarian theology; to the contrary, "John's presentation of Father, Son and Spirit is a function of his mission theology" (p. 149). The church must conceive of and fulfill its mission in a trinitarian way.

10. John 17 summarizes John's trinitarianism, though the Spirit's presence is implicit rather than explicit. The Triune God reveals Himself as He is *ad intra*. Otherwise, God's mission of self-revelation must be considered a failure. How the persons relate in the economic Trinity parallels how they relate in the immanent Trinity.

FSS repeatedly engages the egalitarian trinitarianism of Kevin Giles, et al. and responds to its misrepresentations (pp. 52, 71, 88, 90, 92, 105–7, 118–26, 172–73). Subordination is eternal, unidirectional, and irreversible. It is both functional and personal, but never ontological.

FSS has much to commend it. It is thorough, organized, Bible-saturated, up-to-date, and generally lucid and compelling.

Nonetheless, *FSS* has several weaknesses.

1. Inaccuracies: *FSS* is dedicated "to the triune God" using Eph 1:14's "to the praise of his glory" (p. 5). Yet in the context, this passage almost certainly refers to the Father. *FSS* avers that there are 41 occurrences of Jesus as Son and, if the four occurrences of *μονογενής* are included, then 45. However, in two of those occurrences (3:16, 18), *μονογενής* is modifying *υἱός* so that both terms cannot be counted. The total would be 43.

2. Inconsistencies: It is not entirely clear how the authors would harmonize these two statements: "Neither John nor the other NT writers evidence any consciousness of tension between the attribution of deity to Jesus and their Jewish monotheistic beliefs" (p. 37) and "Any claims to deity by an individual such as Jesus would have been fiercely opposed by pious first-century Jews" (p. 35). Perhaps the simple answer is Matt 16:17, but they do not suggest a resolution. *FSS* also argues that John 3 is "probably not [referring] to the person of the Holy Spirit" but to "spiritual . . . birth" (p. 94), but then uses 3:5, 6, 8 as the primary passage on "the Spirit's role in regeneration" (p. 96). Finally, though the chapter on mission was one of the best, it departs—without explanation—from the other chapters by broadening the scope to include John's letters.

4. Vagueness: Several of the ten tables are not illuminating and even confusing.

5. Typos: A handful of errors were missed: “ironing sharpening iron” (p. 13), missing comma (p. 21), missing author (James D. G. Dunn, p. 196), and capitalization errors (pp. 191, 204, 205).

6. Omission: The absence of a subject index reduces its value for quick reference.

In spite of its several minor shortcomings, *FSS* fills an important gap in the intersection of Johannine and trinitarian studies and deserves wide readership.

Philip R. Gons

Bob Jones University Seminary
Greenville, South Carolina, USA

PHEME PERKINS. *Introduction to the Synoptic Gospels*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007. xvi + 312 pp. \$28.00.

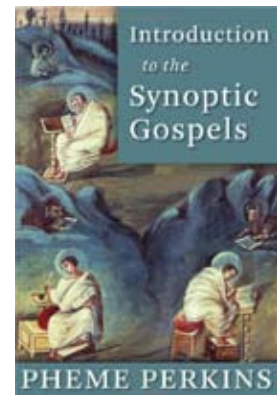
Introduction to the Synoptic Gospels is an engaging and accessible volume written for the general reader. All the while, Perkins, professor of NT in the theology department at Boston College, does not shy away from attending to scholarly methods by “explaining the what and why of the methods used by scholars when we approach the Gospels” (p. xiv).

Chapter 1, “What Is a Gospel” (pp. 1–30), addresses the question of genre, surveying the use of “gospel” in secular literature and its appropriation in Christian tradition for the “deeds of salvation in Jesus Christ” (p. 1). Perkins identifies the gospels in the genre of “life” or biography, importantly clarifying that this is in a decidedly ancient rather than modern sense, but also illustrating its differences from Greco-Roman *bioi* of antiquity.

Chapter 2, “Books and Believers in Early Christianity” (pp. 31–53), begins by discussing literacy rates in antiquity and the importance of the written word for Judaism and Christianity. Here Perkins explores the way in which books were created, copied, and preserved in the early centuries. Chapter 3, “The Quest for Sources,” is by far the longest chapter in the book (pp. 54–125). Beginning with Luke’s preface, the author elucidates the importance of recognizing gospel sources, introducing readers to a synopsis to illustrate differences. Importantly, she shows that Q is decidedly not a gospel; it lacks narrative and mention of the death/resurrection of Jesus (p. 86).

The next chapters cover each of the Synoptics: “Reading Mark’s Gospel” (pp. 126–63), “Reading Matthew’s Gospel” (pp. 164–201), and “Reading Luke’s Gospel” (pp. 202–53). Each of these chapters provide a narrative summary of the book’s shape, analysis of its literary features and characters, its presentation of Jesus, a profile of the “Community Implied” in the gospel, and issues particular to that gospel. For Mark, these are the ending(s) of Mark, and the so-called “secret version.” Matthew’s chapter addresses “Jewish Christian Gospel Traditions.” Finally, for Luke, Perkins analyzes various Mary traditions and other “infancy gospels,” as well as the “reception and revision” of the third gospel. It should be noted that the author’s discussion of the “community implied” in each gospel speaks more to its intended reader than it expresses an outgrowth of the so-called Community hypothesis.

The final chapter, “Gospels from the Second and Third Centuries” (pp. 254–93), discusses the various oral and written Jesus traditions and their similarities to and distinctions from the Synoptics,



specifically with respect to second- and third-century Gnostic Gospels. Perkins concludes that despite some striking similarities and overlap of material between apocryphal and canonical gospels, the latter received their status in history because of their antiquity and origin in the apostolic generation “that none of the second-century attempts at revising, expanding, or changing the story could” (p. 292).

This book is far-reaching in its scope. Perkins’s expertise is highlighted by the clarity and accessibility with which this book is written. There are many points of engagement, but we can address only a few. First, Perkins affirms that early believers “read from a more extensive collection of sacred writings than one finds in the canon” (p. 36), but does not clarify how widely read the apocryphal gospels were. This may give the reader the impression that these texts were widely held as authoritative and heavily in use in early Christian communities. Her statement that “ancient biography is much less complex than its modern counterpart” (p. 9) may require some explanation. *Bioi*, as Burrige points out, exhibit a high degree of complexity, as Perkins herself ably demonstrates. Perhaps more constructive would be what she illustrated so well: it is significantly *different* from modern biography. Furthermore, Perkins says that “the Evangelists employed their knowledge of Scripture to supplement traditions about Jesus” life and death” (p. 7). This is true enough, but in what sense do they “supplement”?

My main criticism reflects more my own biases than Perkins’s shortcomings. Specifically, attention to the OT and Second Temple literary, historical, and theological milieu could potentially help readers engage the text of the Synoptics more constructively than Perkins’s extended discussions of the apocryphal gospels. Yet all these remarks really underscore the contribution of Perkins’s work for the general reader. This book is ripe for developing critical thinking skills in the general reader. Infrequent are Perkins’s adoption of critical positions without clearly explaining why they are held. Though readers should read some portions of the book with a critical eye, such is no less true for any good work of secondary literature. Her scholarship is current, and sensationalist conspiracy theories are dismissed. That she is able to distill centuries of scholarship into a constructive, readable work that is both accurate and informative is a tribute to the abilities and expertise of the author. The only comparable book that comes to mind is Craig Blomberg’s *Jesus and the Gospels: An Introduction and Survey* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1997), which also includes John and other critical issues and is decidedly addressed to the interests of (primarily North American) evangelicals.

Daniel M. Gurtner
Bethel Seminary
St. Paul, Minnesota, USA

Kenneth E. Bailey. *Jesus Through Middle Eastern Eyes: Cultural Studies in the Gospels*. Downers Grove: IVP, 2008. 443 pp. \$23.00.

When confronted with Kenneth E. Bailey's book, my initial reaction was that this is going to be "yet another book on the life and ministry of Jesus." However, it was a pleasant surprise to discover that a lot could be learned from this volume. These new insights stemmed primarily from the approach conveyed by the title of this volume: *Jesus Through Middle Eastern Eyes*. It is this particular point of view that gives the book its distinctiveness.

The book is made up of six parts: (1) the birth of Jesus, (2) the Beatitudes, (3) the Lord's Prayer, (4) the dramatic actions of Jesus, (5) Jesus and women, and (6) the parables of Jesus. The contents of these parts are in the form of textual studies with cultural-based interpretations. There are thirty two chapters in all. The author's style is clear. He first discusses pertinent textual and literary features, then provides a commentary on the text under discussion, and concludes each chapter with a clear summary of the salient features discussed.

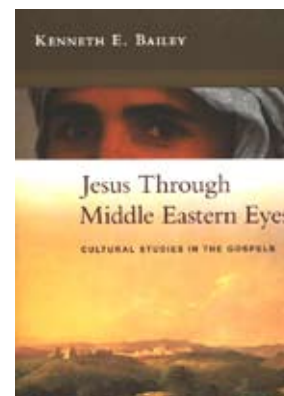
While all of the sections are thought-provoking, the first section, "The Birth of Jesus," is noteworthy. Bailey argues that over the centuries, traditional understandings of the birth narratives have obscured the true meaning and message of the text (p. 25). This imprecision can be combated by re-reading the text bearing in mind cultural customs and attitudes contemporaneous to the text and by consciously stripping away long held traditions that have blinded us to Middle Eastern culture and customs that still remained unchanged even up to this day.

For nearly all the textual studies in this book, Bailey makes use of a device that he calls "Prophetic Rhetorical Template." Such a template has seven inverted stanzas with a climax in the center, where "the first three stanzas relate to the last three in an inverted manner and a special point of emphasis appears in the centre" (p. 355). He notes that these rhetorical styles are clearly Jewish and can be traced to the Prophetic literature. The reappearance of these styles in the New Testament clearly indicates that these texts came out of a Jewish, not Greek world. It is that Middle Eastern world that the author sets out to reconstruct. While the application of the prophetic rhetorical template fits with most of the texts discussed, on a few occasions it seems rather forced and does not work very well as in Luke 18:1–8 (p. 262), 10:25–37 (p. 291), or 19:11–27 (p. 399).

At the heart of this cultural approach to the Gospels is Bailey's appeal to recognize the historical nature of the Scriptures. He emphasizes that the Word of God is spoken through people in history: "Those people and that history cannot be ignored without missing the speaker or writer's intentions and creating our own substitutes for them" (p. 281).

The distinctiveness of these essays is their interaction with early Syriac and Arabic Christian literature on the Gospels, such as the powerful ideas of Ibn al-Tayyib, a medieval scholar from Baghdad. Interaction with Arabic versions of the New Testament (translated from Syriac and Coptic) also provide insights into Eastern exegesis of the Bible. Since these linguistic sources share the broader culture of the ancient Middle East ". . . all of them are ethnically closer to the Semitic world of Jesus than the Greek and Latin cultures of the West" (p. 12).

The great strength of this work is the author's familiarity with Middle Eastern culture. He succeeds in shedding new light on well known Gospels stories from a cultural perspective. Another valuable contribution of this book is the introduction to, and interaction with, great Eastern commentaries long forgotten or largely unknown to Western Biblical Scholarship.



Jesus Through Middle Eastern Eyes is a very readable book and will be profitable to various levels of readers: pastors will find a wealth of 'sermon' material; academics will benefit from interpretations that emerge from interaction Middle Eastern scholarship; interested lay persons will find that Bailey's work could serve equally well as an informative, devotional book. Anyone interested in understanding the New Testament from its own distinctive Middle Eastern, cultural perspective ought to read this book.

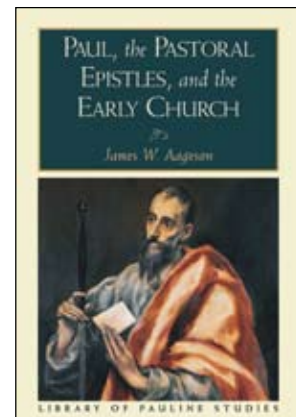
Mark Jason
The Methodist Church
Banjul, The Gambia, West Africa

James W. Aageson. *Paul, the Pastoral Epistles, and the Early Church*. Edited by Stanley E. Porter. Library of Pauline Studies. Peabody: Hendrickson, 2008. xv + 235 pp. \$24.95.

This book aims to see what the early church did with the memory of Paul and how this affected the image of Paul. If the Pastoral Epistles are not by Paul himself, they are an example of appropriation of Paul by later writers with a somewhat different theology from his, and then they in turn become an important part of the written legacy ascribed to Paul which influenced later writers in developing their pictures of Paul.

Aageson's first task is to identify and compare the patterns of theology in each of the three Pastoral Epistles with one another and with the indubitable Paul. 1 Timothy is built around the concept of the household of God. 2 Timothy is more concerned with the activity of God and the resulting paraenesis. Titus is concerned more with the gospel. Comparisons are then instituted between the letters. 1 Timothy and Titus identify God as Saviour (unlike Paul), and Titus stands out from its companions by not using *Kyrios* for Christ. The household motif shapes 1 Timothy. The stress on godliness and fitting into the real world found in 1 Timothy and Titus is absent from 2 Timothy which expects rather trials and suffering. The letters show more agreement on truth, knowledge, and faith. There is opposition to false teachings in 1 Timothy and Titus, but in 2 Timothy the problem is more one of persecution and concomitant suffering. 2 Timothy is not concerned with the appointment of leaders and their qualities, but with the broader need for sound teaching to be passed on to the next generation.

Next Aageson claims that 1 Timothy relates most closely to 1 Corinthians, 2 Timothy to Philippians, and Titus to Galatians. But 1 Timothy and Titus show patterns that are substantially different from those in Philippians (e.g. the lack of personal affection and friendship). Both Galatians and Titus are concerned with the Jewish law, but in significantly different ways. What drives Galatians theologically is different from 1 Timothy and Titus. There are also significant differences from 1 Corinthians (body versus household; centrality of resurrection; new emphasis on truth). Hence we cannot conclude that the same author wrote Philippians and 2 Timothy (still less 1 Timothy and Titus), but rather than 2 Timothy is by a different author from 1 Timothy and Titus (which are assumed to be by the same author). This is a restatement of the by no means novel observation that 2 Timothy is the closest of the three to the accepted Pauline Epistles. As earlier scholars have said, if 2 Timothy did not keep such questionable company (1 Timothy and Titus), the task of defending its Pauline authorship would be much easier!



This separation of the Pastoral Epistles from Pauline authorship sets the stage for an examination of their images of Paul. Paul is a figure of authority (apostle) and teacher who incorporates the true gospel. He is used to sanction the model of the church as a household. So begins a canonisation process which attributes authority to the Pauline writings and to the Pastoral Epistles themselves in that they are presented as if they were part of that collection. Contrast this image of Paul with that in Acts where he is not a teacher or writer of letters concerned to rebut heresy but a missionary calling others to follow his example of suffering. There is no likelihood that the author of Acts also wrote the Pastoral Epistles! Nor does the developed theology of Colossians and Ephesians figure in the Pastoral Epistles.

The second half of the book deals with the period after the Pastoral Epistles. What influence did the Pastorals as part of the Pauline corpus have on the subsequent church? Aageson argues that the Pastorals stand midway between Paul and Ignatius. Ignatius extends their christology, and his ecclesiology likewise goes beyond them in its threefold ministry. Ignatius, Polycarp, and Clement all see the Pauline era as past (whereas the Pastorals might be said to extend it), and the Pauline correspondence is well on the way to being regarded as Scripture. Thus the Apostolic Fathers continue the trends that may be traced in the Pastorals. The investigation is then extended to the later second-century theologians, especially Irenaeus and Tertullian, although specific examples of influence from the Pastorals on the thinking of these authors are not always easy to find. Finally, where the *Acts of Paul (and Thecla)* promote asceticism, the Pastorals advocate a godliness that conforms to the concept of the household of God and is less world-denying.

This commendably fresh approach treats the Pastorals sympathetically and notes their important role in the development of Christian theology to meet new problems. Most of what is said about their subsequent influence is compatible with theories that would place them nearer to Paul. The kind of theological and ecclesiastical developments traced in the letters could well be the kind of reactions that one might expect in Paul himself and his circle in the period towards or just after his decease. Further, Aageson is well aware that the different circumstances of each of the Pastoral Epistles may play a role in determining the theological emphases, patterns and nuances. I question whether he takes this factor sufficiently into account. A more nuanced view of what could be different aspects of essentially the same theology to deal with a different situation as compared with expressions of different theologies is required. For example, to call God 'Saviour' may be to use a different expression, but is it really a different theology of God from that in Paul? Is the essential content of what Ephesians and Colossians call 'forgiveness' essentially different from what earlier letters call 'justification'? Or again is the activity of God in ordering the functions of the different parts of the body (1 Cor 12:18, 28) any different from his role as a householder giving different tasks to his servants. Are the apostles lacking in authority whereas the overseers are authoritative figures? Certainly the images are developed in different ways, but the analysis requires to be even more sophisticated.

