



themelios

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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 RTSE/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.

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EDITORIAL

Generational Conflict in Ministry

— D. A. Carson —

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

About five years after the Berlin wall came down and the communist regimes of Central and Eastern Europe had mostly fallen or been transmuted into something rather different, I had the privilege of speaking at a conference for pastors in one of those formerly eastern-bloc countries. The numbers were not large. Most interesting was the way this group of men reflected a natural breakdown. They were clearly divided into two groups. The older group—say, over forty or forty-five—had served their small congregations under the former communist government. Few of them had been allowed to pursue any tertiary education, let alone formal theological training. Most of them had served in considerable poverty, learning to trust God for the food they and their families needed to survive. Some had been incarcerated for the sake of the gospel; all had been harassed. The men in the younger group—say, under forty or so—without exception were university graduates. Several had pursued formal theological education; two or three were beginning their doctorates. They were interested in ideas and in the rapidly evolving cultural developments taking place in their country now that their media were a good deal freer. Quite a number were engaged in university evangelism and wanted to talk about postmodern epistemology.

The older group viewed the younger men as untested, ignorant of the lessons learned by suffering, far too cerebral, dizzily scattered and ill-focused, cocky, impatient, even arrogant. The younger group viewed the older men as, at best, out of date: they had slipped past their “sell by” date as much as had the communist regimes. They were ill-trained, defined too narrowly by yesterday’s conflicts, unable to evangelize the new generation, vainly clutching to power, consumed rather more by tradition than by truth.

And in very large measure, both sides were right.

More recently I spoke at a denominational meeting of ministers in a Western country. Again there was a generational breakdown, cast somewhat differently. The older men had, during the decades of their ministry, combated the old-fashioned liberalism that had threatened their denomination in their youth. Many of them had been converted out of rough backgrounds and subsequently built strong fences around their churches to keep out alcohol and sleaze of every sort. Most of their congregations were aging along with their ministers; only a handful of them were growing. They loved older hymns and patterns of worship. The younger men dressed in jeans, loved corporate worship where the music was at least 95 decibels, were interested in evangelism, and loved to talk to the ecclesiastically disaffected—homosexuals, self-proclaimed atheists, mystically orientated “spiritual” artists. Some were starting Bible studies, fledgling churches, in pubs. This group thought the older men were out of date,

too defensive, unable to communicate with people under twenty-five without sounding stuffy and even condescending, much too linear and boring in their thinking, and largely unable to communicate in the digital world (except by emails, already largely dismissed as belonging to the age of dinosaurs), mere traditionalists. The older group thought the younger men were brash, disrespectful, far too enamored with what's "in" and far too ignorant of a well-integrated theology, frenetic but not deep, energetic but not wise, and more than a little cocky.

And in very large measure, both sides were right.

Doubtless there have always been generational conflicts of one sort or another. Arguably, however, in some ways they are becoming worse. There are at least two reasons for this. First, the rate of cultural change has sped up, making it far more difficult for older people to empathize with a world so very different from the one in which they grew up three or four decades earlier, while making it far more difficult for younger people to empathize with a world in which people used typewriters and wired telephones and had never heard of Facebook or Twitter. Second, and far more important, the social dynamics of most Western cultures have been changing dramatically for decades. The Sixties tore huge breaches into the fabric that had united young and old, assigning more and more authority to the young. The cult of youth and health that characterized the Eighties and Nineties, complete with hair transplants and liposuction, along with gated communities for the middle-class elderly and social welfare that meant families did not really have to care for, or even interact much with, the older generation, built a world in which integration across generational lines could be happily avoided. Even the new digital tools that facilitate interaction tend to enable people to link up with very similar people—very much *unlike* the way the church is supposed to be, bringing together very different redeemed people who have but one thing in common, Jesus Christ and his gospel.¹

Ideally, how should both sides act so as to honor Christ and advance the gospel?

1. Listen to criticism in a non-defensive way. This needs to be done on *both* sides of the divide. It is easy to label criticism as hostile or non-empathetic and write it off. Nevertheless the path of wisdom is to try to discern what validity the criticism may have and learn from it. It may be that some older pastors do *not* know very well how to communicate with a younger generation. How, then, could they strengthen their ministry in these domains? It may be that some younger pastors *are* brash and intemperate in speech, finding it easy to build a following out of the gift of the gab. How then might reflection on 1 Cor 2 modify their speech? Even well-intentioned criticism hurts enough that we are sometimes seduced into a defensive posture because we have forgotten that the wounds inflicted by a friend are faithful and helpful, but wisdom also listens carefully and respectfully even to disrespectful speech in order to learn lessons not otherwise picked up.

2. Be prepared to ask the question, "What are we doing in our church, especially in our public meetings, that is not mandated by Scripture and that may, however unwittingly, be functioning as a barrier to getting the gospel out?" That question is of course merely another way of probing the extent to which tradition has trumped Scripture. There is no value in changing a tradition merely for the sake of changing a tradition. The two tests buried in my question must be rigorously observed: (a) Is the tradition itself mandated by Scripture, or, in all fairness, is its connection with Scripture highly dubious? (b) Is the tradition helpful only to the traditionalists, while getting in the way of outreach?

¹ On the changing social dynamics, it is worth reading Matthew Shaffer, "Ages Apart: How modernity has separated the generations, and why we should care," *National Review* 68/11 (June 20, 2011): 35–37.

Even when the question is asked, the answers are rarely easy or clear-cut. The answers may bear on, say, what we wear, styles of music, the order of service, what we do with our massive pulpit. In each case, the bearing of Scripture and tradition can lead to conflicting inferences. Obviously there is no specific biblical mandate for a large pulpit in the middle of the front, preferably elevated to ensure the minister is six feet above contradiction. Knowledge of historic disputes reminds us of the way this arrangement has functioned in the past: the Reformation taught us that not the “altar”² was to be central but the Word of God—so the large pulpits were installed in the center. In today’s climate, however, the very same furniture may signal something else to casual visitors—not the centrality of the Word, but the lecture hall, or talking down to others. How can one rightly emphasize the authority of the Word of God without, on the one hand, erecting unnecessary barriers, and without, on the other hand, turning the front of the building into a “stage” associated with entertainment and performance arts? Fine pastors may disagree on the prudential outworking of such reflections in their specific contexts. Unless the questions are addressed with ruthless rigor, however, unbending lines will be drawn and positions staked out that serve only to foster division, not thought.

3. Always focus most attention on the most important things, what Paul calls the matters of first importance—and that means the gospel, with all its rich intertwinings, its focus on Christ and his death and resurrection, its setting people right with God and its power to transform. So when we take a dislike of another’s ministry primarily because he belongs to that *other* generation, must we not first of all ask whether the man in question heralds the gospel? If so, the most precious kinship already exists and should be nurtured. This is not to say that every other consideration can be ignored. Some ministers *are* pretty poor at addressing homosexuals in a faithful and winsome way, at speaking the truth in love, at coping with the rising relativism without sounding angry all the time, at avoiding the unpretty habit of nurturing a smart mouth. But Paul in Phil 1 understands that whatever the shortcomings and confused motives of some ministers, if they preach Christ faithfully, he will cheer them on, and be grateful.

4. Work hard at developing and fostering good relations with those from the other generation. This means meeting with them, even if, initially at least, you don’t like them. It means listening patiently, explaining a different point of view with gentleness. It means that the new generation of ministers should be publicly thanking God for the older ministers, praying for them with respect and gratitude; it means that the older generations of ministers should be publicly thanking God for the new generation, seeking to encourage them while publicly praying for them. It means that ideally, disputes should be negotiated in person, winsomely, not by blog posts that are ill-tempered and capable of doing nothing more than ensuring deeper divisions by cheering on one’s supporters. It means shared meals, shared prayer meetings, shared discussions. It means younger men will seek out older men for their wisdom in a plethora of pastorally challenging situations; it means older men will be trying to find out what these younger men are doing effectively and well, and how they see the world and understand their culture in the light of Scripture. It means that younger men will listen carefully in order better to understand the past; it means that older men will listen carefully in order better to understand the present. It means humility of mind and heart, and a passion for the glory of God and the good of others.

² “Altar”? What new covenant warrant is there for such terminology?

MINORITY REPORT

A Word to the Conscience

— 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.

Some years ago I was asked what I thought of those whose teaching undermined the Reformation position on justification by grace through faith. While I have no recollection of this, I am reliably informed that my answer was ‘I despise them; for that doctrine is often the only thing that gives me the strength to get out of bed in the morning.’ If I were asked the same question today, I would not use the term ‘despise’; it is scarcely designed to gain one a hearing with those with whom one disagrees; nor does it set a particularly good example for students who might run off and start using it rather indiscriminately about everyone with whom they disagree, from the local pastor to the chap in the ticket office at the railway station. Rudeness aside, however, the latter half of the statement is as true for me today as it was then. Indeed, if anything it is more so. The older I am, the further I seem to fall short; the more conscious I become of my need of grace.

This increasing awareness has led me to a place where I thought I would never come: I have become more and more enamoured over the years with a modest amount of formal liturgical structure to worship services. Of course, everyone has liturgy, the same as everyone has tradition. The only differences are whether one acknowledges the fact or not, and how formally structured such is. You might go to a service where, to the casual visitor, the whole affair looks like complete anarchy; or you might go to a service where, despite the claims on the noticeboard that the church is Protestant, it is hard to distinguish it in aesthetics and structure from a Roman Catholic service. Different as they might appear to be, both are liturgical, albeit in very different ways.

Now, you can take the man out of British non-Anglican evangelicalism, but you cannot take the British non-Anglican evangelicalism out of the man. Thus, my emigration has not dented my deep-seated suspicion of elaborate prayer books and sophisticated, prescriptive forms. I accept that many of the arguments against formal liturgy which I used to hold—concerning spontaneity, freedom of the Spirit etc.—are by and large most specious; but the deep-seated cultural aversion is still there. Nevertheless, there is one aspect of liturgy which has come over the years to mean much to me: the confession of sin and the assurance of salvation.

At some point prior to the sermon each Sunday in my church, the minister or elder leading the service will read a passage of Scripture designed to expose the moral failure of fallen humanity before God. Then he will lead the congregation in a corporate prayer of confession. Finally, when he closes the prayer, he will read a short passage (often just a verse or two) which speaks of the forgiveness of sins in Christ. The dramatic theological movement of the service at that point is profound: the congregation

goes from being reminded and convicted of their sin, to calling out to God for forgiveness, to being reminded that in Christ God has acted in a startling and decisive way to cast our sin as far away as the east is from the west. We are reminded of the entire gospel, from fall to redemption to consummation, in the space of just a few minutes.

This moment in the church service has come to mean much to me. This is the point where, after a week of failure—of not living up to the standards I set myself, let alone those set for me by my Creator—I am reminded once again that all is well: Christ has dealt with my sin; my failings were placed on his shoulders on the cross; and my heavenly Father has annihilated them there. It is not, of course, that I do not know this Monday to Saturday; it is not that I do not read the gospel every day in my Bible; it is not that I do not confess my sins during the week and look then to Christ. But this is a word from outside, God's work spoken to me by another human being, which lifts my head once again and assures my conscience that I am clean despite the filth I so often choose to wade in. So often I enter church weighted down with care; when I am once again reminded of God's rich forgiveness in Christ, the weight is wonderfully lifted from my shoulders.

So often Christians can tend to think of the church worship service as something *we* do: *we* sing praise to God; *we* respond to the gospel; and *we* rejoice in our Saviour. Further, much discussion in the church focuses on what *we need to be doing* in order for church to be effective. Yet church is, first and foremost, something which God does. It is primarily and in origin an act of his grace, not an act of human response. He calls us out to be his people; he gathers us through his Spirit; he speaks to us through the reading and the preaching of his word. There is far more passivity in worship than we care to imagine, a passivity that is often belied by our concerns to make sure 'everybody is involved.' When the law is read, sins are confessed, and forgiveness declared, we are all involved because we are all included under the words of condemnation and the words of promise and mercy.

Of course, this is not an appeal for some form of mystical quietism. *We* do need to *do* things for and in the service, from the most trivial (someone, for example, needs to make sure the church door is unlocked) to the most serious (singing songs of praise in response to the declaration of the gospel). But, to put a new—and, I think, biblical—twist on the current consumer mentality, I think we need to go to church to expect it to do things for us. Not to provide us with a good social network or a context where the kids can have wholesome friends and stay out of trouble or where I can find the best coffee after a sixty minute worship session; but rather to provide us with the oxygen of our spiritual lives—those words of rebuke that cut down our pride and self-sufficiency, those words of brokenness that allow us to call out to God for his mercy, and that word that comes from outside that assures us that all of our sins have been dealt with in Christ and that we are thus liberated to give ourselves in lives of service to our brethren and to our neighbours because our own debt has been paid.

That word which should be spoken in every church service is still what gives me the energy to get out of bed in the morning. Praise God for the glorious gospel of Jesus Christ.

Is the Reformation Over? John Calvin, Roman Catholicism, and Contemporary Ecumenical Conversations¹

— Scott M. Manetsch —

Scott Manetsch is professor of church history and chair of the church history department at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School in Deerfield, Illinois.

Is the Reformation over? At first blush, this question would appear to be a rather peculiar one to ask. Of course the Reformation is over—if by that term we mean the particular constellation of religious, political, and social events in sixteenth-century Europe that led to the division of Western Christendom and the renewal of early modern Christianity. In recent years, however, the question “Is the Reformation over?” has served as a placeholder for a different set of issues, addressing the nature of contemporary Roman Catholicism and its relation to historic Protestantism. The issues are complex and controversial: To what degree has the Roman Catholic Church after the Second Vatican Council effectively redressed the central theological and religious concerns posed by sixteenth-century Protestant leaders such as Martin Luther or John Calvin? Has the historic agreement reached between the Catholic Church and the Lutheran World Federation in 1999—known as the Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification (JDDJ)—successfully pacified the centuries-long controversy over the doctrine of justification by faith alone?² And irrespective of real theological differences, is it strategic and wise for Christians in the Western world to continue to divide over matters of doctrine in the face of radical Islam and rampant secularism? Moreover, some contemporary evangelicals outside historic Protestant churches may wonder if the question “Is the Reformation over?” holds any relevance for them at all. Should evangelicals remain wedded to theological constructions framed by religious controversies that occurred nearly 500 years ago?

¹ A draft of this paper was first delivered to the Theologians’ Network of the European Leadership Forum (May 2010) in Eger, Hungary. I am grateful for the constructive comments provided by members of the Network.

² In this historic agreement, signed at Augsburg, Germany on October 31, 1999, official representatives of the Vatican and the Lutheran World Federation agreed on a statement that removed the mutual condemnations from the Reformation era, and (among other things) affirmed Protestant formulations: “Justification takes place ‘by grace alone’ . . . by ‘faith alone’” (see esp. Annex 1 and 2C). This document is reprinted in Anthony Lane, *Justification by Faith in Catholic-Protestant Dialogue: An Evangelical Assessment* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2002), 239–59. Not all Lutherans welcomed this accord. The conservative Lutheran Church Missouri Synod in the United States deemed the JDDJ to be a “stunning departure from the Reformation and thus is contrary to what it means to be a Lutheran Christian” (cited in Samuel H. Nafzger, “Joint Declaration on Justification: A Missouri Synod Perspective,” *Concordia Journal* 27 [2001]: 178–80). For a European perspective, see G. Forde, “The Critical Response of German Theological Professors to the *Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification*,” *Dialog* 38 (1999): 71–72.

In 2005, evangelical historian Mark Noll and freelance Christian author Carolyn Nystrom addressed these issues in a book entitled (appropriately enough) *Is the Reformation Over?*³ In this highly acclaimed work, Noll and Nystrom survey the history of Catholic-Protestant controversies in North America over the past three centuries. The authors call particular attention to the seismic shift in evangelical attitudes toward Roman Catholics since the Second Vatican Council. In recent years, they note, much of the historic mistrust and antagonism between evangelicals and Catholics has been set aside for a new spirit of cooperation and mutual support. Today evangelical Protestants in the United States make common cause with their Catholic neighbors on a variety of important political and social issues. At the same time, a sizeable number of evangelicals admire Catholic leaders such as Pope John Paul II and Mother Theresa, and they look to traditional works of Catholic spirituality and modern Catholic devotional literature for inspiration and spiritual nourishment. In addition to these shifting popular attitudes, Noll and Nystrom point to the sustained ecumenical dialogues between Catholic and evangelical scholars over the past fifteen years—known collectively as Evangelicals and Catholics Together (ECT)—as evidence of substantive *theological* rapprochement between the two religious camps. The most impressive fruit of these *unofficial* dialogues, the authors believe, is the agreement on the Protestant doctrine of justification by faith alone as formulated at ECT II.⁴

Should we conclude, then, that the Reformation is over? For Noll and Nystrom, the answer is “No” and “Yes.” No, the Reformation is *not* over in the sense that important theological differences continue to divide American evangelicals and Roman Catholics—most notably their conflicting understandings of the Church, the primacy of the Pope, and the Marian doctrines. On the other hand, Noll and Nystrom believe that ecumenical accords such as ECT II and JDDJ signal that the Reformation divide over justification *has* been successfully bridged. The authors, thus, conclude, “If it is true . . . that *iustificatio articulis stantis vel cadentis ecclesiae* (justification is the article on which the church stands or falls), then the Reformation is over.”⁵

Noll and Nystrom’s book *Is the Reformation Over?* has garnered both praise and criticism. The evangelical periodical *Christianity Today* awarded the book “honorable mention” in its 2006 book awards. Evangelical leader J. I. Packer praised the book for its “superb theological journalism.”⁶ Other scholars have been far less positive. While acknowledging the book’s usefulness as a historical survey of Catholic-Protestant relationships, several reviewers (including myself) question the quality of theological analysis and dispute the accuracy of a number of the book’s conclusions.⁷

³ Mark Noll and Carolyn Nystrom, *Is the Reformation Over? An Evangelical Assessment of Contemporary Roman Catholicism* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2005).

⁴ ECT II, “The Gift of Salvation” (1996), includes this statement: “We agree that justification is not earned by any good works or merits of our own; it is entirely God’s gift, conferred through the Father’s sheer graciousness, out of love that he bears us in his Son. . . . By faith, which is also the gift of God, we repent of our sins and freely adhere to the good news of God’s saving work for us in Christ. . . . Faith is not merely intellectual assent but an act of the whole person, involving the mind, the will, and the affections, issuing in a changed life. We understand that what we here affirm is in agreement with what the Reformation traditions have meant by justification by faith alone” (cited in Noll and Nystrom, *Is the Reformation Over?*, 160).

⁵ Noll and Nystrom, *Is the Reformation Over?*, 232.

⁶ This statement is one of the endorsements appearing on the book jacket of *Is the Reformation Over?*

⁷ See Scott M. Manetsch, “Discerning the Divide: A Review Article,” *TJ* 28 (2007): 37–63, and Brad S. Gregory, “Two-thirds Catholic,” *Commonweal* 133 (January 13, 2006): 26–28.

One thing is clear, however: Noll and Nystrom's book has been read widely, and it has played a not insignificant role in shaping American evangelicals' perceptions of contemporary Roman Catholicism. A good example of this is seen in the case of Francis Beckwith, former president of the Evangelical Theological Society. When Beckwith, announced his decision to convert back to the Roman Catholic Church in 2006, one of the factors he listed that influenced his decision was reading the book *Is the Reformation Over?*⁸

Because of the limitations of space and the range of my own expertise, I will explore the question "Is the Reformation over?" from a slightly unconventional angle. Instead of examining Catholic theological formulations since Vatican II or describing ecumenical conversations of the past four decades or reviewing relevant material in the authoritative *Catholic Catechism* (rev. 1994), this essay focuses on the fundamental religious and theological concerns of one Protestant reformer, John Calvin, as he engaged Catholic opponents between 1539 and 1549. Several words of explanation are in order.

1. I am convinced that before we answer the question "Is the Reformation over?" we must first clearly define the nature of the Protestant Reformation, or more precisely, the primary theological convictions that set Protestant churchmen at odds with the late medieval Church. If contemporary ecumenical dialogues are to be conducted with historical integrity, they must take seriously the substantial theological and religious disagreements that caused ecclesial division in the first place.

2. Why John Calvin? Admittedly, it is hazardous to present one sixteenth-century reformer as representative of a religious movement as complex and variegated as the "Protestant Reformation." Nevertheless, Calvin was recognized in his own day as one of the most insightful and articulate Protestant theologians who rigorously engaged and critiqued Roman Catholic theology.⁹ Though few magisterial reformers endorsed all of Calvin's conclusions, documentary evidence indicates theologians such as Martin Luther, Philip Melancthon, Martin Bucer, and Pierre Viret did read and approve of the general substance of Calvin's argument against his Catholic opponents.

3. Finally, I have chosen to focus my analysis on a select number of Calvin's writings from 1539 to 1549, a decade (as we shall see) when Calvin was intensively engaged in defending the Protestant cause against papal and imperial threats. Several of these treatises are relatively unknown, yet they provide important insights into the reasons that Calvin believed that religious reformation was necessary to preserve the Christian gospel and protect the purity of Christ's Church.

This essay proceeds as follows: §1 briefly surveys Calvin's engagement with Roman Catholic opponents from 1539 to 1549. §2 highlights important theological themes found in Calvin's writings of this period that shed light on his distinctive priorities and theological concerns as they relate to Catholic theology and practice. §3 concludes with five brief observations drawn from Calvin's theological writings that seem particularly relevant for contemporary ecumenical discussions between evangelical Protestants and Catholics.

⁸ See the January 2008 article on Francis Beckwith in *Inside the Vatican*, <http://www.insidethevatican.com/back-issues/2008/issue-jan-08.htm> (accessed June 14, 2010).

⁹ The nature of Calvin's historical and theological engagement with Roman Catholicism has recently been revisited in Randall C. Zachman, ed., *John Calvin and Roman Catholicism: Critique and Engagement, Then and Now* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2008).

1. A Decade of Debate: Calvin and Catholicism, 1539–1549

John Calvin is frequently remembered as the author of the *Institutes* and the writer of biblical commentaries. He is less well-known for the several dozen polemical writings that periodically issued from his pen during his career. For Calvin, defending Christian truth in print was a crucial dimension of his vocation as pastor and doctor of the church: “I would be a real coward if I saw God’s truth being attacked and remained quiet without a sound,” he once commented.¹⁰

A survey of Calvin’s polemical writings over the course of his career reveals a definite pattern: during the late 1530s and throughout the 1540s, his opponents more often than not were Roman Catholics, such as Louis Du Tillet, Jacob Sadoletto, Albert Pighius, Pope Paul III, and the Council of Trent. By contrast, during the 1550s, Calvin’s literary battles shifted to engaging Protestant opponents, such as the Lutheran pastor Joachim Westphal and the reformed scholar Sebastian Castellio. We begin with a brief survey of Calvin’s most important writings against Catholic opponents during the decade from 1539 to 1549.

Calvin’s first major polemical writing against Catholicism was thrust upon him. In 1539, Calvin was in the city of Strasbourg, serving as minister of the French congregation under the tutelage of the seasoned reformer Martin Bucer. Calvin had been expelled from Geneva the previous year, and he was still licking his wounds from the humiliating treatment he had received from the city council. With Calvin’s departure, the progress of reform had gone rather badly in Geneva, and Catholic authorities had seized upon the opportunity by enlisting Cardinal Jacob Sadoletto to write an open letter to Geneva’s citizens in order to woo them back to the Mother Church. With no one to answer Sadoletto, Geneva’s city council appealed to Calvin for help. That Calvin agreed to do this says a lot about his character and his sense of Christian duty. Calvin wrote his response to Sadoletto in six days in August of 1539.¹¹

In this long epistle, Calvin defends the Genevan reformation as well as his own ministry as a reformer. He articulates the Protestant doctrine of justification by faith, the nature of the Church, and a reformed understanding of the sacraments. Calvin’s primary argument is that true Christianity is founded upon the Word of God, not the pronouncements and traditions of men. Calvin and the Protestants were not destroying the true Church, but seeking to restore it according to Scriptures, following the pattern of the ancient Church. Calvin comments,

You know, Sadoletto, . . . not only that our agreement with antiquity is far closer than yours, but that all we have attempted has been to renew the ancient form of the Church, which, at first sullied and distorted by illiterate men of indifferent character, was afterward flagitiously mangled and almost destroyed by the Roman Pontiff and his faction.¹²

¹⁰ John Calvin, *Ioannis Calvini Opera quae supersunt omnia* (ed. G. Baum, E. Cunitz, and E. Reuss; Braunschweig: C. A. Schwetschke et Filium, 1874), 12:67. Hereafter abbreviated *CO*.

¹¹ John Calvin, *Iacobi Sadoleti Romani Cardinalis Epistola ad Senatam Populumque Genevensem . . . Joannis Calvini responsio* (Geneva: Rhelius, 1539). For bibliographical information about this work, see W. de Greef, *The Writings of John Calvin* (trans. Lyle D. Bierma; Grand Rapids: Baker, 1993), 152–53, and Rodolphe Peter and Jean-François Gilmont, *Bibliotheca Calviniana. Les oeuvres de Jean Calvin publiées au XVIe siècle* (Geneva: Librairie Droz, 1991), 1:65–67.

¹² John Calvin, *A Reformation Debate: Sadoletto’s Letter to the Genevans and Calvin’s Reply* (ed. John Olin; Grand Rapids: Baker, 1987), 62; *CO* 5:394.

During Calvin's three year sojourn in Strasbourg, Martin Bucer introduced him to the broader world of inter-confessional dialogue. In 1540–41, Bucer persuaded Calvin to accompany him to a series of religious colloquies at Hagenau, Worms, and finally Regensburg, aimed at achieving religious concord between Protestants and Catholics. "They are dragging me to Regensburg although I do not want to go at all," Calvin complained.¹³ At Regensburg, Protestant theologians (such as Philip Melancthon and Martin Bucer) and Catholic moderates (such as Gasparo Contarini, Johannes Gropper, and Johann Eck) tentatively agreed on key doctrines that divided them, including original sin, free will, and justification.¹⁴ As a theological advisor, Calvin watched from the sidelines. He found the articulation of justification in Article 5 to be satisfactory, although somewhat vague. Writing to Guillaume Farel, Calvin reported:

You will be astonished . . . that our opponents have yielded so much, when you read the extracted copy. . . . Our friends have thus retained also the substance of the true doctrine. . . . [Y]ou will desire, I know, a more distinct explication and statement of the doctrine [of justification], and in that respect, you shall find me in complete agreement with yourself. However, if you consider with what kind of men we have to agree upon this doctrine, you will acknowledge that much has been accomplished.¹⁵

In the end, both Martin Luther and the pope rejected the Regensburg Agreement—including the article on justification. Long before this, Calvin had given up hope for true reconciliation with the Roman Catholic Church and returned to Strasbourg. For the remainder of his career, Calvin was of the opinion that healing the breach between Rome and the Protestant churches was all but impossible.¹⁶

In the years following Calvin's return to Geneva in 1541, he engaged Catholic opponents on a variety of fronts. In 1543, he wrote a sharp satirical work against the popular Catholic practice of venerating religious relics. Honoring the physical remains of martyrs and saints is not only foolish and superstitious, Calvin argued, but nothing short of idolatrous because it transfers to physical objects the worship and praise that belong to the living God alone.¹⁷

In the same year, Calvin offered a more substantial critique of Roman Catholic theology and practice in a long treatise entitled *On the Necessity of Reforming the Church*.¹⁸ This work is addressed to Emperor Charles V, who had announced an Imperial Diet to be held at Speyer early in 1543. Comprising more than one hundred pages in the Latin original, this treatise describes in detail the myriad of errors of Roman Catholic teaching on worship, salvation, the sacraments, and church leadership, showing the ways that false doctrine translated into religious practices that were abusive, superstitious, and even

¹³ Cited in Herman Selderhuis, *John Calvin: A Pilgrim's Life* (Downers Grove: IVP, 2009), 101.

¹⁴ For a discussion of the doctrine of "double justification" framed at Regensburg, see David C. Steinmetz, *Reformers in the Wings: From Geiler von Kayserberg to Theodore Beza* (2nd ed.; New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 23–31, and Lane, *Justification by Faith*, 46–60.

¹⁵ Calvin to Farel, May 11, 1541, in *John Calvin Tracts and Letters* (ed. Jules Bonnet; trans. David Constable; Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 2009), 4:260. Hereafter abbreviated as *CTS*.

¹⁶ Selderhuis, *John Calvin*, 102.

¹⁷ Calvin, *Advertissement tresutile du grand profit qui reviendrait à la Chrestienté s'il se faisoit inventaire des reliques* (Geneva: Iehan Girard, 1543). For bibliographical information about this work, see De Greef, *The Writings of John Calvin*, 156–57. Peter and Gilmont, *Bibliotheca Calviniana*, 1:119–21.

¹⁸ Calvin, *Supplex exhortatio ad Carolum Quintum . . . Ut restituendae Ecclesiae curam serio velint suscipere* (Geneva: n.p., 1543). For bibliographical information about this work, see De Greef, *The Writings of John Calvin*, 160–61. Peter and Gilmont, *Bibliotheca Calviniana*, 1:135–40.

pagan. Given the church's desperate condition, Calvin urges the emperor to undertake the cause of religious reformation in the German lands by summoning a religious council. This was the emperor's responsibility; this was God's command: "[T]he church should be restored to true order, and its most corrupt condition reformed, according to the strict standards of the gospel."¹⁹ Calvin's treatise *On the Necessity of Reforming the Church*, which went through eight editions in the half century that followed, was read with approval by Martin Luther, Philip Melancthon, and Martin Bucer.²⁰ There is no evidence that Emperor Charles V ever saw it or read it.

By the time that Pope Paul III finally convened a General Church Council at Trent in December 1545, the window of opportunity for religious reconciliation between Catholics and Protestants had closed. In the first phase of the Council, which met in eight sessions from 1545 to 1547, the roughly forty clergymen in attendance addressed and rejected central doctrines of the Protestants. The council condemned the doctrines of *sola scriptura* and justification by faith alone. At the same time, it reaffirmed the Roman Church's traditional teachings on original sin, baptism, the Mass, penance, purgatory, the priority of the Vulgate and the authority of Apocryphal books.²¹

The first phase of Trent had scarcely concluded before Calvin's friends were urging him to respond. By the end of 1547, Calvin had rushed to publication a printed version of the Acts of the Council of Trent, with his *Antidote* that answered Catholic arguments point by point.²² Calvin's theological analysis in the *Antidote* is incisive, even as his tone is sharp and sometimes abusive. Calvin ridicules the notion that the Catholic Council is infallible: the forty clergymen in attendance were drawn from the "dregs" of the church; they are a bunch of "garrulous and audacious monks, some of whom hunt after mitres, and others after cardinals' hats." Consequently, "[t]he proclamation of the Council is entitled to no more weight than the cry of an auctioneer."²³ The Catholics at Trent boast of their "specious reformation" (*speciosa reformatio*) but refuse to address the myriad of problems in the Church. Calvin summarizes Protestant grievances as follows:

We complain that the whole doctrine of godliness is adulterated by impious dogma; that the whole worship of God is vitiated by foul and disgraceful superstitions; that the pure institution of the sacraments has been supplanted by horrible sacrilege; that their use has been converted into a profane trafficking; that poor souls, which ought to have been ruled by the doctrine of Christ, are oppressed by cruel bondage; that nothing is seen in the Christian Church that is not deformed and debased; that the grace of Christ not only lies half-buried, but is partly torn to pieces, partly altogether extinguished.²⁴

¹⁹ *On the Necessity of Reforming the Church*, CTS 1:227; CO 6.529.

²⁰ Peter and Gilmont, *Bibliotheca Calviniana*, 1:139.

²¹ For the decrees and canons of Trent, see Norman Tanner, ed., *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils* (vol. 2; London: Sheed & Ward, 1990).

²² Calvin, *Acta synodi Tridentinae cum antidoto* (Geneva: Iehan Girard, 1547). For bibliographical information about this work, see De Greef, *The Writings of John Calvin*, 162. Peter and Gilmont, *Bibliotheca Calviniana*, 1:236–40.

²³ *Antidote*, CTS 3:33–34, 36; CO 7:382–83, 385.

²⁴ *Antidote*, CTS 3:39; CO 7:387.

Calvin's frustration and bitterness are palpable in the *Antidote*. Despite repeated calls for religious reform, the Council of Trent in Calvin's view had done nothing but condemn the Protestants, reaffirm errant Catholic dogma, and tighten the yoke of tyranny over faithful Christian people.

The final major treatise that Calvin wrote against Catholic opponents appeared in 1549 under the title *The Adultero-German Interim*.²⁵ Like the *Antidote*, Calvin wrote it in response to a specific confessional crisis. After more than two decades of empty threats, Emperor Charles V finally found the political opportunity in 1547 to wage war against the Lutheran princes who made up the Schmalkaldic League. On April 23, 1547, imperial forces won a stunning victory at Mühlberg over Johann Friedrich, the Elector of Saxony. Over the next months, Charles imposed on Lutheran territories and cities the so-called Augsburg Interim, a temporary religious settlement that required Protestants to subscribe to a moderate statement of Catholic doctrine which, among other things, recognized the existence of married clergy and allowed laity to receive communion in both kinds.²⁶

Several Protestant reformers, most notably Philip Melancthon, were willing to accommodate themselves to this uncomfortable arrangement. Calvin, by contrast, was horrified and soon published the text of the Interim with a lengthy commentary on each doctrinal point. Calvin's *Adultero-German Interim* represents one of the clearest and most comprehensive statements of what he believed to be the fundamental doctrines dividing Catholics and Protestants. Its popularity in the sixteenth century is attested by the fact that it reappeared in ten editions during the following two decades.

In Calvin's mind, there was no room for compromise. To do so, would be to mix Christ and Baal, indeed, to settle for "half of Christ."²⁷ In order he treats justification by faith, confession of guilt and penance, the nature of the true Church, the authority of Scripture, papal primacy, the Catholic sacraments, intercession of the saints, fasting, celibacy, and ceremonies. On all these points, Calvin is clear: any doctrinal accommodation is impious, indeed sacrilegious. Certainly Christian unity and the peace of the Churches is desirable. But Protestants must reject all "terms of peace which mingle the figments of men with the pure truth of God."²⁸

Calvin concludes his treatise by calling German Protestants to die, rather than sign the Augsburg Interim: "The time now demands that the faith which we have hitherto professed with the tongue and pen shall be sealed with our blood. . . . For an idol is set up, not to deform the external appearance of the sanctuary, but to defile and destroy the whole sanctity of the Church, to overthrow the entire worship of God, and leave nothing in our religion unpolluted."²⁹ Clearly, Calvin was not attempting to build bridges with his Catholic opponents, but to expose the church of Rome as a false church that had fundamentally destroyed the Christian gospel.

²⁵ Calvin, *Interim adultero-germanum. Cui adiecta est Vera Christianae pacificationis, & Ecclesiae reformatandae ratio* (Magdeburg: n.p., 1549). For bibliographical information about this work, see De Greef, *The Writings of John Calvin*, 162–63; Peter and Gilmont, *Bibliotheca Calviniana*, 1:316–21.

²⁶ Diarmaid MacCulloch, *The Reformation: A History* (New York: Penguin, 2005), 271–72.

²⁷ *Adultero-German Interim*, CTS 3:241; CO 7:591–92.

²⁸ *Adultero-German Interim*, CTS 3:242; CO 7:593.

²⁹ *Adultero-German Interim*, CTS 3:342; CO 7:672–73.

2. Calvin's Critique of Roman Catholicism

To detail each of the theological concerns articulated in Calvin's writings against Catholic opponents from 1539 to 1549 would require an essay much longer than the present one. This section highlights only some of the most important or suggestive elements of Calvin's argument against Roman Catholicism.

2.1. Scripture and Interpretation

Throughout his Catholic writings, Calvin emphasized that the Word of God, the Scripture, must serve as the *norma normans*, the determinative authority within Christ's Church. The Word of God, states Calvin, "is like the Lydian stone, by which [the Church] tests all doctrines." Indeed, "all controversies should be decided by thy Word."³⁰ In his letter to Sadoletto, Calvin insists that the Church of Christ must be governed by both Word and Spirit: "seeing how dangerous it would be to boast of the Spirit without the Word, [our Lord] declared that the Church is indeed governed by the Holy Spirit, but in order that that government might not be vague and unstable, he annexed it to the Word."³¹

In Calvin's eyes, one of the chief failures of the medieval church was that it had neglected the divine Scriptures. Scarcely one bishop in a hundred was willing or able to preach.³² Lay people were encouraged to venerate the Sacred Text, but they were not taught its message. In a rare auto-biographical comment in his letter to Sadoletto, Calvin recalls his own experience:

I, O Lord, as I had been educated from a boy, always professed the Christian faith. But at first I had no other reason for my faith than that which then everywhere prevailed. Thy Word, which ought to have shone on all thy people like a lamp, was taken away, or at least suppressed as to us.³³

Calvin believed that the consequences of such neglect were devastating. Once deprived of God's Word, ignorant common people were victimized by the corrupt traditions of the medieval church and succumbed to pernicious errors, falsehoods, and superstition.³⁴ By contrast, one of the most important achievements of the Protestant Reformation, Calvin asserts, is to make the Word of God available to the people of God, whether through preaching, vernacular translations of the Scripture, or biblical commentaries. Calvin boasts, we "have thrown more light upon the Scriptures than all the doctors who have appeared under the Papacy since its commencement."³⁵

Calvin's most detailed treatment of the authority of Scripture is found in the *Antidote*, his commentary on the early sessions of the Council of Trent. Here Calvin rehearses and rejects the four main conclusions that the Tridentine fathers made relative to the Scriptures: (1) Scripture *and* church tradition share equal authority in determining matters of doctrine; (2) the Apocryphal books are authentic Scripture; (3) the Latin Vulgate constitutes the authoritative version of the Church; and (4) the magisterium alone has the right to interpret Scripture.

³⁰ *Letter to Sadoletto*, 61, 86; CO 5:393, 410.

³¹ *Letter to Sadoletto*, 60; CO 5:393.

³² *Adultero-German Interim*, CTS 3:293; CO 7:633–34.

³³ *Letter to Sadoletto*, 87; CO 5:411.

³⁴ *Letter to Sadoletto*, 82; CO 5:408.

³⁵ *Antidote*, CTS 3:76; CO 7:418.