Aageson's argument for the possible attribution of 2 Timothy to a separate author from 1 Timothy and Titus could be strengthened by considering the sort of differences between the letters traced in R. Fuchs, *Unerwartete Unterschiede: Müssen wir unsere Ansichten über die Pastoralbriefe revidieren?* (Wuppertal R. Brockhaus, 2003). But he passes over the linguistic and stylistic similarities between the three Pastorals which form the basis for considering them to be the work of a single author whose style is different from that of Paul (whether he be an amanuensis or a continuator).

This is a valuable book for its fresh questions about the theological patterns in the Pastorals and for its comparison of them with the Apostolic Fathers and other early writers, but the discussion needs to be taken further.

I. Howard Marshall
University of Aberdeen
Aberdeen, Scotland

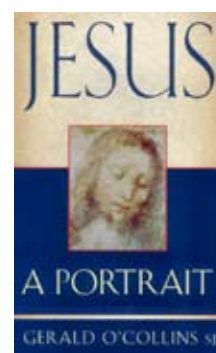
Gerald O'Collins. *Jesus: A Portrait*. New York: Orbis, 2008. xvi + 246 pp. \$25.00.

Jesus: A Portrait represents the summary reflections of a lifetime of study by noted Roman Catholic theologian Gerald O'Collins. During his distinguished career, the Australian Jesuit has written several books related to Jesus, including *Interpreting Jesus* (1983), *Christology: A Biblical, Historical, and Systematic Study of Jesus Christ* (1995), and *Jesus Our Redeemer: A Christian Approach to Salvation* (2007). O'Collins's latest Jesus book is not a systematic Christology written for theologians or a critical history written for biblical scholars; rather, *Jesus: A Portrait* is, in O'Collins's own words, "a personal portrait of Jesus that is also a vital mirror of ourselves" (p. xvi).

In keeping with the motif of a "portrait," O'Collins takes as his starting point Augustine's description of the beauty of Christ from his homily on Ps 45. This description is used as an initial survey of Christ's person and work from eternity past to eternity future, describing the way each step of humiliation and exaltation shows Christ's beauty, a beauty to enjoy and to prompt worship. Subsequent chapters focus on various aspects of Christ's person and work: Jesus' embodiment of the kingdom of God, the divine and human natures of Christ, Jesus' miracles and teachings, his sufferings and death, his resurrection, and his continuing significance and personal presence for believers. The book concludes with an epilogue, an appeal to know Jesus relationally and not merely intellectually. Endnotes and a bibliography point readers to a selection of other excellent historical, exegetical, and theological resources on Jesus.

A wide variety of helpful quotations, illustrations, expositions, and homilies are interspersed throughout this very readable book. For example, in a chapter entitled "The Meanings of the Miracles," one finds a short homily on the theme of "life" from John 6:41–51, providing a demonstration of how one might preach on the miracles of Jesus. As another example, O'Collins devotes an entire chapter to the story of the Prodigal Son, exploring the way in which the context and characters of the story provide insight into the love of God the Father and the character of Jesus the storyteller. One further example underscores O'Collins's repeated emphasis on the personal significance of this study of Jesus: the final chapter of the book, called "Jesus the Abiding Presence," employs a series of questions asked by Jesus in the Gospel of John (e.g. "Do you love me?"), turning them toward the reader as questions of great significance for people today.

While the focus of the book is on developing this "personal portrait" of Jesus that provides "a vital mirror of ourselves," O'Collins is well aware of critical questions related to Jesus and the Gospels. Indeed, his preface nicely summarizes his own answers to many of these questions. For example, O'Collins holds that each of the canonical Gospels reflects eyewitness testimony to some degree, though none but the Fourth Gospel is in any way directly attributable to such an eyewitness; that the Two Source Hypothesis



(Mark and Q used by Matthew and Luke) is the best solution to the Synoptic Problem; and that the Gospel material variously reflects the conventional three *Sitze im Leben*, the setting of each Evangelist in writing about Jesus, the setting of the early Christians in passing on testimonies and traditions about Jesus, and the setting of Jesus himself in his public career. Understandably for a book such as this, O'Collins's reasons for these and other answers to critical questions are not spelled out in detail. When one moves to the body of the book, there is only occasional interaction with such critical issues; the reader is expected to trust the prior study and conclusions of the author. Nevertheless, for the most part O'Collins's perspectives on such issues do fit within what could be called the conservative-to-moderate consensus of New Testament scholarship in general, and they are compatible with the broad sweep of evangelical scholarship in particular.

Evangelicals should not be put off by O'Collins's Roman Catholic orientation either. O'Collins's intellectual horizon spreads wider than the Roman Catholic Church, and several Protestant and even evangelical voices find representation in the book. While there is an undeniable Catholic flavor to the book, evangelicals can and should appreciate this study of Jesus for its exegetical sensitivity, theological insight, and devotional depth.

In short, O'Collins's *Jesus: A Portrait* is what it claims to be: "a personal portrait of Jesus that is also a vital mirror of ourselves" (p. xvi). As such the book would be an excellent resource for an adult Sunday School class, for sermon preparation for pastors, or even for supplementary reading for theological students.

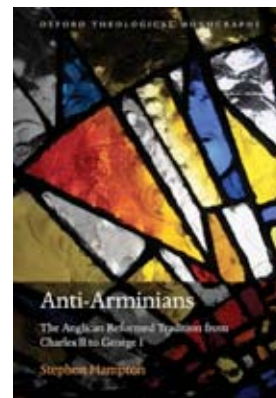
Michael W. Pahl
Ambrose Seminary
Calgary, Alberta, Canada

— HISTORY AND HISTORICAL THEOLOGY —

Stephen Hampton. *Anti-Arminians: The Anglican Reformed Tradition from Charles II to George I*. Oxford Theological Monographs. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008. 293 pp. \$240.

Hampton in this work aims to remedy a gap in scholarship. It grew out of his doctoral dissertation and filling a lacuna in the literature is a worthy doctoral goal. He argues that there was a conforming Reformed tradition within the later Stuart Church that scholarship on the period has neglected. He fills the gap over seven main chapters beginning with ‘The Anglican reformed tradition after the Restoration’ and ending with ‘The reformed defence of Thomist theism’ before he draws his overall conclusion in chapter eight. As the subtitle of the work suggests the accent falls on the Anglican story. For example, the magisterial John Owen is worth only a footnote (p. 240). The names he conjures within the main are Bishop Thomas Barlow (1608/9–1691), Bishop William Beveridge (1637–1708), John Edwards (1637–1716), Bishop John Pearson (1613–1686) and Dean Thomas Tully (1620–1676). Hampton challenges the historiography of the period in a number of ways. For a start, he argues—following Richard Muller—that the term ‘Calvinism’ is too narrow a descriptor and thus excludes a number of key churchmen of the period who were broadly speaking Reformed (e.g. Bishop William Nicholson). If one adopts the narrow idea then it is easy to miss how much conforming Reformed theology existed in the period on view. Bishop J. C. Ryle is an example of a later writer who fell into this trap (3). By way of contrast on Hampton’s reckoning there were twelve bishops and six deans who could be counted as Reformed together with some eminent scientists (e.g. Boyle, Ward and Wallis) and ecclesiastical courtiers (e.g. Morley and Compton). Moreover, several of the clergy held divinity chairs at either Oxford or Cambridge (p. 22). The tenacity of the conforming Reformed tradition during the period can be seen in the two great theological controversies of the time: the justification one occasioned by the publication of George Bull’s *Harmonia Apostolica* (1670) and the Trinity debate stimulated by William Sherlock’s *A Vindication of the Doctrine of the Trinity* (1690). Thomas Barlow and Thomas Tully in particular entered the lists on the Reformed side with regard to the first; John Wallis and Robert South with regard to the second. The Reformed Anglicans resisted any slide towards tritheism on the one hand (pace Sherlock) or into subordinationism on the other (pace Samuel Clarke).

Hampton draws three important conclusions from his study. First, the Evangelical revival of the 18th century was not ‘the rediscovery of an abandoned theological tradition’ (p. 272). The conforming Reformed tradition was never without its representatives and advocates. It proved resilient, even if it became unfashionable by the end of the period under discussion. Second, ‘there was no harmonious Anglican theological tradition emerging after the Restoration’ (p. 273). Reformed Anglicans and Arminian Anglicans shared the post-Restoration Church – albeit with increasing dominance by the Arminians. Third, ‘the Reformed theological tradition is an essential ingredient in any conception of Anglicanism’ (p. 273). He also observes how Reformed Anglicans were increasingly sympathetic to High Church ecclesiology during the period. Hampton writes: ‘Theirs was, therefore, Reformed Divinity, but with Restoration curlicues [ornamental twists]’ (p. 23). William Beveridge and John Pearson illustrate this penchant, although others such as Barlow and Edwards much less so with regard to the episcopacy



(pp. 25–27). Clearly Reformed Anglicanism itself was not monochrome in every aspect. However, Reformed Anglicans commonly remained staunchly ‘Anti-Arminian’ as Benjamin Jenks (bap. 1648–1724) illustrates (p. 274).

In this impressive work, Hampton makes his case. His handling of both the primary sources and the secondary literature is adroit. His conclusions, as adumbrated above, are convincing. I particularly enjoyed his treatment in chapter five of the rise of subordinationism within both 17th century continental (Episcopius and de Courcelles) and English (Cudworth, Bull, Sherlock and Tillotson) Arminianism. It has surprising relevance to the contemporary debates within evangelicalism on subordination within the Trinity. He rightly notes that Oxford, unlike Cambridge, was the bastion of the conforming Reformed tradition. In that regard, I would have liked to have read more of Cambridge and of any difficulties the Reformed tradition had there. After all, on the one hand and side, Bishop John Pearson had been both a Lady Margaret Professor of Divinity in Cambridge and Master of Trinity College. On the other, William Sherlock went to Peterhouse. I would have liked too to have read more on the question as to what extent the Great Ejection of 1662 weakened the Reformed Anglican tradition. Hampton’s style is clear and engaging. In the work there are a few typographical problems (‘historiorians’ provides a glaring example, p. 269) and occasional sloppiness. With regard to the latter, was George Bull’s *Harmonia Apostolica* published in 1670 as per p. 37 or in 1669 as per p. 39?

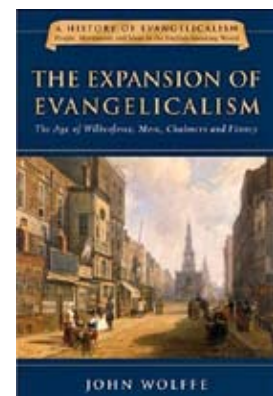
In sum, Hampton has written a very fine work and a worthy contribution to the Oxford Theological Monograph series.

Graham A. Cole
Trinity Evangelical Divinity School
Deerfield, Illinois, USA

John Wolffe. *The Expansion of Evangelicalism: The Age of Wilberforce, More, Chalmers and Finney*. Edited by David W. Bebbington and Mark A. Noll. A History of Evangelicalism: People, Movements and Ideas in the English-Speaking World 2. Downers Grove: IVP, 2007. 280 pp. \$25.00.

Every year scores of books and articles attempt to make sense of the history of evangelicalism. For the past two decades a number of scholars have argued that evangelicalism is a relatively diverse interdenominational, transatlantic movement first birthed during the awakenings of the mid-18th century. The leading proponent of this interpretation is Scottish historian David Bebbington, himself an evangelical. Bebbington and Notre Dame historian Mark Noll are co-editors of the award-winning series A History of Evangelicalism: People, Movements and Ideas in the English-Speaking World. John Wolffe’s recent book *The Expansion of Evangelicalism: The Age of Wilberforce, More, Chalmers and Finney* is the latest volume to appear in that series.

Like all the authors in the series, Wolffe assumes the Bebbington paradigm for evangelical history. He also follows Bebbington in defining evangelicals as Protestants who affirm four theological distinctives: biblicism, conversionism, activism, and crucicentrism. *The Expansion of Evangelicalism* focuses on the period roughly coinciding with the Second Great Awakening in America, 1790–1850. As evidenced by the title, Wolffe argues that this period was a time of remarkable numeric



growth for evangelical denominations and ministries. He illustrates this theme well with numerous statistical charts based upon government records and denominational studies. As with the other volumes in this series, major themes include the role of revivals and awakenings, theological emphases and developments, evangelical political engagement, the contributions of women and minorities, and movement diversity within the broad boundaries of Bebbington's "evangelical quadrilateral."

Wolffe divides his book into eight chapters. Chapter one introduces some of the key figures around whom Wolffe builds his narrative, including the four individuals noted in the book's subtitle. Chapters two and three discuss the development of the Second Great Awakening and the influence of the revivals upon evangelical theology and practice. Chapter four describes the popular spirituality and worship of evangelicals during this period (a strength of all the books in this series) while the fifth chapter focuses upon gender and family issues among evangelicals. Chapters six and seven highlight cultural engagement, particularly in matters of social justice like slavery, temperance, and working conditions in an increasingly industrialized West. The final chapter, heavy on statistical charts, addresses the unity and diversity among evangelicals, emphasizing some of the denominational divisions taking place and the approximate growth of each major tradition.

The Expansion of Evangelicalism shares many of the strengths and weaknesses of the entire series. One strength is the way Wolffe helpfully synthesizes social and intellectual history, examining the convictions and practices of both clergy (and other leaders) and laity. Wolffe also highlights the particular contributions of women, a topic for which he clearly cares deeply, though he avoids an overtly feminist reading of evangelical history. The book's bibliography is also a valuable resource for those who desire to examine some of the more specialized studies related to the era under consideration.

A possible weakness of the book (and series), though perhaps understandable, is the uncritical acceptance of the Bebbington interpretation of evangelical history. A growing number of scholars are questioning the thesis that evangelicalism did not emerge until the 1730s. For example, a recent volume co-edited by Michael A. G. Haykin and Kenneth Stewart titled *The Emergence of Evangelicalism* (published in the UK by Inter-Varsity and in the US by Broadman and Holman) includes seventeen essays challenging the Bebbington thesis from a number of different angles, as well as a response from Bebbington. Of course whether or not Wolffe's acceptance of Bebbington's paradigm is a weakness or strength of the book depends upon the reader's perspective (full disclosure: the reviewer does not yet have a settled conviction on this matter). Another weakness is the lack of nuance when it comes to particular denominations during this period, though this is likely a result of the survey nature of the book.

These weaknesses (both real and possible!) do not in any way detract from the value of the book. *The Expansion of Evangelicalism*, like the other available volumes in the A History of Evangelicalism series, is a valuable resource for pastors, students, and scholars. This series is simply the best introduction to evangelical history currently on the market, and Wolffe's contribution continues the high standard established by the earlier volumes.

Nathan A. Finn
Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary
Wake Forest, NC, USA

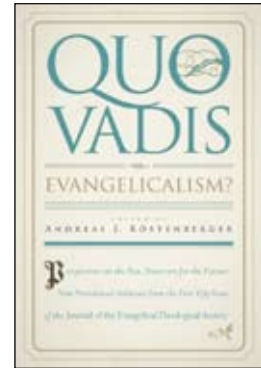
Andreas J. Köstenberger, ed. *Quo Vadis Evangelicalism? Perspectives on the Past, Direction for the Future: Nine Presidential Addresses from the First Fifty Years of the Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society*. Wheaton: Crossway, 2007. 233 pp. \$22.00.

The fiftieth birthday of the Evangelical Theological Society (ETS) provided a golden opportunity for scholarly reflection on the society's direction and relationship with the larger world of evangelicalism. Andreas Köstenberger, professor of New Testament at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, seizes the opportunity in this collection of nine presidential addresses from ETS's first fifty years. Among the presidents whose addresses Köstenberger includes are Ned B. Stonehouse, Gordon H. Clark, Stanley N. Gundry, Darrell L. Bock, and Millard Erickson.

In his introduction to the addresses, Köstenberger argues that the history of ETS divides into three periods. The first period spanned from 1958 to 1970 and focused on the issue of scriptural inerrancy. The second (1971–1999) considered the practical and methodological implications of inerrancy. The third period (2000–2007) presented new reflections stemming from the society's commitment to inerrancy (pp. 10–11). According to Köstenberger, these addresses reflect both the trajectory of ETS and the evangelical movement as a whole (p. 10). In a brief epilogue, Köstenberger provides a concise summary of ETS's history and argues that in the next half-century the society must strike a balance between setting confessional boundaries and engaging views held by others (pp. 217–18).

Köstenberger has no problem showing that the presidential addresses tie into a meta-narrative rather than merely reflecting isolated happenings during specific years. His selection of these nine addresses supports his argument well, as several of the addresses interact with one another. For example, Bock's 2001 address refers to the addresses of Warren Young, Gundry, and Alan Johnson (pp. 144–45). Even when addresses do not specifically reference one another, they deal with related topics, as in the case of Young and Gundry both rejecting rigid fundamentalism (p. 15). Köstenberger's introduction presents fair summaries of each address and highlights for readers connections between the various theologians (pp. 9–26). Historical footnotes and evenhanded evaluation of the addresses demonstrates the thorough research informing this work. Perhaps the most inspirational aspect of the book is the manner in which it introduces readers to theologians who combine the most rigorous standards of scholarship with a commitment to the inerrancy of Scripture. Clark, illustrative of other ETS presidents in the book, argues, "the Bible is the Word of God written. Therefore the conclusion follows that the Bible is inerrant. God cannot lie" (p. 62).

The book's main weakness is Köstenberger's tendency to equate evangelicalism as a whole too closely with ETS. Even the Latin phrase in the title of the book (which means, "Where are you going, evangelicalism?") suggests that one can gauge the trajectory of evangelicalism as a whole by looking narrowly at ETS. Köstenberger argues in the introduction that the various addresses "document the quest of the evangelical movement . . . to define its identity in the midst of the larger world of scholarship and the surrounding culture" (p. 11). Köstenberger is aware that ETS is but a narrow slice of evangelicalism (p. 217). Still, he claims that "the specific topic chosen for the present volume" is "the present and future state of the evangelical movement at large" (p. 10). Though ETS certainly played an important role within evangelicalism during the past fifty years, neither Köstenberger's introduction nor the addresses themselves provide sufficient evidence to justify the claim that ETS mirrors the larger movement. Additionally, the dividing line between Köstenberger's second and third periods of ETS



history seems artificial. While addresses from the third period demonstrate slightly more outward focus, all of the addresses from 1970 forward are concerned with the practical and methodological implications of inerrancy.

Overall this book provides a valuable survey of ETS that will benefit both seasoned veterans of the society and outsiders with little previous knowledge. The weaknesses of the argument are negligible and should not deter study of this volume. Scholars would do well to build off Köstenberger's work by undertaking further scholarly research on ETS and its relation to the larger world of evangelicalism.

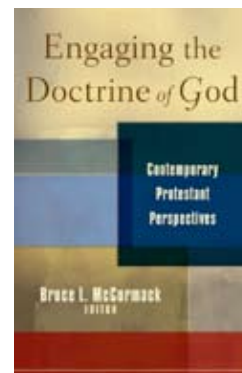
David Roach

The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary
Louisville, Kentucky, USA

— SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY AND BIOETHICS —

Bruce L. McCormack, ed. *Engaging the Doctrine of God: Contemporary Protestant Perspectives*. Grand Rapids/Edinburgh: Baker Academic/Rutherford House, 2008. 271 pp. £17.58/\$26.99.

Engaging the Doctrine of God (EDG) is a very fine work with a somewhat misleading subtitle. The subtitle should read: "Contemporary Evangelical Perspectives." The back cover says as much and in his preface the editor states his hope: "It is my fervent hope that evangelicals will one day be able to build a new consensus on the doctrine of God" (p. 10). The genesis of the work was a conference on dogmatics held in Edinburgh in 2005 (p. 9). The conference origins can be seen in the first chapter, which consists of a sermon by David F. Wright on "The Lamb That Was Slain" (pp. 11–18). The sermon sets out the ultimate criterion for engaging the doctrine of God, namely, "fidelity to Scripture" (p. 11). All the essays in the volume exhibit a similarly high regard for Scripture, as one should expect in an evangelical work. The contributions in chapters 2–11 fall into four parts. Part 1 includes N. T. Wright on "Christian Origins and the Question of God" (chap. 2), and D. A. Carson's "The Wrath of God" (chap. 3). Part 2 moves the conversation to history. Paul Helm treats "John Calvin and the Hiddenness of God" in chapter 4, and Oliver D. Crisp writes on "Jonathan Edwards's God: *Trinity, Individuation, and Divine Simplicity*" in chapter 5. Part 3 deals with theological perspectives on the doctrine of God. John Webster addresses "Life in and of Himself: *Reflections on God's Aseity*" in chapter 6. "God and the Cross" is Henri A. Blocher's theme in chapter 7. Pierre Berthoud tackles "The Compassion of God: *Exodus 34:5–9 in the Light of Exodus 32–34*" in chapter 8. "The Sovereignty of God" occupies Stephen N. Williams in chapter 9. Bruce L. McCormack brings this part to a close with "The Actuality of God: *Karl Barth in Conversation with Open Theism*" in chapter 10. Part 4 introduces a practical theology note. It has only one chapter: Donald Macleod's "The Doctrine of God and Pastoral Care" (chapter 11). Thus the book ends with a limited amount of applied doctrine, formally speaking.



There is no introduction as such to *EDG*, although McCormack offers a four-page preface that effectively serves as one (pp. 7–10). McCormack states that the work is "exploratory" and hopefully at the very least, "a kick-start [to] a conversation" (p. 10). On the same page he identifies contributor as falling into one of two groups. One group is at "the classical end of the spectrum" where he places Carson, Crisp, Macleod, and Webster, and the other is at the "progressive" end where we find listed N. T.

Wright, Blocher, Berthoud, and Williams. Both Webster and McCormack are well known appropriators of Barth, but in different ways as McCormack indicates. The work shows that evangelicalism is a bigger tent than many realize. Even so, I do wonder given the list of contributors whether the work is to be even more precise “Contemporary Reformed Perspectives.”

In *EDG* I found the following contributions to be of great benefit. Carson’s careful treatment of the wrath of God is both instructive and sobering. He writes, “To speak faithfully of the wrath of God, very often what we most urgently need are tears” (p. 63). He shows that the idea of divine wrath is firmly grounded exegetically and recent attempts to emasculate the doctrine do not succeed. Blocher offers methodological clues as to how theology may be derived from the cross. He argues that the cross reveals a God who is singular in sovereignty, overflowing in righteousness and unsurpassed love (pp. 138–40). Berthoud draws attention to the key importance of the theophany at Sinai and the declaration of the divine Name in Exod 34:5–9. His contribution reminds me that my understanding of the being and attributes of God needs solid biblical warrant grounded in responsible scholarly exegesis. Macleod earths the doctrine of God in a pastorally astute way. He helpfully explains what doctrine does when engaged with Scripture and us: “It addresses our minds. It makes logical demands of us. It exposes our fallacies and neuroses. It reasons us, with God’s blessing, into reverence, confidence, peace, contentment, and hope” (p. 260).

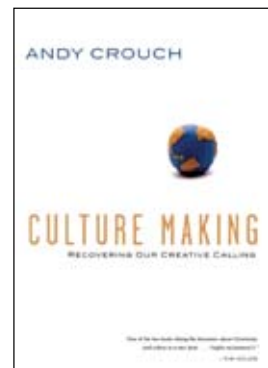
As already noted, right at the beginning of the book, McCormack describes *EGD* as exploratory and a kick-start to a conversation. Indeed it is both. In my view, both aims would have been strengthened by a list of questions in an epilogue to help the reader take further the stimulating and theologically sophisticated material found in this excellent book.

Graham A. Cole
Trinity Evangelical Divinity School
Deerfield, Illinois, USA

Andy Crouch. *Culture Making: Recovering Our Creative Calling*. Downers Grove: IVP, 2008. 284 pp. £13.03/\$20.00.

As an academic and a culture critic, I am not given to gushing over new publications. But *Culture Making: Recovering Our Creative Calling*, brought me pretty close to doing just such a non-scholarly thing! Odd, too, because of the subject. With so much coming out these days on religion and culture, one becomes a bit jaded about the possibility of something really fresh emerging. Well, this book is fresh, compelling, and engagingly written. More important, it goes deeply into its subject. Or should I say, subjects? For while there is unity to the book, it is wide-ranging, moving easily from theoretical to theological to practical considerations.

The central argument of the book, approached from many angles, is that Christians must move beyond lamenting cultural trends, or simply analyzing them, or even engaging culture. We must also create culture. In Part 1, Andy (I’ll call him by his first name, as he is a good friend) argues that just as culture remakes the world, so culture is what humans make of the world. So, what is this thing called culture? It is, of course, related to *cultivation*. Much as the farmer milks the cow or



tills the soil, so our own culture-making is an investment in the environment we have been given. It can be long and slow, and progress may be elusive. But the work is crucial to defining who we are and what our calling is as God's creatures. More centrally, culture is *creation*. Andy prefers this term over *culture* for a number of reasons. It is less antiquated or retro. "Creation" appeals to our contemporaries, despite its potential unhealthy penchant for novelty, which he strenuously argues against. "Underneath almost every act of culture making we find countless small acts of culture keeping" (p. 77), which amounts to discipline, the opposite of untamed creativity.

The link between the many helpful explorations of culture-making and the Bible is eventually made explicit in Part 2. Predictably, for someone who announces his devotion to Abraham Kuyper in the Introduction, Andy cites Gen 1:26–28 as the foundation of cultural calling. (It would have been cumbersome to point out, though it is interesting, that Kuyper rarely talks about culture in a positive way, because it was humanistic. Instead, he liked to use the expression "common grace." While Kuyper was undoubtedly in the background, it is actually the work of Klaas Schilder [1890–1952] who promotes thinking about culture. In all likelihood it is Schilder who coined the term "cultural mandate." See N. H. Gootjes, "Schilder on Christ and Culture," in *Always Obedient* [ed. J. Geertsema; Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian & Reformed, 1995], esp. pp. 35–40).

As Andy moves into the details, we are plunged deeply into the text and its import. He shows us how the image of God means that we should be as purposeful and energetic as God in his desire to create (p. 104). He takes issue with the pious sounding idea that only God can make something new, though he guards against an exaggerated equation between our work and his. He also underscores the relational aspect of creation, that is, the interrelatedness of all things as a reflection of God's inter-Trinitarian personality. His critique of composers Pierre Boulez and John Cage, inspired by Jeremy Begbie's aesthetics (See his *Theology, Music, and Time* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000], pp. 179ff.), is that their music is ultimately not relational enough to be satisfying (p. 106). Creation is also celebration and should lead us to be joyful, not jaded (p. 107).

As biblical scholars know, Gen 2 is a more focused rendering of one aspect of the creation as recounted in Gen 1. From it we learn all about cultivation in the deepest sense. While Adam was to dress and keep the garden, there is no Rousseau-esque nostalgia for something called *nature* in the biblical text. The ultimate goal of humanity is to dwell in the city. Even though the journey to the city is horribly marred by sin, through Jesus Christ we are ultimately conducted into the greatest city of all, the New Jerusalem (p. 170).

While Andy takes us rapidly through the history of redemption, he is particularly eloquent as he pauses to describe Jesus' approach to culture. The Lord's preaching on the kingdom of God announces a profoundly cultural mission. Andy's description of Christ's death on the cross is for me the most powerful writing in a powerfully written book. As an evangelical, he can say that Christ did something no one else could possibly do: suffer the full weight of the human story of rebellion against God (p. 141). As a culturally self-conscious Christian, he adds that at the cross, an instrument devoid of any cultural life, all culture-gone-wrong dies. Here and throughout the volume we are warned against any kind of triumphalism or misguided notion of progress. Then at the resurrection a new world is born, one that gave Jesus' disciples the ability to go into all the world and cultivate it. Springing off of N. T. Wright's well-known emphasis on the early church's successful transfer of Sabbath from Saturday to Sunday, which means all things are new, Andy explains that ritual is the most difficult of all cultural things to change. But all older "ritual" *was* changed, not by raw power, but by trust (p. 145).

If the book had ended here, it would have been a fine book. But because it goes on, it is a finer book still. In chapter 11, Andy tries his hand at scrutinizing an elephant in the room, the landmark study by H. Richard Niebuhr, *Christ and Culture* (1951). Niebuhr's typology, dividing theologies of culture into five groups (Christ against culture, Christ of culture, Christ above culture, Christ and culture in paradox, and Christ transforming culture), set the agenda for much of the discussion in the mid-twentieth century. After appreciating the work and approvingly noting that Niebuhr favored the final view, "Christ Transforming Culture," more than any of the others, Andy goes on to critique the book on a number of fronts. First, it is dated. Niebuhr's *Christ* seems stilted, lacking humanity and compassion. His *Culture*, in the singular, overlooks the dynamic feature of cultures with their multiple gestures. Second, there is a tacit connection between "Christ" and "Christians" that should have been uncoupled, as it does not follow that Christ's approach to culture, as he governs world history, is the same as that of his followers' work, which is more local, modest, and fallible. Finally, while Niebuhr rightly underscores the fragility of culture, he could have stressed its joys and the way Christ by grace gives us back the culture we have ruined by sin.

Finally, Part 3 articulates the author's approach to calling. As it is for Christians and culture studies, their emphasis on vocation is emerging as prominent and significant in recent times. It opens with a very challenging chapter entitled, "Why We Can't Change the World." Andy does not deny the possibility of making a difference; indeed, that is the book's principal subject. But he takes issue with the self-assured and aggressive ways in which many attempt to be change the world. He points out that sociologists have now made us aware how much the world actually changes us. Here and throughout we are cautioned against hastily measuring how much lasting change there really has been. Some of yesterday's bestsellers are all but forgotten today, whereas some of yesterdays ignored works are today bestsellers. (J. S. Bach's output was not terribly influential until at least eighty years after he passed away.)

These thoughts and so many more are simply beautifully put. Are there any action items? Sure. For one thing we can try to bring a little humanity into our fast-moving world. For example, the Charlotte airport set the trend on placing rocking chairs and affordable wine bars in its halls, making the place just a little more home-like for people usually rushing around, worried about their next flight. In another example, Andy compares the route to power of Lady Diana with Mother Teresa, who both died within a week of each other. The obsession people had over Diana way overshadowed their interest in Teresa, possibly because they had some sense of how dangerous power can be (p. 219). He discusses the humbling of Ralph Reed and his Christian Coalition, noting that their alliance with the more right-wing Republicans got them into partnerships they did not need, such as the greedy Jack Abrahamoff. Instead of the allure of power, Christians should be attracted to the allure of service, not as high profile, but a lot more effective and God-honoring. Perhaps Kuyper could have served here to remind us that service does not have to mean political inactivity. While Andy clearly emulates Gary Haugen and the International Justice Mission, I wonder whether he has equal respect for the work of James Skillen and the Center for Public Justice. He does list their web site in the bibliography. At any rate, service and humanizing are the most forceful ideas for him. Movingly, for example, he relates the story of "Smokey Mountain," a garbage heap in Manila that acquired dignity and an improved quality of life through the humble preaching and service of a Roman Catholic priest.

Change is modest but powerful in unexpected ways. It's about sowing seeds, working in small groups, breaking down the sacred/secular rift which removes grace from all of the realms of life it is meant to provide for. Change is about setbacks and temporary failures. Endearingly, Andy discusses Jimmy Rollins, the shortstop for the Philadelphia Phillies baseball team. (British readers of *Themelios*

will forgive this allusion to the quintessentially American sport!) He is a nearly perfect athlete, getting on base 331 times out of 1,000 in his career thus far. But that means he “fails” two-thirds of the time to get on base. Christians who “take up their cross” to follow Jesus should know better than to expect easy triumph all the time. When we grasp this, then truly can we “make something of the world,” the last line in the book. A four-page appendix on Rembrandt’s *Artist in His Studio* encourages us to posture before the canvas of the world and make beauty out of ashes, much as Moses hoped for in the prayer of Ps 90.

William Edgar
Westminster Theological Seminary
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, USA

Jerry L. Walls, ed. *The Oxford Handbook of Eschatology*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008. xviii + 724 pp. \$105.00.

The Oxford Handbook of Eschatology, edited by Jerry Walls, is one of the newest additions to the Oxford Handbook series from Oxford University Press. As is the case with other volumes from this series, contributors are recognized specialists in their fields, and the relatively brief essays are generally high quality and represent cutting-edge research.

The volume begins with an introduction by Jerry Walls that maps the territory within Christian theology occupied by the topic of eschatology, introduces its various dimensions, and highlights some of its constitutive components: personal and social eschatology, temporality and eternity, teleology and history, theodicy, and cosmology. Toward situating the volume’s content in its historical context, he briefly charts the decline of eschatology in the 19th century and its resurgence in the 20th on the heels of Johannes Weiss and Albert Schweitzer. That Christian eschatology is an incredibly diverse topic is not a reality lost on Walls, and he goes to some length to broadly introduce the issues that polarize Christian eschatological debates, such as the nature of the resurrection, scripture and its interpretation (specifically the nature of apocalyptic literature such as Daniel and Revelation), and the relationship between future and realized eschatology with the attending societal and ecclesial implications. Related to the Christian polarization on eschatological issues, Walls argues that divergences between eschatological commitments are informed not only by differing biblical interpretations but by underlying moral and philosophical judgments as well. Alertness to this reality will only serve one’s reading of the essays that follow.

Following Walls’ introduction, the book unfolds in three parts, encompassing a total of thirty-eight entries that range over a wide field of biblical, theological, philosophical, and cultural issues related to the complex subject of eschatology. This Oxford Handbook is a massive tome totaling 726 pages, and the diversity of topics covered is equaled only by the diversity of its contributors, who represent various theological traditions and schools of thought. The format of the essays is generally predictable: introduction to the relevant contextual material, presentation of the debated issues, and some constructive proposals.