To concede these points, Calvin argues, is to capitulate everything to the Catholics. For if one places the church's oral traditions on equal footing with Scripture, then "whatever [doctrines] they produce, if supported by no authority of Scripture, will be classed among the traditions, which they insist should have the same authority as the Law and the Prophets."³⁶ The same thing pertains to the exclusive privilege of interpretation. If the Roman magisterium is granted exclusive authority to interpret holy writ, then the papists will prove whatever they wish out of Scripture, turning God's Word into a "wax nose."³⁷

Calvin does acknowledge, however, the dangers of allowing private individuals to interpret the Scripture for themselves in every circumstance. Certainly, most biblical texts are clear, and everyone may correctly interpret them. But for a passage that is more obscure or difficult, it is "inappropriate [*indignum*] to refer it to the private will of man" alone. In such instances, he believes, a company of godly teachers well-versed in the Scriptures ought to undertake such interpretation: "in the case of an obscure passage, when it is doubtful what sense ought to be adopted, there is no better way of arriving at the true meaning than for pious doctors to make common inquiry, by engaging in religious discussion."³⁸ For Calvin, then, Christian lay people are responsible to study and interpret the Word of God, but on difficult matters, they must submit to the judgment of godly leaders with special training in the biblical text.

2.2. Church and Tradition

In his polemical writings dating from 1539 to 1549, Calvin never minced words in his stinging rebuke of the structures, doctrines, and religious practices of the medieval Church. The papal office he likened to the Roman Antichrist. The Catholic Mass was an "abomination" and "sacrilege," devised by Satan. The requirements of auricular confession and clerical celibacy were "murderers of souls" and a "modern tyranny."³⁹ The Roman Catholic Church, with the pope at its head, had snuffed out the light of divine truth, buried the Word of God, defiled the glory of Christ, and subverted the pastoral office.⁴⁰ Despite this perilous situation, however, Calvin insisted that the true Church of Christ had not entirely been extinguished in Europe. The Christian Church was in "grievous distress, and in extreme danger"; it was at "the very brink of destruction," writhing under the effect of "a deadly wound."⁴¹ But it wasn't altogether deceased.

In his writings against Roman Catholicism, Calvin regularly distinguishes the spiritual and visible natures of the Christian Church. On the one hand, the Christian Church is a spiritual reality, "the society of all the saints," spread over the whole world through time, "bound together by the one doctrine and the one Spirit of Christ."⁴² In this sense, Calvin believes that remnants of God's elect people still remained within the Roman Catholic Church, though facing the most dire of circumstances.⁴³ On the other hand, Calvin asserts that the Church of Christ took on visible form in the world through two or perhaps three

³⁶ *Antidote*, CTS 3:67–68; CO 7:411.

³⁷ *Antidote*, CTS 3:69; CO 7:412.

³⁸ *Antidote*, CTS 3:74–75; CO 7:416.

³⁹ *On the Necessity of Reforming the Church*, CTS 1:177, 183; CO 6:495, 499.

⁴⁰ *Letter to Sadoletto*, 74–75; CO 5:402–3.

⁴¹ *On the Necessity of Reforming the Church*, CTS 1:124, 137, 198; CO 6:457, 467, 509.

⁴² *Letter to Sadoletto*, 61–62; CO 5:394.

⁴³ See *Letter to Sadoletto*, 75; CO 5:403, and also the *Adultero-German Interim*, CTS 3:264; CO 7:610.

primary marks: the preaching of sound doctrine, the pure administration of the sacraments, and the practice of church discipline.⁴⁴

The true Church should be identified through right doctrine rather than the visible succession of bishops. Though “there has been an uninterrupted succession of the Church from the beginning of the gospel even to our day,” Calvin writes, this succession exists, not in the “external show” of bishops and popes, but in the “perpetuity of doctrine” handed down from the Apostles.⁴⁵ Because of this understanding of the Church, Calvin strenuously rejects Catholic claims that the Protestant reformers are schismatics or innovators. In Calvin’s view, the Protestants did not break the spiritual unity of the Christian Church; rather, they are defending the Apostolic message of the gospel and the purity of Christ’s Church. Calvin makes this point forcefully in his treatise *On the Necessity of Reforming the Church*:

It is not enough, therefore, simply to throw out the name of Church, but judgment must be used to ascertain which is the true church, and what is the nature of its unity. And the thing necessary to attend to, first of all, is, to beware of separating the Church from Christ its head. When I say Christ, I include the doctrine of his gospel, which he sealed with his blood. . . . [The] uniform characteristics of a well-ordered Church are the preaching of sound doctrine and the pure administration of the Sacraments.⁴⁶

From Calvin’s perspective, therefore, the Protestant reformers are engaged in a “holy work” of God. Their efforts are not innovative, but preservative—reforming, restoring, and renewing Christ’s Church on earth. By contrast, it is the Catholics who are the innovators, out of sync with both the teachings of Scripture as well the practice of the early church. Calvin makes this point repeatedly in his treatises:

Our agreement with antiquity is far closer than yours [i.e., Sadoleto]. . . . [Indeed] in all these points, the ancient Church is clearly on our side⁴⁷

[T]he primitive and purer church is not in this matter so adverse to us as our enemies pretend [on the subject of clerical marriage]. . . . [W]e accord far better with the ancient Church than they do.⁴⁸

[B]esides the clear testimonies which are everywhere met with in Scripture [regarding images], we are supported by the authority of the ancient Church.⁴⁹

Clearly, even as Calvin based his arguments on the solid foundation of Scripture, he in no way was willing to abdicate the precedence of the early Church to his Roman Catholic opponents. Indeed, so confident was Calvin that the Reformation message was in basic conformity with the early Church that,

⁴⁴ *Letter to Sadoleto*, 63; *CO* 5:394. Calvin indicates here that there are three marks of a visible Church. In his later writings, including all subsequent editions of the *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, Calvin identifies the preaching of sound doctrine and the pure administration of the sacraments as the two marks of a true Church. See the *Institutes* IV.i.10.

⁴⁵ *Adultero-German Interim*, *CTS* 3:264–65; *CO* 7:610–11.

⁴⁶ *On the Necessity of Reforming the Church*, *CTS* 1:213–14; *CO* 6:520.

⁴⁷ *Letter to Sadoleto*, 62, 74; *CO* 5:394, 402.

⁴⁸ *On the Necessity of Reforming the Church*, *CTS* 1:181; *CO* 6:498.

⁴⁹ *On the Necessity of Reforming the Church*, *CTS* 1:149; *CO* 6:476.

in his *Antidote*, he marshals the testimony of Jerome, Cyprian, Bernard of Clairvaux, and especially Augustine against the Council of Trent on such issues as free will, justification, and Roman primacy.

Calvin's doctrine of *sola Scriptura* did not preclude him from calling upon the authority of early church fathers or the customs of the patristic church in an effort to demonstrate the fundamental continuity between the gospel that the reformers preached and the message of the early Church. If Scripture was Calvin's highest authority, it was not the only authority to which he appealed.

2.3. Central Issues in Dispute

It is not uncommon for Protestant Christians today to summarize their primary doctrinal commitments with five "solas": *sola Scriptura*, *sola gratia*, *sola fide*, *solus Christus*, and *solus Deo gloria*. Calvin would certainly not have objected to such formulations. However, in his polemical treatises against Catholic opponents during the 1540s, Calvin framed his central concerns somewhat differently.

This is clearly seen in the structure of Calvin's treatise *On the Necessity of Reforming the Church*. In this treatise, Calvin summarizes the primary doctrinal grievances that Protestants have with the Roman Church in these terms: "All our controversies concerning doctrine relate either to the legitimate worship of God or to the ground of salvation."⁵⁰ These two issues—legitimate worship and the doctrines of salvation—constitute what Calvin calls the "soul" of the matter. They are of central importance: "If the purity of this doctrine is in any degree impaired, the Church has received a deadly wound" and will be brought "to the very brink of destruction."⁵¹

After treating these two chief matters in the first part of his treatise, Calvin next turns his attention to two derivative and supporting doctrines: church government and the sacraments. Calvin likens these to the "body." If the "body" (church government and the sacraments) is not infused and animated by the "soul" (right worship and salvation), then it becomes "a dead and useless carcass."⁵²

What becomes clear from his treatment of these theological priorities is that, for Calvin, fundamental Christian truths do not stand alone, but are closely related to one another and dependent upon one another. Thus, for example, the "false" sacraments of the Catholic Church were insidious, not only because Christ did not institute them but also because they diminished God's glory and undermined the unique role of grace in salvation. Moreover, it is important to recognize that when Calvin gives priority to right worship and salvation, he is defending not simply discrete theological topics, but a constellation of related truths and practices that cohere and comprise a larger conceptual field of doctrines. Thus, for Calvin, a biblical understanding of salvation includes not only a commitment to the doctrines of grace and justification, but also to particular understandings of election, original sin, the substance of faith, remission of sins, the nature of good works, and Christian assurance.

The importance of this insight is clearly illustrated by Calvin's discussion of the doctrine of justification in his treatise against the Augsburg Interim.⁵³ Although the Interim's statement on justification is more moderate and less angular than that made by the Tridentine Council, Calvin was not in the least bit impressed. In the introduction to his treatise, he reminds his reader, "[T]here is a

⁵⁰ *On the Necessity of Reforming the Church*, CTS 1:146; CO 6:474.

⁵¹ *On the Necessity of Reforming the Church*, CTS 1:137; CO 6:467.

⁵² *On the Necessity of Reforming the Church*, CTS 1:127; CO 6:459–60.

⁵³ The Augsburg Interim's statements on the doctrine of Justification (chapters IV–VI) are prefixed to Calvin's *Adultero-German Interim*, see CTS 3:196–99.

great difference between merely uttering the one expression—we are justified by faith—and setting forth the whole matter in a distinct explanation.”⁵⁴ Over the next several pages, Calvin demonstrates the ways in which one’s conception of Christian faith, divine sovereignty, and the remission of sins either support or undercut the biblical doctrine of justification:

It is now clear enough how important it is, in order to maintain the doctrine of Justification entire, to have a sure definition of faith.

Unless [God’s effective call in salvation is] put beyond controversy, though we may ever and anon repeat like parrots that we are justified by faith, we shall never hold the true doctrine of Justification.

Is not the name justification more than shamelessly brought forward while consciences are laid under [the burden of Catholic penance]? . . . Scripture declares that we are justified, not because we fulfill the law, but because we rest on the sacrifices of Christ, by which sins have been expiated.⁵⁵

Calvin concludes his defense of the Protestant doctrine of justification in the *Adultero-German Interim* with a final polemical thrust that highlights his central theological concerns. *Even if* the Augsburg Interim allows for the doctrine of justification by faith alone (which it does not), the Catholic settlement would still be unacceptable because it fails to redress the problem of idolatry that permeates the Catholic cultus.⁵⁶

2.4. True Worship

In recent years scholars of the reformed tradition have highlighted the central place that right worship occupied in the theological constructions of the Swiss reformers in the sixteenth century.⁵⁷ And the subject of worship was a recurring theme in Calvin’s theological treatises from 1539 to 1549. Calvin’s indictment of what he calls Catholic idolatry is devastating. Roman Catholics rob God of his glory by praying to saints, seeking their intercession and assistance. Catholics perpetrate a grave injustice against the Virgin Mary and commit the grossest of idolatries when they present Jesus’ mother as “the gate of heaven, hope, life, and salvation.”⁵⁸ This same idolatry is evident as Catholics adore physical images of deceased saints and worship sacred relics. Catholic ceremonies such as vigils, prayers, and fasts are also a mockery of God that promote a new Judaism, and “God rejects, condemns, abominates all [such] fictitious worship.”⁵⁹

But what of the Catholic distinction between *dulia* (the veneration reserved for saints) and *latria* (the worship reserved for God alone)? Calvin argues that this is a distinction without a difference, for in everyday practice, “Do not men pay to images and statues the very same reverence which they pay to

⁵⁴ *Adultero-German Interim*, CTS 3:243; CO 7:594.

⁵⁵ *Adultero-German Interim*, CTS 3:249, 254, 254–55; CO 7:599, 602, 602–3.

⁵⁶ *Adultero-German Interim*, CTS 3:260; CO 7:607.

⁵⁷ In particular, see Carlos Eire, *War against the Idols: The Reformation of Worship from Erasmus to Calvin* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986).

⁵⁸ *On the Necessity of Reforming the Church*, CTS 1:190; CO 6:504.

⁵⁹ *On the Necessity of Reforming the Church*, CTS 1:133; CO 6:464.

God?”⁶⁰ By encouraging common people to exalt Mary, pray to saints, and worship physical objects, the Catholic tradition promoted superstition and manifold idolatry, undermining the unique mediatorial role of Christ, treating him as if he were “some ordinary individual in a crowd.”⁶¹

Calvin believes that one of the most important achievements of the Protestant Reformation is that it purified the Church of such idolatry and restored true worship to Christ’s Church. What does Calvin mean by right worship? To worship God rightly is to worship him in Spirit and in Truth. Right worship is to acknowledge God as he is—the only source of all virtue, justice, holiness, wisdom, truth, power, goodness, mercy, life, and salvation—and to render him glory alone. Right worship is not a matter of outward ceremonies, but is a matter of the heart. It is the “inward worship of the heart, which alone [God] approves and requires.”⁶² Finally, true worship must always follow the rule of Scripture (the so-called Regulative Principle). Calvin makes this point on several different occasions: “God disapproves of all modes of worship not expressly sanctioned by his Word. . . . [T]he Word of God is the test which discriminates this true worship and that which is false.”⁶³

For Calvin, then, true worship is governed by the Scripture, inspired by the Holy Spirit, and issued from the human heart. True worship brings glory to God alone. Calvin is convinced that the Protestants restored true spiritual worship to the Christian churches, notwithstanding the scorn and abuse that Catholics heaped upon them:

While the whole world teems with these and similar delusions . . . we, who have brought back the worship of the one God to the rule of his Word, we, who are blameless in this matter, and have purged our churches, not only of idolatry but of superstition also, are accused of violating the worship of God, because we have discarded the worship of images.⁶⁴

2.5. Justification by Faith Alone

As with other sixteenth-century Protestant reformers, Calvin believed that the doctrine of justification occupied an essential place in the Christian gospel.⁶⁵ He also believed it to be one of the most significant issues separating Protestants from their Catholic opponents. In his *Letter to Sadoletto*, for example, Calvin identifies justification as “the first and keenest subject of controversy between us.” This was no trifling matter, for “[w]herever the knowledge of it is taken away, the glory of Christ is extinguished, religion abolished, the Church destroyed, and the hope of salvation utterly overthrown.”⁶⁶

How then did Calvin understand the biblical doctrine of justification? According to Calvin, justification is simply God’s acquittal of sinners by which he pardons them of their sin and imputes the alien righteousness of Christ to their account. Sinners are justified through Christ’s expiatory death

⁶⁰ *On the Necessity of Reforming the Church*, CTS 1:131; CO 6:462.

⁶¹ *On the Necessity of Reforming the Church*, CTS 1:130; CO 6:462.

⁶² *Adultero-German Interim*, CTS 3:260; CO 7:608.

⁶³ *On the Necessity of Reforming the Church*, CTS 1:128, 132; CO 6:461, 464.

⁶⁴ *On the Necessity of Reforming the Church*, CTS 1:149; CO 6:476.

⁶⁵ For an excellent discussion of Calvin’s doctrine of justification as founded upon the believer’s union with Christ, see J. Todd Billings, *Calvin, Participation, and the Gift: The Activity of Believers in Union with Christ* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008).

⁶⁶ *Letter to Sadoletto*, 66; CO 5:396.

alone, and this is received by faith alone. Faith is not a good work that merits justification; rather, faith is the gift of God by which the Holy Spirit unites sinners to Christ, effecting their adoption and enabling them to partake of all the blessings of Christ. Calvin defines justification like this in his *Adultero-German Interim*:

As God justifies us freely by imputing the obedience of Christ to us, so we are rendered capable of this great blessing only by faith alone. As the Son of God expiated our sins by the sacrifice of his death, and by appeasing his Father's wrath, acquired the gift of adoption for us, and now presents us with his righteousness, so it is only by faith we put him on, and become partakers of his blessings.⁶⁷

Stated more succinctly: "We say therefore, that we are justified by faith, because the righteousness of Christ is imputed to us."⁶⁸

Calvin emphasizes that justification, as God's forensic declaration of non-guilt, must be distinguished from regeneration or sanctification. But at the same time, he insists that the faith that justifies the sinner necessarily results in spiritual renewal and growth in godliness: "when we say a man is justified by faith alone, we do not fancy a faith devoid of charity, but we mean that faith alone is the cause of justification." It is "faith alone which justifies, and yet the faith which justifies is not alone."⁶⁹ Calvin articulates this doctrine most fully in his *Antidote* against the Council of Trent:

Justification and sanctification, are constantly conjoined and cohere; but from this it is erroneously inferred that they are one and the same. . . . [A]s soon as any one is justified, renewal also necessarily follows: and there is no dispute as to whether or not Christ sanctifies all whom he justifies. . . . The whole dispute is as to the cause of justification. The Fathers of Trent pretend that it is twofold, as if we were justified partly by forgiveness of sins and partly by spiritual regeneration. . . . I on the contrary, while I admit that we are never received into the favor of God without being at the same time regenerated to holiness of life, contend that it is false to say that any part of righteousness [*iustitiae*] consists in quality, or in the habit which resides in us, and that we are righteous [*iustos*] only by gratuitous acceptance.⁷⁰

This then is the crux of Calvin's disagreement with his Catholic opponents. The reformers taught that believers' right standing before God is due to the once-for-all free imputation of Christ's righteousness. By contrast, the Tridentine Fathers taught that justification includes both divine pardon *and* the process whereby Christ's righteousness is infused into believers, which enables them to cooperate with divine grace, live a holy life, and merit salvation. From Calvin's viewpoint, Trent's doctrine represents little more than a modified version of the ancient heresy of Pelagius, in that it affirms "that men are justified partly by the grace of God and partly by their own works."⁷¹ Accordingly, Calvin finds the Catholic doctrine of justification altogether pernicious, for it ignores the full effects of original sin, exalts human righteousness, vitiates divine grace, distorts the meaning of true faith, and destroys the grounds of

⁶⁷ *Adultero-German Interim*, CTS 3:249; CO 7:598.

⁶⁸ *Adultero-German Interim*, CTS 3:244; CO 7:594.

⁶⁹ *Antidote*, CTS 3:151, 152; CO 7:476–77.

⁷⁰ *Antidote*, CTS 3:116–17; CO 7:448–49.

⁷¹ *Antidote*, CTS 3:108; CO 7:442.

Christian assurance. On this last point, Calvin is particularly adamant. Because Catholics predicate justification on the inherent righteousness of the believer, they must regard full Christian assurance as ungodly presumption. In so doing, they portray God as an exacting Judge and thereby “rob all consciences of calm and placid confidence” in divine grace.⁷² How different is the Protestant teaching on justification, Calvin believes. The doctrine of justification by grace through faith alone enables Christians to conduct their lives with confidence and gratitude, secure in the knowledge of God’s fatherly love for them. As Calvin notes in his response to the Augsburg Interim,

It is asked . . . where our consciences may rest safely in regard to salvation. . . . Any part of this righteousness, however small, if placed in works will totter, as resting on an insecure foundation. . . . It is a plain matter, that we cannot come boldly before the tribunal of God, unless we are certainly persuaded that he is our Father: and this cannot be without our being regarded as righteous in his sight.⁷³

For Calvin, the Protestant doctrine of justification by faith is not only a truth to be professed, but a doctrine to be celebrated and enjoyed, for it provides Christians both comfort and confidence during this present life and a firm assurance for the next.

3. Concluding Observations

I conclude with five brief observations based on Calvin’s polemical treatises from 1539 to 1549. I hope these will be helpful as evangelical Protestants engage Roman Catholics in the present day.

3.1. *Sola Scriptura* Does Not Mean *Nuda Scriptura*

Evangelical Christians in North America sometimes misunderstand the Reformation doctrine of *sola Scriptura* to mean that the Bible is the Christian’s *only* theological resource, that it can and should be denuded of its churchly context (hence *nuda Scriptura*).⁷⁴ Such an understanding is altogether incorrect.

Calvin believed that holy Scripture as the only infallible rule of faith and practice should serve as the *final* authority by which to judge Christian doctrine and practice, but it was not his *only* resource for theology. Consequently, he regularly consulted and appealed to early Christian documents and church authorities—most notably Augustine—to gain theological insight and clarity on contested doctrinal matters. He recognized the strategic importance of demonstrating the *continuity* of Protestant teaching with the core convictions of the early Church. Thus, his regular refrain: “The ancient church is on our side!”

In a similar fashion, evangelical Protestants should view the riches of the Christian tradition(s) during and before the sixteenth-century Reformation not simply as an “alien world” or as an unfortunate parenthesis. Instead, they should view them as an important resource for biblical interpretation,

⁷² *Antidote*, CTS 3:125; CO 7:456.

⁷³ *Adultero-German Interim*, CTS 3:244–45; CO 7:595.

⁷⁴ On this problem, see the helpful statement in ECT III, “Your Word is Truth.” Charles Colson and Richard John Neuhaus, eds., *Your Word Is Truth: A Project of Evangelicals and Catholics Together* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), 4.

theological reflection, and ecumenical dialogue while at the same time insisting that everything be tested carefully by the authoritative Word of God.

3.2. Moving Beyond Reformation Slogans

In the past four centuries, Protestants have often summarized their distinctive doctrinal commitments with the five Latin phrases *sola scriptura*, *sola gratia*, *sola fide*, *solus Christus*, and *soli Deo gloria*. How should evangelical Protestants respond, then, when contemporary Roman Catholic churchmen affirm one or several of these slogans? To be more concrete, how should evangelicals respond to the Roman Catholic Church's official approval of the formulae "by grace alone" and "by faith alone" in the Joint Declaration of 1999? Or, again, how should evangelical Protestants respond to revisionist Catholic interpretations that argue that the Fourth Session of the Council of Trent did in fact affirm the doctrine of *sola Scriptura* as the authoritative position of their Church?⁷⁵

We should be grateful that Catholics are willing to affirm these central biblical truths while at the same time remaining both cautious and realistic. Calvin reminds us that the so-called Protestant "*solas*" cannot be treated as discrete or independent doctrines. Rather, they cohere with, inform, and require other important biblical truths. Thus, as we have seen, Calvin was quick to point out the theological inconsistency of affirming the doctrine of justification by faith alone, on the one hand, while remaining committed to the Catholic sacrament of penance, with its distinction between guilt and punishment, and its requirement of works of satisfaction, on the other. So also Calvin recognized that whatever authority the Catholic Church ascribed to Scripture in theory, Rome undermined Scripture's authority in practice by commanding the exclusive right of interpreting the biblical text. Evangelicals engaged in ecumenical conversations with Roman Catholics should demonstrate this same kind of realism.

Moreover, the *accent* that a particular theological tradition gives to a doctrine is important. For the Protestant reformers, justification was a first-order doctrinal concern. Not so with many contemporary Catholics. The most recent edition of the *Catholic Catechism* gives only brief attention to the doctrine of justification.⁷⁶ Clearly, sacramental grace, not justification, occupies the central position in Catholic conceptions of salvation. American Cardinal Avery Dulles admits as much: "Justification is rarely discussed at length except in polemics against, or dialogue with, Protestants."⁷⁷ Lutheran scholar James Preuss once stated the problem even more baldly: "The doctrine [of justification] is at best at the fringe of their *corpus doctrinae*, like a fingernail, or like the planet Pluto at the edge of our solar system."⁷⁸ In

⁷⁵ Drawing upon the work of Tübingen professor J. R. Geiselmann, Roman Catholic scholars such as George Tavard, Ives Congar, Karl Rahner, and Joseph Ratzinger (Pope Benedict XVI) have rejected the traditional view that Trent defended a two-source theory of revelation. On this see Steven W. Berg, "Totally in Tradition and Totally in Scripture: The Implications of the Catholic Notion of *Sola Scriptura*" (M.A. thesis, Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, 2002).

⁷⁶ See *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (Rome: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1994), pars. 1987–95, 2018–19.

⁷⁷ Cited in Lane, *Justification by Faith*, 230. Note however the statement in the *Joint Declaration* (par. 18): "Therefore the doctrine of justification, which takes up this message and explicates it, is more than just one part of Christian doctrine. It stands in essential relation to all truths of faith, which are to be seen as internally related to each other. It is an indispensable criterion which constantly serves to orient all the teaching and practice of our churches to Christ. . . . When Catholics see themselves as bound by several criteria, they do not deny the special function of the message of justification" (ibid., 246).

⁷⁸ Ibid., 230.

discussions with Roman Catholics, evangelical Protestants need to be attentive to the priority given core Christian doctrines. Defending slogans is important, but not enough.

3.3. Clarifying the Meaning of Justification

It is noteworthy that the official Catholic formulations of the doctrine of justification found in the *Catholic Catechism* and the *Joint Declaration* make no mention of the positive forensic character of justification—that sinners are acquitted before God on account of the *imputed* righteousness of Christ. Moreover, both of these documents describe justification as including divine pardon *and* the process of renewal of the inner person. The *Catholic Catechism*, for example, reaffirms the definition of justification formulated at Trent in 1547: “Justification is not only the remission of sins, but also the sanctification and renewal of the interior man.”⁷⁹ In a similar fashion, section 4.2 of the *Joint Declaration* bears the title “Justification as forgiveness of sins and making righteous.”

This has led evangelical theologian Anthony Lane rightly to observe that the definition of justification presented in the *Joint Declaration* is a decidedly *Catholic* one.⁸⁰ All of this should cause evangelical Protestants some pause. Although the Roman Catholic Church has now affirmed the slogans *sola gratia* and *sola fide* as consonant with historic Catholic teaching, nevertheless, the definition of justification found in its official doctrinal statements continues to be at variance with the understanding of justification defended so tirelessly (and often courageously) by Protestant reformers such as John Calvin. To underline this point is not to be churlish or uncharitable; it is to be theologically precise and fair to the historical record.

3.4. The Challenge of Right Worship

The dogmatic priority that Calvin gives to right worship in his polemical writings may appear somewhat idiosyncratic—even irrelevant—to contemporary Christians in the West. But it shouldn't. Calvin's concern that God alone be glorified and his warnings against the insidious nature of human idolatry are extremely timely for evangelical Protestants as well as Roman Catholics. The propensity of sinful human beings to seek to domesticate God by human ceremonies, rules, ideologies, and intellect; the ever-present temptations of self-promotion; the expansive influence of celebrity culture in many of our churches; the allure of slick methods to manage the Holy Spirit and manipulate God—in all of these ways contemporary Christians in the Western world would do well to take seriously Calvin's warnings on this topic. Some will no doubt view Calvin's regulative principle of worship as unnecessarily restrictive. But all evangelicals should resonate deeply with Calvin's call for a reformation of worship that glorifies God alone, where true spiritual worship is filled with reverence for God's majesty and profound gratitude for his mercy.

3.5. Living Our Theology

When reading Calvin's treatises against Roman Catholic opponents during the 1540s, I have been impressed how often he reminds his readers of the *practical* entailments of their theological commitments. What we confess affects how we live.

⁷⁹ *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, pars. 1989, 2019.

⁸⁰ Lane, *Justification by Faith*, 158.

Calvin believed that religious legalism tortures the consciences of men and women. Merit theology plunges God's people into the "gulf of despair."⁸¹ The Catholic sacrament of penance "rob[s] all consciences of calm and placid confidence"; indeed, mandatory annual confession is nothing but "an executioner to torture and excruciate consciences."⁸²

By contrast, the Protestant doctrine of justification by faith alone offers the believer a safe refuge of assurance that brings with it "peace of conscience."⁸³ Calvin is concerned, in other words, not simply with articulating biblical doctrine, but demonstrating how it impacts the spiritual experience of ordinary Christians. Calvin the theologian was also Calvin the pastor. For those of us who have been called to serve Christ's church as pastors or professors, we would do well to follow Calvin's example in this. For our vocation is not simply to uphold biblical orthodoxy, but to edify, instruct, and protect God's people entrusted to our care. It is our task, our awesome responsibility, to present God's timeless truth in a manner that assists everyday Christians to live their lives in faithful, joyful obedience to Christ. May this be true of all of us, for Christ's glory and for the edification of his Church!

⁸¹ *On the Necessity of Reforming of the Church*, CTS 1:193; CO 6:506.

⁸² *Antidote*, CTS 3:125, 140; CO 7:456, 467.

⁸³ *Adultero-German Interim*, CTS 3:244; CO 7:595.

Intrinsic Canonicity and the Inadequacy of the Community Approach to Canon-Determination

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Scholars continue to discuss and debate the scope of the biblical canon.¹ At the heart of the discussion is the nature of canonicity, including a vital philosophical division between those who believe that the canon is a community-determined construction and those who believe that the canon is divinely appointed and thus merely recognized, but not determined, by any given community.² Numerous studies posit the former position, that the community functions as the final arbiter of what is included or excluded from the scope of the biblical canon (community-canon).³ At the same time, there is considerable support for the latter option (intrinsic canon).⁴

With this division in mind, this study evaluates the community-canon approach from a Christian perspective. It does not intend to delineate the scope of the biblical canon. In other words, it does not

¹ Consider the numerous works that continue to engage the ongoing debate. For instance, Craig G. Bartholomew et al., eds., *Canon and Biblical Interpretation* (vol. 7 of *The Scripture and Hermeneutics Series*; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2006); Bart D. Ehrman, *Misquoting Jesus: The Story Behind Who Changed the Bible and Why* (New York: HarperSanFrancisco, 2005); Timothy P. Jones, *Misquoting Truth: A Guide to the Fallacies of Bart Ehrman's Misquoting Jesus* (Downers Grove: IVP, 2007); Lee Martin McDonald, *The Biblical Canon: Its Origin, Transmission, and Authority* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2007); Lee Martin McDonald and James A. Sanders, eds., *The Canon Debate* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2002).

² The basic definition of canon as “rule” or “standard” is widely recognized. The question is what the basis for this “rule” or “standard” is.

³ These approaches are by no means monolithic, so one must apply the emphasis on community to varying degrees. Moreover, for some it is not always clear whether the community-canon view is prescriptive or merely descriptive. Considerable diversity exists among these scholars. With this in mind, consider the essays by James D. G. Dunn, Robert W. Funk, and James A. Sanders in *The Canon Debate* (ed. Lee Martin McDonald and James A. Sanders; Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2002); Lee Martin McDonald, *The Formation of the Christian Biblical Canon* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1995); James A. Sanders, *Canon and Community: A Guide to Canonical Criticism* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1984); Charles J. Scalise, *From Scripture to Theology: A Canonical Journey into Hermeneutics* (Downers Grove: IVP, 1996).

⁴ See, for example, Milton Fisher, “The Canon of the New Testament,” in *The Origin of the Bible* (ed. Philip Wesley Comfort; Wheaton: Tyndale, 1992), 65–78; Norman L. Geisler, *Systematic Theology: Introduction Bible* (Minneapolis: Bethany, 2002); Norman R. Gulley, *Systematic Theology: Prologomena* (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 2003); Gerhard F. Hasel, “Divine Inspiration and the Canon of the Bible,” *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society* 5 (1994), 68–105; Bruce M. Metzger, *The Canon of the New Testament* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1987).

address the inclusion or exclusion of specific books.⁵ Rather, it addresses the logically prior question of the nature of canonicity.

Two major issues, entailing a number of questions, are raised in this regard that may be summed up in two interrelated queries. First, what about radical propheticity? Second, which community? Regarding the first query, what impact might a community-canon approach have upon the potential for a radically prophetic function for that canon? Would not the community approach leave open the considerable possibility that unpopular prophetic messages would be rejected? With this in mind, what is to be made of the apparently revolutionary and community-opposed voices that are preserved in the received, Protestant canon?⁶ The potential community-rejection of genuine prophetic messages itself highlights the second query: which community is authoritative to function as the arbiter regarding canonicity? What time, place, or culture constitutes the applicable community? Moreover, what constitutes a legitimate community in the first place?

1. Two Approaches to Canonicity

Before addressing these queries by means of canonical examples, it is important to clarify the fundamental division between the two approaches to canonicity: community-canon and intrinsic-canon. The primary philosophical distinction relates to this question: Who determines the scope of the canon?

1.1. The Community-Canon Approach

For the community-canon approach, the community (as the name suggests) determines the scope of the canon. This reduces the definition of canon to a collection of books deemed authoritative by a given community.⁷ The community-canon approach thus modifies the traditional view of canon as divinely authoritative Scripture to a more fluid definition, a canon shaped by the authoritative community.⁸

⁵ Although I make no attempt to argue the reasons in this paper, I ascribe to the sixty-six-book Protestant canon. See John C. Peckham, "The Canon and Biblical Authority: A Critical Comparison of Two Models of Canonicity," *TJ* 28 (2007): 229–49. Cf. Stephen Dempster, "Canons on the Right and Canons on the Left: Finding a Resolution in the Canon Debate," *JETS* 52 (2009): 47–77; Charles E. Hill, "The New Testament Canon: Deconstructio Ad Absurdum?" *JETS* 52 (2009): 101–19.

⁶ For lack of a better term I use the term "Protestant canon" to denote the sixty-six-book biblical canon of the OT and NT.

⁷ This is carried out to varying extents depending upon the particular scholar. This approach stems, in large part, from Albert C. Sundberg's sharp distinction between "Scripture" and "canon," where Scripture is a fluid categorization of divine writings and canon is reserved for a fixed authoritative list of writings. See Sundberg, *The Old Testament of the Early Church* (New York: Kraus, 1969). Consider also Gerald Sheppard's influential distinction between canon 1 as a loose category of sacred writings as standard and canon 2 in reference to a fixed, definitive, authoritative list ("Canon," in *The Encyclopedia of Religion* [ed. Mircea Eliade; New York: Macmillan, 1987], 65). McDonald leans heavily on this distinction in his interpretation of the formation of the canon while Steinmann criticizes its usage as "purposely confus[ing] two different meanings of canon . . . in order to argue that the canon was not closed until a relatively late date." See McDonald, *The Formation of the Christian Biblical Canon*, 15; Andrew E. Steinmann, *The Oracles of God* (Saint Louis: Concordia, 1999), 17.

⁸ Sanders comments, "It was quite essential in effect for scholars to devalue the meaning of the word canon in order to apply to the Bible the developing tools of historical investigation borrowed from literary study in other fields" (*Canon and Community*, 1). In this way, "[t]he progress of historical-critical scholarship has under-

Some suggest that the biblical canon is merely an anachronism and thus externally imposed upon the writings.⁹ Others reduce the notion of “canon” to the decisions of a denomination or community. James Sanders is a primary representative of this latter approach; for him, “Biblical canons depend for content and order on the denomination or communion in view.”¹⁰ The biblical canon, therefore, is “something officially or authoritatively imposed upon certain literature” and, as such, “basically a community’s paradigm for how to continue the dialogue in ever changing socio-political contexts.”¹¹

Others attribute less fluidity to the canon yet retain the centrality of the community in canon-determination. Paul McGlasson states, “*Canon* by definition refers to a sacred text treasured in an ongoing community of faith.”¹² Charles Scalise similarly points out, “Including a text in the canon means that it has theological importance for the communities who read it as Scripture.”¹³

In sum, despite variations regarding fluidity and authority, this approach locates canon-determination in the community.

1.2. The Intrinsic-Canon Approach

Conversely, for the intrinsic-canon approach, God determines the scope of the canon, and the community recognizes it.¹⁴ The canon is a collection of authoritative books that are authoritative because God commissioned them.¹⁵ Recognizing the canon does not bear on its canonicity but determines only whether that given community will allow the canon to *function* as authority.

It is important to clarify what the intrinsic-canon approach is not. This approach does not overlook or ignore the variegated history of receiving and recognizing the canon. The historical information

mined the historical reliability and theologically dependability of the traditional biblical canon” (Funk, “The Once and Future New Testament,” 546).

⁹ See, for example, Philip R. Davies, *Whose Bible Is It Anyway?* (London: T&T Clark, 2004), 17–27. Cf. Funk, “The Once and Future New Testament.”

¹⁰ Sanders, *Canon and Community*, 15.

¹¹ Sanders, “The Issue of Closure in the Canonical Process,” 252, 262. As such, the community may “adapt its authoritative Scriptures in such a way as to meet its own evolving needs” (Brevard S. Childs, “The Canon in Recent Biblical Studies: Reflections on an Era,” in *Canon and Biblical Interpretation* [ed. Craig G. Bartholomew et al.; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2006], 39).

¹² Paul McGlasson, *Invitation to Dogmatic Theology: A Canonical Approach* (Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2006), 54.

¹³ Scalise, *From Scripture to Theology*, 45.

¹⁴ In other words, God revealed and inspired the canon, and it was canon even before it may have been recognized as such. Thus, “what is really meant by canonization—[is] recognition of the divinely authenticated word” (Fisher, “The Canon of the New Testament,” 77). So Brevard S. Childs, *Biblical Theology in Crisis* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1970), 105; Norman L. Geisler and Ralph E. MacKenzie, *Roman Catholics and Evangelicals: Agreements and Differences* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1995), 192; Anthony C. Thiselton, “Canon, Community, and Theological Construction,” in *Canon and Biblical Interpretation* (ed. Craig G. Bartholomew et al.; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2006), 13. See also the persuasive arguments for the priority of the authority of Scripture and the church’s mere recognition and transmission of Scripture as canon in F. F. Bruce, *The Books and the Parchments* (Glasgow: Harper Collins, 1991), 86–104; cf. idem, *The Canon of Scripture* (Downers Grove: IVP, 1988).

¹⁵ Hasel thus affirms that the “canon developed at the very point when the biblical books were written under inspiration” (“Divine Inspiration and the Canon of the Bible,” 73). Cf. Gulley, *Systematic Theology: Prolegomena*, 318.

regarding the numerous canon-lists and council-discussions is intriguing and important.¹⁶ It is by no means presumed that the community received the canon without controversy or criticism, yet this approach nevertheless maintains that the history of canon-recognition does not change the intrinsic nature of the canon if it was divinely revealed, inspired, and preserved. In other words, if the concept of canon is defined as writings appointed by God, then the history of a canon's recognition does not itself bear on its canonicity, as such.¹⁷

With these approaches in mind, we begin by evaluating the community-canon approach with regard to the issue of the community's recognizing prophets within the canonical writings.

2. Persecuted Prophets

For sake of discussion, consider the conception of canon as limited to what the community views as somehow prophetic or sacred. If the canon is what a particular community determines to be normative, significant methodological questions arise. To illustrate such questions, we first introduce some examples of canonical prophets and then examine the community-canon approach. In each of the cases below, a purportedly authoritative community rejects the message that is later accepted as a truly prophetic, canonical voice.