Part I considers ‘Historical Eschatology’ and is divided into two sections. The first is populated by essays on the Old Testament and the rise of apocalypticism, apocalyptic eschatology in the ancient



world, New Testament eschatology and its relationship to the church, eschatology and the historical Jesus, and the place of eschatology in the Early Church Fathers. The second section explores 'Eschatology in World Religions' and includes discourses on Jewish, Muslim, Buddhist, and Hindu perspectives. Walls explains the importance of this section on non-Christian religions as 'crucial to understand the conflicting visions of where our world is headed and what it all means' (p. 16). The section is rounded out by a fascinating essay by Christopher Partridge that tracks end-time discourses in a wide array of new religions for whom millenarianism and apocalypticism have been importance features, such as Jehovah's Witnesses, the Seventh-day Adventists, the Branch Davidians, the Nation of Islam, and even UFO religions, environmental movements, and New Age organizations. Partridge's analysis of the relationship between apocalypticism and violence is of special interest. At the core of much end-time thinking (Christian or otherwise), there is a narrative of violence which encourages strong good-evil dualism, combat mythologies, and leads in some cases to the complete withdrawal from the wider society and even to 'the rationalization of violence' (p. 201). While the contributing factors to extreme cases of violence are multiple and complex (e.g. the Tokyo Subway bombing by Aum Shinrikyo), the key for all such scenarios is a form of 'theological dualism.' This dualism, Partridge contends, can be found in a 'relatively diluted form' even in mainstream conservative theistic eschatologies. The worry, according to Partridge, is not that eschatological theologies such as these create interpretive matrixes for understanding evil and suffering or for making sense of religious persecution per se; instead, in some cases dualistic, millenarian eschatologies can produce 'a rationalization of violence' (p. 206) leading to disastrous results.

Part II explores eschatological beliefs in distinct Christian traditions and theological movements including Roman Catholic, Eastern Orthodox, Protestant, Fundamentalist, Pentecostal, Process, Liberation, and Feminist theologies. Following Peter C. Phan's survey of Catholic eschatology and preceding Gerhard Sauter's proposal for a renewed emphasis in Protestant eschatology on the 'Christ predicate', Andrew Louth expounds on Eastern Orthodox rationales for the final restoration of all (*apokatastasis pantōn*). Drawing on Origen, Gregory of Nyssa, and St. Maximus the Confessor, Louth maintains that Orthodox theology has always held a hope for universal salvation based on the belief of 'the boundlessness of God's love'. This finds expression in prayers of the Orthodox church that 'there is nothing beyond the infinite love of God, that there is no limit to our hope in the power of his love, at least regards as a legitimate hope the universal salvation of all rational creatures, maybe even the devil himself and his demons' (p. 245–46).

The third part of the volume, 'Issues in Eschatology', focuses on theological issues in its first segment and on philosophical and cultural issues in the second. In the first on theological issues, notable theologians Douglas Farrow, Clark Pinnock, and David Bentley Hart give their attention to church and ecumenism, annihilationism, and the meaning of life respectively (other chapters cover millennialism, resurrection, heaven, hell, purgatory, and universalism). The contribution by David Hart, 'Death, Final Judgment, and the Meaning of Life', is particularly good. Remaining true to his Eastern Orthodox heritage, Hart contends for eschatological divinization as the hope of fallen persons. The Christian story and specifically Christ's resurrection fundamentally orients our view of death as infinitely unnatural and calls us to an 'inextinguishable disquiet' before death's power:

That disquiet, it emerges, is a sign of a created disposition to grace; it is the original agitation of a spiritual summons to a kingdom not of this world, to the external life of a renewed creation. In the light of Easter, however, that aboriginal anxiety is transformed into a kind of spiritual ecstasy. For what God raised up on Easter was the deified

humanity of Christ; and he thereby revealed that the true story of our humanity is that of a true union between humanity and God, a marriage of the finite to the infinite, a divinization of the creature in Christ (p. 487).

The second section of Part III examines philosophical and cultural issues, including contributions by Wolfhart Pannenberg ('Modernity, History, and Eschatology'), Stephen Webb ('Eschatology and Politics'), Michael Peterson ('Eschatology and Theodicy'), and William Abraham ('Eschatology and Epistemology'). The multifarious questions of cosmology and time are taken up expertly by Robert Russell ('Cosmology and Eschatology') and William Lane Craig ('Time, Eternity, and Eschatology'). While these essays could have been five times their length in order to deal adequately with the complexity of the issues at hand, Russell and Craig provide a fine survey of the questions at stake and the current state of research. Welcome additions also include Heidi J. Hornik's piece, 'Eschatology and Fine Art' and the piece 'Eschatology and Pop Culture' by Robert Jewett and John Shelton Lawrence. Hornik's discourse tracks the appearance of eschatological themes in Christian art during the Medieval and Renaissance periods and addresses shifts in eschatological themes with an eye to history, culture, and changing doctrinal issues. Jewett and Lawrence's contribution introduces readers to the relatively new field of 'religion and popular culture' then briefly (tantalizingly) addresses mediums of popular culture as diverse as Julia Ward Howe's Civil War ballad "Battle Hymn of the Republic" and the *Matrix* trilogy.

The book concludes with a short essay by Richard Bauckham which, among other topics, addresses emerging eschatological issues 'after Moltmann' in the 21st century. Of particular interest to Bauckham are the 'myths of progress' that stubbornly remain even after postmodernism's critique of modernity's over-confidence in human, societal 'progress.' Bauckham identifies several forms this takes: the neoliberal ideology of free-market economic globalization, postmillennial utopianism, and science and technology. In each case, for Bauckham, Christian eschatology must reject 'yet another example of the modern attempt to make immanent reality what Christian eschatology expects from the transcendent power of God' (p. 678).

There is much to commend the *Oxford Handbook of Eschatology*. The sheer scope of material held between its covers and the diversity of its contributors is, in itself, impressive. According to the criteria of scope, diversity, and quality, there simply is no comparison for this volume. It is hard to imagine a better place to find up-to-date, authoritative, introductory contributions on subjects related to Christian eschatology. It will, therefore, be a welcome addition to any seminary or university library. Professors in upper level university courses and graduate classrooms would find the highly readable essays here useful as brief introductions to eschatological topics. For researchers and interested readers, the footnotes, bibliographies, and suggested reading lists provide useful launching points for continued study.

However, the collection is not without some detracting qualities. The price alone makes it hardly reasonable for someone to purchase for their personal library (although I do not think Oxford had personal libraries in mind when publishing it). Further, and more problematic for the content of the volume, notably missing from the 'theological issues' section is an essay addressing the dogmatic relationships between eschatology and other doctrines within Christian systematic theology. While landmark theologians such as Karl Barth, Wolfhart Pannenberg, and Karl Rahner are noted in various essays, readers would be well-served had there been an essay interacting with the various ways eschatology has been dogmatically mapped within the Christian tradition. Ready examples come to mind such as the 'actualism' of salvation in Christ in Karl Barth's *Church Dogmatics* and its consequences for Barth's eschatology of final transformation, Wolfhart Pannenberg's pneumatology in *Systematic Theology* and its implications for his account of eternity's entrance into time in the consummation of history, or

Karl Rahner's highly anthropological vision of eschatological hope and its dependence upon certain Christological commitments.

Had a chapter such as this been commissioned, the odd lack of doctrinal discussions related to the doctrines of creation, providence, and Christology would likely have been remedied. Seeing the dogmatic relationship between eschatology and other doctrines might also have served to further bolster Walls' insistence from the introduction that Christianity must never shrink from its status as 'daring hope' that 'refuse[s] to resign our hopes or diminish our desires' (p. 6) for it would have filled out this claim from across the whole breadth of Christian doctrine.

Kent Eilers
King's College, University of Aberdeen
Aberdeen, Scotland, UK

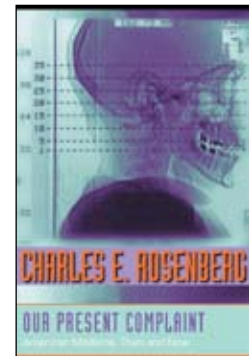
Charles E. Rosenberg. *Our Present Complaint: American Medicine, Then and Now*. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2007. 214 pp. \$50.00.

Today most people, including medical professionals, are woefully deficient in their knowledge of history. Dr. Charles E. Rosenberg's *Our Present Complaint: American Medicine, Then and Now* aims to put medicine's present situation into its historical context and to help readers examine "medicine as a way of thinking about society" (p. 11). A professor of the history of science at Harvard and, therefore, outside of the medical world, he attempts to give an objective, long-term perspective to those who work and receive care within it.

He summarizes the principles of medicine since Hippocrates and emphasizes changes in the past two centuries. For most of the past 2000 years, medicine was practiced in the Hippocratic tradition. Medical practice incorporated specific "gentlemanly" behavior standards for physicians and emphasized the physician-patient relationship. Medical care was provided largely by families at home. Disease was viewed largely as the result of personal conduct and lifestyle choices. Diagnosis was vague and based on symptoms and physical findings. A wide variety of practitioners including midwives, surgeons, pharmacists, and natural/folk healers were sought out for care in addition to physicians. Hospital care was rare and medical specialties did not yet exist.

In the late 19th century, medicine became increasingly science-based and reductionistic. Diseases and the training of physicians were better defined. Diagnosis increasingly relied on technology, and medical specialties developed. Infectious diseases were caused by pathogens, rather than behavior, and were curable with antibiotics. Hospitals became more important for medical training and patient care.

More recently, medicine has become a bureaucratic system, as the role of third party payers and government agencies in the health sector increased. Costs soared and financial containment measures restrict physician choice and practice. Care is more scientific but less personal. Individualizing care is increasingly difficult as evidence-based medicine standards grow in influence. Increasing life spans and effective immunization programs shifted the focus back from acute to chronic disease. Personal conduct and lifestyle choices are again emphasized as the basis for much of the chronic disease burden. In contrast, problems such as homosexuality, alcoholism, and other addictions, which for most of



Western history were viewed as social and behavioral problems, have become medicalized. Genetic traits and abnormal lab values (e.g., high cholesterol) have come to be viewed as medical problems, even when asymptomatic. Globalization and emerging diseases made health care issues transnational.

Rosenberg examines a number of medical issues over time, showing how their definitions and society's perspectives toward them have changed. He examines the concepts of disease definition and the shifting boundaries between medical, psychiatric, and social problems. He discusses the assessment and management of risk and what he calls the "pathologies of progress" (environmental and occupational exposures). He addresses contemporary medical utopianism related to genetic and stem cell developments and the unrecognized likelihood of unintended consequences. The lure of alternative and complementary medicine and desire for and concept of holistic care are examined. He describes the origin of bioethics and its role in helping balance multiple variables and concerns in today's extremely complex medical world.

Rosenberg defends the thesis that medicine is an inherently moral endeavor:

The professional identity and market plausibility of medicine . . . have rested historically on a special moral and intellectual style, formally transcending the material reality and reflecting the sacredness of human life and the emotional centrality of the physician-patient relationship. . . . [T]here remains something special about the physician's vocation, about the profession's peculiar configuration of ethical and knowledge based claims. . . . Medicine's traditional identification with the sacred, the selfless, and the public interest has blurred and hybridized with the intellectual, the technical, and the instrumental (pp. 189–90).

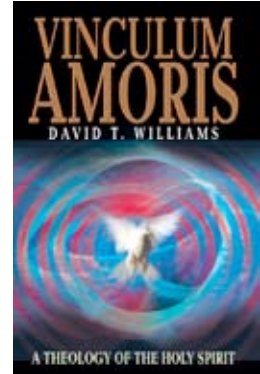
Our Present Complaint is not a particularly easy read. However, it is a timely book. It examines important concepts and history that people need to be aware of and think through if they seek to understand and address the many problems with the American medical system. Americans are demanding change in their health system and health insurance. The President-Elect has promised it. Those who want to enter the arena and influence the direction of change would find their time well spent reading, thinking about, and discussing the concepts presented in this relatively slim volume.

Sharon A. Falkenheimer

The Center for Bioethics and Human Dignity, Trinity International University
Deerfield, Illinois, USA

David T. Williams. *Vinculum Amoris: A Theology of the Holy Spirit*. New York: iUniverse, 2004. ix + 295 pp. \$21.95.

With the rise of Pentecostalism, the Charismatic movement, and more recently the so-called Third Wave churches, the days when theologians regarded the Holy Spirit as the shy or retiring member of the Trinity are now largely behind us. Especially in more popular publishing, there is an expanding body of literature on the Spirit while at the same time disputes about the work of the Spirit have been at the heart of many disputes among Christians. Williams seeks to chart a path through these disputes by operating with Augustine's description of the Holy Spirit as *Vinculum Amoris*, or 'the bond of love.' Although there is a brief discussion of the Trinity near the end of the book, Williams is not particularly concerned with developing a theology of the person of the Spirit so much as employing Augustine's model to explore the work of the Spirit.



After two chapters in which he outlines the relevance of Augustine's model, Williams explores a series of theological themes that develop from this starting point. The areas addressed are salvation, filling with the Spirit, the sacraments, ethics, prayer, slaying in the Spirit, the Spirit in the world, Scripture, resurrection, and the importance of the benediction in 2 Cor 13:14 for our understanding of Trinity. The survey of topics shows the concern to explore the work of the Spirit, and for each Williams employs the model of the *Vinculum Amoris* as a means for resolving disputes among Christians over the Spirit's work. Although many of these disputes are located within western Protestantism, Williams does not shy away from matters that reach into the fundamental division of the church between East and West. Although Williams employs the one model, each of these theme studies is essentially an independent piece, so a student wanting to explore, say, slaying in the Spirit could do so by reading the first two chapters and then the one on that topic. For this reason, the book's conclusion struggles slightly because of the independence of each topic, though it is not lacking in insight.

The structure for each topic is also reasonably consistent, with Williams attending both to biblical material and wider discussions in systematic theology. Williams' initial theological training as an OT scholar is evident from the skill with which he considers a range of texts, but he is also adept at bringing this material into dialogue with contemporary issues. An engineer before he commenced his theological studies, he also draws on his knowledge of science in explaining matters. There is also a refreshing concern to demonstrate the abiding relevance of the material, though it would have been good to see a little more how the author's grounding as a white European in a traditionally black university in South Africa has shaped his work. Where these points do arise they help to earth his discussions more thoroughly, showing the importance of context for theology. One minor weakness is that Williams sometimes introduces technical terms without fully explaining them. For example, *perichoresis* is mentioned a number of times without ever being explained, while his discussion of the relative merits of the subjective or objective genitive in 2 Cor 13:14 will leave those without Greek rather perplexed. But for the most part, this is a balanced and thought-through treatment of a theme of abiding theological significance.

David G. Firth
Cliff College
Calver Hope Valley, Derbyshire, UK

Bonnie Steinbock, ed. *The Oxford Handbook of Bioethics*. Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2007. 768 pp. £89.00/\$150.00.

After almost forty years of explosive growth and activity, bioethics has become a mature form of interdisciplinary enterprise. Bioethics journals, conferences, academic programs, and centers proliferate, and bioethicists frequently are called to serve on hospital ethics committees and government commissions, to speak to media, and to testify before congresses and parliaments. From its origin in the work of theologians such as Joseph Fletcher and Paul Ramsey, bioethics evolved into an interdisciplinary field. However, the theoretical work that undergirds this endeavor is primarily philosophical.



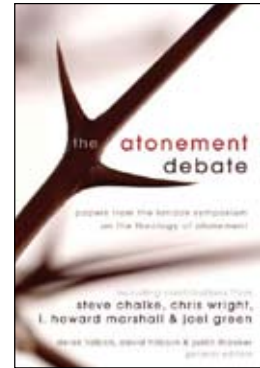
This volume from Oxford University Press, edited by philosopher Bonnie Steinbock, is an excellent resource for those who want to delve deeper into the philosophical issues raised by the concerns of bioethics. Most of the authors are American and British philosophers well known to those familiar with the field, including Steinbock, Felicia Ackerman, John D. Arras, Allen Buchanan, Gerald Dworkin, John Harris, Ruth Macklin, Don Marquis, and Ronald Munson, joined by a number of other bioethicists, most of whom are well known. They have each contributed an original essay on one of thirty topics. These include standard issues such as the methodology of bioethics, autonomy, justice, death, reproductive technology, abortion, transplantation, human and animal research ethics, and moral status, and such newer topics as human enhancement technologies, biobanking, stem cell research, cloning, pharmacogenomics, and bioterrorism. The first essay, a masterful review of the issue of bioethical method and the fate of the “four principle” approach against a flock of challengers such as virtue ethics and casuistry, is written by James Childress, one of the co-authors of the canonical text of modern bioethics, *Principles of Bioethics*.

This is an excellent collection of essays demonstrating the state of secular bioethics today. As far as this book is concerned, religious and theological perspectives have little relevance to bioethics and little to contribute to its debates. There are no authors writing from a particular theological perspective, nor do any topics deal substantively with theological or religious concerns. The book, though excellent, would have been stronger with a chapter on theological approaches to bioethics from someone like Allen Verhey or H. Tristram Englehardt Jr. In spite of this glaring omission, it remains a very worthwhile collection of essays for philosophers, theologians, physicians, lawyers, and others interested in bioethics.

David B. Fletcher
Wheaton College
Wheaton, Illinois, USA

Derek Tidball, David Hilborn, and Justin Thacker, eds. *The Atonement Debate: Papers from the London Symposium on the Theology of Atonement*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2008. 360 pp. £11.99/\$18.99.