2.1. Elijah

Consider the case of Elijah. Although we have no canonical books written by Elijah there is considerable canonical information regarding his prophetic ministry. Despite later being recognized as one of the greatest prophets in Israel's history, Elijah faced severe persecution in his own day by his own community. Ahab and Jezebel sought to kill Elijah for his unfavorable messages (1 Kgs 18:7–10; 19:2). Further, in the remarkable Mt. Carmel narrative, God's response determines the difference between true and false prophets. Specifically, God's acceptance of Elijah's offering by fire, contrasted with the lack of response to the call of the false prophets, manifests Elijah's true propheticity (1 Kgs 18:25–40). Notably, just previous to the divine display at Mt. Carmel, the community failed to respond to Elijah's prophetic call (1 Kgs 18:21).¹⁸

¹⁶ While we should not overlook the interpretation of the history of canon-recognition, the interpretation of that history is complex and oft-disputed since it necessarily includes speculation, being "left to a critical reconstruction of the process from indirect evidence (Ben Sira, Josephus, Church Fathers, Talmud, etc.)" (Brevard S. Childs, "The Canon in Recent Biblical Studies: Reflections on an Era," 36).

¹⁷ The intrinsic-canon approach does not thereby object to recognizing that members of the community contributed to the canon. The divine-human interplay in the writing and compiling of the canonical works is quite important to note. However, that representatives from the community were inspired by the Holy Spirit in producing the canonical writings does not thereby grant authority to the community as a whole.

¹⁸ Specifically, "Elijah came near to all the people and said, 'How long *will* you hesitate between two opinions? If the LORD is God, follow Him; but if Baal, follow him.' But the people did not answer him a word." Even afterward, matters remain bleak for Elijah to the extent that he feels that he is the only true prophet remaining after Israel's apostasy to Baal worship (1 Kgs 19:10–18). Of course, God reveals that Elijah is not the only one left, but that he has reserved seven thousand. Nevertheless, if only seven thousand are reserved, what does that say about the vast majority of the community?

2.2. Micaiah

Another illuminating example is that of the oral prophet Micaiah. When Ahab (king of Israel) seeks the help of Jehoshaphat (king of Judah) against Ramoth-Gilead, Jehoshaphat calls for prophetic guidance, specifically for the “word of the LORD” (1 Kgs 22:5).¹⁹ Roughly four hundred “prophets” of Israel counsel to attack Ramoth-Gilead; Jehoshaphat seeks a prophet of the LORD (YHWH), yet Ahab is reticent to call Micaiah, a prophet of YHWH, because his prophecies are unfavorable to Ahab (1 Kgs 22:7–8). In the midst of further prophecies in support of Ahab’s desire to attack Ramoth-Gilead, Micaiah stands alone (despite counsel to provide a favorable and agreeable message and even initially providing such) in revealing the devastation that will follow such a course of action, yet his prophecy goes unheeded (1 Kgs 22:9–29).

2.3. Jeremiah

The difficult prophetic career of Jeremiah provides yet another example that raises questions for a community-canon approach. Jeremiah proclaimed a message of divine judgment against Judah, a message that was rejected by his own community (Jer 18:18; 37–39).²⁰ Not only did the community dismiss Jeremiah’s message, they beat and jailed him for an extended period (Jer 37:15–16) and afterward imprisoned him in a miry pit (Jer 38:6–9). Although Judaism and Christianity recognize Jeremiah’s writings as canonical, his immediate community summarily rejected his prophetic message of judgment.

2.4. John the Baptist, Stephen, Paul, and Jesus

Historical examples of community-opposition to authentic prophetic voices are not restricted to the Hebrew Bible; the NT prophets also faced persecution within their own original community. Despite a broad following of disciples, John the Baptist is beheaded for his prophetic messages (Mark 6:21–29). Later, Stephen becomes the first Christian martyr, being stoned for preaching before the Sanhedrin (Acts 7:1–60). Then there is Paul, first himself a persecutor and later himself repeatedly persecuted, beaten and imprisoned (Acts 14:19–20; 16:19–34; Acts 22; 2 Tim 4:6–8), and finally martyred.²¹ In this manner throughout the history of the sixty-six-book canon, many prophets were egregiously rejected.

Yet from a Christian perspective, such rejections pale in comparison to the rejection and crucifixion of Jesus Christ himself. Jesus was persecuted by his own community, his opponents repeatedly sought to kill him for his prophetic messages (John 5:18; 7:1), and finally they succeeded in crucifying him (John 19:30).²² Even the majority of his nearest followers, the twelve, temporarily forsook him. Afterwards, previous to the resurrection account, they remained in confusion and despair. Not merely a prophet, but the Son of God, the center of the biblical canon, Jesus himself was rejected and crucified by the supposedly authoritative community of his day.

¹⁹ Unless otherwise noted, Scripture taken from the NEW AMERICAN STANDARD BIBLE®, Copyright © 1960, 1962, 1963, 1971, 1972, 1973, 1975, 1977, 1995 by The Lockman Foundation. Used by permission.

²⁰ In Jer 18:18, the community explicitly rejects Jeremiah: “Come and let us devise plans against Jeremiah. Surely the law is not going to be lost to the priest, nor counsel to the sage, nor the *divine* word to the prophet! Come on and let us strike at him with *our* tongue, and let us give no heed to any of his words.”

²¹ Of course, the martyrdom of Paul is not included in the canonical accounts.

²² Jesus himself had spoken numerous times about the community’s rejection of God’s prophets, including the impending rejection of himself (Matt 23:34–37; Luke 11:49; cf. the words of Stephen in Acts 7:52).

3. The Inadequacy of the Community-Canon Approach

3.1. What about Radical Propheticity?

In light of the examples in §2, we return to the first of our two primary queries: What about radical propheticity? That is, what impact might a community approach to canonicity have upon the potential for a radically prophetic function for that canon? The examples in §2 illustrate a key weakness in the community-canon approach: communities, for obvious reasons, tend to reject critical messages and calls to reform, preferring favorable, pleasing words.²³ Communities may reject prophetic messages that run counter to their own interests, thus jeopardizing the prophetic function to call for reform and change. While it is not valid to assume that every particular community would reject critical voices, human beings tend to avoid radical criticism (cf. Isa 30:10; 2 Tim 4:3). If a particular community is the final arbiter of canonicity, divinely commissioned revolutionary voices opposed to the value-system of that community could be legitimately precluded in favor of community-sponsored pseudo-prophets.²⁴

This is not to suggest that it is impossible for a community to accept prophetic critique or that a community could not preserve messages that are revolutionary and/or community-opposed. On the contrary, it is evident that both contemporaneous and later communities did accept prophetic voices.²⁵ Nevertheless, under a community-canon approach wherein the community holds primacy in determining the canon, such messages could be legitimately silenced. In other words, absent external standards or qualifications, whatever community that is considered authoritative would be thus authorized to discard divinely commissioned messages.²⁶

3.2. Which Community?

3.2.1. Who Is a True Prophet?

This brings us to the second of our primary queries: Which community was or is legitimate and adequate to determine the validity or invalidity of purportedly prophetic messages? In numerous instances referenced above, the immediate community fails to recognize both oral and writing prophets.²⁷ If the community is authoritative to determine canonicity, why are those whom the canon calls “false prophets” not genuine prophets by virtue of their community’s support? This question exposes a contradiction between the biblical conception of propheticity and the supposed primacy of

²³ Biblical hamartiology (the depravity of human nature) raises serious issues for the primacy of the community. The carnal nature inclines to reject authority, especially such authority that threatens one’s own desires and/or interests.

²⁴ By “legitimately” here and below, I do not mean that the decision should be considered legitimate but that by the internal logic of the community-canon approach such community-determinations should be considered legitimate, at least for the particular community that made them. This problem of what might be called canonical relativism is revisited below.

²⁵ Beyond the examples already referred to in this essay, one might think specifically of (at least some of) the recipients of Galatians and 2 Corinthians, among others.

²⁶ Interestingly, it seems that some reject a rigid canon for fear of stifling diversity difference, yet it seems that a community-canon approach could equally stymie diversity and difference.

²⁷ In many (if not all) such cases there was a minority that did recognize and receive the prophetic message. Moreover, many later communities have accepted these individuals as truly prophetic voices. These two significant facts are revisited below.

the community to determine canonicity. Specifically, the biblical concept of a true prophet refers to one divinely authorized to speak for God (Jer 15:19; Acts 3:18, 21).²⁸ There is then, by definition, a divinely appointed authority belonging to true prophets that is thereby inconsistent with the epistemological primacy of the community. Yet if the community is considered to be authoritative to determine the validity of prophets, such prophetic authority is logically (if not actually) compromised. Further, divinely commissioned prophets may be legitimately replaced by pseudo-prophets since, if the community is truly the arbiter of canonicity, whomever the community accepts is thereby an authoritative voice.

The primacy of the community to determine the canon is therefore logically inconsistent with the claim of 1 Kgs 18 (to take but one example) that those whom the community accepted as prophets were false prophets in contrast to the true prophet Elijah, whom the community rejected. In this way, the way the Bible defines a true prophet contradicts the view that the community possesses epistemological primacy. True prophets are commissioned by God regardless of whether any particular community accepts them.

3.2.2. What Constitutes a Legitimate and/or Adequate Community?

One might reply that since the community that rejected Elijah was apostate it was disqualified from having a voice in canon-determination. However, such an argument implicitly subjects that community to an external standard and thus conflicts with the community-canon approach, which posits the community as the prime, authoritative arbiter. Such an appeal to an external standard actually supports the primary thesis of the intrinsic-canon approach that communities are not authoritative to *determine* canonicity but that the community must apply external criteria to *recognize* canonicity.

One might further suggest two factors presumed to be in favor of the community approach. First, in many (if not all) of the cases above, there was a minority that did recognize and receive the prophetic message. Second, many later communities accepted and preserved those truly prophetic voices. However, these facts actually serve to further highlight the inadequacy of the community-canon approach.

For example, the early Christian community accepted Paul's prophetic authority, although after some reticence (Acts 9:10–30). At the same time there were other communities, such as the Jewish leadership, who rejected Paul's prophetic validity (Acts 23:1–15). This conflict between contemporary communities points back to the larger question: Which community possesses primacy with regard to canonicity? Moreover, what qualifies as a legitimate community in the first place? May any two or more constitute a community and thus legitimately function as arbiters of their own canon? Why does

²⁸ Thus, a prophet may be referred to as God's "spokesman," literally, his "mouth" (Jer 15:19; cf. Ex 7:1–2). In Acts, God is said to have spoken "by the mouth of his prophets" (Acts 3:18, 21; cf. Matt 1:22; 2:15, 17, 23). In Num 11:26, 29, true prophets are those upon whom God has put his Spirit. On the other hand, false prophets are those whom God has not commanded or sent (Deut 18:20; Jer 14:14; 23:21, 32; 28:15; Ezek 13:6), those willing to say what people desire to hear (Isa 30:10; Mic 2:11), and those with inconsistency between their words and previously recognized prophets (Isa 8:20; Deut 13:2–3). Peter proclaims that "no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God" (2 Pet 1:21). Similarly, 1 John 4:1 exhorts, "test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world" (cf. Matt 7:15). These indicators of true or false prophets point toward divine commission, not human recognition, as the requisite of true propheticity. Thus, "a prophet is an authorized spokesperson for God with a message that originated with God" (Walter Kaiser Jr., "Prophet, Prophetess, Prophecy," *Evangelical Dictionary of Biblical Theology* [Grand Rapids: Baker], 642). Cf. P. Verhoef, "Prophecy," *NIDOTTE* 4:1067–79.

the Damascus or Jerusalem Christian community possess authority to accept Paul in contrast to his former community? Further still, by what authority is the NT added to the so-called OT?²⁹ Indeed, by what authority do Christians accept Christ in distinction from other communities that reject him? Community fiat will not suffice.

If each community is authoritative to determine their own canon, then since mutually exclusive canons of sacred writings are posited by various communities, the “Christian canon” is not authoritative over and against the canon of any other community but is authoritative only within the community or communities that determine and/or recognize it. This amounts to a canonical relativism that is mutually exclusive to a universally authoritative biblical canon (cf. Matt 24:14; 28:19–20; Acts 17:30; 1 Thess 2:13; 2 Tim 3:16).

Perhaps one might posit that a later community, whether a community of a particular time and place or the collective early Christian community over a period of time, is authoritative to determine canonicity. Yet the same problems apply to later communities. On what grounds should one accept that a later community is more legitimate and/or adequate to determine canonicity?³⁰ As was the case for the earliest Christian community, the “community” is not monolithic decades or even centuries later. There are now and have been in ages past numerous communities that differ regarding the scope of sacred writings as canon. Examples include the times of the early church (the so-called canon of Marcion³¹ and Irenaeus’ view of the Scriptures vs. his Gnostic opponents³²), over one thousand years later (the canon posited by the Council of Trent vs. the Thirty-Nine Articles³³), and more recent times (the Gospel revisions of the Jesus Seminar³⁴). Hence, asserting that a later community might be authoritative to determine the canon likewise raises the question, “Which community?”

²⁹ The NT authors themselves appear to base their claims on a “canonical” argument, specifically that their message is the legitimate continuation of the Tanakh (cf. Luke 24:27; Acts 18:28; Rom 1:2; 16:26; 1 Cor 15:3). See also the brief discussion of the internal canonical support for the concept of canon in its etymological sense of “rule” or “standard” in the discussion of “The Adequacy of the Intrinsic-Canon Approach” below.

³⁰ Considering the examples above of communities that rejected true prophets, it may be too optimistic to hope that other communities will not make similar mistakes (cf. Prov 14:12; 16:25). There is no guarantee that a later community would be a better arbiter of the canon than an earlier community.

³¹ Marcion rejected the OT and of the NT accepted only an edited version of Luke and ten letters of Paul including Romans, Ephesians, Colossians, Galatians, 1–2 Corinthians, 1–2 Thessalonians, Philemon, Philippians, and the non-extant epistle to the Laodiceans, which many believe was a forgery. See McDonald, *The Biblical Canon*, 325.

³² According to Irenaeus, the Gnostics selectively used portions of the Scriptures, claiming that such writings were incorrect and/or corrupted, and they supplemented these with their own pseudepigraphal writings and secret oral traditions. See Irenaeus, *Haer.* 3.2.1. Irenaeus responded with a multiple-pronged argument that the authentic apostolic teachings had been preserved and passed down (*traditio*) by the church in the Scriptures. See Irenaeus, *Haer.* 4.33.8. In the development of his argument, Irenaeus appeals to apostolic succession and tradition not in order to set up an authority that competes with the apostolic writings (the Scriptures) but in order to exclude the false, secret teachings and pseudepigraphal documents of his opponents in favor of the primacy of Scripture. See John C. Peckham, “Epistemological Authority in the Polemic of Irenaeus,” *Did* 19 (2008): 51–70.

³³ The Council of Trent in its fourth session, April 8, 1546, included the OT Apocrypha whereas the Thirty-Nine Articles of the Church of England of 1562/1571 excluded apocryphal books from doctrinal decisions but considered them useful for reading. See McDonald, *The Biblical Canon*, 210.

³⁴ The Jesus Seminar decides by consensus vote which deeds and sayings of Jesus are historical, thus rejecting many deeds and sayings of Jesus contained in the canonical four Gospels and favoring others from

In order to overcome such problems, one might point to a particular historical community as the legitimate arbiter of canonicity. If so, one must be prepared to demonstrate the superiority of that community that affords it the authority of canon-determination over and against all others. Moreover, this demonstration, insofar as it attempts to uphold a community-canon approach, must be accomplished without recourse to external standards, including criteria of canonicity. Appeal to standards external to the community itself would deny the primacy of the community in canon-determination. Appeal to criteria of canonicity would amount to the circular argument that the community is authoritative to *determine* the canon *because* they selected the right books.³⁵

In the absence of objective criteria by which one proposed canon is superior to others, the door is left open to the objection that it is merely the historical dominance of a particular community that ultimately carries the day for one canon or the other.³⁶ If, after all, the canon is an arbitrary construct that depends upon merely the agreement of some human community, why adopt any canon at all? If the scope and authority of the canon is solely community-based, it appears that the canon would either be authoritative only for some communities and not others or it would remain in flux, ever-shifting according to community-opinion. In the former case, the canon has lost its claim to universal authority and thus much of its significance. In the latter case, the function of canon in its etymological sense of “rule or “standard” appears to be nullified, or at least sterilized on the basis of the ideological dismissal of the very concept of an objectively authoritative canon in favor of the authority of community-consensus.³⁷

Thus, the community-canon approach (1) leaves open the danger of the rejection of radical community-opposed, but truly prophetic, voices; (2) requires a compelling and/or internally consistent rationale for the selection of the particular community or sect that legitimately functions as canon arbiter; and (3) contradicts the biblical conception of propheticity, which posits that divinely appointed authority belongs to true prophets independent of the acceptance of any community.

4. The Adequacy of the Intrinsic-Canon Approach

The intrinsic-canon approach appears to avoid the problems discussed above. However, that is not to say that the intrinsic-canon approach is without its limitations. In my view, the issue of canonicity in an intrinsic-canon approach comes down to two fundamental questions:

documents such as the *Gospel of Thomas* and the hypothetical *Q*. See, for instance, Robert W. Funk and the Jesus Seminar, *The Gospel of Jesus: According to the Jesus Seminar* (Salem, OR: Polebridge, 1999).

³⁵ Of course, this appeal would also support the ideology of the intrinsic-canon approach, which proposes that accurate canon-recognition (in contrast to determination) accords with the criteria of canonicity by which the divinely commissioned writings are identified.

³⁶ Consider Philip Davies’s contention that canonization was a process whereby a privileged class controlled the politics of reading (*Whose Bible Is It Anyway?* 17–27). For an interesting and informative, if at times controversial, analysis of the impact of political forces on canon recognition in early Christianity, see David L. Dungan, *Constantine’s Bible: Politics and the Making of the New Testament* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2006).

³⁷ Consider Robert Funk’s call for a new Bible with a version to “include whatever traces of the original strangeness of Jesus and Paul we can isolate or reconstruct and eliminate everything else” and a second version that would “contain the current twenty-seven books plus others” in sections by dates, a massive book of literature in successive stages (“The Once and Future New Testament,” 556–57).

1. Is there a divinely determined canon?
2. What is the scope of that canon, and on what basis is it recognized?

The extensive nature of both questions eludes sufficient response due to the nature of this brief study.³⁸ However, it seems that both questions might be capable of plausible suggestions that, in turn, afford a working approach to canonicity. Such a working approach, in my view, requires two major allowances. First, one must allow that divine revelation is possible and be willing to examine the data with such a possibility in mind. Second, one must seek to recognize the scope of the canon based on the criteria of divine revelation.

Regarding the second parameter, the criteria of divine revelation requires simply that a canonical book be divinely appointed and commissioned.³⁹ These two allowances highlight the limitations (but not defeaters) of the intrinsic-canon approach. Specifically, humans cannot prove with certainty that divine revelation exists. Secondly, even if they could, they could not prove with certainty the scope of the canon.⁴⁰ With regard to both limitations, a decision of faith is required, which seems appropriate considering canonical exhortations to faith.

4.1. The Role of the Community in Canon-Recognition and Preservation

As previously mentioned, the intrinsic-canon approach recognizes that the variegated and complex history of canon-reception is important, yet it does not believe that history bears on the canonicity of the writings themselves.⁴¹ This is based, not on ignorance or indifference regarding history, but on the differentiation between what something *is* and what it is *recognized to be*. To say otherwise would raise an enormous difficulty for Christian theology.⁴² For instance if what something *is* is relegated to what the community recognizes it to be, then Jesus Christ is divine only to the extent that he is recognized

³⁸ I briefly address these two questions in Peckham, “The Canon and Biblical Authority.” For a more detailed treatment, see R. T. Beckwith, *The Old Testament Canon of the New Testament Church* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1986); Bruce, *The Canon of Scripture*; Metzger, *The Canon of the New Testament*.

³⁹ For an outline of this approach, including some suggested criteria of canonicity that stem from this seminal characteristic of divine commission, see Peckham, “The Canon and Biblical Authority.”

⁴⁰ The limitations regarding lack of certitude, however, do not cast reproach upon the intrinsic-canon approach since postmodern epistemology has highlighted the requisite of choice underlying the starting point(s) of any epistemology in light of the defeat of positivism. For an informative introduction that promotes a quest for the best explanatory model, see J. P. Moreland and William Lane Craig, *Philosophical Foundations for a Christian Worldview* (Downers Grove: IVP, 2003). In this manner, there is no ground for the supposition that a non-theistic approach to canon is somehow more objective. As Thiselton points out, “Non-theism or positivism is no more value-free than *theism*” (Thiselton, “Canon, Community, and Theological Construction,” 4).

⁴¹ Much of the conflict revolves around differing views on the dating of the fixed and authoritative closing of the canon, including considerable disagreement with regard to the method for deciding the matter (e.g., the weight given to lists, quotations, allusions, etc.). For the argument in favor of a late date for the closing of the canon, see McDonald, *The Biblical Canon*; Sanders, “The Issue of Closure in the Canonical Process.” For arguments in favor of early recognition of the canon, see Peter Balla, “Evidence for an Early Christian Canon (Second and Third Century),” in *The Canon Debate* (ed. Lee Martin McDonald and James A. Sanders; Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2002), 372–85, cf. the brief summary in Peckham, “The Canon and Biblical Authority.”

⁴² To be sure, this assumes that God is the ultimate epistemological authority. This does not require a naïve realism, but merely commitment to God as the epistemological compass, assuming that he never possesses false knowledge. Thus, something *is* whatever God knows it to be.

as such. For Christians, this would have the objectionable result that the nature of Jesus Christ is itself relative to community-recognition, calling to mind the failure of such recognition by the vast majority of Christ's contemporaries.⁴³ From a Christian perspective, this magnifies the inadequacy of a community approach to determine the canon.

Importantly, however, the intrinsic-canon approach does not intend to rule out the community from the canon-recognition process, which is essential to the *functional* (not intrinsic) authority of the canon.⁴⁴ Rather, from the standpoint of the intrinsic-canon approach, the community should recognize its own inadequacy to *determine* the canon and, accordingly, seek to *discover* the scope of the canon as divinely intended.⁴⁵ This encourages humility in approaching divine revelation, promoting a healthy spirit of submission in seeking divine revelation to reform the community as opposed to the intentional or unintentional re-forming of divine revelation.

At the same time, the intrinsic-canon approach celebrates the community's role in preserving and recognizing the canon. It recognizes that the community approach is inadequate for determining the canon, but that does not mean that all communities inadequately recognize the canon. On the contrary, the community has been integral to preserving and passing down (*traditio*) the canon to all future generations.⁴⁶ From an intrinsic-canon perspective, God uses the willing community throughout the ages to preserve and disseminate his canonical revelation. Thus, the intrinsic-canon approach recognizes the community's competence to preserve information (i.e., the canon itself as well as relevant history) that affords the opportunity to recognize the canon.⁴⁷ It is not necessary to disparage the community's contribution in the history of the canon in order to concurrently recognize the community's inherent limitations with regard to the ability to determine that same canon.

4.2. The Theocentric Foundation of the Intrinsic-Canon Approach

A further criticism of the intrinsic-canon model might cynically suggest that it is quite a coincidence, perhaps too good to be true, that the intrinsic canon matches up with the canon that is recognized by one's particular community.⁴⁸ However, if one has decided to believe in a God who reveals himself to

⁴³ Of course, numerous communities reject the divinity of Christ. But does that rejection have any bearing on the divinity of Christ *itself*? Conversely, does the Hindu belief that Brahman is the Supreme Being make it so? Does the Christian rejection of that belief determine it to be false? It seems, rather, that the truth (if there is any objective truth at all) of these statements is independent of community-acceptance or rejection.

⁴⁴ In other words, the intrinsic canon is the divinely intended canon, which God intends to be recognized, and submitted to, by the community. The recognition of the canon affords it functional authority in the life of the community and/or individual. The intrinsic-canon approach thus affords intrinsic authority to the canon prior to its recognition by any individual or community but seeks the functional authority of the canon that follows correct canon-recognition.

⁴⁵ Concurrently, recognizing the inadequacy of the community does not entail a belief that the individual is a proper locus of authority. Rather, humans, as imperfect whether individually or corporately, lack the adequacy as well as the authority to bestow or determine canonicity.

⁴⁶ For instance, consider the motivations of Irenaeus in passing along (*traditio*) the apostolic teachings. See Peckham, "Epistemological Authority in the Polemic of Irenaeus."

⁴⁷ Moreover, this model does not require that each successive community be more qualified to determine or recognize the canon than the ones before.

⁴⁸ See Ulrich, "The Notion and Definition of Canon, in *The Canon Debate* (ed. Lee Martin McDonald and James A. Sanders; Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2002), 21–35.

human beings through inscripturation, it does not seem at all unreasonable also to believe that this same God provided means for the community to recognize that revelation as “canon.” One may reject the epistemological decision of the intrinsic-canon model to believe in and recognize divine revelation, but that moves the discussion far beyond canonicity to the philosophical question of theism itself.⁴⁹ If this is the grounds for rejecting the intrinsic canon, it would seem better to address the issue at its core, not regarding the issue of canon but of theism. On the other hand, if one is willing to allow for the possibility of the internal coherence of theism, and further, a type of theism that expects recognizable divine revelation, then it appears that the intrinsic-canon model may lay claim to an equivalent possibility and perhaps even plausibility.

Importantly, the internal coherence of the intrinsic-canon approach may appeal to the intentions evidenced within the canon itself. It appears that both God and the human authors intended the canonical writings to be read as canon, from the etymological standpoint of canon as “rule” or “standard.”⁵⁰ Indeed, an abundance of biblical evidence, from both OT and NT, conveys the intention for the writings to have a continuing, authoritative function like a rule or standard.⁵¹ Thus, the concept of an authoritative canon is not an external imposition upon the Bible.⁵² Although the technical, contemporary meaning of canon may be anachronistic when applied specifically to the mindset of biblical authors, the kernel of a collection of authoritative writings (divinely bestowed) is evident in the text.⁵³ Furthermore, the idea of authoritative writings that cohere and explain one another exists within the canon itself.⁵⁴ Thus, “canon”

⁴⁹ Once again, this approach questions whether a non-theistic approach to canonicity is virtuous or objective. Cf. Thiselton: “Non-theism or positivism is no more value-free than *theism*” (“Canon, Community, and Theological Construction,” 4).

⁵⁰ Some might consider this a matter of circularity, appealing to the canon for support of canonicity. However, any proposed authority must be in coherence with its own doctrines as well as its own phenomena. The intention recognized in the Bible to be read as canon does not itself prove its canonicity but does provide the necessary condition for such a canonical approach.

⁵¹ Perhaps the capstone OT statement comes from Isa 8:16, 20, “Bind up the testimony, seal the law among my disciples. . . . To the law and to the testimony! If they do not speak according to this word, it is because they have no dawn.” Numerous times writers are given divine instruction to write things down as instruction or teaching for others (Exod 17:14; Jer 30:2; Rev 1:11). The intent for the continuing authoritative function of such works is also apparent (Deut 31:9, 12; Josh 1:8; 23:6; 1 Kgs 2:3; Neh 8:8–18; 9:3). Moreover, throughout the OT, the prophets continually called the people to “hear the word of the Lord” (Amos 3:1; Jer 2:4; Ezek 6:3; Hos 4:1). Likewise, NT writers repeatedly appeal to OT writings as authoritative (Rom 4:3), including Jesus himself (Luke 10:26). In the NT, the intention for a “rule” or “standard” is likewise apparent. Jesus obviously considered his words to be foundational, likening those who heed his words to the one who builds on the rock (Matt 7:24, 26). The apostles likewise expected their teachings to continue authoritatively. For instance, 2 Tim 1:13 exhorts, “retain the standards of sound words which you have heard from me” (cf. 2 Thess 2:15; 3:14; Tit 1:9; 2 John 9–10; Jude 3; Rev 22:18). Moreover, such expectation was fulfilled as the early Christians were “continually devoting themselves to the apostles’ teaching” (Acts 2:42; cf. Tit 3:8). Finally, the authority of Scripture is unequivocally stated in numerous instances (Acts 17:11; 1 Thess 2:13; 2 Tim 3:16; 2 Pet 1:19–21).

⁵² In fact, Childs points out, “From the evidence of the New Testament it seems clear that Jesus and the early Christians identified with the scriptures of Pharisaic Judaism” (Childs, *Biblical Theology*, 26).

⁵³ Balla thus correctly argues, “the later use of the term ‘canonical’ should not prevent us from seeing an awareness in the authors of the New Testament of a connection between the writings of the ‘Old Testament’ and their own writings” (“Evidence for an Early Christian Canon [Second and Third Century],” 373).

⁵⁴ For instance, the aforementioned counsel of Isa 8:20, “To the law and to the testimony! If they do not speak according to this word, it is because they have no dawn.” Moreover, Jesus, on the road to Emmaus, utilizes

is not an external construct imposed on the text.⁵⁵ The scope of the canon, which is not explicitly listed in canonical documents themselves, is another matter. Nevertheless, from a theistic perspective, the intrinsic-canon approach is internally coherent and plausible. To be sure, if one has ruled out *a priori* the possibility of a divinely determined canon, then one would not seek to discover and recognize the divinely intended scope of Scripture. However, on the other hand, once one has decided to allow for the possibility of a divinely determined canon (rather than ruling it out *a priori*) then one can seek to recognize a canon of divinely appointed writings.

The intrinsic canon-approach thus presents a plausible, internally coherent approach to the issue of biblical canonicity responsive to the all-too-common supposition that the Bible is merely a human construct. In doing so, the intrinsic-canon approach impinges upon the larger question regarding the foundational authority of Scripture. If the Bible consists merely of books selected based upon human whims and power structures, why should one accept it as trustworthy and authoritative today? Why adopt such texts instead of any others that might be popular or personally palatable? Indeed, why accept any writings as authoritative at all? When it comes to such a decision of faith, the canon's significance is rooted in its claim to divine revelation, inspiration, and commission. The divine origin of Scripture makes it the authoritative and trustworthy foundation for theology and practice, to be received not merely as "the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God" (1 Thess 2:13).

Moses and all the prophets to explain "the things concerning Himself in all the Scriptures" (Luke 24:27, 44; cf. Matt 5:17–18). Elsewhere Jesus teaches that the Scriptures testify of him and that one who believes Moses should believe him; conversely, if one does not believe Moses, it is clear why one does not believe him. (John 5:39, 46–47). Paul contends that he believes "everything that is in accordance with the Law and that is written in the Prophets" (Acts 24:14; cf. 2 Cor 4:2). Moreover, belief is to be in accordance with the gospel preached by the apostles, which is not their own message but itself received from the Lord (Gal 1:8–12).

⁵⁵ Metzger thus correctly states, "The canon is complete when the books which by principle belong to it have been written" (*The Canon of the New Testament*, 287).

Canon as Tradition: The New Covenant and the Hermeneutical Question

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The relatively recent interest among evangelicals in engaging ancient Christian tradition is without question a welcome development.¹ However, unlike earlier voices that valued the early post-apostolic church's theologizing within the context of the Reformation's *sola scriptura* hermeneutic,² recent voices appear to assign categories like *necessity* and *normatively* to a "patristic hermeneutic." D. H. Williams, for example, writes in the introduction to Baker Academic's *Evangelical Ressourcement* series, "If evangelicalism aims to be doctrinally orthodox and exegetically faithful to Scripture, it cannot do so without recourse to and integration of the foundational tradition of the early church."³ This and similar claims for the mind of the Fathers being a kind of ground zero in the hermeneutical task,⁴ in my view have not sufficiently attended to the Bible's own deep hermeneutical structure of the new covenant and the post-apostolic church's legacy with it. To this end this essay makes three distinct claims:

¹ Jason Byasse's enthusiastic review of D. H. Williams, *Evangelicals and Tradition* (see n. 3 below) refers to "the Evangelical wound" of a vast denominational spectrum driven by abuses of "private interpretation" as the need for attention to the ancient Church (*Books and Culture* 14 [May/June 2008]: 12). Scot McKnight has chronicled the way this and other factors has been prominent in why evangelicals move to historical churches ("From Wheaton to Rome: Why Evangelicals become Roman Catholic," *JETS* 45 [2002]: 451–72).

² For example, Alister McGrath, "Engaging the Great Tradition: Evangelical Theology and the Role of Tradition," in *Evangelical Futures: A Conversation on Theological Method* (ed. John G. Stackhouse Jr.; Grand Rapids: Baker, 2000): 139–58; idem, *The Genesis of Doctrine: A Study in the Foundation of Doctrinal Criticism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990); and Harold O. J. Brown, "The Necessity and Temptations of Church Traditions," in *Reclaiming the Great Tradition: Evangelicals, Catholics and Orthodox in Dialogue* (ed. James S. Cutsinger; Downers Grove: IVP, 1997), 69–99.

³ D. H. Williams, *Evangelicals and Tradition: The Formative Influence of the Early Church* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2005), 18. Under a section entitled "Patristic Tradition as Canon," Williams elaborates what is meant here by "patristic hermeneutic." Whereas older evangelicals endorsed a robust doctrine of Scripture's perspicuity, Williams appears to endorse the patristic church's theologizing as the interpretive lens to understand Scripture. He states, "The apostolic and patristic legacies are foundational to the Christian faith in *normative* ways that no other period of the church's history can claim" (D. H. Williams, *Tradition, Scripture, and Interpretation* [Grand Rapids: Baker, 2006], 24; cf. the reprise of his thesis in *SJT* 55 [2002]: 105–12).

⁴ Cf. R. L. Wilken's assertion: "Any effort to mount an interpretation of the Bible that ignores its first readers is doomed to end up with a bouquet of fragments that are neither the book of the church nor the imaginative wellspring of Western literature, art and music" (*The Spirit of Early Christian Thought* [New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003], xvii; cited by Craig D. Allert, *A High View of Scripture? The Authority of the Bible and the Formation of the New Testament Canon* [Grand Rapids: Baker, 2007], 86).

1. The theology of the new covenant is central to the story of the Old and NT and so comprises the *canonical tradition*.
2. The patristic church did not pay sufficient attention to the canonical tradition of the new covenant.
3. Therefore, by implication, the claims for the patristic church's necessity and normativity in the hermeneutical question must be moderated accordingly.

For the apostles Jesus was no doubt the center of God's Story (Eph 1:9–10), but he was not the beginning of it. That Story was a covenanted movement of God emerging from the OT that the NT canonical writers saw fulfilled in Jesus. It is not merely Jesus who was the center of the apostles' thought, but Jesus as *fulfillment of the new covenant* that provides the hermeneutical key for understanding Scripture's Story and the standard by which the church of any era, including the patristic, must be measured.

1. The Canonical Nature of the Apostolic New Covenant Hermeneutic

1.1. The Eclipse of the New Covenant in Biblical Theology

What do we mean by the new covenant? The *locus classicus* in Jer 31:31–34, together with its other prophetic enunciations, reveal the nucleus of provisions for which God's people would look in the coming age. They are broadly categorized as:

1. a new measure of the Holy Spirit's presence in the human heart providing
2. a divinely immanent impulse to know and obey Yahweh's will that would
3. make obsolete all mediation to fellowship with Yahweh himself, entailing radical changes in the functioning of the Law and the temple institution to which it was tied.⁵
4. In continuity with the overarching covenant program of Scripture, especially the covenant made with Abraham, the prophets made clear that the inaugurator of the new covenant would be Yahweh's anointed Servant and that the blessings of the covenant would reach beyond the individual's heart to include
5. a revived Israelite nation and
6. a renewal of the creation itself.
7. The basis of these provisions was Yahweh's final resolution of the sin-problem in a gracious *forgiveness of his peoples' sin*.⁶

⁵ The "new" covenant is mentioned only in Jer 31:31, but by its other terminology ("everlasting covenant," "my covenant," e.g., Ezek 16:60–62; Isa 55:3) stands as the subject of Ezekiel, Isa 40–66, Jeremiah, Hosea, and Malachi (William J. Dumbrell, *The End of the Beginning: Revelation 21–22 and the Old Testament* [Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2001], 79–103). Principle passages of the new covenant include: Jer 24:7; 32:38–40; 50:5; Ezek 16:60; 34:25; 36:27–28; 37:26; Isa 42:6; 49:8; 54:10; 55:1–5; 59:21; 61:8; Mal 3:1; cf. 2:1–9. On the exegetical questions of the continuity and discontinuity of the new covenant for OT theology, see the discussion and bibliography in Petrus J. Gräbe, *New Covenant New Community: The Significance of Biblical and Patristic Covenant Theology for Contemporary Understanding* (Carlisle, UK: Paternoster, 2006), ch. 1.

⁶ Paul R. Williamson, *Sealed with an Oath: Covenant in God's Unfolding Purpose* (New Studies in Biblical Theology 23; Downers Grove: IVP, 2007), 146–81. The restoration of Israel by the Suffering Servant of the new covenant had worldwide significance in the implementation of the covenant program (Andreas Köstenberger and Peter T. O'Brien, *Salvation to the Ends of the Earth: A Biblical Theology of Mission* [New Studies in Biblical

While it might seem counterintuitive for biblical theology concerned with the *NT* corpus, the new covenant *per se* finds little heuristic value for modern practitioners of NT theology. I. Howard Marshall's recent *New Testament Theology* may stand as a case in point. Only a brief footnote on page 719 is all that we are offered of the new covenant as the hermeneutic key to understanding the NT writers' interpretation of Jesus: "The old covenant-new covenant distinction is not at all that prominent on the surface of the New Testament, but it seems to underlie Christian thinking on the understanding of the progress of salvation history."⁷ But in this neglect of the new covenant, Marshall is in good company. Other NT theologies having little or no significant treatment of the new covenant include those by Ladd, Morris, Goppelt, Guthrie, and more recently Schreiner and Thielman.⁸

Part of the reason for this lack of attention to the new covenant Marshall does supply, namely, its relative rare appearance on the pages of the NT—indeed, just one mention by Jesus, a couple of times in Paul, and a few scant chapters in Hebrews. Another part of the reason also lies in the way scholarship has tended to isolate the Testaments and leave OT theology and NT theology as what Barr calls "separate blocks."⁹ Fortunately for the discipline, there appears to be a revival of the view that the individual parts cannot be understood without grasping the whole and that grasping the meaning of the whole forces a review of the parts. Other voices are now calling for a more systematic treatment of the entire corpus of Scripture: "pan-biblical theology" (Gese), or "intermediate theology" (Scobie), or merely the one *biblical* theology as William Dumbrell calls it.¹⁰ Offering the same prospective for the new covenant as a longitudinal theme in Scripture are thinkers of theological method and hermeneutics like Vanhoozer and Dockery, who call evangelical theology to a "canon competence" above all as we exposit the glorious theology of the gospel for our day.¹¹

Theology 11; Downers Grove: IVP, 2001], 42–49, 252–53). See Isa 42:1–4; 49:1–6; 52:13–53:12. On the Savior-King figure in Isaiah, see Walther Eichrodt, *Theology of the Old Testament* (trans. J. A. Baker; 2 vols.; Philadelphia: Westminster, 1961), 2:482–87; and Antony Edanad, *Christian Existence and the New Covenant* (Bangalore: Dharmaram, 1987), 55–66. On forgiveness of sins as the basis of all new covenant promises, see the comments on Jer 31:34 by Dumbrell (*The End of the Beginning*, 92–93) and Jack R. Lundbom, *Jeremiah 21–36* [AB 21B; Garden City: Doubleday, 2004], 470–71).