Do traditional evangelical interpretations of the death of Christ on a Roman cross portray God as a divine child-abuser wherein God the Father brutally punishes his Son in the place of sinners? Does the penal substitutionary theory of the atonement, viewed by many evangelicals as central to the message of the gospel, in reality portray God as vindictive and interested only in retribution against his creatures? These questions are just representative of some of the issues currently being raised in relation to the penal substitutionary view of the atonement. What might be surprising to some within the evangelical community is that these and other similar charges have recently arisen from within evangelicalism itself. *The Atonement Debate* is a collection of papers devoted to discussion of just such issues related to the nature of the atonement and recent criticisms of penal substitution.



The background to the publication of this volume is helpful for understanding its purpose. In 2003, Steve Chalke and Alan Mann coauthored a volume entitled *The Lost Message of Jesus* (Zondervan). In this work Chalke and Mann offer several critiques of the penal substitutionary theory of the atonement. Both men also further elaborate their positions in subsequent publications. Their views created concern within the Evangelical Alliance (UK) over the question of their adherence to the Alliance's statement of faith. In July 2005, a symposium, co-sponsored by the Evangelical Alliance and the London School of Theology, was held—not to pass judgment on the “orthodoxy” of those critical of the penal substitutionary view of the atonement, but rather to provide an avenue for discussion of the various issues that have arisen surrounding the nature of the atonement. *The Atonement Debate* brings to the larger evangelical community the papers that were presented at this symposium as well as a few papers that were not able to be presented at the time of the meeting.

While Scholars from both sides of the debate are represented, those favorable to the traditional penal substitutionary theory outnumber those critical of penal substitution. Several well known scholars are represented, including I. Howard Marshall and Anthony N. S. Lane, both of whom write in support of penal substitution and in favor of some of the more controversial issues related to the theory, including Christ's bearing the punishment for sin in the place of sinners. Those critical of penal substitution include Steve Chalke and Joel B. Green. Green has also previously called for a reappraisal of our understanding of the atonement in *Recovering the Scandal of the Cross: Atonement in New Testament and Contemporary Contexts* (with Mark D. Baker; Downers Grove: IVP, 2000).

While it would be impossible in a review of this length to provide a summary of all the articles in *The Atonement Debate*, some general observations can be made. Recent criticism of penal substitution has had some positive effects even among adherents of this theory. Supporters of penal substitution have taken the time to clarify and refine their positions and have agreed that there has at times been some unfortunate language used to describe the atonement. There is general agreement, for example, that statements portraying the Father as being angry with the Son are nowhere supported in Scripture. While this type of language is sometimes heard from the pulpit, it does not accurately reflect a careful presentation of the penal substitutionary theory of the atonement. However, the critics of penal

substitution do not stop at criticizing some of the unfortunate portrayals of this theory. They go on to claim that penal substitution is deeply flawed at its very core. One recurring criticism of penal substitution is that it rests upon the assumption that God is not free to forgive sins unless His wrath has first been satisfied. This, it is claimed, contradicts God's own requirement that His human creatures forgive those who sin against them without first demanding any sort of restitution before forgiveness is offered. As Steve Chalke writes, "If the cross has anything to do with penal substitution, then Jesus' teaching becomes a divine case of 'do as I say, not as I do'" (p. 40). Other common criticisms include the claim that penal substitution emphasizes God's wrath at the expense of God's love (pp. 40, 159–64), and that penal substitution is based on an individualistic and decidedly Western understanding of justice more than it is on Scripture (pp. 164–66).

The Atonement Debate serves as a helpful introduction to the current discussion within evangelicalism over the nature of the atonement. Both sides of the debate are well represented even considering that there is more space devoted to the pro-penal substitution view. That being said, it is unlikely, in the opinion of this writer, that someone reading this volume will be convinced to jettison penal substitution. As I. Howard Marshall clearly points out in chapter three, the New Testament teaching is that all those who do *not* trust in Christ have a sure and certain future. That future is variously described as receiving God's wrath or God's judgment and ultimately results in eternal separation from God. As Marshall correctly observes, the New Testament is unanimous in its teaching that our salvation is the deliverance from this future judgment. That Christ's work on the cross removes the judgment of sin from the sinner seems to be an inescapable element in the Bible's teaching on the atonement. This certainly describes the heart of the penal substitutionary theory of the atonement.

Kevin D. Kennedy
Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary
Fort Worth, Texas, USA

Alan Spence. *Incarnation and Inspiration: John Owen and the Coherence of Christology*. London: T&T Clark, 2007. xi + 164 pp. £70.00/\$124.00.

One of the many legacies left by the late Colin Gunton has been the retrieval of the theology of John Owen. As a representative of this legacy, Alan Spence examines the christology of John Owen and proposes it to be one that addresses the problems that surface anytime an attempt is made to balance the biblical teaching that Jesus Christ is both truly God and truly man. Under the banners of 'incarnation' and 'inspiration,' Spence proposes that Owen's christology properly integrates the concerns and emphases of both concepts and so proves the coherence and continuing value of Owen's thought on the subject.

In the first chapter, Spence states the problem that attends christology as one that finds christological expressions offered in an 'either-or' framework. On the one hand, when an 'incarnational' christology is emphasized, Christ's ontological unity with God receives most of the attention. On the other hand, when an 'inspirational' christology is emphasized, the imbalance shifts to 'the interpretation of Christ as a person in whom



God has acted graciously through his Spirit, comforting and strengthening him in his spiritual life, equipping and empowering him in his mission' (p. 4). Yet having explained that the task of Chalcedon was to press for a clear account of the incarnation of the Word, Spence makes the controversial claim that for a thousand years the Church's 'commitment to a doctrine of incarnation required her denial in practice of an inspirational christology' (p. 15). He explains that the church 'was always somewhat embarrassed with the human experiences of Jesus, such as prayer, growth in grace, or dependence on the Holy Spirit' (p. 15). At the end of the chapter, Spence introduces John Owen as a theologian who managed to integrate the emphases of incarnation and inspiration.

In chapters 2 and 3, Spence leads the reader through a detailed commentary on Owen's christology, providing a deeper description of the categories of incarnation and inspiration. In the thought of John Owen, the author identifies a solution to the problem of an attenuated description of Christ's humanity. Within the teaching of the personal union of Christ's two natures, Spence explains that while 'each nature remains the subject of its own properties' (p. 40), both natures relate to each other—not in the sense of the traditionally appealed to *communicatio idiomatum*, whether *realis* or *verbalis*—but according to the Holy Spirit. The value of this particularly bold move to the overall shape of the argument is in its securing the space needed to further an account of the Holy Spirit's agency in the life of Jesus Christ.

Premised on an understanding that Christ must be like us in every possible way and so, 'face God as we do' (p. 111), Spence argues that Christ's human nature cannot be determined by his divine nature, but, like us, Christ is aided by the Holy Spirit. Spence explores this pneumatological component to Owen's christology by proposing that it was the particular work of the Holy Spirit to restore the image of God in human nature as well as in the human nature of Christ. This manoeuvre obtains 'a direct correspondence between the work of the Spirit in the man Christ Jesus and his work in all believers' (p. 54), wherein Christ's experiences of temptation, suffering, and dependence upon God are rendered continuous with our own.

In order to affirm and defend the validity of Owen's position, Spence spends the final section structuring his discussion by setting Owen's description alongside that of Apollinarianism, kenoticism and, finally, the theology of Karl Barth.

In this piece, Alan Spence has not only managed to prove the validity of engaging the theology of John Owen, but he has done so by balancing historical and theological research performed in high gear with lucid description that invites a wide range of readers the opportunity to learn and appreciate the importance of this much neglected Puritan thinker. Spence addresses the topic with a pastoral sensitivity that avoids the appearance of merely seeking to solve a theological conundrum. The motivation that drives his argument is Christ's kinship to us, which can be established and upheld only with an appeal to a fuller role of the Holy Spirit.

One lingering concern for this reviewer relates to the restriction of the Word's role in the earthly life of Jesus Christ. It is claimed that the Word is directly active only in the assumption of Christ's human nature since any other direct action of the Word on the human nature would thereby constitute some kind of unfair advantage that would no longer allow Christ to be like us in every possible way. However, can the Word cease to exercise his power as God and still be God? Is it not proper to say that the Son displays his power by becoming human and acting as our kinsman yet in a way wholly mysterious to us? One could then still affirm the role of the Holy Spirit in the earthly life of Jesus Christ but in concord with, and not instead of, the Son. Some readers might also sense that Spence's criticism of Karl Barth along the lines of a thin and inadequate interpretation of Christ's human agency to be a little unfair, given the author spends little time dealing with the christological material in *Church Dogmatics IV*.

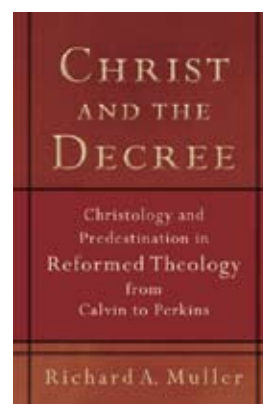
Such readers would do well to temper this criticism with the work of George Hunsinger, John Webster and, more recently, Paul Daffyd Jones.

Overall, this is a very fine work and a valuable contribution that draws a forgotten figure back into an especially important discussion.

Mark McDowell
King's College
Aberdeen, Scotland, UK

Richard A. Muller. *Christ and the Decree: Christology and Predestination in Reformed Theology from Calvin to Perkins*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008. xiv + 240 pp. \$29.99.

The third printing of Richard Muller's *Christ and the Decree* by Baker Academic is welcome and timely. It is welcome because it remains the sole single volume redressing modern historiography on the relationship between christology and predestination in Reformation and early post-Reformation Reformed theology. It is timely because while today Reformed theology is vigorously endorsed, it is so variously, often from perspectives that lack the theological and historical knowledge of the Reformed tradition possessed by Muller. Since the first edition of 1986 (Labyrinth Press), itself a revision of his doctoral dissertation at Duke University under David Steinmetz accepted ten years prior, Muller has established himself as North America's leading scholar on post-Reformation Reformed dogmatics as well as a rigorous and formidable historical theologian. At present, he continues in the post of P. J. Zondervan Professor of Historical Theology at Calvin Theological Seminary to which he was appointed in 1992.



The text remains the same as the 1988 paperback edition (Baker), with the exception of a new preface. There, the author declares: “If I were to write *Christ and the Decree* today, it would be a very different book.” While the “conclusions of the study would be much the same,” they would have been more attuned to sixteenth century conceptuality and, consequently, less influenced by its modern reception (p. ix). In short, Muller is more fully aware of the ways in which his first monograph was stunted by the questions and terms of the reigning Calvin scholarship at the time, a paradigm which Muller's scholarship is partially responsible for overthrowing.

This no doubt means a rewrite would be considerably less accepting of Karl Barth's interpretations. So, “[r]ather than attempting to match the christocentrism of the second-generation Reformers to the christocentrism of the early orthodoxy, I would identify the issue of christocentrism for what it is—an anachronistic overlay of neo-orthodox dogmatic categories—and set it aside as useless to the discussion” (p. x). A detailed presentation of Muller's thoughts on this issue can be found in his article, “A Note on ‘Christocentrism’ and the Imprudent Use of Such Terminology” (*Westminster Theological Journal* 68:2 [Fall 2006]: 253–60). Surely accompanying Muller's disinterest in modern theological concerns would be a more thoroughgoing eradication of modern historiography of scholasticism. Thus, Muller also explains that he would have deemphasized even more the placement of theological *loci*. As readers of his *After Calvin* (Oxford University Press, 2003) and the second edition of the first volume of his impressive *Post-Reformation Reformed Dogmatics* (Baker, 2003) will know, Muller has solidified and

extended the position found here on a smaller scale that dogmatic organization has less to do with theology and more to do with the ordering necessary for teaching theology in the academic context. Scholastic theology does not denote specific doctrinal content, but simply “school theology.” Without this theological orientation and these constraints, this would have been a very different text indeed.

Some word about the contents is in order. After the introduction, in which Muller proposes his reading against the distortions and, now surprisingly considering his current grievance with Barth, takes Barth’s rejection of such as a starting point for a fresh assessment, the book divides into two parts. The first explores the relationship between christology and the doctrine of predestination in Calvin and subsequently situates such in relation to that of three of his contemporaries, namely, Heinrich Bullinger, Wolfgang Musculus, and Peter Vermigli. Here Muller uncovers a christological concentration of sorts in the early Reformed that avoided a speculative or deductive doctrine of predestination (one in which God’s decree was interpreted in abstraction from its execution in Christ). In Part 2, Muller goes on to explore the same in Theodore Beza, Zacharias Ursinus, Jerome Zanchi, Amandus Polanus, and William Perkins. This portion attempts to show that while the post-Reformation Reformers developed the early impulse according to a scholastic method, such a development remained in doctrinal harmony with the early codification. Thus Muller’s overarching thesis is that the later scholastics did not introduce a speculative doctrine of predestination that was disconnected from the christological focus of the early Reformers on account of their (the scholastics’) employment of rationalistic scholasticism, but were faithful to the christological/covenantal orientation of Calvin and his contemporaries. Indeed, the structural adjustments consequent upon the scholastic method are not theological in nature but simply pedagogical. In this book, then, one finds early versions of arguments that Muller would go on to develop and would become central to his work. And, as one should expect from Muller, they are meticulously made and supported by penetrating research into both primary and secondary sources.

Discerning readers will have wished Muller would have answered Bruce McCormack’s response to *Christ and the Decree* (I thank David Gibson for alerting me to this essay). To be sure, the core of McCormack’s response will be met with a yawn or two from Muller who, as mentioned above, is no longer interested in issues of doctrinal ordering or christocentrism. But McCormack’s is the only substantial response, and it would have been helpful for Muller to provide readers with his perspective. McCormack argues that Muller’s reading of Calvin, mistaken at several points, actually confirms Barth’s critique of Calvin’s doctrine of predestination. According to McCormack, Muller’s Calvin does in fact articulate a speculative, that is, non-christological, doctrine of predestination because it is the eternal Son, undetermined by his incarnate identity as Jesus Christ, who is the subject of the divine decree (“Christ and the Decree: An Unsettled Question for the Reformed Churches Today,” in *Reformed Theology in Contemporary Perspective* [ed. Lynn Quigley; Edinburgh: Rutherford House, 2006], p. 134). Since Muller’s critique of Barth has expanded and sharpened over time, an answer to one of today’s foremost Barth scholars on this point seems necessary.

Christ and the Decree is still a valuable source for the theology of predestination in early Reformed theology. It would be a great text for classes on Reformed theology, and could be used to supplement standard treatments of Reformed covenantal theology. And while scholars will want to turn to Muller’s later works for a more mature form of the arguments, there is much insight into the character and development of Reformed theology to be found in this book.

James R. A. Merrick
King’s College, University of Aberdeen
Aberdeen, Scotland, UK

Fred Sanders and Klaus Issler, eds. *Jesus in Trinitarian Perspective: An Introductory Christology*. Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2007. xii + 244 pp. \$24.99.

Co-editor Fred Sanders explains, “The thesis of this book, and the conviction of each author, is that the intellectual work of Christology is best undertaken in the context of the doctrine of the Trinity” (p. 3). Thus, in *Jesus in Trinitarian Perspective*, he and co-editor Klaus Issler want to provide beginning evangelical theology students with an understanding of the doctrinal issues related to Christology. The five essays that follow Sanders’ introduction are apportioned according to the classic systematic division of Christ’s person and work. Each essay, including Sanders’ introduction, begins with a summary of the argument, a statement of what are called “axioms for christological study,” and a list of important terminology. And each ends with reading recommendations and study questions.



Sanders’ introduction attempts to persuade evangelicals that Chalcedonian orthodoxy can supply “the conceptual categories evangelicals need to tell the story of their personal savior the way they need to” (pp. 1–2; cf. p. 34). He worries that there is a tendency within evangelicalism to marginalize doctrinal description because of an interest in biblical simplicity. He writes,

One of the great ironies of modern theological history is that the heirs of those conservatives who opposed high liberalism have become the chief bearers of the Harnackian bias against doctrine. Whenever we assume that the best way to embrace the simple gospel is to eschew the difficulties of doctrine, Evangelicals are unconsciously adopting the position of their historic opponents and standing in contradiction to their own best interests (p. 5).

The remainder of the essay, then, explains the classical christological debates with a view towards showing their value for evangelical theology. Such a recovery, if one admits it necessary, could prove beneficial for evangelical theology given the number of internal controversies that turn on Christology in general and the nature of the incarnation in particular (e.g., open theism, the divine-human authorship of Scripture, and religious pluralism).

In Part 1 (“The Person of Christ”), Donald Fairbairn’s examination of the Cyrillian character of Chalcedonian and post-Chalcedonian Christology corrects a common misinterpretation of those debates. Exploring in more detail the ground covered by Sanders, he contends that the fifth-century christological controversies were not, as usually taught to beginning theology students, a debate between two competing schools, the Alexandrian versus the Antiochene, but about a clarification of Cyril’s Christology in light of challenges from a minority position who had the support of a prominent bishop, Nestorius.

J. Scott Horrell’s biblical defense both of social trinitarianism and of the evangelical view of the Son’s eternal subordination/submission to the Father is largely a revision of an earlier *JETS* article. In it he joins the contemporary call for a “social trinitarianism,” but spends more time giving biblical justification for such rather than entering philosophical debates about the divine persons’ “individual centers of consciousness.” What distinguishes Horrell’s approach from that of other evangelical defenses of a hierarchy of authority in the Godhead is the attempt to commandeer recent interest in a social Trinity. Horrell might have needed to provide more than just the assertion that God is accurate in his

economic manifestation to convince those skeptical of the configuration of the relationship between the immanent and economic Trinity required to justify reading the economic taxis present in the Son's historical mission as reflective of an immanent taxis. But this relationship is incredibly complex, and such a discussion may have compromised the book's ability to assist its target audience. (Sanders's *The Image of the Immanent Trinity: Rahner's Rule and the Theological Interpretation of Scripture* [Peter Lang, 2004] is a great guide to the issues involved.)

Garrett DeWeese's essay comparing patristic and contemporary metaphysics of incarnation reads like an apologetic for the latter. It is perhaps a bit too belabored by the philosophical practice of translating every contention into an equation to be accessible to beginning students. Moreover, depending on one's view, both Horrell's and DeWeese's essays could be considered inappropriate for beginning students since they attempt to defend ideas of more recent vintage. In my judgment beginning students should be immersed in the classic tradition that has been found to be a reliable resource for Christians throughout the majority of church history before entertaining more novel notions. Additionally, both appear to risk undermining the book's stated intention of avoiding "new or experimental position[s]" (pp. 39–40).

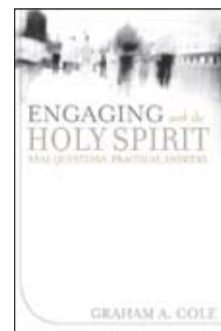
Part 2, "The Work of Christ," contains Bruce Ware's presentation of the trinitarian shape of Christ's atonement and Klaus Issler's account of Jesus' "predominant" dependence upon Father and Spirit in his life. Issler's concern is to show how Christ's spirituality is imitable for our own. Ware's essay serves as a catalogue of various biblical passages that evince a trinitarian pattern in Christ's identity and activity. In other words, he surveys instances where Jesus' work and personhood are described with reference to the Father and the Spirit. This allows Ware to conclude in line with the assumptions of this book that Jesus must be understood "in Trinitarian perspective." It was unfortunate that there was not much discussion of what specifically such a conclusion means for a theology of atonement. I was also surprised that Ware did not respond to the *trinitarian* objection to penal substitution.

Readers are here introduced to several of the doctrinal issues involved in thinking of Jesus in Trinitarian terms as well as the key biblical passages that prove such is a necessary component for being faithful to Scripture. The book will prove to be a great resource for evangelical undergraduates, interested lay folk, or pastors looking for a refresher in Christology. And the listing of key terminology, reading recommendations, study questions, and christological axioms make the book extremely useable for classroom discussion and general study.

James R. A. Merrick
King's College, University of Aberdeen
Aberdeen, Scotland, UK

Graham A. Cole. *Engaging with the Holy Spirit: Real Questions, Practical Answers*. Wheaton: Crossway, 2007. 125 pp. \$12.99.

Graham Cole's *Engaging with the Holy Spirit* is the kind of book we need more of within evangelical theology: concise, accessible, and practical. Cole's introduction touches on the theological method he utilizes throughout, which involves biblical investigation of the issue under consideration, some discussion of contemporary and historical perspectives, and engagement with the practical implications. Cole applies this approach to six questions regarding the Spirit: (1) What is blasphemy against the Spirit? (2) How may we resist the Spirit? (3) Ought we to pray to the Spirit? (4) How do we quench the Spirit? (5) How do we grieve the Spirit? (6) How does the Spirit fill us?



On the blasphemy of the Spirit, Cole makes clear that believers can sin, doubt, and be angry with God and yet not have committed blasphemy. Indeed, Cole emphasizes the pastoral point that an individual's concern over having committed the unpardonable sin is a good indication that they have not done so inasmuch as such sensitivity is a sure sign of the Spirit's ongoing work. Cole proposes that blasphemy of the Spirit is a settled opposition to Christ, which, on Cole's Calvinism, can be committed only by the unbeliever.

On resisting the Spirit, Cole argues that Acts 7:51 in which the term appears is not relevant to the debate between Calvinists and Arminians over irresistible/resistible grace. Rather, in that passage Stephen is speaking of Israel's rejection of the Word of God and so, Cole reasons, believers today can resist the Spirit when they are resistant to the truth of God's Word.

Regarding praying to the Spirit, Cole alerts the reader to the fact that there is no biblical precedent for praying to the Spirit although the practice does have historical precedent in the church. Cole accepts a Trinitarian argument in favor of praying to the Spirit, though he stresses the theologically normative shape of prayer as *to* the Father *through* the Son *by* the Spirit.

When it comes to quenching the Spirit, Cole argues that the Pauline term (1 Thess 5:19) is a metaphor for nullifying the Spirit's work, but that the text does not specify how the Spirit can be quenched. Cole turns quickly to a discussion of the gift of prophecy in which he positions himself as open but discerningly cautious.

Cole maintains that grieving the Spirit takes place when there is a moral discrepancy between what believers say they do and what they actually do. Contrary to classical theism, Cole argues that the Spirit's grief or sorrow is not metaphorical but that the Godhead does experience different passional states.

Lastly, Cole argues that the fullness of the Spirit in Eph 5:18–21 refers to the filling of the church with other-person-centered practices, which is in contrast to the interpretation that sees the filling of the Spirit as the empowerment for such practices.

Cole is to be commended for clearly and succinctly dealing with several important questions regarding the ministry of the Spirit in a balanced manner that will no doubt be helpful to many Christians. The book has sufficient theological depth to be a resource for those doing research on the issues and passages Cole addresses. And yet, it is also written in an accessible style for a thoughtful layperson who is interested in pneumatology. It should also be noted that Cole has written a more comprehensive theology of the Spirit: *He Who Gives Life: The Doctrine of the Holy Spirit* (Crossway, 2007).

There are two weaknesses I perceive in the book. First, assuming that space limitations forced Cole to be highly selective regarding the particular issues he addressed, I found myself wishing he would have merged several of the questions and eliminated another which would have made room for him to deal with other matters. In particular, while there is a difference between resisting, quenching, and grieving the Spirit, these three ways of obstructing the ministry of the Spirit could have been treated together and thereby condensed. Also, while the question of praying to the Spirit is important, there would seem to be other questions of greater significance, such as the following: What does it mean to walk by the Spirit? What are the gifts of the Spirit? What is the illumination of the Spirit? What is the indwelling of the Spirit?

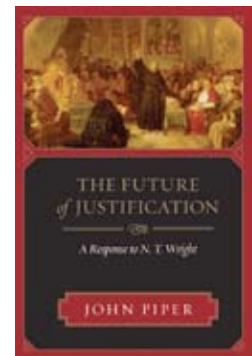
The second criticism pertains to Cole's treatment of being filled with the Spirit. Cole adopts a "newer view" of Eph 5:18–21 in which to be filled with the Spirit is equated with the performance of certain behaviors by the people of God (pp. 106–7). That is, to be filled with the Spirit is to behave in an other-centered manner. But this view could easily suggest a spirituality of autonomous behavior that can exist apart from the Spirit's empowerment, which seemingly flies in the face of various other New Testament teachings (e.g., Gal 5:16–26). So then one has to make clear that it is only by the Spirit's enabling grace that these behaviors are meant to be performed. But such a nuanced position ends up reasserting the truth (empowerment of the individual by the Spirit) that the Eph 5 passage supposedly no longer teaches. This result does not mean that Cole's interpretation is incorrect, but it does make it even more troubling that Cole never deals in his book in any sustained manner with the empowering work of the Spirit. In other words, since Cole thinks that the Eph 5 passage does not teach individual empowerment by the Spirit, Cole's book on *engaging* the Spirit ends up without any major treatment of what such engagement brings about in the believer's life.

Steve L. Porter

Talbot School of Theology, Rosemead School of Psychology
La Mirada, California, USA

John Piper. *The Future of Justification: A Response to N. T. Wright*. Wheaton: Crossway, 2007. 240 pp. £12.20/\$17.99. ([Available as a free PDF download.](#))

In the last several years, John Piper has repeatedly addressed the doctrine of justification in his sermons and writings. Now he does so via close interaction with the writings of prominent New Testament scholar and Anglican bishop N. T. Wright. Piper, who is the pastor for preaching and vision at Bethlehem Baptist Church in Minneapolis, Minnesota, is concerned that Wright's presentation of the gospel, specifically the doctrine of justification, "is so disfigured that it becomes difficult to recognize as biblically faithful" (p. 15). After noting the Pauline curse upon those who offer a different gospel (Gal 1:8–9), Piper emphasizes that he does not consider Wright to be under this curse (p. 15), nor does he question whether Wright himself is truly justified before God, although he has "a defective view of justification" (p. 24). Piper is especially concerned that Wright's global reconstruction in the area of New Testament theology contains vague and confusing ambiguities that are irreconcilable with the historic



and biblical view of justification. However, he affirms Wright's reverence for Scripture and hopes "that our common ground in Scripture will enable some progress in understanding and agreement" (p. 27).

Chapter 1 sets the stage methodologically with the caution that extra-biblical texts and first-century ideas can adversely constrain one's understanding of Scripture since these sources can be misunderstood, misconstrued, and misapplied. Wright's "esteem for the importance of the extra-biblical context seems to give it a remarkably controlling role for his interpretation of the New Testament" (p. 36).

Chapter 2 describes the usage of covenant and law-court imagery in regard to justification. Wright confuses denotation with implication by defining justification as God's declaration that someone is a member of the covenant, rather than the divine act that makes a person so (pp. 39–40). On the contrary, Piper contends that "justification is part of the ground, not the declaration, of saving covenant membership" (p. 43).

Chapters 3–4 explore the law-court dynamics of justification in regard to the meaning of God's righteousness and the necessity of real moral righteousness. Wright is criticized for defining divine righteousness in terms of what it does ("*keeps* covenant, *judges* impartially, *deals* properly with sin, and *advocates* for the helpless"), rather than what it is (p. 62). Instead, for Piper, "The *righteousness of God* consists most basically in God's unswerving commitment to preserve the honor of his name and display his glory" (p. 66). Wright's assertion that the historic understanding of imputation does not make sense (i.e., righteousness is not something that can be transferred from the judge to the defendant) is based on an inadequate definition of righteousness. Piper suggests that this transfer is possible when righteousness is viewed at the deeper level of attribute instead of actions alone (p. 71). Thus, the Judge counts "us as having the required moral righteousness—not in ourselves, but because of the divine righteousness imputed to us in Christ"; Wright thinks this whole way of framing the discussion is a category mistake (p. 80).

Chapter 5 outlines the practical implications of Wright's insistence that the Gospel ("the announcement of Jesus' universal lordship to all people") be distinguished from justification, which declares an individual is part of God's people but is not about how someone gets saved (p. 93). Piper claims that the admonition to "believe on Jesus, not the doctrine of justification" does not clearly reveal why the gospel is good news for individual sinners (pp. 85–86). He contends that only when Jesus' lordship is connected to justification is this message heard as good news. Chapter 6 asserts,

Calling/faith/justification are parts of one event that brings us from God's enmity to his acceptance. There is a logical sequence, but to say that justification only comes *after* we are "in" would misrepresent Paul's treatment of justification as essential to the act of actually putting us in the right with God (p. 98).

Chapters 7–8 treat the relationship of works to justification. Piper believes that good works are viewed as the evidence and confirmation of our faith in Christ, rather than the basis for justification (p. 110). He is concerned that Wright's analysis of final justification at the last day is ambiguous about how works function (pp. 118–19). Because Wright does not believe Christ's perfect obedience is imputed to us via our union with Him, he has significantly diverged from the viewpoint of traditional Reformed exegesis (pp. 124–25). Additionally, Wright's definition of faith as "faithful obedience" "leaves us with the impression that human transformation and Spirit-wrought acts of obedience are included in the term 'faith' when he speaks of present justification being by faith alone" (p. 131).

In chapters 9–10, Piper critiques Wright's version of the New Perspective on Paul, namely, that Paul and Judaism have a formally similar soteriology: (1) "free and gracious entrance into the covenant"; (2)

“a life of obedience to God out of gratitude for this grace”; and (3) “final justification on the basis of the entire life lived” (pp. 133–34). In reply, Piper distinguishes between hard and soft legalism, which both assume one’s works are related to one’s right standing with God; the former is self-produced, the latter a product of God’s grace (p. 152). He asserts that Wright’s arguments do not hold since “from Jesus’ standpoint, relational exclusivism (ethnic or otherwise) is rooted in self-righteousness, which means that ethnocentrism and legalism have the same root” (p. 157).

Chapter 11 returns to what Piper considers the heart of the matter: the imputation of God’s righteousness to us in Christ. He examines Rom 4:3–8; 5:18–19; Phil 3:9; 1 Cor 1:30; and 2 Cor 5:21, countering Wright’s exegesis in each passage. A final, concluding chapter reveals a basic concern that motivated Piper to write this book in the first place. He is afraid that Wright’s understanding of justification (specifically, future justification) is so similar to the Roman Catholic understanding that “his view will be co-opted as confirmation of the Catholic way” (p. 183). We must not think that our works of love cause God to be for us. To do so would take away from “the beauty and worth of Christ” as well as undermine “the assurance that God is totally for us” (pp. 186–88). Six appendices give further exegesis of specific texts and provide deeper access into Piper’s own understanding of justification and related matters.

The main strength of this book is Piper’s sustained attempt to accurately present and fairly critique the viewpoints of Wright, often including lengthy quotations and seeking to understand Wright’s position from the inside. Piper’s prose is readable, even in the midst of dense theological/exegetical analysis, and the chapters are divided into manageable sections with descriptive headings. Also salutary is his manifest concern for doctrinal preaching and its effect upon the church (cf. pp. 165–67).

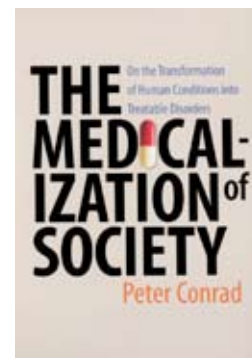
Although Piper’s passion is the biblical text and faithful exegesis, it is obvious that his critique springs from a particular understanding of the *ordo salutis*. In his discussion of the historic doctrine of justification, an inclusion of the significant Arminian tradition of interpretation (e.g., John Wesley) would have provided a helpful balance to his focus on the Reformed and Roman Catholic perspectives. Even within the Reformed tradition, Daniel P. Fuller has pointed out the difference between aspects of Piper’s understanding and that of Jonathan Edwards, who “unlike Piper, viewed the works of faith as an integral part of the persevering faith essential for justification” (*Reformation and Revival* 12 [2003]: 118). Finally, while N. T. Wright is obviously the scholar scrutinized in this volume, Piper’s explanation of Christ’s imputed righteousness has recently been critiqued in a 29-page essay by Robert H. Gundry that responds to Piper’s earlier assessment of Gundry’s view (“The Nonimputation of Christ’s Righteousness,” in *Justification: What’s at Stake in the Current Debates* [ed. Mark Husbands and Daniel Treier; Downers Grove: IVP, 2004], pp. 17–45). Although Piper references other essays in this volume on justification, his various discussions of imputation never interact directly with Gundry’s critiques. Perhaps he will do so at a later time.

Overall, this is a thought-provoking, well written book that provides a valuable counterpoint to the influential scholarship of N. T. Wright. Piper has pointed out several inconsistencies and ambiguities in Wright’s voluminous writings, and has repeatedly called upon him to provide a clarifying response. Hopefully Wright will oblige him so that this dialogue on one of the central doctrines of the Christian faith may continue.

Stephen B. Smith
Trinity Evangelical Divinity School
Deerfield, Illinois, USA

Peter Conrad. *The Medicalization of Society: On the Transformation of Human Conditions into Treatable Disorders*. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2007. 224 pp. \$20.00.

Peter Conrad's interest in the sociological aspect of disease began in the 1970's with his study of childhood hyperactivity. He returned to his study of the medicalization of disease in the 1990's as he observed the increasing number of conditions that had been labeled medical illnesses. His goal in writing this book is not to judge the appropriateness of these new diagnoses as medical illnesses nor catalog all newly medicalized diagnoses, but instead to select several new diagnoses, examine their evolution, and reflect on them from a sociological perspective. He appears to have been successful in his pursuit. Conrad begins by explaining that he desires to explore "illnesses or 'syndromes' that relate to behavior, a psychic state, or a bodily condition that now has (have) a medical diagnosis and medical treatment" (p. 3). And although not seeking to judge the appropriateness of these new diagnoses, he states, "What constitutes a real medical problem may be largely in the eyes of the beholder or in the realm of those who have the authority to define the validity of the diagnosis that is the grist for the sociologic mill" (p. 4).