⁷ I. Howard Marshall, *New Testament Theology: Many Witnesses One Gospel* (Downers Grove: IVP, 2004), 719n10.

⁸ Leonhard Goppelt, *Theology of the New Testament* (ed. Jürgen Roloff; trans. John E. Alsup; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1981); George Eldon Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament* (ed. Donald A. Hagner; 2nd ed.; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993); Leon Morris, *New Testament Theology* (Grand Rapids: Academie, 1986); Donald Guthrie, *New Testament Theology* (Downers Grove: IVP, 1981); Thomas R. Schreiner, *New Testament Theology: Magnifying God in Christ* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2008); Frank Thielman, *Theology of the New Testament: A Canonical and Synthetic Approach* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2005).

⁹ James Barr, *The Concept of Biblical Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1999), 585.

¹⁰ "[O]n my view we cannot construct an Old Testament theology or a New Testament theology, but only a biblical theology" (William J. Dumbrell, "Paul and Salvation History in Romans 9:30–10:4," in *Out of Egypt: Biblical Theology and Biblical Interpretation* [ed. Craig Bartholomew et al.; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2004], 287). Cf. Charles H. H. Scobie, *The Ways of Our God: An Approach to Biblical Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003); Hartmut Gese, *Essays on Biblical Theology* (trans. Keith Crim; Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1981); and the discussion of Gese's proposal in Barr, *The Concept of Biblical Theology*, 363–77; 581–85.

¹¹ Kevin J. Vanhoozer, "The Voice and the Actor: A Dramatic Proposal for the Ministry and Minstrelsy of Theology," in *Evangelical Futures*, 61–106; idem, *Is There Meaning in This Text?* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1998),

1.2. The New Covenant in the New Testament

As the concept of the covenant being the organizing theme of OT theology again claims new advocates in the academy,¹² I argue that the same needs to be taken up in the NT. Only a suggestive menu can be attempted here, but there is no doubt that more should be made of the new-covenant script as the bridge from the older testament that the writers of the NT travelled in their reflections and interpretation of Jesus of Nazareth. The fact that “new covenant” is rare terminology in the NT should not deflect us from seeing its magisterial highway running throughout the entire NT. Marshall is right: the new covenant underlies the canonical tradition’s account of the progress of salvation history.¹³

1.2.1 *The New Covenant in Jesus*

We begin our brief survey of the canonical new-covenant tradition with Jesus. His appearance in the Gospels as the preacher and worker of the deeds of the kingdom in every way hearkens to the prophetic new covenant.¹⁴ As the *fulfillment* of the Law (Matt 5:18), Jesus comes as the new Moses authoritatively delivering his own commandments.¹⁵ He is the unique Spirit-bearer and baptizer (Luke 4:16ff) who inaugurates the kingdom age characterized by a new work in the human heart (John 3:3–5) and new interiorized standards of Yahweh’s Torah (Mark 7:15).¹⁶ The presentation of the fatherhood of God and the new means by which the Father and he will dwell with his people establishes the covenant’s sonship ideal for the relationship between God and his people.¹⁷ Likewise, Jesus sidesteps the mediating temple

264; idem, *The Drama of Doctrine* (Louisville: John Knox, 2005); David S. Dockery, *Biblical Interpretation Then and Now: Contemporary Hermeneutics in the Light of the Early Church* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1992).

¹² Williamson, *Sealed with an Oath*, 28–34. See also the sources cited by Gräbe (*New Covenant New Community*, 1–3, 14–57), who notes the particular significance of Rolf Rendtorff’s work, *Die “Bundesformel”* (1995) for advancing the centrality of the covenant theme to the OT through his study of the interrelationship of the covenant and other significant OT motifs.

¹³ Marshall, *New Testament Theology*, 719n10. Scott J. Hafemann has also argued recently for the integrative power of the covenant motif in Scripture as a whole and the NT in particular by means of the new covenant (“The Covenant Relationship,” in *Central Themes in Biblical Theology* [ed. Scott J. Hafemann and Paul R. House; Grand Rapids: Baker, 2007], 20–65). See other sources offered there.

¹⁴ Jesus appears on the stage of history without defining his meaning of the kingdom, only announcing its nearness (Mark 1:15). The theme of fulfillment permeates his ministry, including his identification with the prophetic voice in John (Matt 3:11), his application of Isaiah’s messianic prophecy to himself in the synagogue (Luke 4:16–30, cf. Isa 61:1–2), his answer to John’s disciples’ question of his identity from Isa 35:5 (Matt 11:5). Jesus preaches the “gospel” of the kingdom after Isaiah’s prophecy (Isa 40:9; 41:27; 52:7; 61:1), “the favorable year of the Lord” of Israel’s Jubilee eschatological hope (Luke 4:19), going only to Jews (Matt 10:5–7), and choosing for himself twelve disciples who will one day judge the twelve tribes of Israel (Matt 19:28) (Mark Saucy, *The Kingdom of God in the Teaching of Jesus in 20th Century Theology* [Dallas: Word, 1997], 318–30).

¹⁵ Dale C. Allison, *The New Moses: A Matthean Typology* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1993).

¹⁶ Particularly in Luke’s Gospel, Jesus is presented as the Spirit-bearer, whose kingdom is inaugurated and sustained by the Spirit. See details in Darrell L. Bock, “A Theology of Luke-Acts,” in *A Biblical Theology of the New Testament* (ed. Roy B. Zuck; Chicago: Moody, 1994), 97–101. N. T. Wright says that the inwardness of the purity Jesus calls for “was the new heart *promised as part of the new covenant*” (*Jesus and the Victory of God* [Minneapolis: Fortress, 1996], 287; emphasis his).

¹⁷ Israel as Yahweh’s son (Exod 4:22–23) is a covenant concept taken up by Eichrodt (*Theology of the OT*, 67–69; cf. also Bruce K. Waltke with Charles Yu, *An Old Testament Theology* [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2007], 543–44. A recent account of the sonship-covenant relationship for Jesus’ teaching in John’s Gospel is Andreas J.

cult as he presents himself as the new institution of atonement in the scandalous claim to forgive sins (e.g., Mark 1:41) and to stand as Lord of the temple sacralizing all times and all places (John 4:20–24).¹⁸

The zenith of Jesus' revelation of the new covenant—and its only explicit mention in the Gospel record—however, is the last-supper formula for the cup: “this is the new covenant in my blood” (Luke 22:20 cf. Mark 14:24).¹⁹ Matthew's addition here of “for the forgiveness of sins” (Matt 26:28) is significant and leaves no doubt of the new-covenant predication of forgiveness of sins as the condition for all the blessings of the new age to be realized. There would be no new movement of God by his Spirit toward the creation, no interiorization of the Torah in the heart of God's people, no restoration of Israelite sovereignty or renewed created order without a decisive movement against sin and the one who stood armed with its decree. Elsewhere the Gospel writers keenly show Jesus as Isaiah's Suffering Servant who “bore the sins of many” (Isa 53:6, 12; cf. Mark 10:45; 14:24)—a note to the universal character of the Servant's role as “light to the nations” (Isa 42:6; 49:7–8), and as the one who would bind the “strong man” who contended with God's people (Isa 49:24–25; cf. Matt 12:44).²⁰ The climax of divine resolution of the sin problem is reached at the cross when the veil of the temple that symbolized the mediated access to God in the old covenant tears top to bottom as the blood of the new covenant is shed.²¹ Thus it should be no surprise to us that in the complex of these momentous events a new meal is instituted from the hands of the new Moses for his new community.²²

The significance of the new covenant's appearance in the passion narratives is also marked by its correlation there with Jesus' rhetorical motif of the kingdom of God. The covenant form of the language in Jesus' words to his disciples in Luke 22:29, “I appoint unto you a kingdom,” has been duly noted by scholars,²³ but beyond this, the promise of v. 30 that the disciples would share Jesus' table in his kingdom (cf. Luke 22:18) and judge the twelve tribes of Israel retains the elements of the covenant and kingdom

Köstenberger and Scott R. Swain, *Father, Son and Spirit* (New Studies in Biblical Theology 24; Downers Grove: IVP, 2008), 187–90; also W. L. Kynes, “New Birth,” *DJG* 574–76.

¹⁸ James Sweeney, “Jesus, Paul and the Temple: An Exploration of Some Patterns of Continuity,” *JETS* 46 (2003): 605–31. Jesus' actions in the court of the Gentiles of the temple complex have been noted as underscoring his openness to outsiders in concert with the original intent of the covenant to bless all peoples (A. J. M. Wedderburn, “Paul and Jesus: Similarity and Continuity,” *NTS* 34 [1988]: 161–82). On Jesus' allocation of atonement to himself, see D. J. Antwi, “Did Jesus Consider His Death to Be an Atoning Sacrifice?” *Int* 45 (1990): 17–28.

¹⁹ Unless otherwise noted, Scripture taken from the NEW AMERICAN STANDARD BIBLE®, Copyright © 1960, 1962, 1963, 1971, 1972, 1973, 1975, 1977, 1995 by The Lockman Foundation. Used by permission.

²⁰ It is particularly in his miracles and exorcisms that Jesus makes open war on the kingdom of Satan (see James Kallas, *The Significance of the Synoptic Miracles* [London: SPCK, 1961], 78–102).

²¹ The “blood” of the new covenant is noted in all the Gospels and Paul, who follows Luke's account in 1 Cor 11:23–25, and it remains the fundamental concept for atonement. Jesus' “blood” is mentioned five times as often as either his “cross” or his “death” in the NT.

²² Dumbrell (“Paul and Salvation History,” 292) and Gräbe (*New Covenant New Community*, 79–82) report on the observations of Gnilka and others how the last supper continues Jesus' rhetorical motif of the eschatological meal for all nations (Luke 13:29; 14:15–24 and pars.; Joachim Gnilka, *Das Evangelium nach Markus* [1980]).

²³ Διατίθεμαι (“appoint”) as a cognate of noun διαθήκη (“covenant”) of v. 20 is noted by Max Turner, “The Sabbath, Sunday and the Law in Luke-Acts,” in *From Sabbath to the Lord's Day: A Biblical Historical and Theological Investigation* (ed. D. A. Carson; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1982), 99–157, cited by Dumbrell, “Paul and Salvation History,” 290; and the works cited by Gräbe, *New Covenant New Community*, 82–88.

Story that began with Abraham and that would see fulfillment in all of the world through the people and land of Israel.²⁴

This brief survey of the new covenant in the ministry of Jesus concludes as Jesus sends his disciples out with the *kerygma* of the new covenant. The Lukan Great Commission, “that repentance for forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in His name to all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem,” (Luke 24:47) effectively links the new-covenant provision of repentance for forgiveness to the message the church carried throughout Acts (forgiveness [ἄφεσις] at Acts 2:38; 5:31; 10:43; 13:38; 26:18; repentance [μετάνοια] at Acts 5:31; 11:18; 13:24; 19:4; 20:21; 26:20.²⁵ The new covenant’s Spirit, who makes rare appearance in the Synoptic Gospels, appears in Acts as the heart of the “promise of the Father” (Acts 1:4; 2:33) orchestrating the formation and growth of the church as well as its proclamation of the forgiveness of sin.²⁶ The Spirit’s mission also proclaims hope for the nation of Israel to restore their function before the nations—only this time in Christ (Acts 1:6; 3:18, 21; 26:6–7).²⁷ Finally, the new covenant interfaces with the kingdom-of-God motif in Acts because, like forgiveness of sins, the kingdom also functions as cipher for the early church’s proclamation.²⁸

1.2.2. *The New Covenant in Paul*

The continued ritual remembrance of the Lord’s death and resurrection in the apostolic churches after Jesus demonstrates the abiding presence of the new-covenant matrix for the early church’s tradition. But with many NT theologians, we may ask, “How central can something be that does not appear all that often on the pages of the NT?” The writings of Paul are a case in point.

Of course, the proposed “centers” of Paul’s theology are nearly as broad as the list of those offering them,²⁹ but the claim of the new covenant to this role can hardly be overlooked for this apostle, who

²⁴ J. Ramsey Michaels considers that the ethnicity of the kingdom Jesus preached is “a question curiously neglected in the study of the kingdom of God.” See his discussion and defense of the nationalistic Jewish *and* universal nature of the kingdom in Jesus’ teaching (“The Kingdom of God and the Historical Jesus,” in *The Kingdom of God in Twentieth-Century Interpretation* [ed. Wendell Willis; Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1987], esp. 113–15).

²⁵ Cf. also the conceptual parallels to forgiveness in “washing away” (ἀπολούω, 22:16), “wiping away” sins (ἐφαλείφω, 3:19), or “cleansing their hearts” (καθαρίζω, 15:9). The covenant storyline of the OT is also explicit in Acts at 2:29–30; 13:34 (David); 3:13, 25; 7:2ff, 17; 13:26 (Abraham); 10:17ff; 11:9; 15:10 (Moses—discontinued); 3:22; 7:37 (Moses—continued); and 13:40 (prophets).

²⁶ The Spirit’s mission in Acts as proclaiming forgiveness of sins in Christ and forming the church as Christ’s body that lives from its forgiven status is taken up in Mark R. Saucy, “*Regnum Spiriti*: The Role of the Spirit in the Social Ethics of the Kingdom,” *JETS* (forthcoming).

²⁷ The disciples’ question in Acts 1:6 of the restoration of the kingdom to Israel reflects the OT storyline of the new covenant and probably should not be taken as wrongheaded according to immediate context (Jesus’ immediate teaching on the kingdom), the nature of Jesus’ answer (no rebuke for misunderstanding the nature of the kingdom, just its timing), and the disciples’ later preaching of a restoration of Israel in Acts 3. See further Antony Buzzard, “Acts 1:6 and the Eclipse of the Biblical Kingdom,” *EQ* 66 (1994): 197–215. The disciples’ use of the word ἀποκατάστασις (restoration) in Acts 3:21 was a technical term for the messianic, political, restoration of Israel to the land according to A. Oepke (“ἀποκατάστασις,” *TDNT* 1:388–89).

²⁸ The kingdom of God appears in summary statements at Acts 8:12; 19:8; 28:23, 31. Its appearance in 1:3 and 28:31 forms an *inclusio* to the book (D. W. Palmer, “Mission to the Jews and Gentiles in the Last Episode of Acts,” *RTR* 52 [1993] 63–64; cited by John Michael Penney, *The Missionary Emphasis of Lukan Pneumatology* [Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1997], 69).

²⁹ See the survey by Don N. Howell Jr. “The Center of Pauline Theology,” *BSac* 151 (1994): 50–71.

considers himself the “minister of a new covenant” (2 Cor 3:6).³⁰ The progress of the covenant-program stands behind Paul’s whole kerygma: he proclaims the mystery of Christ internalized to the believer, the advent of the eschatological gift of the Spirit, the reconciling righteousness of Christ’s cross, and the destiny of his countrymen.³¹

As with the Gospel-tradition, for Paul the person of Christ marks both the continuity and advance of the covenant-program. Both continuity and progress of the covenant shine in the “mystery” now revealed in Paul’s gospel. What was mere hope for Jeremiah and his people, “Christ in you the hope of glory” (Col 1:27) is the dawn of a new age for Paul:

It is in light of this [Christ-Sinai parallel] that we are probably to understand his references to Christ being in him and living in him, the inwardness of the new covenant of Jeremiah’s hope is achieved for Paul through the indwelling Christ, the new Torah “written in the heart.” The Law within him is Christ in him; the indwelling Christ has replaced the old Torah written on tablets of stone and has become a Torah written within.³²

Still connected to the past as its fulfillment, the participation of the believer’s life with Christ is also something truly new—a move from “holy religion to that of *life*”: “life in Christ; the ‘new life,’ that is the life of God *himself* communicated to his sons. . . . *And that is something quite new.*”³³

The Spirit-letter or Spirit-law polarity in Paul’s writings illustrates his new-covenant thinking regarding the nature of Christian identity in the new age inaugurated by Christ. Paul makes the contrast clear in 2 Cor 3:1–6 and Gal 3–4, where he specifically puts it in terms of the two covenants. In answer to his Judaizing opponents who saw Christ as needing incorporation into the Law of Moses, Paul argues the opposite: the Law finds its fulfillment in Christ. And because the man Jesus fulfilled the Law, the new covenant has become a reality. The inherent limitations of an old covenant is undone as the required

³⁰ Διαθήκη appears nine times in the letters of Paul: Rom 9:4; 11:2; 1 Cor 11:25; 2 Cor 3:6; Gal 3:15, 17; 4:24; Eph 2:12. He mentions “two covenants” in Gal 4:24, but the only occurrence of “new covenant” is 2 Cor 3:6. “Minister of a new covenant” is parallel in form to Paul’s self-understanding as a “minister of the gospel” (Eph 3:6; Col 1:23) and likewise interfaces with his other self-appellations as “apostle to the Gentiles” (Rom 11:12; 15:15), “Christ’s ambassador” (2 Cor 5:20; Eph 6:20), and “prisoner of the Lord” (Eph 3:1).

³¹ Bruce W. Longenecker, “Contours of Covenant Theology in the Post-Conversion Paul,” in *The Road from Damascus* (ed. Richard N. Longenecker; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 125–46; Helmut Merklein, “Der (neue) Bund als Thema der paulinischen Theologie,” *TQ* 176 (1996): 290–308; W. C. van Unnik, “La Conception Paulinienne de la Nouvelle Alliance,” *Littérature et Théologie Pauliniennes* (RechBib 5; Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 1960): 109–26; Jerome Murphy-O’Connor, “The New Covenant in the Letters of Paul and the Essene Documents,” in *To Touch the Text* (ed. Maurya P. Horgan and Paul J. Kobelski; New York: Crossroad, 1989), 194–204; W. S. Campbell, “Covenant and New Covenant,” *DPL* 179–83; Williamson, *Sealed with An Oath*, 186–201; Gräbe, *New Covenant New Community*, 108–24.

³² W. D. Davies, *Paul and Rabbinic Judaism: Some Rabbinic Elements in Pauline Theology* (4th ed.; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1980), 226. On the mystery and fulfillment theme recently, see D. A. Carson, “Mystery and Fulfillment: Toward a More Comprehensive Paradigm of Paul’s Understanding of the Old and the New,” in *The Paradoxes of Paul*, vol. 2 of *Justification and Variegated Nomism* (ed. D. A. Carson, Peter T. O’Brien, and Mark A. Seifrid; WUNT 181; Grand Rapids: Baker, 2004), 393–436.

³³ Yves M.-J. Congar, *The Mystery of the Temple: or, The Manner of God’s Presence to His Creatures from Genesis to the Apocalypse* (London: Burns & Oates, 1962), 275; emphasis his. The prominence of the participation theme is seen in the “in Christ” language Paul favors.

mediation by Moses, angels (cf. Gal 3:19), and the temple cult are now exchanged for the Law written “on the tablets of the human heart” (2 Cor 3:3), making the Spirit’s new temple in the believer’s body (1 Cor 6:19).³⁴

The former covenant also in its limitations brought condemnation and death (2 Cor 3:7, 9), merely demonstrating—but not rectifying—the ravages of sin (Gal 3:10). But the forgiveness of sins provided in Christ’s cross was the new covenant’s way to righteousness abounding in glory (Rom 3:21–29; cf. 2 Cor 3:9).³⁵ The cosmic victory of Christ’s cross achieved the new covenant’s defeat of the enemies who were armed themselves with the believer’s sins (Col 2:13–15). His blood removed the barrier to the full adoption of the believer as a new-covenant son or daughter (Col 1:19–22).³⁶ For Paul, the new covenant was the means by which heaven’s order of salvation itself was near and available to the believer in Christ (Gal 4:21–31).³⁷

The new covenant’s forgiveness also represents the means by which Paul’s countrymen according to the flesh would find their promised restoration as Yahweh’s national servant who would channel the blessings of the promise to the whole world. Rom 9–11 shows that in Christ the covenant promises to his people are not annulled, for God’s election is irrevocable (Rom 11:29); but the new exodus from sin’s bondage means that God’s plan for his people is still in force once they are found in Christ according to the new covenant’s promises: “And this is My covenant with them, when I take away their sins” (Rom 11:27). Paul makes it clear that non-Jews are also now Abraham’s heirs by faith, but he is just as clear that Gentiles *join* and do not replace Israel in the future fulfillment of the promise made to them through Abraham:

Theologically [the replacement of Israel’s election by the Church’s] is an impossible position for it calls in question not only God’s wisdom and power, but his faithfulness. Thus the very meaning of covenant in the biblical sense is annulled. In the context of prophetic revelation *berit* invariably means God’s “unswerving loyalty to Israel” and stands as a sign and token for “the faithfulness of the unchanging God.” Israel, therefore, must remain the *am Yahwe* not because he deserves it, but because the God of Israel is a Covenant-keeping God.³⁸

³⁴ See Dumbrell, “Paul and Salvation History,” 293–95; Unnik, “La Conception Paulinienne de la Nouvelle Alliance,” 119; and Sweeney, “Jesus, Paul and the Temple,” 610–12.

³⁵ According to Louw and Nida, *δικαιοσύνη* and *διαθήκη* belong to the same semantic domain (L&N 2:451–53); cf. also Gräbe, *New Covenant New Community*, 115–16; Norman H. Snaith, *Distinctive Ideas of the Old Testament* (London: Epworth, 1944), 51–78.

³⁶ Paul’s adoption theology is grounded in the covenant theme (J. M. Scott, “Adoption, Sonship,” *DPL* 15–18). Unnik notes the parallel between Paul’s adoption theology in Eph 1 and the covenant promises of Exod 19:5–6 (Unnik, “La Conception Paulinienne de la Nouvelle Alliance,” 120).

³⁷ Petrus J. Gräbe, “Καὶνὴ διαθήκη in der paulinischen Literatur,” in *Ekklesiologie des Neuen Testaments* (ed. Rainer Kampling and Thomas Söding; Freiburg: Herder, 1996), 287.

³⁸ J. Jocz “The Connection Between the Old and the New Testament,” *Jud* 16 (1960): 142–43; with citation of George A. F. Knight, *A Christian Theology of the O. T.* [1959], 224. Romans 9–11 is the *crux interpretum* for understanding Paul’s view of the relationship of the church and Israel. For the view that Paul in Rom 9–11 is discussing the progression of salvation history that still awaits fulfillment of the promises made to Israel as a nation, see Walter C. Kaiser, “An Assessment of ‘Replacement Theology’: The Relationship between the Israel of the Abrahamic-Davidic Covenant and the Christian Church,” *Mishkan* 21 (1994): 11–20; Mark A. Seifrid, *Christ, Our Righteousness* (New Studies in Biblical Theology 9; Downers Grove: IVP, 2000), 158–69; Williamson, *Sealed with*

This radical shift that the gospel of Christ had meant for Paul did not, thus, sever him from his OT covenant- and kingdom-roots. Paul was no innovator; he was a Jew preaching the Jewish Scriptures aware that his proclaiming “Christ crucified” was the final crucial link of a chain of events mapped out in a straight line to him and his people from his forefather Abraham.

1.2.3. *The New Covenant in Hebrews*

In accord with the new-covenant tradition already seen in Paul and the Gospels, the writer to the Hebrews also centers the advance in the covenant storyline in the person and work of Jesus Christ.³⁹ In explicit terms, the high priesthood of Christ introduces the first occurrence of διαθήκη in 7:22, and from there the extensive exposition of the new covenant follows in chapters 8–10; but it would be a mistake to subsume the covenant-theme to the priesthood or other cultic motifs also prominent in this epistle. As Lehne and others have rightly noted, the deeper inner logic of the covenant grounds the author’s portrayal of Jesus’ superior priesthood (chs. 8–10) and his superior revelation (1:1–3).⁴⁰

It is by means of the covenant-concept that the author of Hebrews charts both the continuity and discontinuity called for by the advent of the new covenant. Both realities appear in the context of the author’s treatment of the disposition of the older covenant’s *cult* in the new priesthood of Christ. While Jeremiah anticipates the demise of the Mosaic cult in Jer 31:34,⁴¹ the new covenant’s superiority is clear specifically in regards to its provision to *forgive sins* (also noted in Jer 31:34).⁴² Gräbe and others have documented this in the strategic placement of the Jer 31 text in the author’s argument.⁴³ The citations from Jer 31 in Heb 8:8–13 and 10:16–17 form an *inclusio* to the main soteriological section of the epistle, which has its key center in 9:15: “And for this reason He is the mediator of a new covenant, in order that since a death has taken place for the redemption of the transgressions that were *committed* under the

an Oath, 188–91. Unnik also concludes that a spiritualizing of the new covenant in Paul’s writings is an untenable exegesis of Rom 9–11 (“La Conception Paulinienne de la Nouvelle Alliance,” 118).

³⁹ For an overview of Hebrews in recent research, see Daniel J. Harrington, *What Are They Saying about the Letter to the Hebrews?* (WATSA; Mahwah, NJ: Paulist, 2005); George H. Guthrie, “Hebrews in Its First-Century Contexts,” in *The Face of New Testament Studies: A Survey of Recent Research* (ed. Scot McKnight and Grant R. Osborne; Grand Rapids: Baker, 2004), 130–45; Craig R. Koester, “The Epistle to Hebrews in Recent Study,” *CurBS* 2 (1994): 123–45; and J. C. McCullough, “Hebrews in Recent Scholarship (Parts 1 and 2),” *IBS* 16:2 and 16:3 (1994), esp. 16:3, pp. 108–20.

⁴⁰ Suzanne Lehne (*The New Covenant in Hebrews* [JSNTSup 44; Sheffield: Sheffield University Press, 1990], 94) notes, “If it is understood that the διαθήκη is reduced to its cultic dimensions in Heb., then one is justified in making ‘covenant’ the overarching category for conceptual purposes and in treating priesthood and sacrifice from a covenantal angle.” John Dunnill considers the “covenant-renewal rite” to be the “inner genre” of the epistle (*Covenant Sacrifice in the Letter to the Hebrews* [SNTSMS 75; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992], 261; cited by Gräbe, *New Covenant New Community*, 125n3), and W. B. Morrice calls Hebrews “the Letter of the New Covenant” (“New Wine in Old Wine Skins,” *ExpTim* 86 [1975]: 134).

⁴¹ Jer 31:34: “And they shall not teach again, each man his neighbor and each man his brother, saying, ‘Know the LORD,’ for they shall all know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them.” Jeremiah is predicting the obsolescence of the priesthood as the institution that taught Israel *torah* (Dumbrell, *The End of the Beginning*, 93). Lunblom sees also the prophetic office in this verse (Lundbom, *Jeremiah*, 470).

⁴² See n. 6 above. The forgiveness of sins was the ground of all promises entailed in the new covenant.

⁴³ Gräbe, *New Covenant New Community*, 130–31, who also cites Jörg Frey, “Die alte und die neue διαθήκη nach dem Hebräerbrief,” in *Bund und Tora* (ed. Friedrich Avemarie and Hermann Lichtenberger; WUNT 92; Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck, 1996), 279–80.

first covenant . . .”⁴⁴ The new covenant’s superior handling of the sin-problem is the fundamental axis around which the writer argues for the *correspondence*, *contrast*, and *superiority* of the new covenant to the old throughout the epistle, especially in chapters 8–10.⁴⁵

The new covenant order *corresponds* to the old:

1. Both are based upon a sovereign act of God on behalf of his people (8:8–13).
2. In both covenants God’s people are summoned as an assembly bound by God’s word (12:18–24).
3. Both orders are similarly inaugurated by a bloody ceremony involving the death of the victim (9:15–22).
4. Both require allegiance and obedience to God to gain a promised inheritance (9:15).

Contrast is marked most prominently by the author’s comparing the two priesthoods associated with the two covenant-orders:

1. mortal priests with genealogies vs. one high priest who lives forever (7:3)
2. appointment by fleshly Law or commandment vs. appointment by word of an oath (7:28)
3. priests offering for their own sins vs. one who is sinless (9:14)
4. daily earthly offerings vs. a superior heavenly ministry (9:25)
5. patterns of heavenly things vs. the real heavenly things themselves (9:11)
6. holy places made with hands vs. heaven itself (9:24)
7. many annual entries vs. one final entry (9:11)
8. limited access and barriers vs. the real presence of God (10:20)
9. no final purgation of sin vs. final removal of sins (9:9; 10:1–2; 10:14; 10:18)
10. animal sacrifice and blood vs. the sacrifice and blood of Christ himself (9:12)

Superiority of the new covenant’s order in the epistle also revolves around the forgiveness of sins and includes

1. a superior appointment (7:21),
2. a superior rule by an indissoluble life (7:16),
3. a superior, infinite duration without succession (7:23–24),
4. the superior nature of the Son, made perfect forever (7:28),
5. a superior *locus* of ministry in heaven (9:24), and
6. the superior offering of Christ’s *own* blood, one time, consummated in life and death, in submission to God’s will (10:9).

Gräbe puts it another way: “The two qualities that constitute the superiority of the covenant of ‘better promises’ are (1) it is heavenly in rank, because it is based on the ministry (λειτουργία) of the

⁴⁴ Hebrews 9:15 “represents not only the climax, but also the sum of the whole covenant theology of Hebrews” (Gräbe, *New Covenant New Community*, 132–33; Gräbe cites Knut Backhaus, *Der neue Bund und das Werden der Kirche: Die Diatheke-Deutung des Hebräerbrief im Rahmen der frühchristlichen Theologiegeschichte* [Münster: Aschendorff, 1996], 185).

⁴⁵ Correspondence, contrast, and superiority are the organizing categories preferred by most commentators and taken up by Lehne, *New Covenant in Hebrews*, 98–99, and Gräbe, *New Covenant New Community*, 138. The account of these categories in this section follows Lehne.

heavenly high priest; (2) unlike the Levitical cult, it is able (through Christ) to accomplish the ministry (λειτουργία) of forgiveness of sins.”⁴⁶

It is in the new covenant’s superiority that the author gains most traction for the paraenetic intentions he has for his readers, which are reviewed and emphasized in the portions of the letter following 10:18. Here the covenant appears first in the warning of 10:26–31, where the author, having just pointed out the significance of the better (new) covenant, warns of the seriousness of falling away from it (10:29). In 12:24, again the readers are reminded of their relationship to “Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood,” which at once recalls the better sacrifice of the better covenant they enjoy in Christ.⁴⁷ Finally, in 13:20, the “blood of the covenant” appears in a positive way as the basis for Jesus’ resurrection. The new salvation order established in the atoning blood of the superior high priest is a heavenly *resurrected* order.⁴⁸

The continuity and discontinuity of the canonical tradition is thus reiterated by means of the author to the Hebrews’s analysis of the cult under the old and new orders. The new covenant inaugurated by Christ continues the divine intention to redeem the creation from sin that was earlier found in Israel’s covenant-heritage at Exod 24:8 and Lev 16.⁴⁹ However, “by stressing the element of *newness* and drawing *contrast* to the former system, the writer succeeds in presenting Christ as the permanent, definitive, *superior* replacement of the same heritage.”⁵⁰

1.3. Summary: The Continuity and Discontinuity of the New Covenant in the Canonical Tradition

As is clear from this brief survey of the canonical tradition, Johannes Behm’s assessment accurately reflects the view of the NT writers: “Jesus conceived of His Messianic work fulfilled in His death from the standpoint of the fulfillment of prophecy of the eschatological διαθήκη.”⁵¹ In this fulfillment, Jesus truly continues the Great Covenant Story of restoration of the creation promised to Abraham back to the earliest parts of Israel’s Scriptures. But he also *advances* that Story by moving it beyond and cancelling earlier transitional elements. The final resolution of the sin-problem accomplished in Christ’s cross made obsolete earlier mediated approaches to God in the temple cult. With the life of God’s own Spirit pulsing within, the believer in Jesus has new knowledge of the Holy One of Israel as *Father*, giving the new, true power of full acceptance and sonship from *within* that enables obedience and holy

⁴⁶ Gräbe, *New Covenant New Community*, 130.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 137.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

⁴⁹ Rolf Rendtorff, *Canon and Theology* (ed. and trans. Margaret Kohl; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1993), 203; Lehne, *New Covenant in Hebrews*, 119; Gräbe, *New Covenant New Community*, 137.

⁵⁰ Lehne, *New Covenant in Hebrews*, 119. The emphasis in Hebrews on the new covenant’s redefinition and replacement in Christ of the Israelite cult need not be taken as the replacement of Israel itself in Christ as is common in supersessionism. Richard B. Hays rightly calls out the anachronism of such a reading of Hebrews that has been common in the book’s interpretive history since Chrysostom (“‘Here We Have No Lasting City’: New Covenantalism in Hebrews,” in *The Epistle to the Hebrews and Christian Theology* [ed. Richard Bauckham et al.; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009], 151–73). Along with the understanding of Paul and Jesus, the writer to the Hebrews can still anticipate the future *earthly* rule of the one who is exalted to the right hand. See Mark R. Saucy, “Exaltation Christology in Hebrews: What Kind of Reign?” *TJ* 14 NS (1993): 41–62.

⁵¹ J. Behm, “διαθήκη,” *TDNT* 2:133.

living. As heirs of God's irrevocable promises, the blessing of all flesh could be expected in the future restoration of Israel itself. Here then is the canon of *Scripture's* tradition of the new covenant's continuity and discontinuity that founded the church by the apostles' inspired witness. It remains now to assess this legacy of the new-covenant tradition in the early patristic church to determine to what extent that tradition reflects the canonical tradition's record of continuity and discontinuity in the new covenant.

2. New Covenant Continuity and Discontinuity in the Early Patristic Tradition

2.1. Continuity in the Tradition of the Second-Century Church

It is in the dialogue with those also claiming to be Abraham's heirs (i.e., Jews) where the early post-apostolic church first reflects seriously on the concept of the covenant. The works of the Apostolic Fathers make no mention of either the new covenant or of the *locus classicus* of the new covenant in Jeremiah. Neither do they appear to have any knowledge of the new covenant from the Eucharistic tradition of Jesus and Paul.⁵² However, early Christian polemic with Jews about who were the real people of God tended to frame everything in covenant-terms.⁵³

2.1.1. Barnabas

The first Christian writer in this discussion was the Alexandrian writer of *Barnabas*. In *Barnabas*, Christians indeed enjoy a covenant relationship with God, but the covenant they have is not "new." In fact for this writer the reality is that there is only one covenant, so the question of "new" and "old" is mooted altogether. In *Barnabas*, the Jews were *never* members of the covenant-program because of their idolatry at Sinai. Christians are the true children of the covenant since they alone fulfill the

⁵² The absence of mention of the new covenant in connection with the Lord's Supper tradition is particularly conspicuous in the *Didache*, which has an extensive treatment of the Lord's Supper in chs. 9–10. See the discussion in Wolfram Kinzig, *Novitas Christiana: Die Idee des Fortschritts in der Alten Kirche bis Eusebius* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1994), 123–24.

⁵³ E. Ferguson, "Justin Martyr on Jews, Christians and the Covenant," in *Early Christianity in Context: Monuments and Documents* (ed. F. Manns and E. Alliata; Jerusalem: Franciscan, 1993), 396. As Ferguson and Kinzig note, the discussion was framed in the covenant terms of the LXX which, like the NT, used *διαθήκη* for the Hebrew *בְּרִית* (*berith*) bringing in the stronger legal tone of "heir" or "last will and testament" to its semantic domain. In Gal 3:15, 17 and Heb 9:16–17, *διαθήκη* means "last will and testament" (E. Ferguson, "The Covenant Idea in the Second Century," in *Texts and Testaments: Critical Essays on the Bible and Early Church Fathers* [ed. W. E. March; San Antonio: Trinity University Press, 1980], 136–37; W. Kinzig, "Καὶνὴ διαθήκη: The Title of the New Testament in the Second and Third Centuries," *JTS* 2:45 [1994]: 519–20; however, against this meaning in Heb 9:16–17, see G. D. Kilpatrick, "Διαθήκη in Hebrews," *ZNW* 68 [1977]: 263–65). Kinzig follows the argument of Ernst Kutsch that when *διαθήκη* entered the Greek-Christian world in the LXX or the NT it came without the Hebrew background of *בְּרִית* and became more legal and so "initiated a whole new series of theological metaphors and associations" including the *disinheriting* of the Jews discussed below (Kinzig, "Καὶνὴ διαθήκη," 524). Dix comments on the difference between Hebrew and Greek cultural notions of *διαθήκη* and the result this had for the new covenant in the patristic tradition of the Eucharist: "The whole conception of a 'Covenant' with God, so vivid and profound to a Jew, was entirely strange to the Greek. . . . The 'traditional' Eucharistic prayer of Hippolytus (c. A.D. 200) no longer mentions 'the New Covenant' at all, even in the Institution-narrative which it contains. And though after the canonization of the Gospels the influence of their accounts caused the phrase to be inserted in later Eucharistic prayers, it has never played any great part in forming Gentile eucharistic devotion" (Dom Gregory Dix, *Jew and Greek: A Study in the Primitive Church* [London: Dacre, 1953], 108–9).

covenant's spiritual requirements. Thus, Christians are the only ones who can lay claim to being the people of God.⁵⁴

2.1.2. Justin's Dialogue with Trypho

The awkward exegetical and theological attempt at covenant self-definition in *Barnabas* reaches greater sophistication by the mid-second century in Justin's *Dialogue with Trypho*. Here also in anti-Jewish polemic is the first real accounting for a two-covenant system that resembles the canonical tradition's presentation of redemptive history.⁵⁵ However, Justin's account of the new covenant break significantly with the new-covenant canonical tradition as he makes clear that Christians are the true people of God, the *new* Israel, who *replace* ethnic Israel in God's covenant program. Skarsaune notes the substance of Justin's deviation from Paul:

whereas in Paul the Gentiles are added to the true Israel of Jewish believers to share in their inheritance, in Justin it is the other way around: the few Jewish believers are added to the church of the Gentiles to share in their inheritance. This shift of perspective had far-reaching consequences. While in Paul the Gentiles share in the promises given to true Israel, in Justin the promises are transferred from the Jewish people to the church of the Gentiles. This church replaces the Jewish people. It takes over the inheritance of Israel while at the same time disinheriting the Jews.⁵⁶

Isa 2:2–4 is the key passage for Justin and the church tradition that follows to show the church as “the mountain of the LORD” and sole proprietor of the covenant's continuity.⁵⁷ The replacement of literal Israel in Justin extends to all aspects of the Mosaic covenant where the church, Jesus, and the cross can now be spiritually found. In Christ, Christians spiritually fulfill all of the washings, fastings, Sabbaths, and other stipulations given to Israel (*Dial.* 29.2).

⁵⁴ *Barn.* 4.3, 6–8; and esp. chs. 13–14. See Kinzig, *Novitas Christiana*, 125–26; Ferguson, “Justin Martyr,” 398–99; idem, “The Covenant Idea,” 137; and William Horbury, “Jewish-Christian Relations in Barnabas and Justin Martyr,” in *Jews And Christians: The Parting of the Ways A.D. 70 to 135* (ed. James D. G. Dunn; London: SCM, 1991), 330.

⁵⁵ See, e.g. *Dial.* 10–12, 26, 34, 43, 51, 67, 118, 121–23; cf. Ferguson, “The Covenant Idea,” 140–41; Kinzig, *Novitas Christiana*, 128. Justin speaks of the new covenant only from Jeremiah, never from the tradition of Jesus, Paul, or the epistle to the Hebrews. Also, while many see a solid redemptive-historical understanding in Justin, Kinzig is inclined to see only foretastes of what would be more developed later in the writings of Irenaeus (Kinzig, *Novitas Christiana*, 132).

⁵⁶ Oskar Skarsaune, *In the Shadow of the Temple: Jewish Influences on Early Christianity* (Downers Grove: IVP, 2002), 267–68; cf. also Knut Backhaus, “Gottes nicht Bereuter Bund,” in *Ekklesiologie des Neuen Testaments* (ed. Rainer Kampling and Thomas Söding; Freiburg: Herder, 1996), 50–52; Ronald E. Heine, *Reading the Old Testament with the Ancient Church* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2007), 50; Ray Pritz, “Replacing the Jews in Early Christian Theology,” *Mishkan* 21 (1994): 21–26; Jeffrey Siker, *Disinheriting the Jews* (Louisville: Westminster, 1991), 28–76, cited by Pritz, “Replacing the Jews,” 21; Kinzig, “Καὶνὴ διαθήκη,” 524, and most recently Michael J. Vlach, *Has the Church Replaced Israel? A Theological Evaluation* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2010).

⁵⁷ “Now it will come about that in the last days, the mountain of the house of the LORD will be established as the chief of the mountains, and will be raised above the hills; and all the nations will stream to it. And many peoples will come and say, ‘Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; that He may teach us concerning His ways’ (Isa 2:2–4). Ferguson, “The Covenant Idea,” 156–57. In Justin, see *Dial.* 24.

The irony of Justin's account of redemptive *history* is how it effectively *de-historicizes* the OT and the new-covenant Story in the church's developing tradition. Jocz notes the situation for the covenant Story:

Many of the Church Fathers understood the *novum* of the gospel to constitute a break in the story of election. The implication being that because God failed with the Jews, he transferred his favours to the Gentiles. Thus Lactantius literally says that God "changed" his covenant from Israel to the "foreign nations" (Lactantius, *Div. Instit.* IV, 11).⁵⁸

The result is similarly observed in Origen, whose allegorical program also utterly effaces the historical dimension of the covenant when he says, "I do not call this law an Old Testament if I understand it spiritually. The law becomes an Old Testament only for those who want to understand it carnally."⁵⁹

The transition from Gentile inclusion to a complete Jewish exclusion from the covenant that was started in Justin became the theological and hermeneutical fund for what Jaroslav Pelikan has aptly termed the "re-judaization" of the church in the early centuries.⁶⁰ Re-judaizing patterns of praxis and doctrine that eventually prevailed and shaped the patristic tradition along with the numbing effects such a pattern had for Christian self-identity and treatment of the OT are observed by Neve, who notes of this period of church history how

[g]radually Old Testament institutions—especially the priesthood and the sacrificial idea—came to be looked upon as emblematic of the Christian congregation. Such a conception and interpretation of the Old Testament naturally destroyed any historical insight into it. With few exceptions this conception and its application continued to prevail until the Reformation.⁶¹

⁵⁸ Jocz, "Connection between the OT and NT," 142; Backhaus, "Gottes nicht Bereuter Bund," 54. Similar de-historicizing of the new covenant occurs in modern supersessionists for whom the new covenant's fulfillment in the church reduces the prophetic announcement made to Israel to some vague message of hope (e.g., C. Fensham, "Covenant, Promise and Expectation in the Bible," *TZ* 23 [1967]: 305–22).

⁵⁹ *Num hom* 9.4, cited by Ferguson, "The Covenant Idea," 155. Origen's "spiritualizing" program reflects the context of the "new διαθήκη" moniker for the collection of the NT books that ultimately prevailed in orthodoxy. Regardless of a likely original allusion to some understanding of the progress of redemptive history, the nomenclature ἡ καινὴ διαθήκη for the NT corpus soon "lost its dynamic weight and became nothing more than just a title" (W. C. van Unnik "Ἡ καινὴ διαθήκη—A Problem in the Early History of the Canon," in *Sparsa Collecta: The Collected Essays of W. C. Van Unnik* [NovTSup 30; Leiden: Brill, 1980], 171; repr. from *Studia Patristica* 1 [Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1961]).

⁶⁰ Jaroslav Pelikan, *The Christian Tradition*, vol. 1 of *The Emergence of the Catholic Tradition (100–600)* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1971), 26. Pelikan means in the term only the church's adoption of OT nomenclature for aspects of its worship. I suggest more: that OT nomenclature carried with it old-covenant theology that continued to color the church's apprehension of the fullness of the new covenant we see in the NT canonical writers.

⁶¹ J. L. Neve, *A History of Christian Thought*, vol. 1 of *History of Christian Doctrine* (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg, 1946), 41.

By means of a “spiritual Israel” hermeneutic, then, the patristic tradition does engage the discontinuity in the canonical covenant program, but the end result for continuity is ultimately historically dysfunctional as the OT Story of Israel is reduced in the Fathers to a mere quarry for types of Christ and the church.⁶²

2.1.3. Irenaeus

The most perceptive and thorough-going thinker regarding the new covenant in the early Church was Irenaeus, bishop of Lyons. In polemics against Gnostics and Marcionites, Irenaeus followed his predecessor Justin by writing often of the one God’s two-covenant program of redemptive history and also taking up Justin’s lead about the Gentile church supplanting Israel.⁶³

It is, however, in his *theological* reflection about the two covenants that Irenaeus breaks new ground in the matters of the new covenant’s continuity with the prior covenant of Moses. Unlike Justin, who tended to see continuity only by Christ’s shadowy presence in the old covenant, Irenaeus maintains something closer to Paul and the canonical tradition. He notes the common root of both covenants in Abraham and sees Christ as the cornerstone of the building being constructed from the righteous of both covenants (*Haer.* 4.25.1). The righteous and prophets and patriarchs of the older covenant through their faith also dealt with Christ and had their sins remitted through him just as the believer does today (*Haer.* 4.27.2). Similarly, both covenants reveal at their core “the precepts of an absolutely perfect life” in their call to love God and neighbor (*Haer.* 4.12.3). So, Irenaeus argues, it must be clear to all that both

⁶² “Justin represents a pattern followed by nearly all ancient Christian writers. He both relied on the LXX and used existing traditions of biblical “proof texts” to establish that Christ and the Church were the true subject of Jewish Scriptures” (Paula Fredriksen and Judith Lieu, “Christian Theology and Judaism,” in *The First Christian Theologians* [ed. G. R. Evans; Oxford: Blackwell, 2004], 92). The historical dysfunctionality addressed here is not intended to deny legitimacy to all “figural,” “symbolic,” or “reimaging” exegetical practices in the early church (on which see especially the overview of Frances M. Young, “Interpretation of Scripture,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Early Christian Studies* [ed. Susan Ashbrook Harvey and David G. Hunter; New York: Oxford University Press, 2008]: 845–63; idem, *Biblical Exegesis and the Formation of Christian Culture* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997]; John J O’Keefe and R. R. Reno, *Sanctified Vision: An Introduction to Early Christian Interpretation of the Bible* [Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2005]; David C. Steinmetz, “The Superiority of Pre-Critical Exegesis,” *ThTo* 36 [1980]: 27–38; and Heine, *Reading the Old Testament*, 75–95). The issue is not historical versus allegorical as taken up in these works. The anti-allegorist exegetes of the fourth century were also part of the “new Israel” re-judaization tradition discussed here as well as many of the Reformation churches.

⁶³ The covenant figures prominently in Irenaeus’ entire theological system. See his general summary of Christian faith in *Against Heresies* 1.10.3. In *Haer.* 3.11.8, Irenaeus does mention four covenants, but in his major discussion of the covenant concept in *Haer.* 4.32–34, he speaks of two (cf. also *Haer.* 4.9.1). Irenaeus’ view of Israel’s fate is closely tied to the redemptive-historical manner in which the old covenant is superseded by the new. Israel is the people of the old covenant; the church the people of the new. See especially Irenaeus’ discussion in *Haer.* 4.32.2 and 4.21.2. In *Demonstration of the Apostolic Preaching* 95, it is because Israel “had left the real God and were giving service to unreal gods. . . . God was pleased to grant His inheritance to the foolish Gentiles, and to those who were not God’s citizens.” See the context for this comment in *Epid.* 93–96. Irenaeus emphasizes Israel’s role under the first covenant as preparatory and suited to the immaturity of humankind (*Haer.* 4.14.1, 3, 5; 26.1; 38.1). For these and other reasons, Marshall refers to Irenaeus as “one of the architects of traditional supersessionism” (Bruce D. Marshall, “Christ and the Cultures: The Jewish People and Christian Theology,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Christian Doctrine* [ed. Colin E. Gunton; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997], 84). On the relationship of Israel and the church in Irenaeus, see Rolf Noormann, *Irenäus als Paulusinterpret: Zur Rezeption und Wirkung der paulinischen und deuteropaulinischen Briefe im Werk des Irenäus von Lyon* (Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck, 1994), 420–26; Ferguson, “The Covenant Idea,” 146.

old and new covenants, although directed to two peoples at two different times, are the work of one and the same God in the divine plan of the *recapitulatio mundi* (*Haer.* 4.12.3; cf. 3.12.11).⁶⁴

In Irenaeus the church had now a fully integrated operation of the new and the old covenants in one history of salvation that was still sensitive to the historical distinctives of both old and new covenants. Unlike most of his contemporaries and those who followed after him, he is not yet so far down the re-judaizing road of Christian supersessionism that continuity in the canonical covenant Story comes at the expense of historical distinctives.⁶⁵

2.2. Discontinuity in the Tradition of the Second-Century Church

2.2.1. Irenaeus

Irenaeus' view of the contrast in the old and new covenants may serve also as the starting point considering the new covenant's discontinuities in the patristic tradition. This is because again in Irenaeus we are at something of a highpoint in earliest post-apostolic Christian reflection regarding the new covenant's *novum* in two particular areas: his attention to Paul and his understanding of the new covenant itself.

Early Christian neglect—passive neglect at best—of the apostle who thought of himself as a “minister of a new covenant” is a well-documented phenomenon in scholarship of the last century.⁶⁶ Pauline scholars lament the apostle's virtual “unintelligibility” to the early post-apostolic Church,⁶⁷ but we must ask, “At what particular point was Paul so hard to understand?” It is no secret that Paul was the darling of the heretical Valentinians and Marcionites, but was it only guilt by association that made him damaged goods to the church? Perhaps it was that he had too thoroughly enriched the lexical arsenal of Gnostics with the “spiritual” and “soulish” categories of his anthropology?

Several lines of thought issuing from Irenaeus' accounting for Paul suggest that it was the apostle's presentation of the new covenant's *novum* of forgiveness that made him harder to digest for the moralizing orthodox and such a delight to the heretics. First, Irenaeus' explicit program was to rescue Paul from the heretics' madness and misrepresentation: “to examine his opinion, to expound the apostle, and to explain whatever passages have received other interpretations” (*Haer.* 4.41.3–4). Second, from

⁶⁴ Supposed predecessors of Irenaeus' *recapitulatio mundi* doctrine are presented by Sesboüé, but he notes that Scharl's earlier thorough investigation concludes that such evidence is still meager and that Irenaeus likely took his idea of redemptive history in this form directly from Scripture (E. Scharl, *Recapitulatio mundi. Der Rekapitulationsbegriff des heiligen Irenäus und seine Anwendung auf die Körperwelt* [Freiberg: Herder, 1941], 131; cited by Bernard Sesboüé, *Tout récapituler dans le Christ: christologie et sotériologie d'Irénée de Lyon* [Paris: Desclée, 2000], 128).

⁶⁵ Heine, *Reading the Old Testament*, 64–70. See Reinhold Seeberg for a summary of the redemptive-historical thought of the early church (Seeberg, *Text-Book of the History of Doctrines* [trans. Charles E. Hay; 1895; repr.; Grand Rapids: Baker, 1977], 123–24).

⁶⁶ While Paul was treasured as the apostle to the Gentiles in the early church, Wilhelm Schneemelcher notes that his writings appear to have no significance—almost as if there were an “intentional shoving aside” of the apostle by the early generations of the Greek church (“Paulus in der griechischen Kirche des zweiten Jahrhunderts,” *ZKG* 75 [1964]: 9). For a recent discussion of the neglect of Paul in the second century, see J. Roetzel, “Paul in the Second Century,” in *The Cambridge Companion to St. Paul* (ed. James D. G. Dunn; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 227–41.

⁶⁷ See, e.g., Ernst Käsemann, “Paul and Early Catholicism,” in *New Testament Questions of Today* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1969), 20; cited by Roetzel, “Paul in the Second Century,” 227.

what is known about the Gnostic and Marcionite use of Paul, it is in his account of the discontinuity, of what is *new*, in Jesus that made Paul so attractive to them.⁶⁸ For Marcion, Paul was the only true apostle.⁶⁹ Third, Irenaeus' own exposition of Paul's "centers" (*Haer.* 3.16.3 and 4.24.1) reveals that the advance of salvation history from Adam to Christ, corruption to incorruption, is the nucleus around which his other principle themes of monotheism and the incarnation orbit.⁷⁰

Emphasizing the theology of history as Irenaeus does, it is no surprise that he develops the content of the new covenant particularly in its contrast to the old. For him, the new covenant "renovates man and sums all things up in itself" (*Haer.* 3.11.8), and as such, the key concept is freedom. "Covenant of liberty" is a favorite description of the new covenant (*Haer.* 3.13.14; 4.33.14; 4.34.3; 4.16.5) that is closely linked for Irenaeus to the new present time of adoption in contrast to the age of slavery under the "laws of bondage" in the old covenant (*Haer.* 4.22.1; 3.21.4). The new age of adoption means something more is present in the new-covenant age than merely a new kind of spiritual law administered just like the old law. Rather, like the apostle Paul he aimed to exposit, for Irenaeus the new-covenant humanity has not a new law with new rewards and punishments (i.e., a new religion), but a new life in a new spiritual relationship to God—a relationship that is dominated by love and freedom, not fear and slavery.⁷¹

Even if the question of theological supersessionism of the new-covenant provisions for national Israel is set to the side, it is the understanding of the new condition and new administration of the covenant relationship in which Irenaeus seems to rise above his environment and touch on the struggle the early church's tradition had with the new covenant's discontinuity. The re-judaizing tendencies, the advocacy of the new covenant's *novum* by the heretics, and the likelihood that the church's first teachers after the apostles were themselves converted Jews⁷² all give force to continuing traces in the church's tradition of the moralistic mindset Paul addresses in his letter to the Galatians—a mindset that does not grasp fully the new covenant's discontinuity with the old.⁷³ And while even Irenaeus himself may not have fully exploited Paul because of the apostle's gnostic associations,⁷⁴ the novelty of his historical

⁶⁸ Kinzing, *Novitas Christiana*, 138.

⁶⁹ Tertullian, *AM* 3.13.

⁷⁰ Richard A. Norris, "Irenaeus' Use of Paul in His Polemic against the Gnostics," in *Paul and the Legacies of Paul* (ed. W. S. Babcock; Dallas: Southern Methodist University Press, 1990), 97–98.

⁷¹ Ferguson, "The Covenant Idea," 146; Noormann, *Irenäus als Paulusinterpret*, 410–16.

⁷² As Skarsaune has effectively argued by making the case that the church's post-apostolic teachers (authors of the *Didache*, *Shepherd of Hermas* and *1 Clement*) were Jewish Christians (Skarsaune, *Shadow of the Temple*, 181; cf. 223).

⁷³ Neve (*History of Christian Thought*, 39) offers several examples of this moralism from Polycarp ("If you are able to do what is good, do not delay, for alms have the power to release from death"), *Barn.* 19.10 ("If you turn to the Lord with your whole heart and work righteousness the remaining days of your life, and serve him strictly according to his will, he will heal your former sins"), and others (*Herm. Mand.* 12.6.2, *2 Clement* 16.4). He continues, "Due to Jewish and heathen impulses, the idea also arose that it is possible to perform an *excess of good works*, which is made the foundation of a higher morality. The *Didache* declares, "If you will wear the entire yoke of Christ, you will be perfect; if not, then do what you can" (VI.2), and Hermas says, "If you can do more than what God commands, you will earn more glory for yourself and you will have more honor before God" (*Similitudo*, V, 3, 3).

⁷⁴ A thesis advanced by Elaine H. Pagels, *The Gnostic Paul: Gnostic Exegesis of the Pauline Letters* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1975), 162.

focus for the covenant Story of the changed nature of the divine-human relationship still demonstrates how such notions had become dimmed in the patristic tradition.

2.2.2. *Four Divergences from the New-Covenant Canonical Tradition*

The moralistic leanings (i.e., the tendency to express the genius of the new covenant in terms of reward, merit, and punishment) and the developing supersessionism document the dulling of the new covenant's genius in the patristic tradition. Because of this moralistic motif, Barnett bluntly states that when we leave the canonical tradition in church history, "we are stepping into another world."⁷⁵

The same point is affirmed by students of early Gnosticism. For example, van den Broek claims, "The gnostics experienced their salvation as a gift of grace which made them free of the world and put them right away into the new life. They understood Paul better than most of their fellow-Christians, who tended to express salvation in the ethical categories of merit and reward."⁷⁶

As van den Broek's claim for the deficient understanding of the doctrine of grace in patristic tradition has been taken up and argued by others like Drewery and McGrath,⁷⁷ there are other ways in which the divergence of the *mentum patrorum* from the new-covenant canonical tradition may be noted. I offer four that are both early and dominate in the patristic tradition.

All four represent what one might call a "dimming" of the fundamental grace of forgiveness of sins provided in the new covenant that was explicated and proclaimed in the documents of the apostolic church (see §1 above). To be sure, one must tread carefully at this point and not overstate the measure of patristic divergence to the new-covenant tradition as is typical in Protestantism. Clearly, the catholic church was the heir of the biblical tradition, but to assert it was unaffected by its social and historical context would be unjustified as well. The following represent particular early ecclesial emphases and praxis of the developing patristic tradition that, in addition to supersessionism, betray a less than full assimilation of the covenant canonical tradition.⁷⁸

First, dominance of the *Christus Victor* model of the atonement in the early patristic tradition means that things other than forgiveness of sins occupy center stage. Aulen notes this in his remarks concerning Irenaeus: "Irenaeus, in common with other Eastern theologians, places relatively little emphasis on sin, because he regards salvation as the bestowal of life rather than of forgiveness, and as a victory over mortality rather than of forgiveness, and as a victory over mortality rather than over

⁷⁵ Paul W. Barnett, "Salvation," *DLNT* 1074–75; cf. also Seeberg, *History of Doctrines*, 79, who, in reference to the Apologists, makes the link between missing Paul and going moralistic clear: "as the Pauline idea of justification was lost sight of, a moralistic element readily became interwoven . . ."

⁷⁶ R. van den Broek, "The Present State of Gnostic Studies," *VC* 37 (1983): 70–71.

⁷⁷ Benjamin Drewery, *Origen and the Doctrine of Grace* (London: Epworth, 1960); Alister McGrath, *Iustitia Dei: A History of the Christian Doctrine of Justification* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986]; cf. also T. F. Torrance, *The Doctrine of Grace in the Apostolic Fathers* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 1996).

⁷⁸ D. H. Williams ("Justification by Faith: A Patristic Doctrine," *JEH* 57 [2006]: 649–67) makes a compelling case against Protestant overstatement of the patristic divergence from biblical salvation, which he detects in Drewery, Torrance, and McGrath (n. 76 above). Williams does not deny the early neglect of Paul and the presence of moralistic statements exemplified in Hermas and *Barnabas*, but his argument against overstatement comes largely from Hilary and does not address the trajectories of ecclesial praxis that began much earlier which are addressed here.

sin.”⁷⁹ As Burns has demonstrated, the pattern seen in Irenaeus continues to mark the Eastern Church’s economy of salvation, but Augustine, moved through his deep study of Paul, characterized the different focus that developed among the Latins.⁸⁰

Second, the second-century church tended to dissipate the power of Christ’s cross to other mediating objects and human moral striving. Thus, they displaced the church’s canonical new-covenant tradition, namely, that the Suffering Servant’s sacrifice resolved the sin-problem.⁸¹ This development applied especially to the growing sacramental theology that also tended to color the sacraments in quasi-magical tones as Lampe’s study of baptism clearly shows. He notes how in the patristic tradition

the seal of the Spirit, received in Baptism, begins to be conceived in quasi-magical terms as a mark impressed upon the soul by the due performance of the baptismal ceremonial, a stamp whose purpose is to safeguard the recipient from the hostile powers of the Devil, and preserve him in soul and body unharmed for the enjoyment of immortality.⁸²

Proliferation of sacramentals and other alien elements in the worship and theological tradition of the fathers reflect similar divergence from the new-covenant tradition’s trajectory of the all-sufficiency of Christ’s cross. It is as N. T. Wright has observed: when one presently lacks assurance that their sins are forgiven because of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ alone and that their hope is sure and certain, then “all the things of Roman theology to which true Protestantism rightly objects grow from this root.”⁸³

Third, as Wright’s statement suggests, the ecclesiology of the church’s tradition developed along vectors alien to the canonical tradition’s new-covenant ideals. Worship forms and ecclesial institutions gradually reinstated *mediation* to the worshipper’s access to the Father, who had rent the temple veil in the cross of his Son (Matt 27:51). Holy buildings, holy hierarchies, and holy calendars began to constrain what the Spirit had poured into the soul of every believer according to the prophets’ expectation for a coming age. According to Jesus and Paul, this expectation “now is” in the inaugurated new covenant (John 4:22–24; Col 2:20–22). Accordingly, the ecclesial praxis represented on the pages of the NT is different from that of the old covenant and the church tradition that had re-judaized itself by those older

⁷⁹ Gustaf Aulen, *Christus Victor: An Historical Study of the Three Main Types of the Idea of the Atonement* (London: SPCK, 1965), 22; Seeberg, *History of Doctrines*, 130.

⁸⁰ J. Patout Burns, “The Economy of Salvation: Two Patristic Traditions,” *TS* 37 (1976): 598–619.

⁸¹ Seeberg charts the theological terrain here: “As the work of Christ is not understood as having directly in view the forgiveness of sins, so there is naturally a failure to retain this forgiveness as an essential object of faith. Good works are considered as necessary in order to become sure of forgiveness of sins. It is perfectly proper to speak of the ‘moralism’ of such views” (Seeberg, *History of Doctrines*, 80).

⁸² G. W. H. Lampe, *The Seal of the Spirit* (London: SPCK, 1967), 150. Weltin sees three elements of quasi-magic in the church’s early sacramentalism: “(1) evidences of faith in the inherent power of words and signs in themselves and as imitative operations, (2) signs of efficaciousness in important ceremonies regardless of the subjective intention or character of the ministrant or recipients, (3) indications that God’s attention, response, and even presence can be compelled by the ministrant whenever he speaks the required words and makes the prescribed esoteric signs” (E. G. Weltin, “The Concept of *Ex-Opere-Operato* Efficacy in the Fathers as an Evidence of Magic in Early Christianity,” *GRBS* 3:1 [1960]: 80).

⁸³ Tom Wright, “Justification: The Biblical Basis and Its Relevance for Contemporary Evangelicalism,” in *The Great Acquittal: Justification by Faith and Current Christian Thought* (ed. G. Reid; London: Collins, 1982), 31–32.

patterns: it is more lay than clerical, congregational than hierarchical, and voluntary than professional.⁸⁴ The charismatic power of the Spirit authorizes a more democratized ministry where each one has a psalm, a teaching, a revelation, a tongue, an interpretation (1 Cor 14:26). Thus, laid bare is a faulty assumption behind the charge often made that the canonical tradition is materially insufficient for the needs of the church's worship. In actuality with new-covenant fullness, matters of form and ritual so necessary for an older day are decidedly secondary to the freedom of worship that is in the Spirit and the new truth of Christ (John 4:23).⁸⁵

Fourth, the growing institutionalization of the patristic tradition also correlated well to a perception of God quite alien to the new-covenant canonical tradition. Whereas the new-covenant Story climaxes in the unbroken communion between creature and Creator provided in the forgiveness of sins, God the Father in the patristic tradition waxes again strangely distant and becomes shrouded in the mist of absoluteness, impassibility (ἀπάθεια) and apophatic discourse as the maxims of Neoplatonism are enlisted to talk of him and battle pagans.⁸⁶ God's nature as *love*, revealed in the cross of the incarnate Son, gets light play in the Fathers compared to the *du jour* pagan neoplatonist agenda of divine transcendence, unity, and creation *ex nihilo* and where the Son appears as the incarnation of the Father's *reason*.⁸⁷ Justin, as Grant notes, defines God just as he did as a Platonist: eternally immutable and the source of all existence. God has no name, for a name is applied by someone "elder" than the one named; his names are merely derived from his relations with man and the cosmos.⁸⁸ Albinus uses the school definitions when he asserts that the human mind can reach God only by means of abstraction or negation, analogy, or gradual ascension.⁸⁹ The same goes for the Aristides, Theophilus of Antioch, and the apophatic description of God given by Athenagoras: ungenerated, invisible, impassible, incomprehensible, and immeasurable.⁹⁰ These and many other examples establish Pelikan's claim that the patristic doctrine of

⁸⁴ James Tunstead Burtchaell, *From Synagogue to Church* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 274; A. T. Lincoln, "From Sabbath to Lord's Day: A Biblical and Theological Perspective," in *From Sabbath to the Lord's Day*, 368–78.

⁸⁵ Herbert Haag argues that the charge of the Roman state that Christianity was a religion without a liturgy together with the growing "new Israel" hermeneutic was impetus to retreat to old testament patterns in worship (Herbert Haag, *Da Gesù al Sacerdozio* [Turin: Claudiana, 2001], 82–83; cited by Ronald E. Diprose, *Israel and the Church: The Origins and Effects of Replacement Theology* [Waynesboro, GA: Authentic Media, 2000], 94).

⁸⁶ Cf. J. N. D. Kelley, *Early Christian Doctrines* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1978), 83–87; G. L. Prestige, *God in Patristic Thought* (London: SPCK, 1964), 1–24.

⁸⁷ R. M. Grant, *The Early Christian Doctrine of God* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia, 1966), 64. Grant sees this prevalent until Augustine's famous interpretation of the Trinity. Cf. also Anders Nygren's classic study of the inherent incompatibility of the pagan immutable and incorruptible god and the God of Christianity who is *Agape* and who forgives sin (*Agape and Eros: A Study of the Christian Idea of Love* [London: SPCK, 1938; trans. Philip S. Watson; Philadelphia: Westminster, 1953], esp. 200–202).

⁸⁸ Justin, *Dial.*, 3.5; *1 Apol.* 13. 4, cited by Grant, *Doctrine of God*, 5, 21.

⁸⁹ Albinus, *Epit.* 10; cited in Grant, *Doctrine of God*, 23.

⁹⁰ Cited by Robert M. Grant, "The Doctrine of God in Early Christian Thought," in *Papers Presented to the Third International Congress on New Testament Studies Held at Christ Church, Oxford, 1965; Part II: The New Testament Message*, vol. 5 of *Studia Evangelica* (ed. F. L. Cross; Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1968), 65–66; repr. from *ZKG* 70 [1959]).

God is one of “the most reliable indications of the continuing hold of Greek philosophy on Christian theology.”⁹¹

2.3. Summary

The “spiritual Israel” hermeneutic of Justin that had wrestled the OT from the Jews bore in the patristic tradition certain implications for the continuity and discontinuity of the canonical covenant-Story. First, it tended to *de-historicize* the new covenant’s continuity for the nation of Israel. The application of the new covenant to Gentiles of the church functioned effectively to *unelect* the Jews as if universality of the kingdom excluded out of hand a place for any Jewish ethnicity.⁹²

Second, the discontinuity of the new covenant’s *novum* in the radical *forgiveness of sins* was blunted as the patristic tradition languished under older forms of religion and theology. The challenge the apostle Paul represented to the self-identity of his own generation continued to haunt the reflections of those who followed after and the stunning resolution to the problem of sin provided in the cross of Christ became diluted with notions and forms of an earlier time. The *charisma* of the Spirit, now poured out for the inauguration of the eschatological joy, became shackled in the institutional forms more characteristic of a day that knew of his work only as a violent irruption upon life, but not as the natural foundation of it.⁹³ And the Father’s love, demonstrated in Christ’s cross that inaugurated unmediated communion with the creation, wanes distant through growing sacramentalism, moralism, and pagan philosophical categories.

3. Conclusion: Which Tradition?

Almost thirty years ago, David Steinmetz was reminding us all of “The Superiority of Pre-Critical Exegesis,” and in that same spirit it is not uncommon today to encounter *apologia* for the *mentum patrum* and the “grammar of tradition” they authored.⁹⁴ But the *inner canonical logic* of the covenant program that began in the OT and extends into the NT in the apostles’ new-covenant tradition suggests the limits of this patristic tradition and perhaps the more measured tones with which it should be advocated today as a hermeneutical maxim. While there can be no doubt that the legacy of the apostle’s kerygma is present in the early post-apostolic church, the so-called “grammar” of their tradition, as measured by how they attended to the continuity and discontinuity of the new covenant, bears the same marks of historical contextuality that binds the grammar of the church in every age.

Privileging the early patristic tradition as some kind of “hermeneutical ground zero” or as *necessary* for evangelicals to stay orthodox therefore neglects the hermeneutical norm the canonical writers employed in the new-covenant Story and falls into the same tar pit as the “other christianities” also being pushed today.⁹⁵ Both camps mistakenly assume that Christianity simply began with Jesus Christ

⁹¹ Pelikan, *Emergence of the Catholic Tradition*, 51; cf. 52–55.

⁹² See note 24 above.

⁹³ Gustav Friedrich Oehler, *Theology of the Old Testament* (London: T&T Clark, 1873; repr.; Minneapolis: Klock & Klock, 1978), 462–63.

⁹⁴ Steinmetz, “Superiority of Pre-Critical Exegesis.” Cf. Robert Louis Wilken, “How to Read the Bible,” *First Things* 181 (March 2008): 24–27; Thomas Weinandy, “Why Ask the Fathers? The Dynamics of Living Tradition,” *American Theological Inquiry* 1 (2008): 6–10.

⁹⁵ Mark R. Saucy, “Between DaVinci and Rome: The New Covenant as a Theological Norm in Early Christianity,” *TJ* 27:2 (2006): 199–225.

and then proceed to argue for heresy or orthodoxy from there. However, it was *not* in competition with other contemporary options that the disciples located their gospel. Rather, they looked back to the OT canonical script for their interpretation of the person, life, and ministry of Jesus Christ. This indeed was the hermeneutical lens for the gospel that founded the church and that always measures the church and that the Protestant Reformers intended under the maxim of *sola scriptura*.⁹⁶

⁹⁶ See Calvin's *Institutes* 4.9.8 and 4.8.9 for the "majesty" of the early Church's councils and their place relative to Scripture (cf. J. F. Peter, "The Place of Tradition in Reformed Theology," *SJT* 18 [1965]: 294–307). Keith A. Mathison (*The Shape of Sola Scriptura* [Moscow, ID: Canon, 2001]) articulates well the difference between the Reformers' *sola scriptura* and its perversion in *solo scriptura* that appears to fund much criticism of the bona fide *sola scriptura* doctrine even among evangelicals (e.g., D. H. Williams, "In Search for *Sola Scriptura* in the Early Church," *Int* 52 [1998]: 354–66).

Not Ashamed! The Sufficiency of Scripture for Public Theology¹

— Dan Strange —

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Last eve I passed beside a blacksmith's door
And heard the anvil ring the vesper chime;
When looking in, I saw upon the floor,
Old hammers worn with beating years of time.

“How many anvils have you had,” said I,
“To wear and batter these hammers so?”
“Just one,” said he; then with a twinkling eye,
“The anvil wears the hammers out, you know.”

And so, I thought, the anvil of God's Word,
For ages, skeptics blows have beat upon;
Yet, though the noise of falling blows was heard,
The anvil is unharmed—the hammers gone.

—John Clifford

For Christians in the United Kingdom,² the Bible appears to have suffered a reversal of fortune with regards to its standing in public life. Picture two scenes which may seem somewhat ‘random’ but which, to my mind, are illustratively indicative. The first scene concerns itself with the theme of royalty. Whether one is a royalist or not, or even whether one takes any of the ‘pomp and circumstance’ of monarchy as being at all relevant to British life and culture, surely there was still *something* encouraging and positive for the Christian believer who listened and now incredibly for the first time *watched* the coronation ceremony of Elizabeth II in June 1953. For it was with the following words from the Archbishop of Canterbury that Her majesty received a copy of the Bible:

¹ This article is an updated version of a paper originally presented and discussed at the Affinity Theological Conference in England in February 2011.

² The focus of this article concerns British life and culture. Those from a different cultural background will have to contextualize appropriately.

Our gracious Queen: to keep your Majesty ever mindful of the Law and the Gospel of God as the Rule for the whole life and government of Christian Princes, we present you with this Book, the most valuable thing that this world affords. Here is Wisdom; This is the royal Law; These are the lively Oracles of God.

While there are those in all sectors of our society who wish it were not so, one cannot deny the relevance, role, and yes, even rule, that the Bible has explicitly played in the shaping of British life and culture. This may be obvious to some, but for many, including many Christians, there are severe cases of historical myopia and amnesia which need remedying. The Bible's influence is enormous in all fields but let us take just two examples: the Bible as the basis for common law and the motivation for the origins of modern science.

It is likely that within two hundred years of Jesus' birth Britannia had heard the Christian message, but it was not until the 511 and the preaching of Patrick, Columba, Aiden, and Augustine that Christian numbers and influence increased. The earliest document written in English is the law code of Ethelbert, which was strongly influenced by biblical ideals and law. The common law system developed during the twelfth and thirteen centuries was largely shaped by Christian values. Many aspects of the British justice system that we cherish—retributive justice, legal representation, the taking of oaths, judicial investigation, and rules for evidence—all owe a debt to a Christian influence based on the biblical revelation.

In a similar vein, inscribed in Latin over the door of the physics laboratory in Cambridge is neither 'physics is fun' nor 'leave your faith before entering' but Ps 111:2: 'Great are the works of the Lord. Studied by all those who delight in them,'³ a verse chosen by the scientist and formulator of electromagnetic theory, James Clark Maxwell. As the author P.D James summarizes concerning the 'Authorized Version,' 'No book had had a more profound and lasting influence on religious life, the history and the culture, the institutions and the language of the English-speaking peoples throughout the world than has the King James Bible.'⁴

Compare our coronation scene with another televisual event held at the Corn Exchange in Brighton in September 2005. Both the audience and panel hostilely received Stephen Green, the National Director of *Christian Voice*, in his one and only ignominious appearance on the BBC's *Question Time* (a long-running political panel programme in the UK). Again, while one might not support the cause and tone of his organization nor think Green's overall presence and communication skills were the most winsome, it was the muffled but still audible groans, sighs, and titters that were induced whenever Green answered a contemporary political issue by quoting from the Bible. For the Christian watching on, this was perhaps the most painful part to bear. For we know that not a year goes by without some new survey or poll highlighting new levels of biblical illiteracy, incredulity, and disdain in our country. As Boyd Tonkin wrote last year in *The Independent*, again on the subject of the KJV,

For anyone religious or not, who cares about the continuity of culture and understanding, Gordon Campbell lets slip a remark to freeze the blood. A professor at Leicester University, he recalls that 'When the name of Moses came up at the seminar I was

³ 'Magna opera Domini exquisita in omnes voluntates ejus'

⁴ Cited in Susan Elkin, 'Restoring Holy Order', *The Independent* (October 17, 2010). Cited 14 July 2011. Online: <http://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/books/features/restoring-holy-order-is-the-king-james-bible-the-only-version-we-should-celebrate-2105869.html>.

leading, no one had any idea whom he might have been, though a Muslim student eventually asked if he was the same person as Musa in the Qur'an (which he is).⁵

Chilling indeed.

Now, in matters of public life and public policy, and remembering Alistair Campbell's infamous rebuff that 'we don't do God',⁶ there is some evidence that we just *might* be witnessing the start, albeit a glacially slow start, of a thaw regarding a discussion on the place and legitimacy of 'religious commitments' in public life. However, it still appears that for all concerned, both Christians and non-Christians, there is a moratorium on even discussing the possible role, relevance, and rule of the Bible in public life: we *definitely* 'don't do the Bible'. Let me pose a number of awkward questions: Was the pain and frankly toe-curling embarrassment that many *Christians* felt in the Stephen Green appearance as much about the massive apologetic *faux-pas* we thought he was making in his insistence in referring to and quoting from Scripture? Were we not witnessing the awful grating of two incommensurable worlds colliding, worlds that we really believe should now never come into contact with each other? The first, the sophisticated, slick, confessionally 'thin,' allegedly 'neutral' *lingua franca* of modern politics of rights, equality, tolerance, and freedoms. The second, a naïve, unsophisticated, anachronistic, and so irrelevant 'thick' description of Christian particularity, certainly mentioning rights, equality, tolerance, and freedoms, but adding 'God,' 'Jesus,' and 'Bible' to the mix. Were we not witnessing here the breaking of an unspeakable taboo? Was not our number one fear being realised? In this public arena were we ashamed of the Bible being used in this way? Did we think that the Bible was unfit for public service? At this low point (or should it be high point?) of inappropriateness and inconceivability, were we as Christians guilty of buying into the revisionist history which determinedly airbrushes out the impact of Scripture and forgets a time when various public figures had gathered together for six years *in* Parliament itself under the authority of Scripture?