As an introduction to familiarize the reader with the newly identified medical illnesses, he enumerates those now recognized in the early 21st century, only having been labeled as such over the last 30 years. These include attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), anorexia, chronic fatigue syndrome (CFS), post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), panic disorder, fetal alcohol syndrome, premenstrual syndrome (PMS), obesity, alcoholism and innumerable addictions, Gulf War syndrome, and multiple chemical sensitivity disorder. Additionally, disorders or deficiencies seemingly recognized with the development of "medical solutions" include menopause, andropause, erectile dysfunction, baldness, adult ADHD, generalized anxiety disorder (GAD), social anxiety disorder (SAD) or "social phobia", and childhood short stature. With some diseases, diagnostic criteria have changed giving the appearance of a sudden epidemic of new disease. The most striking example of this is Alzheimer's disease in which removal of the age criterion led to the labeling of senile dementia as Alzheimer's disease, making what previously was a rare disease exceedingly common in the aged.

Another interesting change promoted by pharmaceutical companies and professional societies is the association and medicalization of risk factors, as has been seen with hypertension and hypercholesterolemia. Consumers and doctors are led to believe that a risk factor for a disease *is* itself a "disease." In their advertising, pharmaceutical companies suggest prehypertension should be treated but will not reveal the number of individuals with prehypertension one would need to treat for 20 years in order to prevent one individual patient from having a heart attack or stroke (i.e., number needed to treat), nor will they reveal the associated costs of the drug, physician visits for monitoring, and side-effects over 20 years. Finally, although rare, occasionally the demedicalization of a disease occurs. The notable example of this is homosexuality, which was considered a psychiatric disorder (classified under "Personality Disorders and Certain Other Non-Psychotic Disorders") in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders II (DSM-II; American Psychiatric Association, 1968) until a reversal in 1974.

As one might guess, the driving forces behind medicalization of disease vary from disorder to disorder. The obvious facilitators include physicians, patients, advocacy and special interest groups, professional societies, and pharmaceutical companies. The latter group has gained greater influence

with the introduction of direct-to-consumer advertising. An individual's medical insurer is the final agent determining whether payment is valid for treatment of a diagnosis. For example, insurance companies do not cover Propecia (finasteride) for treatment of male pattern baldness while most cover a limited number of Viagra (sildenafil) tablets per month for erectile dysfunction, even in the absence of an identified cause of impotence.

We have already seen how Conrad does not attempt to judge the validity of these new diagnoses as true medical diseases. My own impression after reading this book, as both a physician and a Christian, is that much is at stake in this discussion, especially from the concerns of Christian anthropology and psychology. Unspoken assumptions about human identity, behavior, and sin, are bound up in complex ways with many of these diagnostic developments. I cannot unravel all the issues here, but I am convinced that it is incumbent upon each of us in the body of Christ to examine this medicalization of disease carefully from a biblical wisdom perspective before accepting many of these new diagnoses as bona fide diseases. We are on difficult medical/theological terrain here, yet one can argue that many of these conditions result from rebellious separation from God or possibly represent circumstances, providentially given by God, to draw us to depend more on Him (of course these theological categories must be handled with care!). Also, in those instances when diagnoses are judged valid, it would seem wise to consider the possibility of using medications as a "bridge" for a defined period of healing or normalization instead of accepting them as lifelong therapy.

In sum, the issues raised by this monograph are important, complex, and increasingly relevant for all of us who live in the modern world. For readers interested in finding thoughtful resources to engage these matters further, the President's Council on Bioethics has examined many of these issues in great depth. The most relevant volume here is *Beyond Therapy: Biotechnology and the Pursuit of Happiness* (2003), available for free online at www.bioethics.gov. Readers should also be aware of the helpful resources offered by the [Christian Medical and Dental Association](http://cmda.org) (cmda.org) and the [Center for Bioethics Human Dignity](http://cbhd.org) (cbhd.org).

S. Elizabeth Whitmore
Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine
Baltimore, Maryland, USA

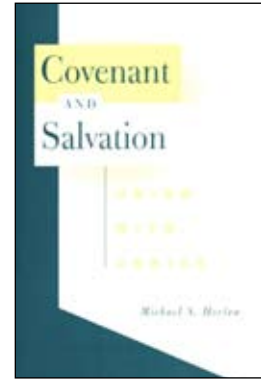
Michael S. Horton. *Covenant and Salvation: Union with Christ*. Louisville/London: Westminster John Knox, 2007. 324 pp. £21.98/\$34.95.

Put rather sophisticatedly, Michael Horton's volume is an exercise in the fusion of horizons: the horizon of Reformation and post-Reformation seventeenth century federal theology, ostensibly rooted in Calvin's thought, and the horizon of third-millennial theological thought. Put rather more straightforwardly, the author is convinced that the tradition of 'covenant theology' has adequate resources to meet contemporary theological needs. And, put more strongly, it is argued that covenant theology is the theology of the Bible and so, beyond adequacy, it is necessary for today.

Covenant and Salvation: Union with Christ is the third volume in a series which argues this case. It is in two parts. The first deals with 'Covenant and Justification' and enters into a debate which has been lively for some time, commonly conducted under the heading of the 'new perspective on Paul'. Horton engages in a running battle with its most prominent representatives, E.P. Sanders, James Dunn and, especially, N.T. Wright. He acknowledges that they differ amongst themselves on some points, but argues that they all fail to displace traditional Protestant Reformation readings of Paul. As we should expect, law, gospel, works and imputation are all discussed here. The second and somewhat longer part deals with 'Covenant and Participation'. Horton argues for the importance of participation and for a strong, positive approach to union with Christ. Eastern Orthodox *thēosis* is given a sympathetic hearing. But the foundations must be right or the theology will be wrong. Covenant theology gives us those foundations. Horton's interlocutors include the Radical Orthodox group, especially John Milbank, who are certainly criticized, though rather more mildly than N.T. Wright.

The whole series amounts to a very solid theological contribution, persuasively argued and judicious in tone. No one can fairly accuse the author either, on the one hand, of strident one-sidedness in his advocacy or, on the other, of unduly bland indulgence of opposing viewpoints. This is the case inclusively for all three volumes. It seems to me to be, generally and largely, a successful theological enterprise. The success of this volume in particular cannot always be judged confidently independently of the others because a defence of some core features of covenant theology is offered in the previous volumes. This volume, taken on its own, will probably not persuade those who doubt that Gal 3:20 teaches a covenant of redemption (p. 90) or Rom 5 a covenant of works (p. 101). They may or may not be persuaded when it is read in conjunction with the previous volumes. Yet the limits of *Covenant and Salvation* on this score should not be exaggerated: Michael Horton rightly draws our attention to the detail of the exposition and defence of covenant theology offered in this volume (p. 2). Overall, he avoids unwarranted repetition of material from volume to volume while at the same time laying down in his successive contributions the biblical grounds of covenant theology sufficiently for the purposes of that particular book.

In *Covenant and Salvation*, there is much quotation from and discussion with other authors. Whether one finds this a slight hindrance or a significant help will somewhat depend, I think, on where the reader is at in his or her theological study. However, these references and discussions should generally prove very helpful to student and teacher alike. On the other hand, theological defence is sometimes required where it is not supplied. It is surprising how many theologians talk positively about the resurrection of the *body* (pp. 283–99) without explaining what that means in light of the gruesome fate that befalls



many bodies or casting an eye in the direction of the crematorium. They also do so without adequately emphasizing the *discontinuity* between the present and the future body, which is surely the pivot of Paul's argument in 1 Cor 15:35–54, even if we must avoid a 'Platonic' reading of his argument. Michael Horton is in their number. On the other hand again, the question must be asked whether too great a weight of expectation is sometimes placed on the shoulders of theological precision. Is lack of a proper forensic covenantal ontology really going to be responsible for driving a significant number of people to Rome or Constantinople, as Bruce McCormack (extensively used and quoted by Horton in chapter 9) apparently fears? I leave it as a question. It is a question worth asking, however, especially when someone might be in sympathy and agreement with so much of what Horton says without being persuaded from his writings of full-blown 'covenant theology'. For it raises the broader question of what hangs for the church and the world on the *detail* of theological construction, a vital issue when theologians consider their mortality and proper use of their time. This is not a question about what hangs on theology *as such*, but of what goes into that theology on which things should hang.

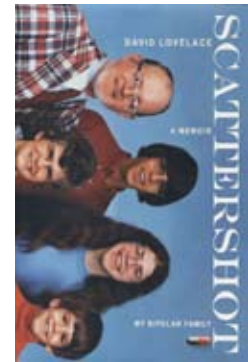
But that should be neither the first nor the last word on this volume. We must certainly be grateful to Michael Horton for this addition to his corpus of writings and it is to be hoped that it, alongside the earlier volumes, will be given the attention that they so well deserve.

Stephen N. Williams
Union Theological College
Belfast, Northern Ireland, UK

Book Notes

David Lovelace. *Scattershot: My Bipolar Family*. New York: Dutton, 2008. 292 pp. \$24.95.

David Lovelace's memoir is a lively mix of humor, tragedy, and a well told story. *Scattershot* gives us a window into the troubled bipolar soul of a family from Hamilton, Massachusetts. Readers of *Themelios* will be familiar with the author's father, Richard Lovelace, a brilliant and godly church historian at Gordon-Conwell Seminary (now emeritus); the author's mother is Betty Lee Lovelace. The protagonist (David) is their eldest, and he has a sister Peggy and a brother Jonathan. As the story unfolds, we discover how everyone in the family except Peggy develops bipolar disorder, all four hospitalized at different times because of the condition. In ten chapters, we meet this family and the remarkable, sometimes funny, sometimes frightening, ways in which the manic-depressive cycles affected



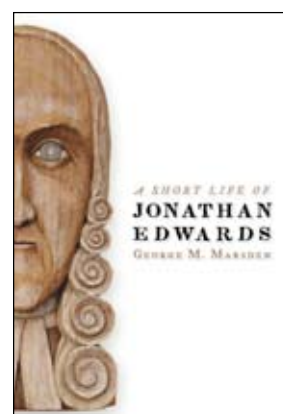
the author and the rest of his family. A large part of the narrative finds Lovelace running away from this reality, relentlessly scared, only to be finally reconciled with it at the end. His adventures make for an incredible if sometimes sobering page-turner, laden with its own share of the dark and even scandalous. While not written from a Christian perspective, Lovelace is acquainted with his father's pious Presbyterian faith. Those who have relatives or friends with bipolar disorder will benefit tremendously from his memoir; those without will come away informed. Ethicists and theologians who investigate matters of anthropology and hamartiology will also want to come to terms with the implicit issues raised. But all of us remain in Lovelace's debt for a brave, poignant, and illuminating account of his

family's struggle. He writes in the last chapter, "I know our disease. I deserted my family and ran from it. I denied it three times and refused it. All that drama may seem pointless and sad but it taught me" (p. 290). May it also teach us.

Hans Madueme
Trinity Evangelical Divinity School
Deerfield, Illinois, USA

George Marsden. *A Short Life of Jonathan Edwards*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008. 152 pp. \$15.00.

This is a new telling of Marsden's earlier biography, not an abridgement. A fresh feature incorporated throughout the book is the parallel experiences of Benjamin Franklin, allowing us to see how two precocious New England boys rose to prominence amidst the turbulent intellectual shifts of their day. Chapter 1 sets the stage with the Puritan story from England to New England. As the 18th century unfolded, the question was whether the heirs of the Puritans would hold unto the old world or whether they would move into the modern world and the emerging Enlightenment; Edwards chose the former, Franklin the latter. Chapters 2–4 canvass the familiar biographical details of Edwards's life, including his role in the Great Awakening. This leads into chapter 5, which further probes George Whitefield's significance: he was "one of America's leading founding fathers," "best known person in the colonies," and he "revolutionized American religion, and hence much of American life" (p. 60). Along with Gilbert Tennent and others, Whitefield's evangelical egalitarianism fueled an epochal social revolution (before the American Revolution). Chapter 6 gives us glimpses of Edwards's family life on the home front: Edwards was an intensely ascetic, visionary, aristocratic, pastoral, intellectual theologian-pastor (pp. 87–89). There is a sensitive but brief treatment of Edwards and slavery (pp. 89–92), and of course there was the "bad book" episode. Chapter 7 explores different aspects of war during that time, illuminating paradoxical features of Edwards's Puritan heritage, some still characteristic of modern American evangelicals and their relationship to the United States. And finally, chapter 8 recounts the events and situations leading up to Edwards's death at age 54 from the small pox vaccine, not least his amazingly prolific writing. The book's conclusion reflects this short biography as a whole: theologically sensitive, historically insightful, and engagingly written. Highly recommended.



Hans Madueme
Trinity Evangelical Divinity School
Deerfield, Illinois, USA

— ETHICS AND PASTORALIA —

**Theology for Kids:
Recommending Some Recent Books for Younger Children**

The evangelical market is glutted with books for children, but many of them are about as biblically faithful and theologically reliable as VeggieTales. In fact, one of the first children's books to be published in 2009 is *The VeggieTales Bible*. At this rate *The Winnie the Pooh – Thomas Kinkade Study Bible* or *Star Wars Bible* may be next!

Many people have an opportunity to teach children about God, including parents, grandparents, older siblings, babysitters, and Sunday school teachers. Teaching theology to children is a joyful yet sober responsibility that many seem to take lightly. It is not as easy as one may suspect. It is challenging to communicate truth about God and his creation to children in an accurate and easily understandable way.

1. Communicating accurately requires a grasp of the Bible's storyline and how all the little stories contribute to the one big story. It requires a sound biblical hermeneutic that does not promote the trivial, extrapolate illegitimately, read between the lines, miss important nuances, or focus on people rather than God. (John H. Walton explains these five hermeneutical errors in "Hermeneutics and Children's Curriculum," *koinōnia* [August 6, 2008], available at <http://zondervan.typepad.com/koinonia/2008/08/hermeneutics-an.html>.)

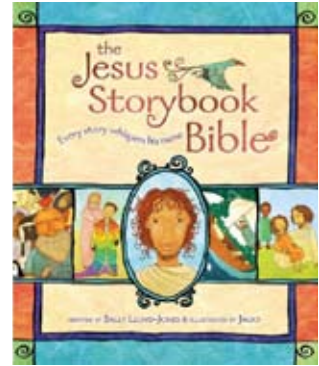
2. Communicating in an easily understandable way requires clarity, conciseness, imagination, creativity, excitement, and appropriateness (e.g., in word choices, length of teaching, level of detail, and means of conveying spiritual truth).

This is hard work. Thankfully, some fine theology books for children are available. (And they are edifying for adults, too!) Without pretending to be experts on theological children's literature, we have sorted through recent theology books for younger children and compiled a short list of outstanding books. Other books are undoubtedly worthy of mention, but these are our favorites. What follows organizes them in three categories and ranks the books in order, beginning with our top recommendations.

Bible Story Books

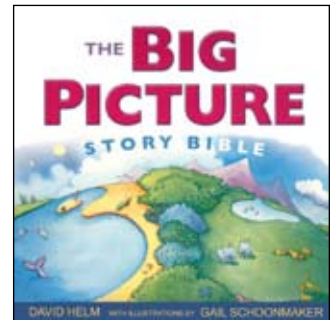
Sally Lloyd-Jones. *The Jesus Storybook Bible: Every Story Whispers His Name*. Illustrated by Jago. Grand Rapids: ZonderKidz, 2007. 352 pp. \$16.99.

This is the most well written children’s book we have read. It brilliantly summarizes the Bible storyline from creation to the consummation, and it emphasizes Jesus and the gospel as the key to understanding the Bible’s storyline. The subtitle captures exactly what the book does: at the end of each story, Lloyd-Jones points ahead to the story’s fulfillment in Christ (though the pointing-ahead theme seems slightly stretched for some of the stories). Lloyd-Jones acknowledges that she has “liberally borrowed” from her pastor, Tim Keller, “whose teaching informs every story” (p. 7). She skillfully crafts words that are captivating, making it hard to stop reading. Some readers may become so entrenched in the story that they will find themselves wishing that it is true (perhaps forgetting that this well written story is not a fairy tale) and then rejoicing that it is! The illustrations are simple, creative, and almost fanciful.



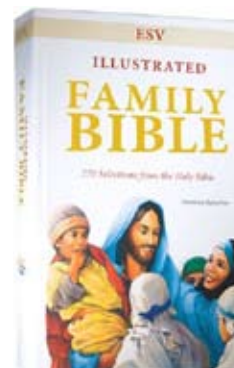
David Helm. *The Big Picture Story Bible*. Illustrated by Gail Schoonmaker. Wheaton: Crossway, 2004. 456 pp. \$22.99.

Helm follows Graeme Goldsworthy’s biblical theological approach: “God’s people in God’s place under God’s rule.” The Bible’s storyline from creation to the consummation emphasizes “God’s forever King” and his work to establish his kingdom (though some of the stories seem to stretch to include this theme). The storytelling is creative and uses simple language to explain theological concepts. For example, “This stone temple wasn’t God’s place anymore. Jesus was God’s special place. His body was God’s holy temple. His blood would pay for sins” (p. 304). The illustrations are excellent and clear, keeping the story flowing and piquing interest. (Jenni used this book when she taught four-year-olds at a Christian school, and the children loved the stories and frequently asked to at least see the pictures for the story they would hear the next day!) The overview of the Bible’s storyline is excellent, though it surprisingly excludes many stories. For example, the story skips almost instantly from the great commission to Pentecost to John writing Revelation, completely omitting the life of Paul. *The Big Picture Story Bible* is simpler and less thorough than *The Jesus Storybook Bible*.