There are, of course, many historical, cultural, sociological, philosophical, and, most important (for it undergirds them all), 'theological' factors which can be cited as reasons for the decline of the Bible's relevance, role, and rule in British lives, British homes, British culture, and British public life (and we may want to add, within many British churches). In being a part of Western culture, these factors have been well-documented and analysed and so will not be dealt with here.⁷ Of course, how our British 'world' deals with the Word is not totally within our control, but thankfully within God's sovereign providence. In the time and circumstances God has placed us, we are called to be faithful. However 'being faithful' means that as Christians in this country in 2011, we do have a role and a responsibility when it comes to reflecting and then acting upon the role we give to the Bible, not just in our own lives or in our church's (what might be called a 'bottom-up' work), but in our 'public theology' (what might

⁵ Boyd Tonkin, 'Battles of a Book,' *The Independent* (December 31, 2010). Cited 14 July 2011. Online: <http://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/books/features/battles-of-a-book-the-king-james-bibles-history-of-dissent-and-inspiration-2171902.html>.

⁶ Campbell was Tony Blair's combative 'spin doctor' who interjected when a journalist deigned to ask the then Prime Minister about his faith.

⁷ E.g., the works of Francis Schaeffer, David Wells, Os Guinness, Herbert Schlossberg, and most recently, James Davison Hunter, *To Change the World: The Irony, Tragedy and Possibility of Christianity in the Late Modern World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010); and Nancy Pearcey, *Saving Leonardo: A Call to Resist the Secular Assault on Mind, Morals, and Meaning* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2010).

be called a top-down work).⁸ It is this arena that I wish to focus on in this paper. Narrowing this focus even further, and coming closer to home, I want to concentrate on how conservative evangelicals and especially those in the Reformed community view the relevance, role, and rule of the Bible in public life, for while there may be a healthy consensus when it comes to the relevance, role, and rule of the Bible in our lives and churches, when it comes to the public square no such consensus exists.

In what follows I compare and contrast two broad positions within Reformed theology:

1. The first, and at the risk of caricature, are those who both for theological and tactical reasons argue for the ‘insufficiency’ (or maybe less polemically ‘illegitimacy’) of the use of the Bible in the public realm but rather the ‘sufficiency’ (or probably better, ‘legitimacy’) of natural revelation embodied in a natural law.
2. The second argue for precisely the opposite.

Those familiar with contemporary Reformed theology in North America will immediately recognise the derivative nature of my argument as I am piggy-backing a very ‘live and kicking’ discussion happening amongst Reformed theologians.⁹ While drawing largely from these North American theologians and this intra-Reformed North American debate, I wish to take seriously the kernel of truth that culturally and politically we are two nations divided by a common language. My aim in this paper therefore is to stimulate further theological reflection and praxis amongst Reformed believers this side of the pond, attempting to contextualize my application and conclusion within our own particular British context.

For reasons I hope to outline, and perhaps showing my hand rather early, I unashamedly embrace the stance that in our public discourse we should engage consciously and explicitly with the Bible as our ultimate authority and that by doing so we will increase *both* our opportunities for evangelism *and* the possibility for social transformation.

1. Rooting Public Engagement in God’s Plan for the World

Both of these two positions on Scripture are inextricably embedded within larger theological ‘visions’ that differ while employing a united ‘grammar’ and ‘language’ of confessional Reformed orthodoxy.¹⁰ Before we concentrate on these respective doctrines of the use or abuse Scripture in public theology, it is worth briefly sketching the theological tenets which both unite and divide these projects.

⁸ Let us use John Bolt’s definition of public theology (‘North American Evangelical Public Theology Today’ [public lecture, 2008; transcript given to the author]): ‘by “public theology” I have in mind the careful, theological thinking about why and how Christians should bear witness in the public square. Included here are questions about how a believer personally relates to public institutions, how Christians think about the best way public order should be constituted, how and to what extent a Christian should strive to influence public policy. . . . It is useful to use the term “public theology” to indicate those aspects of theological reflection that are intentionally directed to the interface between the Christian faith and public life, understood now as the equally intentional efforts of life in the public civic community, a community shared by many who do not share our faith.’

⁹ Indeed sometimes it seems between Westminster campuses and alumni.

¹⁰ While I will demonstrate that there are significant differences between these two positions, I do not want to lose perspective and minimize the broader theological commonality which unites them both. This is an internal ‘family’ dispute within Reformed theology.

Let us start with the raw systematic and biblical-theological material we must fashion and which both sides take as ‘Reformed’ givens. First, we have the reality of God’s general revelation in nature and history and God’s ‘worded’ special revelation. A corollary here is God’s moral standard or norm, his law both revealed in general revelation and special revelation. Second is the overarching world historical pattern of creation, fall, redemption, consummation, and some important ‘glueing’ doctrines which join them together, the concept of ‘covenant’ with its blessings and curses, and ‘kingdom’ with its rulers and realms.

Under ‘creation’ we must mention that all human beings are made in the image of God, made functionally to replicate God’s ‘speaking’ and ‘making’ activities under God’s norms and authority. In other words, human beings are by nature culture-builders. This facet of the *imago Dei* is reinforced in the cultural mandate of Gen 1:26–31; 2:18–25. Finally in terms of creation, God has ordered the world in a structurally or institutionally pluralistic way: under his supreme authority there are other subordinate authorities, each with their own unique jurisdictions, responsibilities, and sanctions (church, family, state, etc.). Under ‘Fall’ we must reckon anthropologically with the complimentary truths of the ‘antithesis,’ common grace, and the image of God. The ‘antithesis’ is God’s judicial curse sovereignly inflicted on humanity in Gen 3:15 and which from then until now puts enmity between followers of God and followers of Satan at all levels, intellectual and moral, individual and societal. The antithesis is *principally* ‘the diametrical opposition between belief and unbelief and therefore between belief and any compromise of revealed truth.’¹¹ The Bible presents this stark contrast between belief and unbelief in many ways: light and dark, death and life, those who are blind and those who can see, covenant keepers and covenant breakers, those in Adam and those in Christ. I stress *principally* because as well as affirming the truth of the antithesis we must also affirm two other biblical truths. First, as believers we know in practice that a version of the antithesis still runs through our own hearts as we daily deal with our indwelling sin, sin which is a contradiction according to who we are in Christ. Second, we note an analogous inconsistency in the unbeliever.¹²

As well as the ‘antithesis,’ we must affirm God’s non-salvific common grace, his goodness showered on a sin-cursed world. In common grace God restrains his own wrath and restrains sin and its consequences in unbelievers, and he also positively blesses creation and excites the unbeliever to perform works of civic righteousness. We must also affirm that despite their rebellion epistemologically (in terms of knowledge) and ethically (in terms of morality), metaphysically (in terms of being) all men and women remain in the image of God with the dignity that this affords. In their very ‘humanity’ they reveal the God who is, and no matter how much they claim otherwise and try to deface this image, they can never totally succeed. The idols they necessarily fashion in creation and in the mind are distorted and perverted copies and counterfeits of the living God, whom they know but do not know. The perennial nature of the *imago Dei* includes mankind’s ‘culture-building’ function. Does the culture built reflect worship of the living God or worship of an idol?

¹¹ John Frame, *Cornelius Van Til: An Analysis of His Thought* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian & Reformed), 188.

¹² “The natural man, “sins against” his own essentially Satanic principle. As the Christian has the incubus of his “old man” weighing him down and therefore keeping him from realizing the “life of Christ” within him, so the natural man has the incubus of the sense of Deity weighing him down and keeping him from realizing the life of Satan within him’ (Cornelius Van Til, *An Introduction to Systematic Theology* [Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian & Reformed, 1974], 27).

Under 'redemption' we have the significance of Christ's life, death, resurrection, ascension, and continuing session for *all* of creation, the Great Commission to disciple all nations, and some version of an 'inaugurated eschatology' (the now and not-yet) although shaped by one's millennial sensibilities. Finally under 'consummation' we affirm the physicality of the new heavens and the new earth.¹³

2. Ambitions for Public Life: A Description of Two (Reformed) Ways to Live

The above sketch should be recognisable to all those who are confessionally 'Reformed'.¹⁴ Now we witness the differences as we configure, stress, emphasise, accent, and nuance the above tenets in different ways and start to join the dots.

Theologically, one helpful way to understand these differences is viewing them as a set of interconnected relationships of continuity and discontinuity.¹⁵ What is the continuity and/or discontinuity between creation and redemption, between the cultural mandate and the gospel mandate, between the creation and new creation this side of judgment day and the new heaven and new earth the other side? Typologically and hermeneutically, what is the continuity and discontinuity between old covenant and new covenant, OT Israel and the church of Christ, OT Israel and the nations, between the Mosaic Law, the Royal Law, and the law written on the heart? More pointedly, we could boil everything down into three questions:

1. What does *God* require and demand of a society? (This is a quasi-spatial category dealing with legitimacy.)
2. What should *we* expect to see in a society in this current age? (This is a quasi-temporal category dealing with feasibility.)
3. What activities is the *church qua church* responsible for within society? (This is an ecclesiological question dealing with vocation.)

As one plots where one stands on all these questions, there will begin to appear in outline-form two related but quite distinct 'visions' for public theology. Indeed, there is a strong sibling rivalry between the two. Both claim to have a rich historical pedigree (both claim to be heirs of the magisterial Reformation and the Westminster Standards), and both have their sophisticated contemporary interpreters, all who give their own variations on a theme. I can do little more here than bash out the basic melody of both before concentrating on the issue of Scripture.

¹³ For a general introduction, see Anthony Hoekema, *The Bible and the Future* (Carlisle: Paternoster, 1979).

¹⁴ More broadly, I would want to argue that these 'Reformed' givens are faithful to the non-negotiable biblical theological plot-line and turning points as articulated by D. A. Carson in *Christ and Culture Revisited* (Nottingham: Apollos, 2008).

¹⁵ In a larger theological context and compared to, say, dispensationalism, Reformed theology is itself a model of continuity.

1.1. A Common-Kingdom Model

The first is a common-kingdom model.¹⁶ On the ‘Reformed’ version of the continuity/discontinuity question, the common-kingdom model can be called a model of discontinuity and dichotomy. Its more recent advocates include Meredith Kline,¹⁷ Michael Horton,¹⁸ Daryl Hart,¹⁹ Stephen Grabhill,²⁰ Ken Myers,²¹ and especially David VanDrunen,²² a scholar who has done more than anyone to defend and champion this vision.

A thumbnail sketch can be drawn thus:

- While God is sovereign, Jesus is Lord and King over all, and the Bible is our ultimate authority, God exercises his rule in two different ways: in two different realms, with two different norms, and with two different expectations for each realm.
 - God is Creator and Sustainer (but not Redeemer) of the common-kingdom, a civil realm that pertains to temporal, earthly, provisional matters, not matters of ultimate and spiritual importance.
 - The other realm is the ‘spiritual’ and ‘holy’ realm where God is Creator, Sustainer, and Redeemer in Christ. ‘This kingdom pertains to things that are of ultimate spiritual importance, the things of Christ’s heavenly, eschatological kingdom.’²³
- Concerning the relationship of the two, ‘although necessarily existing together and having some mutual interaction in this world, these two kingdoms enjoy a great measure of independence so that each can pursue the unique work entrusted to it.’²⁴

¹⁶ I have decided to use the title common-kingdom over the more usual ‘two kingdoms’ title (remembering that the ‘common’ kingdom is one of these ‘two’ kingdoms). The phrase ‘two kingdoms’ is classically associated with Lutheranism, what Niebuhr well describes as ‘Christ and culture in paradox’ (H. Richard Niebuhr, *Christ and Culture* [enlarged ed.; San Francisco: Harper Collins, 2001]). As the Augsburg Confession of Faith states, ‘Christ’s kingdom is spiritual; it is knowledge of God in the heart, the fear of God and faith, the beginning of eternal righteousness and eternal life. At the same time it lets us make outward use of the legitimate political ordinances of the nation in which we live, just as it lets us make use of medicine or architecture, food or drink or air. The gospel does not introduce any new laws about the civil estate, but commands us to obey existing laws, whether they were formulated by heathens or by others, and in obedience to practice love.’ Recent Reformed writers have baptized ‘two-kingdoms’ as the title for their own position on the relationship between Christ and culture.

¹⁷ E.g., Meredith Kline, *Kingdom Prologue: Genesis Foundations for a Covenantal Worldview* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2000).

¹⁸ E.g., Michael Horton, *Christless Christianity* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2008)

¹⁹ E.g., Daryl Hart, *A Secular Faith: Why Christianity Favors the Separation of Church and State* (Chicago: Ivan Dee, 2006), 250–51.

²⁰ Stephen Grabhill, *Rediscovering the Natural Law in Reformed Theological Ethics* (Cambridge: Eerdmans, 2006).

²¹ Ken Myers, ‘Christianity, Culture and Common Grace,’ n.p. [cited 14 July 2011]. Online: <http://www.marshillaudio.org/resources/pdf/ComGrace.pdf>.

²² See David VanDrunen, *A Biblical Case for Natural Law* (Grand Rapids: Acton Institute, 2006); idem, *Natural Law and the Two Kingdoms: A Study in the Development of Reformed Social Thought* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010); idem, *Living in God’s Two Kingdoms: A Biblical Vision for Christianity and Culture* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2010).

²³ VanDrunen, *A Biblical Case for Natural Law*, 24.

²⁴ Ibid., 24.

- From the perspective of biblical-theology (and using Kline’s terminology), we can say that from the Fall, and running in parallel with redemptive history, is a God-ordained common cultural history, covenantally instituted in God’s covenant with Noah, made up of both covenant-keepers and covenant-breakers and sustained by God’s common grace.
- Redemptive history and all it contains in terms of Israel, law, society, covenantal sanctions of blessings and cursings is an anomaly, a typological ‘intrusion’ of the eschatological kingdom to come where there will be total separation of covenant keepers and covenant breakers, a true theocracy.²⁵

For a common-kingdom proponent like VanDrunen, the cultural mandate given to the first Adam has been accomplished in the work of Jesus Christ, the last Adam. ‘Thus redemption is not “creation regained” but “re-creation gained”’²⁶

In defining the scope of this ‘re-creation,’ VanDrunen limits continuity between the creation now and the new creation exclusively to the resurrection of believers’ bodies: ‘The NT teaches that the entirety of present cultural activities and products will be brought to a radical end, along with the natural order, at the second coming of Christ.’²⁷ While believers now can and should engage in cultural pursuits joyfully and thankfully, those pursuits should always be accompanied with a ‘deep sense of detachment from this world, and of longing for our true home in the world-to-come.’²⁸

A common-kingdom approach sees a looser connection than some between culture and cult, between the shape of a society and the religious presuppositions underlying that society. There is no distinctively Christian culture or Christian civilization, and while the ‘secularist’ state is an enemy of the civil realm, the ‘secular’ state is a definition of the ‘civil realm,’ one of the triumphs of the West. In a common-kingdom approach, and crucially for the focus of this essay, evangelical public theology concerns this mixed common cultural history, the ‘civil realm’ which has its own norm and moral basis. A common-kingdom approach appreciates and appropriates a version of natural law given in general revelation (Rom 1:18–32), the law written on the heart (Rom 2:14–15), common to all humanity and the moral basis for civic morality, and the common good: ‘Natural law is God’s *common* moral revelation given to all people of whatever religious conviction. . . . Natural law morally obligates human beings insofar as they are created and sustained by God.’²⁹

The common-kingdom model argues that Scripture at this point is an ‘insufficient’ basis in the civil realm. This does not deny the doctrines of scriptural sufficiency and necessity, but it qualifies in a more

²⁵ As Meredith Kline notes, ‘Apropos of the fifth word [commandment], it is in this New Testament age not a legitimate function of a civil government to endorse and support religious establishments. This principle applies equally to the Christian church; for though its invisible government is theocratic with Christ sitting on David’s throne in the heavens and ruling over it, yet its visible organization, in particular as it is related to civil powers, is so designed that it takes a place of only common privilege along with other religious institutions within the framework of common grace’ (*The Structure of Biblical Authority* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1972], 167).

²⁶ VanDrunen, *Living in God’s Two Kingdoms*, 26. It should be noted though that human beings continue to live and be obligated under the cultural mandate as refracted through the Noahic covenant (78–81).

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 67.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 126.

²⁹ VanDrunen, *A Biblical Case for Natural Law*, 38.

minimalistic direction. For example, T. David Gordon, in a provocative edition of *Modern Reformation*³⁰ and popularizing his more scholarly critique of theonomy,³¹ argues that the phrase ‘faith and life’ in the *Westminster Confession of Faith* 1:6³² must be taken in its ‘religious’ sense and is restricted to the covenant community: ‘The Bible is sufficient to guide the human-as-covenanter, but *not* sufficient to guide the human-as-mechanic, the human-as-physician, the human-as-businessman, the human-as-parent, the human-as-husband, the human-as-wife, or the human-as-legislator’.³³

For VanDrunen, although Scripture does give some guidance to Christians in how they are to live faithfully in the common kingdom,³⁴ the main problem for Scripture serving as a moral *standard* for the civil kingdom is that biblical morality is patterned on an indicative-imperative structure meant only for God’s redeemed covenant people:

Scripture does not provide a common moral standard for Christians and non-Christians in the way that natural law does. Natural law is the only moral standard for which there is a common (though implied) indicative that grounds common imperatives: All people are created in God’s image and have this law written upon their hearts; therefore, they should conduct themselves according to the pattern of that image and the demands of the law.³⁵

Finally, while Christians are not to be indifferent culturally, economically, and socially, the common kingdom model ‘demands limited and sober expectations. This perspective gives no reason to expect the attainment of paradise on earth. The civil kingdom, regulated by natural law, is severely limited in what it can attain, but Scripture gives us no reason to expect more from it.’³⁶ It has a relative importance in the maintenance of order and restraining of evil. So as Christians we live ‘hyphenated lives’³⁷ as citizens of both kingdoms, but as aliens and pilgrims and exiles, our true longing is for our spiritual home. The common-kingdom model appears to exclude both theologically and psychologically any version of a postmillennial hope.

³⁰ T. David Gordon, ‘The Insufficiency of Scripture,’ *Modern Reformation* 11 (January–February 2002): 19. See also his response brought about by critical reaction to the original paper: ‘Response from T. David Gordon,’ *Modern Reformation* 11 (May–June): 46.

³¹ T. David Gordon, ‘Critique of Theonomy: A Taxonomy,’ *WTJ* 56 (1994): 23–43.

³² ‘The whole counsel of God concerning all things necessary for his own glory, man’s salvation, faith and life, is either expressly set down in Scripture, or by good and necessary consequence may be deduced from Scripture: unto which nothing at any time is to be added, whether by new revelations of the Spirit or the traditions of men. Nevertheless, we acknowledge . . . that there are some circumstanced concerning the worship of God, and the government of the church, common to human actions and societies, which are to be ordered by the light of nature, and Christian prudence, according to the general rules of the Word, which are always to be observed’ (*WCF* 1:6).

³³ Gordon, ‘The Insufficiency of Scripture,’ 19.

³⁴ Chapter 7 of *Living in God’s Two Kingdoms* looks at the topics of education, vocation, and politics.

³⁵ VanDrunen, *A Biblical Case for Natural Law*, 40. VanDrunen cites several biblical instances of ‘pagans’ demonstrating natural law: Abimelech’s recognition in Gen 20 that Abraham had done ‘things that should not be done’; Abimelech’s ‘fear of God’ in Gen 20:11; and ‘a common humanity’ illustrated by Job (taken here to have been bereft of special revelation) in his reflection of his past conduct in Job 31:13–15.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 40–41.

³⁷ Hart, *A Secular Faith*, 256.

1.2. A Confessional-Kingdom Model

The second model is what I call the confessional-kingdom model.³⁸ On the Reformed version of the continuity/discontinuity question, this model can be called a model of continuity and unity. Reformed advocates here are a far more disparate group, including those ‘neo-Calvinists’ associated with Kuyperianism and/or Dooyewerdianism³⁹ and various disciples of Cornelius Van Til: Vern Poythress,⁴⁰ Peter Leithart,⁴¹ and especially John Frame.⁴² For this sketch, I concern myself with the Van Tillian family.

Here God is sovereign, Jesus is Lord and King over all, the Bible is our ultimate authority, and God commands that everyone acknowledge this in every sphere of life. While still upholding structural and institutional pluralism (i.e., not confusing or conflating church, state, and family), confessional-kingdom models join together aspects they believe common-kingdom proponents falsely dichotomize: earthly and heavenly, physical and spiritual, judicial-covenantal and material, individual and cosmic, civil and religious, God’s law in one realm of life and his law in another.

From the broadest perspective, redemption restores creation in all its many spheres: ‘Redemption is not an ontological transformation, but an ethical reorientation and redirection.’⁴³ Because Christ’s work is *the* significant event in history as the transition from wrath to grace, the confessional-kingdom model places less stress on the discontinuity between the earth now and the new heaven and new earth because the new creation, inaugurated by Christ’s resurrection and its firstfruits, has begun in history. Therefore, rather than thinking of ourselves as ‘resident aliens’, might it be more accurate to think of ourselves as ‘alienated residents’?⁴⁴ And when one’s framework encompasses the movement from paradise lost to paradise regained and when one recognizes the physicality and continuity between the now and not-yet, this motivates them to start working as soon as they are converted.

Another way of looking at this is the ‘conceptual congruence’ between cultural mandate and the Great Commission.

The Great Commission is the republication of the cultural mandate for the semi-eschatological age. Unlike the original cultural mandate, it presupposes the existence of sin and the accomplishment of redemption. It recognizes that if the world is to be

³⁸ I am intentionally using the term confessional rather than a term like transformational because in my experience the latter can be unhelpfully misleading and distracting.

³⁹ E.g., Al Wolters, *Creation Regained: Biblical Basics for a Reformation Worldview* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1986). I should note that there are versions of Dooyewerdian sphere sovereignty that can resemble a common kingdom position and thus susceptible to the same critique. See Frame, *Doctrine of the Word of God*, 392–421.

⁴⁰ Vern S. Poythress, *The Shadow of Christ in the Law of Moses* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian & Reformed, 1991).

⁴¹ E.g., Peter J. Leithart, *Against Christianity* (Moscow: Canon, 2003); idem, *Defending Constantine* (Downers Grove: IVP, 2010)

⁴² E.g., John M. Frame, *Doctrine of the Christian Life* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian & Reformed, 2008).

⁴³ Michael Williams, ‘A Restorational Alternative to Augustinian Verticalist Eschatology’, *Pro Rege* (June 1992): 15.

⁴⁴ David Bruce Hegeman, *Plowing in Hope: Toward a Biblical Theology of Culture* (Moscow: Canon), 88.

filled with worshippers of God, subduing the earth as his vassal kings, they must first be converted to Christ through the preaching of the gospel.⁴⁵

In this vision, *if* cultural transformation is a desired end, this should not and will not come about by imposed morality but by men and women being converted and willingly submitting themselves to the King of Kings and his rule.

Like a common-kingdom approach, the confessional-kingdom approach regards the ‘secularist’ state as an enemy to be opposed. Unlike the common-kingdom approach, the ‘secular’ state is not to be prescribed but rather seen to be a ‘myth’, a confused, compromised, and unstable state of affairs, and a fruit of the Enlightenment rather than the Reformation.⁴⁶ The confessional-kingdom model can incorporate the concept of Christendom, and a confessionally Christian state is by no means anathema because the gospel has inevitable public and political implications.

Concerning revelation, confessional-kingdom models are far less happy to separate general revelation and special revelation, natural law and biblical law. Both are needed and always have been needed to interpret the other. Confessional-kingdom models recognise the personal knowledge of God that all unbelievers have by virtue of their being made in God’s image, and yet they tend to stress more the antithesis between the believer and unbeliever and the inextricable link between cult (the worship of the living God or the worship of idols) and culture (the externalisation of that worship). That is, the noetic effects of the Fall are so damaging and debilitating that general revelation, without the clarity and regenerating power of special revelation, is severely limited and certainly is not a stable ground for moral consensus. The Bible is both sufficient and necessary to equip the Christian for *every* good work, which includes the cultural and political spheres. The confessional-kingdom model affirms common grace as a *description* of God’s goodness in causing the sinner to be inconsistent in his thinking and acting, not as a *prescription* of what culture should look like in its movement from Garden to Garden-City.

For example, and in contrast to Gordon, John Frame speaks in more maximalist terms of the ‘comprehensiveness’ of Scripture, the way in which Christ rules our lives in a totalitarian way for our good and the good of others:

When people are converted to believe in Christ, they bring their new faith and love into their daily work. They ask how Christ bears upon their work as historians, scientists, musicians, how this new passion of theirs affects art, entertainment, medicine, the care of the poor and sick, the justice of courts, the punishment of convicts, relations between nations.⁴⁷

How then is the comprehensiveness of Scripture related to its sufficiency? Here Frame gives his own interpretation of ‘faith and life’ in *WCF* 1:6:

Christians sometimes say that Scripture is sufficient for religion, for preaching, or theology, but not for auto-repairs, plumbing, animal husbandry, and dentistry. And of course, many argue that it is not sufficient for science, philosophy and even ethics. That

⁴⁵ Frame, *Doctrine of the Christian Life*, 310.

⁴⁶ I.e., the ‘secular’ state is in reality itself a ‘confessional’ state.

⁴⁷ John Frame, *The Doctrine of the Word of God* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian & Reformed), 218. Key verses he cites are 1 Cor 10:31; Col. 3:17; Rom 14:23.

is to miss an important point. Certainly, Scripture contains more specific information relevant to theology than to dentistry. But sufficiency in the present context is not sufficiency of specific information but sufficiency of divine words. Scripture contains divine words sufficient for all of life. It has all the divine words the plumber needs, and all the divine words that the theologian needs. So it is just as sufficient for plumbing as it is for theology. And in that sense it is sufficient for science and ethics as well.⁴⁸

Both ‘the light of nature’ and ‘Christian prudence’ mentioned in the *WCF* are necessary to give us guidance, not by adding to Scripture but by applying the ‘general rules of the Word’. They are ‘a means of determining how the sufficient word of Scripture should be applied to a specific situation.’⁴⁹

Finally, what are the expectations of confessional-kingdom proponents? Here, as elsewhere one’s eschatological commitments play a large part in answering this question. I believe one can construct versions of transformation which cover a range of Reformed eschatological views. Whatever our short-term or long-term expectations, whatever transformation we see or don’t see, we are called to be faithful.

3. Authorities in Public Discourse: A Critique of the Normativity of Natural Law

§2 sketches the contours of two Reformed ‘projects’ or ‘visions’ (one might say micro-worldviews) which are built upon and between the dynamic and configuration of many Reformed doctrinal *loci*. I hope I am not exaggerating if I were to speculate that, if from this moment on, British Reformed Christians were self-consciously to embrace either ‘project’, that over time this would lead to very different praxes with regards our engagement with British culture and public life.

Because of their complex and comprehensive nature, discerning the legitimacy of one ‘vision’ over the other is a large project, way beyond the remit of this essay. However, the question of ‘authority’ in public discourse is a crucial one and brings into sharp focus these visions’ respective treatments of revelation, both ‘natural’ and ‘scriptural’. This question is relevant to us here and crucial to determine which ‘vision’ one eventually adopts.

With this in mind and utilizing the work of Frame and Leithart, I wish to look in a little more detail at the role of natural law and Scripture in both common-kingdom and confessional-kingdom arguments. At the level of theology, history, and apologetics, the common-kingdom use of natural law is flawed and ‘insufficient’, and this calls into question its approach as a whole.

3.1. Theological Insufficiencies of the Common-Kingdom Model

In a recent chapter against soteriological inclusivism, I argue in some depth both exegetically and systematically that though natural revelation is in its own distinctive ways and for its own distinctive purposes necessary, authoritative, sufficient, and perspicuous,⁵⁰ it is *not* sufficient for salvation; what is needed is both the light and sight that only the gospel can bring through God’s Word (normatively

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 221.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 224.

⁵⁰ To use Cornelius Van Til’s categories in ‘Nature and Scripture’, in *The Infallible Word: A Symposium* (ed. N. B. Stonehouse and Paul Woolley; Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian & Reformed, 1967).

through the human messenger in this life).⁵¹ My contention here is that similar arguments can be used in critiquing those who argue for the ‘sufficiency’ of natural law (and the ‘insufficiency’ of Scripture), for establishing a public theology, public policy, and more generally a moral consensus. Although I refer the reader back to that chapter for the details, it is worth briefly summarizing the contours of the argument I make there and applying them here to the arena of the public sphere.

3.1.1. *The Insufficiency of General Revelation*

First, using Ps 19 as an example, I argue that general revelation reveals God’s works and that, as a mode or instrument of God “speaking,” works by themselves are hermeneutically ambiguous. They need further revelatory supplementation to make them clear. This is not to drive a wedge between general and special revelation or to denigrate God’s general revelation but simply to note that God’s purpose in general revelation has never been for it to function independently of his “worded” special revelation. God’s “words” are necessary to interpret and supplement his ‘works.’⁵² General revelation lacks the specificity of special revelation. God’s words have always been needed to interpret, supplement, and therefore complement God’s works. These two modes of revelation were never meant to be separated from one another or to work independently of each other. To make such a separation as natural-law advocates do seems artificial and lacking biblical warrant.

At this point I would note a similar unnatural decoupling that can be seen in attempts to separate ‘moral’ norms from ‘religious’ norms, for example in the claim that the second table of the Decalogue enshrines natural law and can be discovered and known *apart* from special revelation.⁵³ This again is to misunderstand the unity of the Decalogue and its specially revealed and ‘thick’ religious exclusivism for Yahweh and against idolatry.

This is not all, though, for second, this objective epistemological insufficiency of general revelation becomes intensely more acute after the Fall. According to the seminal passage in Rom 1:18–32, the knowledge of God is hideously ‘suppressed’ and ‘exchanged,’ hence the antithetical language of the Bible between regenerate and unregenerate at the level of both epistemology and ethics.⁵⁴ However, it must always be noted that this ‘natural’ knowledge is not static information but dynamic, personal, and relational in character: man ‘is a knower who does not know, a perceiver who does not perceive.’⁵⁵

⁵¹ Daniel Strange, ‘Is General Revelation Sufficient?’ in *Faith Comes by Hearing: A Response to Inclusivism* (ed. Christopher W. Morgan and Robert A. Peterson; Downers Grove: IVP, 2008), 40–77.

⁵² This important insight was made by Vos in his category of ‘pre-redemptive special revelation,’ and Van Til elaborated on it.

⁵³ As Leithart (*Natural Law*, 26) notes, ‘If by “natural law” one means simply “moral truth” then the Decalogue is a summary of natural law. If by natural law one means law that everyone is obligated to obey, then the Decalogue is natural law. If by natural law one means law that is rooted in the very nature of things, in the character of God and the nature of the world He has made, then again the Decalogue is natural law. But if by natural law one refers to moral principles that man is capable of discovering apart from special revelation, then the Decalogue is not natural law.’

⁵⁴ This ‘suppression’ and ‘exchange’ is variegated according to God’s sovereign restraint through common grace.

⁵⁵ Paul J. Visser, *Heart for the Gospel, Heart for the World: The Life and Thought of a Reformed Pioneer Missiologist Johan Herman Bavinck (1895–1964)* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2003), 144. Visser is quoting J. H. Bavinck, *Religieus besef en christelijk geloof* (Religious Consciousness and Christian Faith; Kampen: Kok, 1949), still not translated into English.

3.1.2. Implications

What are the implications of this understanding of revelation for those who advocate natural law as being the prescriptive norm for public life?

First, anthropologically, Leithart notes a paradox in natural-law thinking at this point:

The problem with natural law is not that it claims too *much* for natural knowledge, but that it claims too *little*. Speaking Christianly to an unbeliever is not like speaking Swahili to a Swede; it is like speaking Swedish to an American of Swedish descent who has almost, but not quite, forgotten his native tongue. On the other hand, natural law claims too much for the ability of those who are outside Christ to embrace and put into practice what they know. The fact that men know the moral law does not, for Paul, lead to the conclusion that natural morality is sufficient as far as it goes. On the contrary, because the natural man suppresses and distorts the knowledge he cannot escape, natural morality is ultimately foolish and darkness.⁵⁶

Second, with regards the doctrine of Scripture itself, promoting natural law to the role of rule and standard in public life means relegating Scripture and so potentially jeopardizing its sufficiency and *sola Scriptura*. God's revelation of himself comes to us through various media (nature, history, word, person), all of which are authoritative and consistent, all of which are interdependent on the others. However, 'the Bible has a unique role in the organism of revelation'⁵⁷ since both a verbal and written revelation are necessary for all 'faith and life' to correct our bleary vision (to use Calvin's language).

Methodologically, we are called to interpret the world through the Word, for in God's light do we see light (Ps 36:10). Given Scripture's epistemological primacy, 'principles that cannot be established from Scripture cannot be established by natural-law argument either. When people try to add to God's word by natural-law arguments, they violate the sufficiency of Scripture'.⁵⁸ Sufficiency does not mean that the Bible speaks with a uniform specificity in all matters of faith and life but that it contains the divine words necessary for all faith and life. Given the explicitly 'moral', 'ethical', and increasingly 'religious' questions generated by the public and civil sphere, Scripture has many divine words to say on these matters, both complimenting and supplementing the 'light of nature' and 'Christian prudence'.

Without acknowledging these divine words and their ultimate authority, we are left with simply more instability and confusion. Take, for example, Rowan Williams' infamous lecture on *Sharia* law in February 2008.⁵⁹ It roused many a nominal Christian in the United Kingdom and had radio phone-in bosses rubbing their hands in glee. A close look at Williams' lecture recognises an intelligent reflection that raises a number of important questions concerning the thorny issue of supplementary jurisdictions and the foundations on which we can build a legal arrangement for the whole of society. His own answer comes midway through when he speaks of 'the establishing of a space accessible to everyone in which it

⁵⁶ Leithart, *Natural Law*, 19–20.

⁵⁷ Frame, *Doctrine of the Christian Life*, 141.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 248.

⁵⁹ Williams' lecture 'Civil and Religious Law in England: A Religious Perspective' (paper presented at the Temple Festival series at the Royal Courts of Justice, 7 Feb. 2008). Cited 14 July 2011. Online: <http://www.archbishopofcanterbury.org/articles.php/1137/archbishops-lecture-civil-and-religious-law-in-england-a-religious-perspective>. This example and analysis was originally brought to my attention by David Field.

is possible to affirm and defend a commitment to *human dignity as such*, independent of membership in any specific human community or tradition.’

My question here would be whether Williams’ ultimate ground of ‘human dignity as such’ is a satisfactory answer for a Christian to give. First, it appears to ‘confess’ *human dignity as such* as more ultimate than Jesus’ Lordship. But is this not tantamount to an idolatrous configuration in that it demonstrates an inverted loyalty? Second, and practically, what does ‘human dignity as such’ mean and who ultimately decides what it means? Is it so self-evident that all sectors of our pluralistic society can be united? While it may look like solid ground, it is not ground that will be stable enough to support the social cohesion that we all want.

Third, what of VanDrunen’s claim that while there is a basic moral law that binds all people, Scripture itself is an inappropriate ethical source for the common kingdom since its ethics are characterized by an indicative-imperative structure and so appropriate only for those who have been redeemed? First, while this structure may ground Christian ethical motivation, it is not the only grounds for ethics. As Frame notes, the ultimate ground is the holy character of God, in whose image we are made. Then there are universal creation ordinances given to Adam and Eve. In terms of ethical motivation, God’s commands in Scripture to do something should be grounds enough.⁶⁰

Second, there are numerous examples (the prophetic literature being a pointed example) of the nations outside Israel being condemned and called to repent not simply of moral natural-law sins but ‘religious’ sins especially idolatry. Idolatry, not simply immorality, can well be described as the universally applicable ‘primal’ sin, seen clearly in Adam’s and Eve’s ‘false faith’⁶¹ in the Garden when they followed Satan in believing lies about God. Whether one calls it ‘natural’ or ‘biblical’, the worship of any god other than the transcendently unique Yahweh, is idolatrous and accountable.

3.2. Historical Insufficiencies of the Common-Kingdom Model

In my chapter on the insufficiency of general revelation for salvation, I argue that while the separation and distinction between general and special revelation is absolutely necessary, there is a sense in which it is somewhat abstract and artificial, both theologically and historically. Our theological categorization of revelation as the hermetically sealed compartments of general and special revelation are rather inadequate, for in which category does ‘redemptive history’ go? Frame demonstrates this in his re-categorization of God’s revelation from general and special categories into three: the word that comes through nature and history, the word that comes through persons, and the word written.⁶²

⁶⁰ Frame writes, ‘Are any of these grounds or motivations available to unbelievers? Yes and no. Unbelievers as well as believers *ought* to appeal to the character of God and to the creation ordinances, because they are human beings. Unbelievers have no right, as unbelievers, to appeal to God’s redemptive acts and presence; but they ought to become believers, so that they can make this appeal. Given that condition, unbelievers as well as believers should make their ethical decisions based on God’s redemptive acts, his commands, and his presence. The whole Bible, in other words, is God’s standard for all people, believers and unbelievers alike. God has not ordained separate ethics for believers and unbelievers. All human beings are subject to the same standard and ought to be motivated in the same way’ (review of David VanDrunen, *A Biblical Case for Natural Law*, n.p. [cited 14 July 2011]. Online: http://www.frame-poythress.org/frame_articles/2010VanDrunen.htm).

⁶¹ Francis Turretin, *Institutes of Elenctic Theology* (ed. J. T. Dennison; trans. G. M. Giger; Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian & Reformed, 1992), Topic 9. Q. 6. IX.

⁶² Frame, *Doctrine of the Christian Life*, 136.

If Frame is correct here, a complementary *historical* point can be made. In understanding the theology of other religions, I have noted in a recent work the importance of acknowledging phenomenologically the way religions, in their myths, doctrines, rituals, etc., have idolatrously taken and distorted not simply ‘natural’ revelation, but redemptive-historical ‘special’ revelation.⁶³ As cultures are religions externalized and ‘lived worldviews,’⁶⁴ we can see this perverted ‘special revelation’ influence, culture-wide. Such an influence pertains not only to epistemology but to ethics as well.

In a stimulating essay, Peter Leithart makes a plausible case that moral consensus between Christians and non-Christians does not originate in general revelation, as is often assumed, but rather originates in a mixture of general and special revelation.⁶⁵ What is often taken as evidence of general revelation, natural law, and common grace in our Western culture may actually be rather the historical influence of special revelation, biblical law, and the gospel. He calls this ‘middle grace’:

I hope to make a plausible case that much of what has been identified as a moral consensus based on natural revelation is more accurately seen as a product of general and special revelation. Pagans hold to certain moral principles that are compatible with Christian morality not only because they are inescapably confronted with God’s revelation in creation, but also because they have been directly or indirectly exposed to an influenced by the Spirit operating through special revelation and the other means of grace. Whatever moral consensus exists is thus not a product of pure ‘common grace’ (devoid of all contact with revelation), nor of ‘special grace’ (saving knowledge of God through Christ and his word), but what I call . . . ‘middle grace’ (non-saving knowledge of God and his will derived from both general and special revelation. To put it another way, because of the cultural influence of the Bible, unbelievers in America are more Christian than unbelievers in Irian Jaya. To put it another way, there is and has never existed a pure ‘common grace’ cultural situation.⁶⁶

Given the role that Scripture has played in the history and culture of the United Kingdom, isn’t she a classic example of ‘middle grace’ living now off the borrowed capital of a distinctively Christian worldview? Is not it a plausible narrative that this ‘Christian’ worldview that was once cherished gradually became ‘assumed’ and that the seeds of its subsequent demise were in that ‘assumption’? Hasn’t this demise been due in large part to marginalizing the Christian written rule and norm—Scripture? Isn’t this a significant factor as to the state we are in? Don’t we exacerbate this marginalization, encourage the *status quo*, and stifle deep-rooted recovery in our suggestion that it is natural law rather than the Bible that should be the ‘norm’ to speak into our public life and culture?

⁶³ Gavin D’Costa, Paul Knitter, and Daniel Strange, *Only One Way? Three Christian Responses to the Uniqueness of Christ in a Pluralistic World* (London: SCM, 2011), 120.

⁶⁴ Kevin Vanhoozer, ‘What is Everyday Theology?’ in *Everyday Theology: How to Read Cultural Texts and Interpret Trends* (ed. Kevin J. Vanhoozer, Charles A. Anderson, and Michael J. Sleasman; Grand Rapids: Baker, 2007), 27.

⁶⁵ This is by no means a novel idea but rather an ancient one seen in traditions like the *prisca theologia*, revived and reformed by scholars such as Jonathan Edwards. See Gerald McDermott, *Jonathan Edwards Confronts the Gods* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000).

⁶⁶ Peter J. Leithart, *Did Plato Read Moses? Middle Grace and Moral Consensus* (Biblical Horizons Occasional Paper 23; Niceville, FL: Biblical Horizons, 1995), 4–5.

Interestingly, William Wilberforce appears to have made exactly this point two hundred years ago in his best-seller, *A Practical View of the Prevailing Religious System of Professed Christians in the Higher and Middle Classes in This Country Contrasted with Real Christianity*:

The fatal habit of considering Christian morals as distinct from Christian doctrines insensibly gained strength. Thus the peculiar doctrines of Christianity went more and more out of sight and as might naturally have been expected, the moral system itself also began to wither and decay, being robbed of that which should have supplied it with life arid nutriment.⁶⁷

3.3. Apologetic Insufficiencies of the Common-Kingdom Model

In our particular context, when it comes to matters of public theology, public debate and public policy, one might level the criticism that appeals to Scripture are not only theologically misguided but apologetically idealistic, naïve, and do not deal with *'real politik'*. Even if one's aspirations are limited to that of cultural preservation rather than cultural transformation, Ken Myers deems that natural-law argument will be more persuasive than those based on Scripture:

Telling a late-20th century pagan that he has disobeyed God's word is likely to have little rhetorical power. Telling him that he has, in C. S. Lewis' terms, gone 'against the grain of the universe' might well pack a bit more rhetorical punch, especially if the inevitability of cosmic splinters is spelled out. In a culture that tends to regard all rules and all religion as merely conventional, biblical law language is horribly easy to ignore.⁶⁸

Four comments can be made here, taking into account the theological and historical points I have already outlined.

First, unsupported natural-law arguments *can* be susceptible to the charge of confusing description with prescription. Thus, they commit a number of common logical fallacies, especially a version of the naturalistic fallacy (getting 'ought' from 'is')⁶⁹ and sociological fallacy (moral evaluation comes from social consensus).⁷⁰

Second, and maybe pointing to a difference between the United States and United Kingdom, is there the moral consensus on some of the ethical issues that natural-law advocates point to? In 1970, A. N. Triton (a pseudonym) defended a 'creation ethic' similar to natural law: 'It is, for instance, almost universally regarded as obvious that marital faithfulness is something to be preserved as of great

⁶⁷ Quoted in John Piper, *Counted Righteous in Christ* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2002), 25.

⁶⁸ Ken Myers, 'Natural Law without Shame,' *Tabletalk* 18:5 (April 1994): 61.

⁶⁹ Frame (*Doctrine of the Christian Life*, 247, 954) argues that Budziszewski does this regarding his argument against contraception.

⁷⁰ This is the criticism of Kloosterman in his review of VanDrunen's *A Biblical Case for Natural Law*. See Kloosterman's review with a robust response by VanDrunen in the December 2007 edition of *Ordained Servant Online* [cited 14 July 2011]. Online: http://www.opc.org/os.html?issue_id=26.

importance and that breaches of the moral bond are wrong.⁷¹ Looking back, forty years on, such a statement now seems tragically ‘of its time.’⁷²

Returning to my previous historical point, if a society like ours *has* preserved the sanctity of marriage, could this not be because of the influence of the gospel and scriptural teaching, rather than a non-supplemented natural revelation? Given the sinful suppression and exchange of truth, a ‘naked’ natural law would seem no basis on which to build a society. As Leithart speculates, ‘Can one discern from rational reflection on history and experience that man is *imago Dei*? Will he not perhaps conclude that man instead is *imago diaboli*?’⁷³ Isn’t it those ‘peculiar Christian doctrines’ that we should be referencing and promoting? To put it another way, while *theologically* it may never be legitimate, *practically* arguing from natural law maybe more possible in a more ‘Christianized’ culture where there is a higher degree of latent moral, ethical, and even spiritual consensus. It becomes less possible as this Christian consensus crumbles and collapses. At this point I tentatively and, I realize provocatively, suggest that our ‘collapse’ in the United Kingdom is further along than the United States context in which the advocates of natural law find themselves in. Would common-kingdom supporters advocate natural law as strongly as they do if they were living and ministering this side of the Atlantic?

Third, while some natural-law language is so vague that it is of little substantive use (e.g., ‘human dignity as such’), some natural-law language is simply ‘too theological to pass itself off as a common language for believer and unbeliever.’⁷⁴ In other words, is appealing to scriptural authority any less persuasive than arguing that we are made in the image of God? This is Leithart’s critique of J. Budziszewski, who is arguably the most sophisticated (and certainly the most prolific) conservative defender of natural law.⁷⁵ Concerning Budziszewski’s *The Line Through the Heart: Natural Law as Fact, Theory, and Sign of Contradiction*, Leithart notes that the persuasiveness of the language that Budziszewski employs (e.g., the image of God) requires a ‘conversion’ just as much ‘The Bible says language’: ‘At its best, this book is a book of apologetics and evangelism; not *proto-evangelism*, but evangelism *per se*.’⁷⁶ This may

⁷¹ A. N. Triton, *Whose World?* (London: IVP, 1970), 84.

⁷² As Julian Rivers pointed out in 2004, ‘It may be that a culture deviates in some respect from the law of God to such an extent that some moral positions seem defensible to Scripture alone. We may rapidly be reaching that point in the Western world as regards sexual ethics’ (‘Public Reason,’ *Whitefield Briefing* 9:1 [May 2004]: 4). One thinks here of a country like Switzerland currently discussing the decriminalization of consensual incest and the U.S. case of David Epstein, charged with having a three-year affair with his adult daughter. Epstein’s lawyer said to ABCNews, ‘Academically, we are obviously all morally opposed to incest and rightfully so. At the same time, there is an argument to be made in the Swiss case to let go what goes on privately in bedrooms. It’s OK for homosexuals to do whatever they want in their own home. . . . How is this so different? We have to figure out why some behavior is tolerated and some is not’ (http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2010/12/15/david-epsteins-lawyer-we-_n_797138.html).

⁷³ Leithart, *Natural Law*, 27.

⁷⁴ Found in Peter Leithart’s short review of J. Budziszewski, *The Line through the Heart: Natural Law as Fact, Theory, and Sign of Contradiction* (Wilmington, DE: Intercollegiate Studies Institute, 2009), <http://www.leithart.com/2010/05/14/natural-law/>.

⁷⁵ Budziszewski was an evangelical who became a Roman Catholic in 2003. Although his defence of natural law is now within a Catholic context, his arguments are very similar to those who defend natural law from a Reformed common-kingdom perspective.

⁷⁶ Leithart, review of Budziszewski, n.p. [cited 14 July 2011]. Online: <http://www.leithart.com/2010/05/14/natural-law/>.

be a simplistic way of putting it, but if natural-law arguments are going to be seen as offensive and ‘theological’ as arguments which derive from Scripture, given both the epistemological priority of the later over the former, together with gospel contained in the latter and not in the former, wouldn’t it make more apologetic sense to try to get to the Bible as soon as possible?

Fourth, and related to the previous point, we continue on the epistemological ultimacy of Scripture. In his own appreciative yet critical take on Budziszewski’s work, Frame notes that the philosopher has a high view of Scripture and that he admits in several places that natural law can be vindicated and grounded only in the Word of God:

If one presents a natural law argument to someone who doesn’t believe in natural law, who keeps challenging the authority on which the law is based, ultimately the argument must have recourse to Scripture. So natural-law arguments ultimately depend on arguments from Scripture. . . . Natural-law arguments are, in fact, natural law arguments warranted by the Bible. That doesn’t mean that every natural law argument must be accompanied by Bible texts; rather, when an argument attempts to trace natural law back to its ultimate foundation, that foundation must be located in Scripture.⁷⁷

4. Some Caveats and Clarifications on the Sufficiency of Scripture for Public Theology

Where does this critique of natural-law arguments leave us? Before I come to a conclusion, it might be helpful to note what I am and am not saying.

I am saying that our overall trajectory and ambition, however long-term or far-off or seemingly unreachable now, should be towards distinctive Christian confession and thinking in every area of life including the public and political realm. Thus, we need explicitly biblical engagement. This is Frame’s vision for the United States, and it should equally be ours for the United Kingdom:

We should never investigate nature without the spectacles of Scripture. And that same conclusion follows from the very nature of politics according to Scripture. The ultimate goal of political apologetics is nothing less than to present Christ as King of King and Lord of Lords. The political goal of biblical Christianity is a civil state that acknowledges him for who he is. For every institution of human culture, as well as every individual human being, is called to do homage to King Jesus. We may not reach that goal in the course of modern political debate, but that is where the debate should point, and we may well find occasion to tell unbelievers, in all honesty, that this is the direction in which we would urge society to move. And if the Lord tarries, it should not be unthinkable that one day our society could become predominantly Christian, so that the people will be, not only tolerant of biblical arguments, but eager to hear them. When and if this happens, we should certainly not refuse to bring the Bible into the public square.⁷⁸

What does explicitly biblical engagement mean? Here a number of clarifications are in order.

First, I am not denying natural revelation or even an appeal to natural-law arguments, for God does reveal himself through nature, history, experience, etc. We need natural revelation to apply the

⁷⁷ Frame, *Doctrine of the Christian Life*, 245.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 249–50.

'divine words' of Scripture to any given situation. Natural-law arguments may have their place in certain cultural situations and can be deployed. They may be persuasive on occasion. What I question, however, especially in *our* current cultural context, is the stability and prescriptive power of natural law as a *basis* for public theology and moral consensus and the apologetic appeal and persuasive power of a 'naked' natural law *apart* from the ultimate supplementation of Scripture. 'A complete ethical argument must appeal to the ultimate source of moral authority. And for Protestant Christians that is Scripture and Scripture alone.'⁷⁹ Therefore, we should not be surprised but rather be prepared when our appeal to natural revelation, or our appeal to language like 'dignity' or 'the image of God,' is questioned, so moving us back down the epistemological truth chain and appeals to scriptural authority.

Second, in affirming the sufficiency of Scripture for public theology, I am not advocating quotations of chapter and verse from big floppy Bibles in every conversation within every sphere of society. We will want to contextualize biblical teaching in a way that is appropriate and persuasive to our audience. This was perhaps Stephen Green's biggest mistake. We will want to be subtle, strategic, and subversive, which may mean different levels of discourse for the pastor and the politician. However, into whatever vocation we have been called, first, our arguments will be shaped by Scripture, and when appropriate our ultimate authority can and should be named. We are *Christians* who should be arguing *Christianly*, worried not so much what others think of us but what the Lord Jesus thinks.

Given our culture's current trajectory, I would expect epistemological uncovering to be happening more and more as the 'borrowed capital' of past Christian influence dwindles more and more. In a situation where we often feel increasingly threatened, we are actually being presented with a tremendous apologetic opportunity. If we have been guilty of a crisis of confidence in the public role of the Bible in recent years, this must be set against a wider and more desperate crisis of confidence in society itself, which has led to obvious gaps and 'fissures.' In the language of Jeremiah, we see more and more the tragedy and futility of trying to get water from broken cisterns, be they personal, public, or political. Our job, using God's Word, is not only to expose this futility but to point to the fount of living water, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Third, I have said very little regarding the content of the Bible's teaching on the wealth of cultural, political, economic, and ethical issues involved in a public theology and the hermeneutical models (e.g., regarding the place of the law) that presuppose and undergird differing conclusions regarding what the Bible teaches. In a similar way that a constitution is to be distinguished from legislation, my aim in this paper has been to discuss the base or ground for public theology rather than its content. Suffice it to say that there are a number of Reformed models currently available with differing levels of specificity when it comes to the sufficient 'divine words' on these subjects.⁸⁰ Such internal discussion needs to continue and with some urgency so that we have the semblance of a constructive answer when we are asked on any piece of public policy, 'So, what would you do then?' If this is to happen, we will need different Christians in all their vocations and callings to be working together and supporting one another: public theologians reflecting practically, public servants reflecting theologically, and pastors preaching, teaching, and discipling relevantly.

⁷⁹ Ibid., 956.

⁸⁰ E.g., Frame, Poythress, and Bahnsen. I would also include Chris Wright's 'paradigmatic' approach, which is a biblical foundation for the work of the Jubilee Centre (<http://www.jubilee-centre.org/>). See his *Old Testament Ethics for the People of God* (Nottingham: IVP, 2004).

Fourth, there are those who fear that speaking of the Bible's role in the public sphere might distract from our evangelistic task. Conversely, others fear that bringing the Bible into matters of public life might actually marginalize our voice and so thwart social transformation (or even social preservation for that matter). To both of these groups, I make two observations:

First, I suggest that what I am proposing should encourage more evangelism and enable social transformation to take place if God should allow.⁸¹ Our cultural analysis has been greatly helped in recent years by recovering and deploying the pervasive biblical category of idolatry.⁸² In Isaiah's cutting satirical exposé of idolatry in Isa 44, the prophet makes a profound comment regarding the idolater's activity: 'no one stops to think' (Isa 44:19). Part of our apologetic and evangelistic task is 'offensive' to make all people, whoever they are and whatever they do, stop and think about their ultimate commitments (what the Bible calls their idols), what they are, what they promise, and what they deliver. We hope that this in turn will lead to an opportunity to describe our ultimate commitment to Jesus Christ and what he offers.

At this point we are way beyond reasoning from natural law but reasoning from Scripture. Of course, this is nothing more than a presuppositional apologetic method applied more broadly to societal engagement and public theology. Such a method has a transcendental thrust which demonstrates the solidity and true 'rationality' of Christian commitment by exposing the weak and irrational commitments of every other worldview.

Within the more mainstream academic discourse on public theology, such a method might not be as unappetizing (or better, and using Rorty's phrase, 'conversation stopping'⁸³) as it first appears. For example, Gavin D'Costa remarks that a scholar like Jeffrey Stout has noted the importance of the 'religious' and 'non-religious' being able to 'argue' for basic commitments:

In his critical discussion of Rorty, Jeffrey Stout makes a very pertinent point about religion being a conversation-stopper by helpfully distinguishing between two aspects of religion in such public discourse:

we need to distinguish between discursive problems that arise because religious premises are not widely shared and those that arise because the people who avow such premises are not prepared to argue for them.

The latter is certainly not the preserve of religions, for Stout adds, 'Everyone holds some beliefs on nonreligious topics without claiming to know that they are true' (2004, 87). But the distinction is helpful in clarifying where the problem lies: certainly in religious and non-religious people not being able to 'argue' in support of their basic commitments and claims.⁸⁴

⁸¹ It is important that we distinguish the different roles and responsibilities that we have in our individual vocations and between the 'church as church' contrasted with 'Christians in the world'.

⁸² Deployed most popularly by Tim Keller. See his *Counterfeit Gods* (London: Hodder, 2009).

⁸³ Richard Rorty, 'Religions as a Conversation-Stopper', in *Philosophy and Social Hope* (New York: Penguin, 1999), 166–67.

⁸⁴ Gavin D'Costa, *Christianity and World Religions: Disputed Questions in the Theology of Religions* (London: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009), 119.

If Stout is correct, then with some confidence the Christian can participate in public discourse. In Prov 1:20 we read of the activities of Lady Wisdom, a personification of the living God:

Wisdom cries aloud in the street,
In the markets she raises her voice;
At the head of the noisy streets she cries out;
At the entrance of the city gates she speaks:

Given our ambassadorial role, are not Christians in our busy and congested public square not simply to speak up but rather prophetically to cry out over the ‘noise’ of contemporary idol-worship, a modernistic secular liberalism (with its totalitarian ‘neutralizing’ of particularity), a postmodern secular pragmatism (with its exchange of the universal for the particular and its impotency in offering anything other than ‘irresolvable conflict of cultures and discourses, without any possibility of mediation’⁸⁵), and a radical Islamic worldview? With discernment and wisdom, we will be looking for opportunities to speak in the ‘thick’ language of Christian particularity rather than a ‘thin’ discourse because we want to give a reason for the hope we have in the gospel, hope not just for individuals but for families and communities and nations. We will be looking for opportunities to speak of Jesus Christ, one greater than Solomon and the true embodiment of ‘wisdom.’ And when we are anxious that speaking ‘Christianly’ will threaten our place in the public square and our contribution to social transformation, we need to remember that real social transformation comes about only through conversion through encountering Jesus in the Word of God and by the regenerating and illuminating power of the Spirit. In summary, given our current context: our public theology *is* public apologetics and *is* public evangelism.

Second, and concerning the ‘who does what’ question, I reiterate the need to affirm structural and institutional pluralism distinguishing between the God-given roles and responsibilities of ‘church’ and ‘Church,’ between what Kuyper calls the church as ‘institute’ and the church as ‘organism,’⁸⁶ or between what Carson calls the ‘church as a church in the world’ and ‘Christians in the world’⁸⁷ Some careful and joined-up thinking between these domains is imperative and in my opinion will lead to complementary strategies which mandate societal involvement and influence from both the bottom up (with its bubble-up effect) and from the top down (with its trickle-down effect).⁸⁸ Similarly, such thinking may make

⁸⁵ D’Costa, *Christianity and World Religions*, 117.

⁸⁶ On Kuyper’s teaching here, see Bolt, *A Free Church, A Holy Nation*, 427–28.

⁸⁷ Carson, *Christ and Culture Revisited*, 197. I have dealt with this in a little more detail in my ‘Evangelical Public Theology: What on Earth? Why on Earth? How on Earth?’ in *A Higher Throne: Evangelicals and Public Theology* (ed. Chris Green; Nottingham: Apollos, 2008), 58–61. As I mention there, Tuit’s statement is very helpful: ‘The Kuyperian statement that every square inch of life belongs to Christ cannot be applied only to the institutional Church. Consequently, the leadership of the pastor is a special kind of leadership in close connection with the idea of office and the Word. The believer is accountable to God for the Christian leadership he gives in society as a citizen of the Kingdom guided by the Word preached and taught by the “church” leader, the pastor. One could say therefore that the life of the believer is mission, within the context of the cultural and the mission mandate, rather than that the church is mission’ (Pieter C. Tuit, ‘The Relationship between the Great Commission and World Transformation: Outline for a Reformed Missiology’, in *For God So Loved the World: Missiological Reflections in Honor of Roger S. Greenway* [ed. Arie C. Leder; Belleville, Ontario: Essence, 2006], 137n56).

⁸⁸ Here, and on the subject of cultural change, Hunter’s *To Change the World* is particularly stimulating.

possible a harmonization between what sociologist Robert Putnam calls ‘church-centred *bonding*’ (or exclusive) social capital, as opposed to ‘community centred *bridging*’ (or inclusive) social capital.⁸⁹

5. Concluding with a Public Challenge

2011 could well be labelled ‘the year of the Bible’. Within the church in the UK, a major initiative *Biblefresh* has been launched with the aim of encouraging a greater confidence and passion for Scripture across the Church.⁹⁰ Internationally, *Biblemesh* is a new online resource to encourage biblical literacy in churches all over the world.⁹¹ As welcome as these initiatives are, they are aimed primarily at Christians, preaching to the converted as it were. What about those outside the church?

In my introduction, I note the monumental rise and fall of the Bible in British public life. Even within this arena, however, 2011 presents us with a remarkable and rare window of opportunity given the 400th anniversary of the King James Bible. While *The Telegraph*’s Christopher Howse may be guilty of overstatement when we writes, “Britain is going Bible bananas,”⁹² there has certainly been a level of media exposure not usually accorded the Word of God. Although one might baulk at the way in which the Queen and the Archbishop of Canterbury chose to mark this anniversary in their respective Christmas Day and New Year’s day addresses,⁹³ to have the Bible front and centre in the public consciousness certainly did no harm and may have done some good.

If there is any momentum gathering for British society, just for a few months, to give a hearing to the Bible and its place in British culture and history, won’t those who sit under the Word, who truly believe it to be the King’s speech and the most valuable thing this world affords, do all they can to capitalize on this exposure? Confidently, courageously, prayerfully, and unashamedly, let us take every opportunity that God gives us, formally and informally, to point to Scripture, the Lord Jesus we encounter in it, and its comprehensive sufficiency for all ‘faith and life.’

⁸⁹ Robert Putnam, *Bowling Alone* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2000), 13, quoted in Coffee, ‘The State and Social Transformation’, 100. In my opinion the work and ministry of Tim Keller is a leading example of such a harmonization. See his recent book *Generous Justice: How God’s Grace Makes us Just* (London: Hodder, 2010).

⁹⁰ <http://www.biblefresh.com>.

⁹¹ <http://www.biblemesh.com>.

⁹² Christopher Howse, ‘The Global Phenomenon that will never be lost in translation,’ *The Daily Telegraph* (November 23, 2010). Cited 14 July 2011. Online: <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/newstoppers/religion/8151865/The-global-phenomenon-that-will-never-be-lost-in-translation.html>.

⁹³ Noting the ‘co-operative endeavour’ shown in the translation of the KJV, the Queen speaks of building communities and creating harmony through sport and games. Less tangentially, Rowan Williams speaks of the KJV capturing people’s imagination by making sense of life and putting their individual stories into one big story, the story of the whole universe.

A Preacher's Decalogue¹

— Sinclair B. Ferguson —

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Listening to or reading the reflections of others on preaching is, for most preachers, inherently interesting and stimulating (whether positively or negatively). These reflections then are offered in the spirit of the Golden Rule and only because the Editor is a long-standing friend!

Forty years exactly have passed since my first sermon in the context of a Sunday service. Four decades is a long time to have amassed occasions when going to the church door after preaching is the last thing one wants to do—even if one loves the congregation (sometimes precisely because one loves the congregation and therefore the sense of failure is all the greater!). How often have I had to ask myself, “How is it possible to have done this thousands of times and still not do it properly?”

Yes, I know how to talk myself out of that mood! “It’s faithfulness, not skill, that really matters.” “How you feel has nothing to do with it!” “Remember you’re sowing seed.” “It’s ultimately the Lord who preaches the word into people’s hearts, not you.” All true. Yet we are responsible to make progress as preachers, indeed evident and visible, or at least audible progress (1 Tim 4:13, 15 is an instructive and searching word in this respect!).

All of this led me while traveling one day to reflect on this: What Ten Commandments, what rule of preaching-life, do I wish someone had written for me to provide direction, shape, ground rules, that might have helped me keep going in the right direction and gaining momentum in ministry along the way?

Once one begins thinking about this, whatever Ten Commandments one comes up with, it becomes obvious that this is an inexhaustible theme. My friend, the Editor, could easily run his journal for a year with a whole series of “My Ten Commandments for Preaching.” I offer these ten, not as infallible, but as the fruit of a few minutes of quiet reflection on a plane journey.

1. Know Your Bible Better

Often at the end of a Lord’s Day, or a Conference, the thought strikes me again: “If you only knew your Bible better you would have been a lot more help to the people.” I teach at a seminary whose founder stated that its goal was “to produce experts in the Bible.” Alas I was not educated in an institution that had anything remotely resembling that goal. The result? Life has been an ongoing “teach yourself while you play catch-up.” At the end of the day seminaries exist not to give authoritative line-by-line interpretations of the whole of Scripture but to provide tools to enable its graduates to do that.

¹ This reprints Ferguson’s article as it appeared in two parts in November 2005 and March 2006 in *Reformation21* (<http://www.reformation21.org/>), the online magazine of the Alliance of Confessing Evangelicals.

That is why, in many ways, it is the work we do, the conversations we have, the churches we attend, the preaching under which we sit, that make or break our ministries. This is not “do it yourself,” but we ourselves need to do it.

As an observer as well as a practitioner of preaching, I am troubled and perplexed by hearing men with wonderful equipment, humanly speaking (ability to speak, charismatic personality, and so on), who seem to be incapable of simply preaching the Scriptures. Somehow they have not first invaded and gripped them.

I must not be an illiterate. But I do need to be *homo unius libri*—a man of one Book. The widow of a dear friend once told me that her husband wore out his Bible during the last year of his life. “He devoured it like a novel” she said. Be a Bible-devourer!

2. Be a Man of Prayer

I mean this with respect to preaching—not only in the sense that I should pray before I begin my preparation, but in the sense that my preparation is itself a communion in prayer with God in and through his word. Whatever did the apostles mean by saying that they needed to devote themselves “to prayer and the ministry of the word”—and why that order?

My own feeling is that in the tradition of our pastoral textbooks we have over-individualized this. The apostles (one may surmise) really meant “we”—not “I, Peter” or “I, John” but “We, Peter, John, James, Thomas, Andrew . . . together.”

Is it a misreading of the situation to suspect that preachers hide the desperate need of prayer for the preaching and their personal need? By contrast, reflect on Paul’s appeals. And remember Spurgeon’s *bon mot* when asked about the secret of his ministry: “My people pray for me.”

Reflecting on this reminds me of one moment in the middle of an address at a conference for pastors when the bubble above my head contained the words “You are making a complete and total hash of this.” But as my eyes then refocused on the men in front of me, those men seemed like thirsty souls drinking in cool refreshing water, and their eyes all seemed to be fixed on the water carrier I was holding! Then the above-the-head-bubble filled with other words: “I remember now, how I urged the congregation at home to pray for these brethren and for the ministry of the word. They have been praying.”

Alas for me if I don’t see the need for prayer or for encouraging and teaching my people to see its importance. I may do well (I have done well enough thus far, have I not?) . . . but not with eternal fruit.

3. Don’t Lose Sight of Christ

Me? Yes, me. This is an important principle in too many dimensions fully to expound here. One must suffice. Know and therefore preach “Jesus Christ and him crucified” (1 Cor 2:2). That is a text far easier to preach as the first sermon in a ministry than it is to preach as the final sermon.

What do I mean? Perhaps the point can be put sharply, even provocatively, in this way: systematic exposition did not die on the cross for us; nor did biblical theology, nor even systematic theology or hermeneutics or whatever else we deem important as those who handle the exposition of Scripture. I have heard all of these in preaching . . . without a center in the person of the Lord Jesus.

Paradoxically not even the systematic preaching through one of the Gospels guarantees Christ-crucified centered preaching. Too often preaching on the Gospels takes what I whimsically think of

as the “Find Waldo Approach.” The underlying question in the sermon is “Where are you to be found in this story?” (are you Martha or Mary, James and John, Peter, the grateful leper . . . ?). The question “Where, who and what is Jesus in this story?” tends to be marginalized.

The truth is it is far easier to preach about Mary, Martha, James, John, or Peter than it is about Christ. It is far easier to preach even about the darkness of sin and the human heart than to preach Christ. Plus my bookshelves are groaning with literature on Mary, Martha . . . the good life, the family life, the Spirit-filled life, the parenting life, the damaged-self life . . . but most of us have only a few inches of shelf-space on the person and work of Christ himself.

Am I absolutely at my best when talking about him or about us?

4. Be Deeply Trinitarian

Surely we are? At least in some of our churches, not a Lord's Day passes without the congregation confessing one God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. But as is commonly recognized, Western Christianity has often had a special tendency to either an explicit or a pragmatic Unitarianism, be it of the Father (liberalism, for all practical purposes), the Son (evangelicalism, perhaps not least in its reactions against liberalism), or the Spirit (Charismaticism with its reaction to both of the previous).

This is, doubtless, a caricature. But my concern here arises from a sense that Bible-believing preachers (as well as others) continue to think of the Trinity as the most speculative and therefore the least practical of all doctrines. After all, what can you “do” as a result of hearing preaching that emphasizes God as Trinity? Well, at least inwardly if not outwardly, fall down in prostrate worship that the God whose being is so ineffable, so incomprehensible to my mental math, seeks fellowship with us!

I sometimes wonder if it is failure here that has led to churches actually to believe it when they are told by “church analysts” and the like that “the thing your church does best is worship . . . small groups, well you need to work on that . . .” Doesn't that verge on blasphemy? (Verge on it? There is surely only One who can assess the quality of our worship. This approach confuses aesthetics with adoration).

John's Gospel suggests to us that one of the deepest burdens on our Lord's heart during his last hours with his disciples was to help them understand that God's being as Trinity is the heart of what makes the gospel both possible and actual, and that it is knowing him as such that forms the very lifeblood of the life of faith (cf. John 13–17). Read Paul with this in mind, and it becomes obvious how profoundly woven into the warp and woof of his gospel his understanding of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit is.

Our people need to know that, through the Spirit, their fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ. Would they know that from my preaching?

5. Use Your Imagination

Does this not contradict the immediately preceding observations that the truth of the Trinity should not be thought of as speculative metaphysics? No. Rather it is simply to state what the preaching masters of the centuries have either explicitly written or, at least by example, implied. All good preaching involves the use of the imagination. No great preacher has ever lacked imagination. Perhaps we might go so far as to say it is simply an exhortation to love the Lord our God with all of our . . . mind . . . and our neighbor as ourselves.

Scripture itself suggests that there are many different kinds of imagination—hence the different genres in which the word of God is expressed (poetry, historical narrative, dialogue, monologue, history, vision, and so on). No two biblical authors had identical imaginations. It is doubtful if Ezekiel could have written Proverbs, for example!

What do we mean by “imagination”? Our dictionaries give a series of definitions. Common to them all seems to be the ability to “think outside of oneself,” “to be able to see or conceive the same thing in a different way.” In some definitions the ideas of the ability to contrive, exercising resourcefulness, the mind’s creative power, are among the nuanced meanings of the word.

Imagination in preaching means being able to understand the truth well enough to translate or transpose it into another kind of language or musical key in order to present the same truth in a way that enables others to see it, understand its significance, feel its power—to do so in a way that gets under the skin, breaks through the barriers, grips the mind, will, and affections so that they not only understand the word used but feel their truth and power.

Luther did this by the sheer dramatic forcefulness of his speech. Whitefield did it by his use of dramatic expression (overdid it, in the view of some). Calvin—perhaps surprisingly—did it too by the extraordinarily earthed-in-Geneva-life language in which he expressed himself. So an overwhelming Luther-personality, a dramatic preacher with Whitefieldian gifts of story-telling and voice (didn’t David Garrick say he’d give anything to be able to say “Mesopotamia” the way George Whitefield did?), a deeply scholarly, retiring, reluctant preacher—all did it, albeit in very different ways. They saw and heard the word of God as it might enter the world of their hearers and convert and edify them.

What is the secret here? It is, surely, learning to preach the word to yourself, from its context into your context, to make concrete in the realities of our lives the truth that came historically to others’ lives. This is why the old masters used to speak about sermons going from their lips with power only when they had first come to their own hearts with power.

All of which leads us from the fifth commandment back to where we started. Only immersion in Scripture enables us to preach it this way. Therein lies the difference between preaching that is about the Bible and its message and preaching that seems to come right out of the Bible with a “thus says the Lord” ring of authenticity and authority.

This is, surely, a good place to end the “first table” of these Commandments for Preachers. Now it is time to go and soak ourselves in Scripture to get ready for the “second table.”

6. Speak Much of Sin and Grace

In his exposition of Paul’s letter to the Romans, Martin Luther insightfully uses the words of Jeremiah’s call:

The sum total of this epistle is to destroy, root out, and bring to naught all carnal wisdom . . . All that is in us is to be rooted out, pulled down, destroyed, and thrown down, i.e., all that delights us because it comes from us and is found in us; but all that is from outside of us and in Christ is to be built up and planted.

If that is true of Paul’s “preaching” in Romans, it ought to be true of ours as well. Sin and grace should be the downbeat and the upbeat that run through all our exposition.

But there are some cautions. Preaching on sin must unmask the presence of sin, and undeceive about the nature of sin, as well as underline the danger of sin.

This is not the same thing as hammering a congregation against the back wall of the “sanctuary” with a tirade! That requires little more than high levels of emotion. A genuine, ultimately saving, unmasking and undeceiving of the human heart is more demanding exegetically and spiritually. For what is in view here is the skilled work of a surgeon—opening a wound, exposing the cause of the patient’s sickness, cutting away the destructive malignancies, all in order to heal and restore to life.

Doubtless people need warnings against the evils of contemporary society (abortion, apostasy in the visible church, etc). But we cannot build a ministry, nor healthy Christians, on a diet of fulminating against the world. No, rather we do this by seeing the Scriptures expose the sin in our own hearts, undeceive us about ourselves, root out the poison that remains in our own hearts—and then helping our people to do the same “by the open statement of the truth” (2 Cor 4:2).

There is only one safe way to do this. Spiritual surgery must be done within the context of God’s grace in Jesus Christ. Only by seeing our sin do we come to see the need for and wonder of grace. But exposing sin is not the same thing as unveiling and applying grace. We must be familiar with and exponents of its multifaceted power, and know how to apply it to a variety of spiritual conditions.

Truth to tell, exposing sin is easier than applying grace; for, alas, we are more intimate with the former than we sometimes are with the latter. Therein lies our weakness.

7. Use “*the Plain Style*”

This is a familiar enough expression in the history of preaching. It is associated particularly with the contrast between the literary eloquence of the High Anglican preaching tradition and the new “plain style” of the Puritans in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. William Perkins’s *The Arte of Prophesying* served as the first textbook in this school.

But this seventh commandment is not insisting *per se* that we should all preach like the Puritans. Indeed, acquaintance with the Puritans themselves would underline for us that they did not all preach as if they had been cloned from William Perkins! But they did have one thing in common: plain speech that they believed Paul commended and should be a leading characteristic of all preaching (2 Cor 6:7, cf. 4:2).

There are many ways this principle applies. Do not make eloquence the thing for which you are best known as a preacher; make sure you get the point of the passage you are preaching, and that you make it clear and express its power. True evangelical eloquence will take care of itself. Despite Charles Hodge’s reservations, Archibald Alexander was in general right in urging students to pay attention to the power of biblical ideas and then the words used in preaching will take care of themselves.

The “masters” of clear style can teach us here. Paradoxically, in this context, two of them were themselves Anglicans. C. S. Lewis’s counsel on writing applies equally to preaching:

Use language that makes clear what you really mean; prefer plain words that are direct to long words that are vague. Avoid abstract words when you can use concrete. Don’t use adjectives to tell us how you want us to feel—make us feel that by what you say! Don’t use words that are too big for their subject. Don’t use “infinitely” when you mean “very,” otherwise you will have no word left when you really do mean infinite!

In a similar vein, here is J. C. Ryle's counsel: "Have a clear knowledge of what you want to say. Use simple words. Employ a simple sentence structure. Preach as though you had asthma! Be direct. Make sure you illustrate what you are talking about."

Of course, there are exceptions to these principles. But why would I think I am one? A brilliant surgeon may be able to perform his operation with poor instruments; so can the Holy Spirit. But since in preaching we are nurses in the operating room, our basic responsibility is to have clean, sharp, sterile scalpels for the Spirit to do his surgery.

8. Find Your Own Voice

"Voice" here is used in the sense of personal style—"know yourself" if one can Christianize the wisdom of the philosophers.

That being said, finding a voice—in the literal sense—is also important. The good preacher who uses his voice badly is a *rara avis* indeed. Clearly, affectation should be banned; nor are we actors whose voices are molded to the part that is to be played. But our creation as the image of God, creatures who speak—and speak his praises and his word—really requires us to do all we can with the natural resources the Lord has given us.

But it is "voice" in the metaphorical sense that is really in view here—our approach to preaching that makes it authentically "our" preaching and not a slavish imitation of someone else. Yes, we may—must—learn from others, positively and negatively. Further, it is always important when others preach to listen to them with both ears open: one for personal nourishment through the ministry of the word, but the other to try to detect the principles that make this preaching helpful to people.

We ought not to become clones. Some men never grow as preachers because the "preaching suit" they have borrowed does not actually fit them or their gifts. Instead of becoming the outstanding expository preacher, or redemptive-historical, or God-centered, or whatever their hero may be, we may tie ourselves in knots and endanger our own unique giftedness by trying to use someone else's paradigm, style, or personality as a mold into which to squeeze ourselves. We become less than our true selves in Christ. The marriage of our personality with another's preaching style can be a recipe for being dull and lifeless. So it is worth taking the time in an ongoing way to try to assess who and what we really are as preachers in terms of strengths and weaknesses.