ESV Illustrated Family Bible: 270 Selections from the Holy Bible. Illustrated by Abigniew Freus. Wheaton: Crossway, 2008. 424 pp. \$24.99.

The publisher selects 270 stories from Gen 1 to Rev 22. It uses the actual text of Scripture (English Standard Version) to recount the Bible’s storyline. It does not include every chapter, but includes almost every story. Compared to other children’s books, its language is not as smooth and elementary for young children, nor does it make whole-Bible Christological connections since it includes no commentary.



Other Story Books

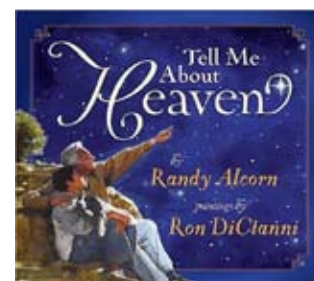
Starr Meade. **Keeping Holiday.** Illustrated by Justin Gerard. Wheaton: Crossway, 2008. 192 pp. \$14.99.

This fanciful allegory is like a combination of John Bunyan’s *The Pilgrim’s Progress* and C. S. Lewis’s *The Chronicles of Narnia*. The storyline is simple: two cousins go on a trip to find the “real” town of Holiday and its founder. Its main refrain is God-centered: “You don’t find the Founder; he finds you. He’s not just the Founder; he’s the Finder, too.” The enchanting story makes one love and long to meet this Founder. Each chapter illustrates a spiritual truth (e.g., one’s spiritual inability to save oneself, God’s provision, temptation). A few of the characters are rather over-imaginative and unrealistic (e.g., talking mistletoe, poinsettia flowers, and bells).



Randy Alcorn. **Tell Me About Heaven.** Illustrated by Ron DiCianni. Wheaton: Crossway, 2007. 64 pp. \$19.99.

After a boy’s grandmother dies, he visits his grandfather and learns about heaven. Alcorn, author of a 560-page book entitled *Heaven* (Wheaton: Tyndale House, 2004), uses this strikingly illustrated story to discuss death and heaven honestly, simply, and calmly. The grandfather consistently points his grandson to Scripture and then explains it. Alcorn makes heaven sound wonderful, but he rightly emphasizes what makes heaven wonderful: God! God is glorious, and heaven is wonderful because it is the place where we will be with him. The last page in the book is a “Certificate of Commitment” that is cheesy at best and may be profoundly misleading (especially at the end of a book on heaven): “This document serves as record that _____ (name) has entrusted his/her life to Christ on _____ (date)” (followed by a quotation of 1 John 5:13).



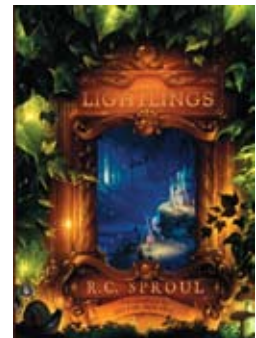
R. C. Sproul. *The Prince's Poison Cup*. Illustrated by Justin Gerard. Orlando: Reformation Trust, 2008. 35 pp. \$18.00.

This fantasy story illustrates redemption and atonement in a way that children can readily grasp: a prince drinks a cup of poison to save the people of the city. The parallel is that Jesus took on the curse of sin to save his people from their sins. The illustrations are beautiful, and the book ends with four pages of suggested questions for parents to pose to children.



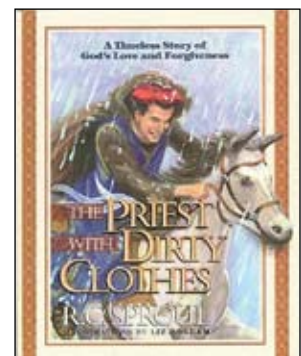
R. C. Sproul. *The Lightlings*. Illustrated by Justin Gerard. Orlando: Reformation Trust, 2006. 40 pp. \$18.00.

This beautifully illustrated fantasy story is about the “King of Light” who made a people of light. These people rejected him and became afraid of the light, but one day a baby is born who returns the light to the people. This illustrates our sin and need for redemption and helps children (and adults!) understand the gospel. It ends with three pages of suggested questions for parents to pose to children.



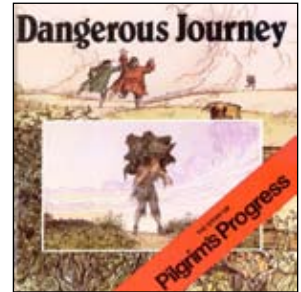
R. C. Sproul. *The Priest with Dirty Clothes: A Timeless Story of God's Love and Forgiveness*. Illustrated by Liz Bonham. Nashville: Nelson, 1997. Reprint, Orlando: Reformation Trust, 2008. 48 pp. \$15.00.

Sproul frequently identifies this book as one of the most important books he has written because his audience is both children and parents reading to their children. This story illustrates imputation in an easy-to-understand way by using the metaphor of exchanging clothes. Very young children (e.g., ages 4–5) may take the story's application too literally and think that their physical heart is literally dirty and needs clean clothes, so parents will want to be careful to communicate this concept as clearly as possible. Bruce Hoffmire, the pastor of children's ministries at our church, calls this his all-time favorite children's book.



John Bunyan. *Dangerous Journey: The Story of Pilgrim's Progress*. Edited by Oliver Hunkin. Illustrated by Alan Parry. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1985. 126 pp. \$24.00.

This is an abridged account of John Bunyan's *The Pilgrim's Progress*, a Christian classic that deserves to be part of every child's theological upbringing. This abridgment vividly captures how Christians persevere in their joyful and dangerous lives, and it richly repays repeated readings. (Charles Haddon Spurgeon read *The Pilgrim's Progress* over one hundred times.) The illustrations seem unrefined and sometimes frightening, but no one will confuse who the bad guys are! The language is not always as archaic as the original *The Pilgrim's Progress* (which is similar to the KJV), but it is still noticeably older (e.g., its sentence structure, word order, word choice). Our pastor, Dr. Mike Bullmore, enthusiastically recommends *Dangerous Journey* and adds that all three of his children look back to it as their favorite children's book.



Paul L. Maier. *Martin Luther: A Man Who Changed the World*. Illustrated by Greg Copeland. Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2004. 32 pp. \$9.99.

Maier superbly describes Martin Luther's life and clearly and simply explains the controversy between Luther and the Catholic Church that led to the Reformation. This magnificently illustrated biography by a trustworthy historian covers a vast amount of history, and some young children may become lost in the details and need explanations for words like "indulgences" and "theses."



Kel Richards. *Gumtree Gully*. Illustrated by Graham Wade. Kingsford NSW, Australia: Matthias Media, 2005. 63 pp. \$4.99.

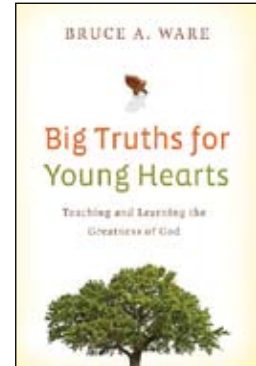
Based on Matthias Media's gospel outline *Two Ways to Live*, this allegorical story illustrates the fall and redemption by using Australian animals that live in a nature preserve. Children will enjoy this fun story about unusual animals. It ends with a section entitled "Things for adults to talk about with kids" (pp. 59–62), which highlights talking points for each chapter: God's creation, our rebellion, God's judgment, God's love, God's power, and our challenge.



Systematic Theology Books

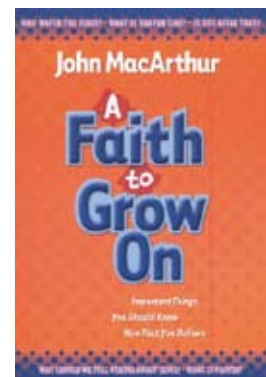
Bruce A. Ware. *Big Truths for Young Hearts: Teaching and Learning the Greatness of God*. Wheaton: Crossway, forthcoming. 224 pp. \$15.99.

This is an excellent resource for teaching Bible doctrine to children in an organized way. Ware, a first-class theologian, serves as professor of Christian theology at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary and was elected in November 2008 as president of the Evangelical Theological Society. He writes in a clear, engaging, gentle manner. *Big Truths for Young Hearts* is not expected to be published until April 30, 2009, and we were able to read only the text, not the final layout with pictures. The draft we read contains ten sections with six chapters each, and the sixty chapters average less than four pages per chapter. The ten sections are as follows: (1) God's Word and God's Own Life as God; (2) God as Three in One; (3) Creator and Ruler of All; (4) Our Human Nature and Our Sin; (5) Who Jesus Is; (6) The Work That Jesus Has Done; (7) The Holy Spirit; (8) Our Great Salvation; (9) The Church of Jesus Christ; and (10) What Will Take Place in the End. It uses the English Standard Version.



John MacArthur. *A Faith to Grow On: Important Things You Should Know Now That You Believe*. Nashville: Tommy Nelson, 2000. 192 pp. \$15.99. Currently out of print.

MacArthur has served as pastor-teacher of Grace Community Church since 1969 and president of The Master's Seminary since its founding in 1986. *A Faith to Grow On* is clearly organized into twelve thematic chapters: (1) God, (2) Creation, (3) Sin, (4) Bible, (5) Jesus, (6) Salvation, (7) Worship, (8) Prayer, (9) Church, (10) Forgiveness, (11) Evangelism, and (12) Heaven. Each chapter is organized by a series of questions and answers, which are clear, sound, and very short. The format on each page is cluttered and distracting, almost like a page from a children's magazine with word scrambles, activity suggestions, glossy pictures, and little text. This is similar to Ware's forthcoming book but not nearly as thorough. It uses the International Children's Bible: New Century Version.



Andrew David Naselli and Jennifer J. Naselli
Trinity Evangelical Divinity School
Deerfield, Illinois, USA

— MISSION AND CULTURE —

Quentin J. Schulze and Robert H. Woods Jr., eds. *Understanding Evangelical Media: The Changing Face of Christian Communication*. Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2008. 347 pp. \$22.00.

As a Christian working in the media, I was excited to hear about *Understanding Evangelical Media*, a collection of essays edited by Quentin J Schulze and Robert H Woods Jr. Its breadth is impressive: radio and theme parks, advertisements and comics are put under the spotlight. In each chapter various writers provide numerous examples of how Christians have used different mass-media to communicate with each other and the non-Christian world—with shaded boxes containing yet further examples and reflections.

There is, then, no shortage of information in this book. And this information is well organised as contributors explain how their respective forms of Christian media seek to instruct, delight, and persuade—which are Cicero’s three basic purposes of public communication. Clearly Cicero’s categories are useful, but why his are favoured to biblical ones? No explanation is given, which leaves us wondering why should Christian media be anything other than instructional and persuasive? Is not entertainment frivolous and distracting? Some evangelicals would say so. And have said so. But not all. This book usefully talks about ‘tribes’ rather than ‘denominations’ and is quick to acknowledge that evangelicalism is extremely broad.

But evangelicals in the book seem to have one thing in common: they are emphatically American. The lack of engagement with any evangelicalism outside the fifty states of America is startling. I don’t recall one reference even to Canada. Robert S. Fortner is given the task of surveying the rest of the world ‘Internationalizing Evangelical Media.’ In such a short space, there is no time for any kind of analysis. The 100 million Christians in China are given a paragraph. Europe, which formed the bulk of Christendom for nearly 2,000 years, is covered in three paragraphs. For those of us not born in the USA, this is all rather frustrating. Clearly, this book is written for the American market, but foreign perspectives may prove useful.

This lack of self-awareness is symptomatic of many of the chapters which fail to analyse the form of media in question. Perhaps the book’s desire to be thorough across media pushed out room for looking at specific media in depth. One of the most insightful chapters is Paul A. Creasman’s chapter on radio. He examines numerous problems that Christian radio faces (in America): commercial pressures; the difficulties of preaching to the unchurched, who simply do not want to listen to Christian radio; and the reality that listeners are getting older and more conservative and therefore finding themselves unable to attract newer younger listeners. But there seems little space to consider options and alternatives for these ailing radio networks. Towards the end of the chapter, Creasman says, ‘Allowing evangelical radio broadcasting to die slowly is not good stewardship.’ Why? Would it be better that it die quickly? What is the case for spending time and resources on it when it is so obviously failing (according to the reasons highlighted in the chapter)? He continues, ‘Intergenerational conversations about the future of evangelical radio are sorely needed.’ I was hoping to read some in the book.

The book, however, does draw some very useful and insightful conclusions. In the final chapter, Schulze and Woods roll up their sleeves and write short, pithy statements about evangelical media that are both accurate and painful to hear, such as ‘Evangelicals are predictable’ and ‘Evangelicals avoid



self-criticism about tribal media.' This is true, and well observed, but where is the evidence and what is the cause? 'Evangelical media generally lack originality'. Again, sadly true. But what are the specific examples of this general malaise? For an evangelical working in media, reading this last chapter was very cathartic. But I was hungry for case studies, which was odd given that for over 280 pages, I had read a great deal of factual information. Ultimately, I cannot help but feel that I would rather have read a book written by Schultze and Woods, rather than their invited contributors. But I am glad I have read it nonetheless because now I do at least understand American evangelical media.

James Cary
BBC Comedy Writer
London, England, UK

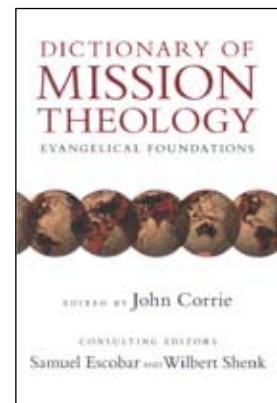
John Corrie, ed. *Dictionary of Mission Theology: Evangelical Foundations*. Downers Grove: IVP, 2007. xvii+451 pp. £24.99/\$36.95.

John Corrie sets out three aims for this dictionary: help integrate mission and theology; help give greater understanding in the area of contextualisation; and attempt 'to chart the contours of evangelical missiology' (xvi). I will assess the dictionary against those aims.

First, the dictionary does limit itself to mission and theology in a narrow sense: if you compare it to *The Evangelical Dictionary of World Missions*, it is different. For instance, there are no articles on significant missionary leaders or countries. There are detailed articles on topics such as 'Asian theology' and 'Sacraments', and so the dictionary will be useful not just for the missionary, but also for the pastor working in a world where they are increasingly finding that peoples from other cultures are turning up in their congregations. It is worth spending an hour flicking through the dictionary to get an idea of what issues are covered so that if you find yourself talking to someone who comes from a background steeped in Shamanism, you can have a good reference to go to. In this respect it is a useful 'one-stop' book for introducing major topics and themes of modern missiology from a broadly evangelical perspective.

Second, the dictionary aims to help with understanding the issue of contextualisation. One aspect of the dictionary, which is particularly noteworthy, is that theologians from the two-thirds' world have written 60% of the articles. And so the dictionary serves two purposes. First, we can see how these writers are working through their issues of contextualisation. Second, we can see how their insights into various issues enrich our understanding of the truth of the Bible. The dictionary gives a snapshot on these two, which is useful for missionaries seeking to help churches in their work of contextualisation, and for Christians who may benefit from seeing how other cultures deal with theological issues.

Third, the dictionary seeks to 'chart the contours of evangelical missiology'. Corrie outlines some of the distinctive marks of evangelicalism in his introduction, including 'a respect for the priority of the Biblical text as the authoritative source of theological and missiological thinking' (p. xvi). But I wonder how far all the contributors go along with this view of Scripture. For instance, in the article on 'Christology', Kang-San Tan reminds us that 'Christology reconstructed in mission contexts needs both the Scriptures as well as historic Christian communities as boundary markers and conversation partners



respectively' (p. 50). As it stands, this statement seems to put tradition and Scripture on an equal footing, so is this a truly evangelical response to Christology? Or take the article on 'Contextualisation': although Musasiwa affirms the authority of Scripture (p. 70), his article does not attempt to examine the limits put on contextualisation by the Bible nor does it give biblical examples of contextualisation. I am not saying that these articles are not useful, but I would like to see more commitment to working out the authority of Scripture for these issues. This contrasts with articles such as 'The Sovereignty of God' (pp. 367–69) or 'Witchcraft' (pp. 428–30), which are saturated with Scripture and attempt to think biblically about these topics. Evangelicals need to work out their commitment to Scripture by thinking biblically about all the areas of missiology today.

So the dictionary (as with all dictionaries) is a useful starting-point, and as with any book, article, or dictionary, we must assess what the author says by submitting it to Scripture. For as the church continues the great task of taking the gospel to all nations and establishing churches, she must live under and work out the authority of Scripture. Otherwise she will lose her 'evangelical foundations' which this dictionary seeks to define and establish.

Andrew Curry
Oak Hill College
London, England, UK