9. Learn How to Transition

There is a short (two pages) but wonderful "must-read" section for preachers in the Westminster Assembly's *Directory for the Public Worship of God*. *Inter alia* the Divines state that the preacher "In exhorting to duties . . . is, as he seeth cause, to teach also the means that help to the performance of them." In contemporary speech this means that our preaching will answer the "how to?" question. This perhaps requires further explanation.

Many of us are weary of the pandemic of "how-to-ness" we find in much contemporary preaching. It is often little better than psychology (however helpful) with a little Christian polish; it is largely imperative without indicative, and in the last analysis becomes self- and success-oriented rather than sin- and grace-oriented. But there is a Reformed and, more importantly, biblical, emphasis on teaching

how to transition from the old ways to the new way, from patterns of sin to patterns of holiness. It is not enough to stress the necessity, nor even the possibility, of this. We must teach people *how* this happens.

Years ago I took one of our sons for coaching from an old friend who had become a highly regarded teaching professional. My son was not, as they say, “getting on to the next level.” I could see that but no longer had (if I ever had!) the golfing *savoir faire* to help. Enter my friend, and within the space of one coaching session, the improvement in ball-striking was both visible and audible (there is something about the sound of a perfectly struck drive—or home run for that matter!).

This is, in part, what we are called to effect in our handling of the Scriptures—not “this is wrong . . . this is right” but by our preaching to enable and effect the transition.

But how? For all its criticism of the pragmatism of evangelicalism, Reformed preaching is not always skilled in this area. Many are stronger on doctrine than on exegesis and often stronger on soul-searching than on spiritual up-building. We need to learn how to expound the Scriptures in such a way that the very exposition empowers in our hearers the transitions from the old patterns of life in Adam to the new patterns of life in Christ.

How do we do this? To begin with by expounding the Scriptures in a way that makes clear that the indicatives of grace ground the imperatives of faith and obedience and also effect them. This we must learn to do in a way that brings out of the text how *the text itself* teaches how transformation takes place and how the power of the truth itself sanctifies (cf. John 17:17).

This usually demands that we stay down in the text longer, more inquisitively than we sometimes do, asking the text, “Show me how your indicatives effect your imperatives.” Such study often yields the surprising (?) result: depth-study of Scripture means that we are not left scurrying to the Christian bookshop or the journal on counseling in order to find out how the gospel changes lives. No, we have learned that the Scriptures themselves teach us the answer to the “What?” questions and also the answer to the “How to?” question.

Do we—far less our congregations—know “how to”? Have we told them they need to do it, but left them to their own devices rather than model it in our preaching?

Some years ago, at the end of a church conference, the local minister, whom I knew from his student days, said to me, “Just before I let you go tonight, will you do one last thing? Will you take me through the steps that are involved so that we learn to mortify sin?”

I was touched—that he would broach what was obviously a personal as well as pastoral concern with me, but perhaps even more so by his assumption that I would be able to help. (How often we who struggle are asked questions we ourselves need to answer!) He died not long afterwards, and I think of his question as his legacy to me, causing me again and again to see that we need to exhibit what John “Rabbi” Duncan of New College said was true of Jonathan Edwards’s preaching: “His doctrine was all application, and his application was all doctrine.”

The ministry that illustrates this, and that understands what is involved in how preaching transitions its hearers from the old to the new, will have what Thomas Boston once said about his own ministry, “a certain tincture” that people will recognize even if they cannot articulate or explain why it is so different and so helpful.

10. Love Your People

John Newton wrote that his congregation would take almost anything from him, however painful, because they knew “I mean to do them good.”

This is a litmus test for our ministry. It means that my preparation is a more sacred enterprise than simply satisfying my own love of study; it means that my preaching will have characteristics about it, difficult to define but nevertheless sensed by my hearers, that reflect the apostolic principle:

What we proclaim is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, *with ourselves as your servants for Jesus’ sake.* (2 Cor 4:5)

We were ready to share with you not only the gospel of God *but also our own selves, because you had become very dear to us.* (1 Thess 2:8)

In Jesus Christ, the church’s One True Preacher, message and messenger are one. He is the Preacher, and also the message. That is not true of us. But, in union with Christ (and we preach “in Christ” as well as live and die “in Christ”), a coalescence of a lesser sort takes place: the truth of the message is conveyed by the preacher whose spirit is conformed to the grace of God in the message. How can it be otherwise when preaching involves “God making his appeal through us” (2 Cor 5:20)? “A preacher’s life,” wrote Thomas Brooks, “should be a commentary upon his doctrine; his practice should be the counterpane [counterpart] of his sermons. Heavenly doctrines should always be adorned with a heavenly life.”

Conclusion

A “Preacher’s Decalogue” might be helpful, but at the end of the day we are nourished not by the commands of law but by the provisions of God’s grace in the gospel. It is as true of our preaching as of our living that what law cannot do, because of the weakness of our flesh, God accomplishes through Christ, in order to fulfill his commands in us by the Spirit. May it be so for us! Then we will be able truly to sing:

Happy if with my latest breath
I might but gasp his Name,
Preach him to all and cry in death,
“Behold, behold the Lamb!”

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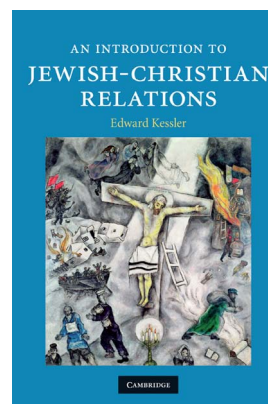
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OLD TESTAMENT

Edward Kessler. *An Introduction to Jewish-Christian Relations*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010. 243 pp. £17.99/\$29.99.

Edward Kessler, author of *An Introduction to Jewish-Christian Relations*, is founder and executive director of the Woolf Institute of Abrahamic Faiths at Cambridge University. He is an expert in interfaith dialogue, focusing primarily on contemporary Jewish-Christian and Jewish-Muslim interfaith relations throughout the history of the Abrahamic faiths. Kessler has written a number of key works to the field of Jewish-Christian relations such as *Bound by the Bible: Jews, Christians and the Sacrifice of Isaac* (Cambridge University Press, 2004) and *A Dictionary of Jewish-Christian Relations* (Cambridge University Press, 2005). *An Introduction to Jewish-Christian Relations* is the first highly accessible historical survey of Jewish-Christian relations that provides the non-specialist with a panoramic overview of the issues under scrutiny.



The book has a timeline of Jewish-Christian relations beginning with the NT and concluding with Major Institutional Statements since 1945 Relevant to Mission, Covenant, and Dialogue (pp. vii–xvi). The first introductory chapter unfolds the significance of the author’s current research (pp. 1–24). The complex, multifaceted history of Jews and Christians throughout the ages has set the stage for mutual exclusion, suspicion, persecution, and violence until the present day. At the same time, following the horrors of the Holocaust and the historical momentum of the establishment of the State of Israel, a remarkably positive change has occurred: many Christian denominations have willingly agreed to embark on the path of interfaith dialogue with Jews.

Another significant development had also occurred on the academic level. Contemporary Christian scholars and theologians have begun to acknowledge and seriously engage with studying the Jewish origins of Christianity, thus encouraging Christian and Jewish scholars to work cooperatively. For example, Christians have started to study the NT as Jewish literature *per se*. Kessler cites the *World Lutheran Federation* (1998): “Christian also need to learn of the rich and varied history of Judaism since New Testament times, and of the Jewish people as a diverse, living community of faith today. Such an encounter with living and faithful Judaism can be profoundly enriching for Christian self-understanding” (on pp. 1–2). An important development that has taken place on the Jewish side is the publication of the document titled “*Dabru Emet*” (2000). It paves the way for Jews to reconsider afresh their historical reception of Christianity. Following a sketchy description of the theological issues involved in Jewish-Christians relations and a brief summary of the history of Jewish-Christian relations, the introduction goes on to discuss the modern attempts to study Jewish-Christian relations. Kessler then illustrates his scholarly approach to the topic by highlighting liturgy, art, and Jewish-Christian relations in the United Kingdom.

Chapter 2 (pp. 25–44), “The New Testament,” is a good starting point to discover the complex history of relations between Jewish groups in the Roman occupied territory of Israel and the Jews of the Diaspora and the co-emerging movement of observant Jews for Jesus in the first century A.D. The reader will be fascinated to read about the Jewish nature of the NT writings. In particular, the discussion on

Paul as a Jew is captivating. Concluding the second chapter with a study on Pauline theology, Kessler writes,

Indeed, so strongly does Paul make this point that he offers a severe warning that Gentile Christians should not be haughty or boastful toward unbelieving Jews, much less cultivate evil intent and engage in persecution against them. This remained a critical warning almost totally forgotten by Christians in history. As we shall see in the next chapter, shortly after the New Testament canon was closed Christian writers remembered Jews as 'enemies' but not as 'beloved' of God (Rom 11:28), and have taken to heart Paul's criticisms, using them against Jews, while forgetting Paul's love for the Jewish people and their traditions. (p. 44)

Chapter 3 (pp. 45–64), "The Writings of the Church Fathers," raises concerns with respect to the increase of anti-Jewish sentiments in Patristic Literature. Chapter 4 (pp. 65–80), "The Writings of the Rabbis," covers the topic of rabbinic approach toward Christians, and most importantly, Jesus of Nazareth, as the key figure of Christianity. Chapter 5 (pp. 81–101), "Biblical Interpretation: Another Side to the Story," offers an interesting discussion of hermeneutical interchange between Jews and Christians in the Patristic era. Genesis 22 is a fine example of an exegetical encounter between Jewish and Christian thinkers manifested in theological treatises and arts alike. Chapter 6 (pp. 102–23), "Medieval Relations," focuses on a quite dark period in Jewish-Christian relations, though there were some positive developments such as Christian Hebraism and the positive attitude of some Christian rulers toward the Jews in medieval Europe.

Chapter 7 (pp. 124–46), "Antisemitism and the Holocaust," outlines the roots of modern antisemitism, the Holocaust, and the Christian responses to this Jewish tragedy. Chapter 8 (pp. 147–69), "Zionism and the State of Israel," expounds on the hotly debated political topic of Palestine and Arabs, on the one hand, and Jews and their historical (biblical) claim for the land of Israel, on the other. Chapter 9 (pp. 170–90), "Covenant, Mission and Dialogue," touches on three core theological points: covenant, mission, and dialogue. According to Kessler, these central topics are critical to ensure future progress in the dialogue between Jews and Christian. The key issue here is the doctrine of supersessionism or the theology of replacement so commonly addressed in contemporary biblical studies and systematic theology.

Interestingly, the author touches, by passing, on the mission of Jews for Jesus, a rather controversial missionary group of Messianic Jews (p. 184). On a larger scale, it would have been necessary to elaborate on the role Messianic Judaism plays in the contemporary dialogue between Jews and Christian. Or put another way, what constructive role do they play in the process of reconciliation between Jews and Christians? Chapter 10 (pp. 191–211), "Jewish-Christian Relations and the Wider Interfaith Context," discusses Muslims and their part in Jewish-Christian relations. It also sheds light on the importance of exegetical pluralism, namely, a careful and respectful rereading of the biblical text in the context of a rich hermeneutical legacy preserved by Jews and Christians alike.

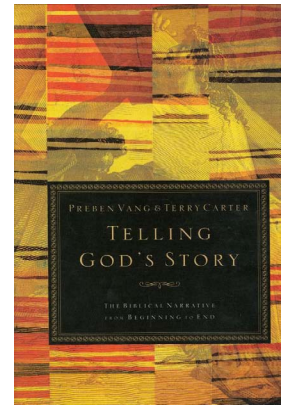
The book concludes with a bibliography, glossary, and general index. The book has no footnotes or endnotes. It makes this book accessible and easy to read. *An Introduction to Jewish-Christian Relations* is by all means an interdisciplinary study that invites the reader to the world of Jewish-Christian relations.

I would highly recommend this book to those readers interested in learning more about Jews-Christian relations. Indeed, the book promises to be a very useful resource in teaching and research alike.

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Preben Vang and Terry Carter. *Telling God's Story: The Biblical Narrative from Beginning to End*. Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2006. 335 pp. \$14.95.

A student at a Christian college, who happened to be the son of a pastor, recently told me what he knew about “Jacob and the whale” (confusing Jacob with Jonah). Even students with Christian backgrounds are entering college with very low biblical literacy, and those who do know a few biblical details have been accustomed to hearing them in isolation from the biblical narrative as a whole. It is the nature of sermons and Sunday School lessons to focus on brief episodes each week, and often there is little done to connect the shorter stories with the whole. Preben Vang and Terry Carter have set about to address this shortfall by retelling the biblical metanarrative in *Telling God's Story: The Biblical Narrative from Beginning to End*. Their effort is admirable, and they succeed in putting the story of Old and New Testaments into a readable summary complete with helpful theological explanations along the way. This book should help readers to know the story from beginning to end and to be able to relate the purpose of the story (p. xii).



The authors identify the purpose of the story with helpful theological insights. They also emphasize the major theological theme of covenant and God's use of that covenant to bring the whole world back into right relationship with himself, as it was portrayed in the Garden of Eden (pp. 43, 52, 74, 142, 147, 150, 173–74). Another theme this book emphasizes is God's use of ordinary people to carry out his plan. Even though Abraham, Moses, and David made mistakes, God was willing to use them “to carry out his awesome plan for salvation and redemption” (p. 65; cf. 110). This is related to another theme: God's ability to orchestrate events, even the actions of pagan kings, to accomplish exactly what he had determined (p. 150; cf. 114, 123, 134).

This book focuses on narrative and as such is in danger of excluding large amounts of biblical material that do not actually tell a story. Nevertheless, the authors provide helpful sections on prophets, poetry (including Wisdom), and parables (pp. 124, 163, 203). Several helpful drawings and charts bring together elements in a visual manner. The explanation of apocalyptic is particularly helpful, and the book also explains different eschatological theories. Unfortunately, there is no bibliography or list of resources for further reading, although a few footnotes do make suggestions.

The authors summarize the biblical story in twelve points, and at the end of major sections, they reproduce this summary along and indicate where they are in the retelling of the story. This greatly furthers their purpose of giving the reader an overview of story, not just presenting disconnected details. They also helpfully summarize their theological explanations in sections entitled “Things to Consider,” which appear at the end of many of the chapters.

Though Vang and Carter helpfully retell the biblical story, there are some possible weaknesses in their content. They sharply dichotomize between the unilateral covenants of Abraham and David and the bilateral covenant of Moses. Law defines the latter covenant, while they define the unilateral covenants as “an expression of pure grace” (pp. 2, 5). They emphasize the Ten Commandments as rules, rather than instructions (as the Hebrew word for “law,” *torah*, implies [p. 3]). In their rejection of legalism, they dismiss the Mosaic covenant as “shattered” and beyond restoration because of idolatry, social injustice, and religious formalism (pp. 4–5).

The ancient treaties on which the biblical covenants are modeled, however, are never really shattered. If the weaker king rebels, then he receives the curses and consequences of broken covenant. But the agreement is not rescinded; it is merely enforced more closely. Likewise, the new covenants of Jeremiah and Ezekiel are not completely discontinuous with the Mosaic covenant, but an internalizing of that covenant. In the proposed new covenants, law is not abolished but written on the heart and obeyed with sincerity; it is not legalism. This is the same attitude that Jesus had to the law in the Sermon on the Mount. While rejecting legalism that minimized the law’s effectiveness, he made the law more stringent by calling for a right attitude as well as action (although the prophets had already called for an internalization of obedience).

While apparently rejecting law and the Mosaic covenant, Vang and Carter also acknowledge the importance of obedience in following Jesus, even going so far as to say “that obedience is a prerequisite for entrance into God’s kingdom” in the sense that a child obeys a parent out of trust, not legalism (p. 202). This statement is probably too strong and even seems to contradict Vang and Carter’s general attitude to law. Not even the Mosaic covenant was a prerequisite for entrance into God’s kingdom, as God had already effected salvation in the form of the exodus before the law was given. Vang and Carter’s discussion of James is more balanced, and there they recognize works as “evidence for the genuineness of faith” in the post-conversion experience (p. 306). This is a confusing topic as the debates within the NT show, and Vang and Carter have not managed to clarify the topic for their readers as they attempt to reject legalism (but identify legalism and law) and yet are still aware of the importance of ethics in the Christian faith (pp. 300, 309, 331).

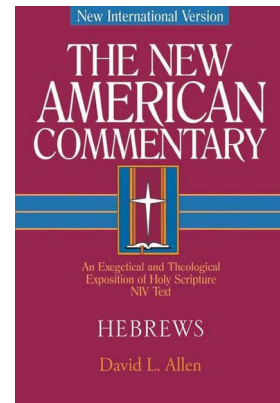
Overall, *Telling God’s Story* achieves its goal. It provides a readable review of the biblical narrative with explanations that will help a general audience gain a better grasp of the Bible as a whole.

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NEW TESTAMENT

David L. Allen. *Hebrews*. New American Commentary. Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2010. 671 pp. \$32.99.

David L. Allen, dean of the School of Theology, professor of preaching, and director of the Center of Biblical preaching at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Ft. Worth Texas, brings decades of study, teaching, and (especially) preaching to this recent contribution to the New American Commentary series. This volume is directed at those who preach and teach Hebrews; it purposes to help students, pastors, and professors, being written on an accessible level, while maintaining sufficient academic depth. At almost 700 pages, it is one of the more substantial recent contributions to this area of NT studies, and at over 3,380 footnotes, one could never accuse Allen of being light on research. Readers of this volume, as well as his *Lukan Authorship of Hebrews* (B&H, 2010), are rewarded with copious notes and detailed research. For that reason alone it will prove to be a helpful contribution to pastors and students alike.



Allen begins with a lengthy introduction. A substantial introduction is a welcomed departure from other volumes in the NAC series, with Allen's introduction extending over seventy pages. (On a side note, why is the table of contents virtually nonexistent?) For those who have followed Allen's research, it will be of no surprise to discover that the largest section of the introduction is given to matters of authorship, with a Lukan proposal taking up the lion's share of the pages. Other matters of introduction include the letter's recipients (perhaps converted Jewish priests), their location (Antioch?), date (pre-70), the purpose and theology of Hebrews, use of the OT (for an example, see pp. 204ff.), and the structure of Hebrews. Concerning the latter, Allen argues for a tripartite division that closely resembles Nauck and others (with a special emphasis on the exhortation of 10:19–13:21), and he suggests that each major section develops a particular aspect of this schema: Son in 1:5–4:13; High Priest in 4:14–10:18; and King in 10:19–13:21 (p. 11).

For Allen, Hebrews is a pastoral, sermonic letter that is essentially a christological interpretation of Ps 110:1, 4 (p. 12). The balance of OT texts in Hebrews are cited in support of these two OT texts. Allen summarizes, "Hebrews is about Jesus the Son who became our High Priest and then became king when he sat upon the throne of God in fulfillment of Ps 110:1, 4" (p. 11). Other than the proposal of Lukan authorship, one will not find new discoveries concerning introductory matters, but one does find a helpful synthesis of the major contributions relating to the central matters of introduction. As such, it is a helpful summary and resource.

Throughout the commentary Allen follows a helpful yet simple pattern. Each section is discussed in a verse-by-verse format, with a copious amount of detailed research in the footnotes, and concludes with a section on theological implications. For example, after discussing the prologue of Hebrews, the section on theological implications stretches over twenty pages. Not all such sections are as lengthy (some are a single page), but the theologically minded reader will appreciate Allen's approach, namely, that exegesis drives theology. To be sure, readers may find themselves in disagreement with some of the theological conclusions at times. Such is to be expected.

Turning to matters of theology, one significant example must suffice. Allen's approach is seen in how he deals with the warning passage of chapter 6. Given the volume of writing and interest in 6:4–8, it comes as no surprise that nearly fifty pages are dedicated to its interpretation and theology (pp. 344–93; cf. 10–11). Allen himself notes the importance of these verses when he writes, "Because so much of the interpretation of the warning passages as well as the entire epistle hinges on this paragraph, considerable attention to its exegetical, historical and theological aspects is mandated" (p. 344). Allen takes a nine step approach to this paragraph, succinctly explains the major interpretive options, and in the end argues that these verses are directed towards believers who will lose their eschatological rewards (pp. 383–86). However one views this passage, Allen's commentary will prove beneficial by clearly summarizing the main interpretive voices. In other words, one need not agree with Allen in order to be served by his research. By contrast, the discussion of 10:26–31 is brief (pp. 520–27). There Allen concludes that the OT background is not soteriological (p. 524). He avers, "The warning passages are not addressing the danger of apostasy. They address the danger of willful disobedience to God on the part of a genuine believer and the serious consequences to that disobedience" (p. 537).

Many excellent commentaries do not attempt to strike such a balance between exegesis and theology. Some focus more on interpreting Hebrews within its historical milieu (such as Attridge); others are more focused on technical matters (such as Ellingworth and Moffatt); others have more of a non-technical pastoral bent to them (such as G. Guthrie and R. Phillips); and others focus on matters of theology and history (such as P. E. Hughes). F. F. Bruce's 1990 revision was a boon for the theological interpreter, but given the amount of research and theological development within Hebrews' studies over recent decades, Allen's work builds upon and in many ways surpasses of Bruce. Further, while being similar in length to the recent and excellent verse-by-verse commentary of O'Brien (Pillar), Allen's work may prove more advantageous to the pastor and theological student due to its theological focus. (O'Brien notes that he is saving his discussion of Hebrews' theology for a separate volume [see his *Hebrews*, p. xiv].) The theologically-minded pastor, student, and layperson will find Allen's work to be quite beneficial, and it deserves to find its way into the hands of anyone studying the Epistle to the Hebrews.

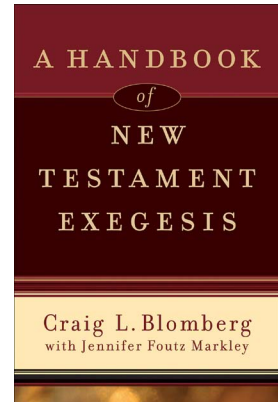
To be sure, linguists may say it is not linguistic enough; grammarians may say it is not grammatical enough; and theologians may say it is not theological enough. However, no single volume can be all things to everyone. Allen does not attempt to break much new ground in this commentary, and this reviewer asserts that is a good thing. It stands in the stream of commentaries by Bruce and O'Brien and is a highlight in the NAC series. For the pastor, teacher, and serious Bible student, Allen's commentary will prove itself to be a thorough, clearly-written, and well-researched asset as they study, teach, and preach this "word of exhortation."

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Craig L. Blomberg with Jennifer Foutz Markley. *A Handbook of New Testament Exegesis*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2010. 304 pp. \$22.99.

NT teachers and students, along with pastors seeking a refresher, stand to gain from this recent overview of biblical exegesis jointly authored by Craig Blomberg and his former research assistant Jennifer Foutz Markley. Blomberg and Foutz Markley sketch a historical-grammatical approach that squares well with exegesis classes taught in evangelical seminaries. Their contribution to the field of exegetical handbooks and introductions is a readable and comprehensive primer housed in a step-by-step methodological framework: it starts with text criticism, then moves to selecting an English translation, historical-cultural context, literary context, word studies, grammar, interpretive problems, outlining, theology, and ends with application and sermon-crafting.



The best comparison, as stated by the authors in their introduction, is Gordon Fee's *New Testament Exegesis: A Handbook for Students and Pastors* (3rd ed.; 2002). The authors describe their textbook as an expansion of Fee's book, with more description and examples, repetition being the underlying pedagogical strategy. That expansion makes the book suitable as an introductory text, whereas Fee's requires prior knowledge of exegetical methods. The most obvious difference is in style and format; Fee's outlined text reads much more like a manual or a quick-reference tool, with content easily presentable in a single flow-chart, while Blomberg and Foutz Markley's chapters are sequential essays supported by sidebars and tables. This prose form, though, does not impede their methodical approach or the ease with which they can summarize the material in a checklist, which appears in an appendix.

The first chapter on textual criticism serves as a good sample of what the book offers. The authors start with the most basic premise of the discipline: "the [extant] copies do not agree, hence the need for textual criticism" (p. 2). They go on to discuss the types of extant manuscripts (e.g., Greek papyri and Latin translations) and the unique challenges of biblical text criticism over against other subjects of text criticism. They also describe text types (e.g., Alexandrian), the apparatus of the UBS and Nestle-Aland New Testaments, and guidelines for making textual decisions (according to a "reasoned eclecticism"). Along the way, they present a sidebar summarizing guidelines for evaluating external and internal evidence, one extended test case from Scripture alongside a continuous peppering of brief Scripture illustrations, and a discussion of implications of textual criticism for pastoral ministry. In contrast, the corresponding section in Fee's text generally assumes basic knowledge of variants, text types, and apparatuses, and it dovetails with the current work only at the point of guidelines for evaluating evidence.

With the substantial number of similar works in this field, it may be helpful to note comparisons to two other recent works, the first being Darrell Bock and Buist Fanning's *Interpreting the New Testament* (2006). Blomberg and Foutz Markley's book differentiates itself by its explicitly step-by-step approach and a stylistic continuity that the other, being a collection of essays by various scholars, misses. Their teaching strategy differs as well, as they utilize brief illustrations throughout the explanatory text, whereas Bock and Fanning give long single test-cases as their own separate chapters. The other comparable book is Richard Erickson's *A Beginner's Guide to New Testament Exegesis* (2005), which also expresses indebtedness to Fee's work but is less comprehensive than Blomberg and Foutz Markley's book and is written in a much more colloquial style.

Blomberg and Foutz Markley occasionally foray into broader issues of hermeneutics such as social-scientific approaches (pp. 85–91), theological interpretation (pp. 227–31), and the role of presuppositions in the act of communication (pp. 244–49). As a rule, though, they fix their attention on the more specific task of author- and text-focused exegesis, that is, “determining the original meaning of a biblical passage” (p. 117). Still, some readers might appreciate more discussion of broader hermeneutics as well as deeper discussion of application, issues that may be increasingly important to the students and pastors for whom this book might be most helpful.

Clear writing and a steady stream of examples, along with a wide breadth of issues addressed in each exegetical step, make this book a promising resource for students, teachers, and pastors. It demonstrates well the necessity of rigorous, self-aware, and thoughtful exegesis for followers of Scripture.

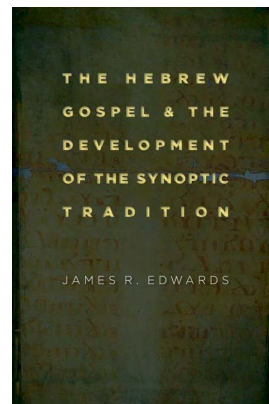
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James R. Edwards. *The Hebrew Gospel and the Development of the Synoptic Tradition*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009. 394 pp. £23.99/\$36.00.

The transmission from the historical life of Jesus to the textuality of Gospel witness has been something of a holy grail within NT scholarship. Though each Gospel demonstrates peculiarities of interests, the Synoptics betray similarities that cause one to suspect a source (or sources) behind these commonalities. Varying theories stemming from the two-source hypothesis to Griesbach’s two-Gospel hypothesis have all been proposed to solve the riddle, but there are plenty who suspect the current consensus. What is more, with the rise of studies in oral cultures and the appropriation of various memory models, transmission theories within Gospel studies have seen recent revaluations.

Enmeshed within these debates is the question of Jesus’ mother tongue. Some suggest Greek (e.g., R. O. P. Taylor), others Aramaic (e.g., Fitzmyer), and still others Hebrew (e.g., Birkeland). Owing to the deportation and the influence of the Achaemenid era (c. 550–330 B.C.), there was a natural move from Hebrew to Aramaic within Palestine. What is more, the Hellenization programs of the Seleucid kings of Syria in the third and second centuries and the two Jewish wars in the first and second centuries A.D. together pressed spoken Aramaic to the margins in favor of Greek. Whatever the spoken language of the Galilean Jesus might have been, however, it must not be confused with the problem of the original language of the primitive forms of say, Matthew’s Gospel or the sources of Luke’s Semitisms. The Qumran community, for example, though writing in a time when both Hebrew and Aramaic were receding in favor of Greek, committed the majority of their texts to neoclassical Hebrew Script. In other words, Hebrew was alive and well in some pockets of first-century Palestine.

Enter James R. Edwards and his daring take on the complexities surrounding the Synoptic riddle. In his recent publication *The Hebrew Gospel and the Development of the Synoptic Tradition*, he argues, “the high concentration of Semitisms in Special Luke—those portions of Luke that are not shared in common with Matthew and/or Mark—can be accounted for on the assumption that they derive from



the original Hebrew Gospel” (p. xxi). Several basic planks support this thesis. First, there is a near 400% increase in Semitisms in Special Luke over Semitisms that occur in Luke that also occur in Matthew/Mark. Because Luke was a Gentile, this increase, so the argument goes, suggests a Semitic source. Second, there are eighty-some quotations from twenty different patristic writers—ranging from Ignatius of Antioch to Jerome—of the Hebrew Gospel, which demonstrate a higher correspondence with Special Luke. According to these patristic sources, the Hebrew Gospel was the work of the apostle Matthew, an eyewitness source perhaps referred to in Luke’s prologue. What is more, reference to the Hebrew Gospel in varying sources such as the scholia in Sinaiticus and the Islamic Hadith suggest a pass on the test of multiple attestation. (Edwards counts at least seventy-five different attestations.)

The first three chapters of the book document and exegete the known references to the Hebrew Gospel through the first nine centuries of the Christian church. The fourth chapter deals with the nature of Semitisms in Luke’s Gospel. Chapter five tackles the contested question of Semitisms or Septuagintisms. The sixth chapter is something of a social history regarding the neglect of the Hebrew Gospel with respect to twentieth-century scholarship. The seventh chapter attempts to dispense with Q’s “continued viability as a hypothesis” (p. xxii). In this chapter, Edwards is careful not to dispense with Markan priority, however, simply the second prong of the two-source hypothesis. Some Q proponents will question his lack of discussion regarding the Lost Sheep parable (Luke 15:4–7) or of Mark/Q overlapping material. The final chapter analyzes the relation between the canonical Greek Matthew and the Hebrew Gospel. A helpful epilogue concludes with twenty-three conclusions (pp. 259–62), and three helpful appendixes round out the volume. On pages xxiii–xxxiv, he situates his project within a brief telling of the history of interpretation regarding the “quest for the Hebrew Gospel.”

Edwards offers no reconstruction of the Hebrew Gospel but instead is interested in the affirmation of it as a narrative “that included material extending from the baptism of Jesus through the resurrection” (p. xxxiv). As such, the second source informed the Synoptic tradition in lieu of Q. In one sense, of course, this is deeply problematic: there is no extant copy of the Hebrew Gospel. Moreover, many will question his methodological assumptions. For example, if, as he maintains, Luke added Semitisms to his Markan source, why not allow the possibility of him creating Semitisms in the material peculiar to his own Gospel?

In this sense, it is difficult to evaluate the work of Edwards. His demonstrable talents in diverse disciplines such as traditional Gospel studies, patristics, nineteenth- and twentieth-century German scholarship, and, of course, the use of Hebrew within antiquity are impressive. One surely walks away from his work impressed, but, at best, with a shrug of the shoulders and a pronounced “perhaps.” Edwards’s volume is surely not the last word to be spoken on the topic of the Hebrew Gospel, but anything said from here forth—either for, against, or indifferent—will have to reckon with it. It is must reading for those engaged in Synoptic studies.

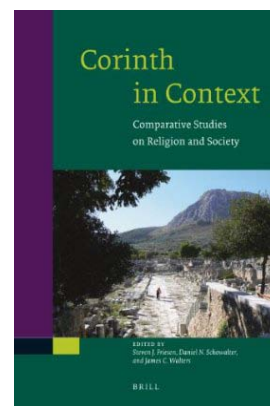
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Steven J. Friesen, Daniel N. Schowalter, and James C. Walters, eds. *Corinth in Context: Comparative Studies on Religion and Society*. Supplements to Novum Testamentum 134. Leiden: Brill, 2010. xxvi + 517 pp. £132.00/\$230.00.

This attractive volume and worthy addition to the distinguished Supplements to Novum Testamentum series consists of thirteen papers originally presented at a 2007 conference held at the University of Texas at Austin. The volume is interdisciplinary, exploring a variety of topics relating to early Christianity, religious studies, ancient history, and archaeology, and the contributors are recognized experts within their fields and on ancient Corinth. The book's strongest essays are those largely unconcerned with illuminating specific NT texts, and they are summarized only briefly here.

Benjamin Millis studies the original colonists of Roman Corinth, arguing (with Antony Spawforth) that the colony's original settlers consisted largely of freedmen, though Millis proposes on linguistic grounds that many of these settlers originated from the eastern provinces. Bronwen Wickkiser provides a survey of recent work on the cult of Asklepios, demonstrating its significance in Corinth during both the Greek and Roman periods. Margaret Laird focuses on the statue base erected by the Augustales in the Corinthian agora, offering a new analysis of the monument, its inscription, and civic significance. Christine Thomas compares Corinth and Ephesus, showing the similar and dissimilar ways the two cities sought to maintain their Greek identities in the Roman era. Mary Walbank analyzes the Corinthian numismatic evidence, explaining the process of coin production in Corinth and how coins serve as valuable primary sources for the study of Corinth's public cults. Jorunn Økland examines the sanctuary of Demeter and Kore, arguing that the deities were characterized differently in Corinth than in other urban contexts and still differently by those in various social strata. Michael Walbank utilizes a sample of several hundred Christian epitaphs (many previously unpublished) to examine the demographics of late Roman and early Byzantine Corinth, concluding that a number of believers during these periods were quite prosperous. Daniel Schowalter treats the location of the Pauline church meetings, surveying and assessing the ways NT scholars have previously studied architectural and archaeological remains to illumine the practices and beliefs of the earliest Corinthian believers. Guy Sanders studies the local and regional significance of the Sacred Spring at Corinth, while Joseph Rife surveys religion and society at the neighboring port city of Kenchreai, and Timothy Gregory does the same for Isthmia and the eastern Corinthia.

The two essays concentrating on NT exegesis, on the other hand, were generally found to be less persuasive and therefore require closer interaction. First, Steven Friesen controversially contends that Erastus, the Corinthian *oikonomos* ("administrator") and acquaintance of Paul (Rom 16:23), was probably an unbelieving public slave who did not belong to the economic elite. Friesen initially seeks to prove that Erastus the first-century *oikonomos* should be differentiated from Erastus the infamous magistrate attested on a Corinthian inscription (*IKorinthKent 232*). Friesen reveals the circular reasoning employed by the original editors of the Erastus inscription, who dated the text to the first century and thus concluded that this magistrate was to be identified with Erastus the *oikonomos*. But when Friesen then attempts to re-date the inscription to the second century, he fails to offer any compelling data to support his case, citing as evidence mainly personal communication with archaeologist Charles Williams, who has yet to publish his own conclusions on the matter. Though Friesen's theory about the



inscription's second-century origin may be valid, the evidence he supplies here is inadequate. Next, Friesen seeks to demonstrate the non-elite status of Paul's Erastus by assembling several inscriptions featuring municipal *oikonomoi*, who were probably public slaves. However valid these parallels may be, Friesen overlooks the evidence showing other *oikonomoi* to be high ranking magistrates; this interpretive issue is simply more complicated than Friesen acknowledges. Finally, Friesen argues that Erastus was an unbeliever since Paul did not give him a Christian attribution, which Friesen insists is afforded for every other Christian in Rom 16. But this is simply not the case. In Romans neither *sungenēs* ("kinsmen," Rom 9:7, 11, 21; cf. 9:3) nor *mētēr* ("mother," 9:13) signifies Christian faith, as Friesen assumes. Presupposing Erastus' faith, then, is perhaps less objectionable than Friesen suggests (see further my forthcoming article in *New Testament Studies*).

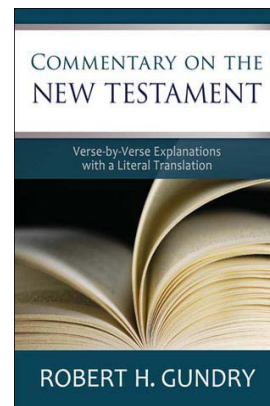
Second, James Walters investigates 1 Cor 11:17–34, attempting to show that Paul was responding specifically to high-status believers who by hosting lavish banquets were utilizing community meals to compete with the apostle and one another in the pursuit of power and prestige. Walters successfully shows that banquets were indeed used (illegally) as opportunities to rally support in local politics (cf. Cicero; *Lex Coloniae Genetivae*), but he fails to demonstrate convincingly that lurking behind 1 Cor 11:17–34 existed a competition between Paul and his "rivals." Though Paul implies in 1 Corinthians that some had dismissed his authority and primacy, the supposition that Paul at that time had opponents in the church, especially among the community's leaders, is doubtful. Beyond that, 1 Cor 11:17–34 indicates nothing about rivalries between banquet hosts and other Christian leaders, as Walters assumes (p. 358).

Despite these disagreements, there are many fascinating and important insights here that will interest specialists in Corinth's social and religious context. Ideological biases occasionally surface that will frustrate conservative readers (esp. Friesen and Schowalter on the historical reliability of the NT; pp. 245n41, 330, 335). Nevertheless, these essays along with their many accompanying maps, tables, figures, and photographs make this volume a worthy addition to any theological library. Though the hardback edition is quite cost prohibitive, the subsequently issued paperback is somewhat more affordable (£40.00/\$73.00).

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Robert H. Gundry. *Commentary on the New Testament: Verse-by-Verse Explanations with a Literal Translation*. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2010. x + 1072 pp. £32.99/\$49.99.

In a day when biblical studies is marked by increasing specialization and swelling bibliography, it is refreshing to see a NT scholar at the zenith of his career venture a one-volume exposition of the NT. It is doubly refreshing to see such an effort designed to “serve Christian ministers, Bible study leaders, and serious-minded lay students” who lack the time or training to profit from the very kind of technical scholarship that has marked so much of Robert H. Gundry’s output (p. ix). Even so, Gundry’s aim is to be simple without being simplistic. His stated hope is that his academic peers “may discover in the comments many particulars not to be found elsewhere yet worthy of consideration” (p. ix). This is an ambitious undertaking indeed. Has Gundry succeeded in accomplishing what he has set out to do?



In some respects he has—and marvelously so. Gundry’s treatment of Rom 1:1–7 is clear and simple, and it disarmingly reflects extensive engagement with the secondary literature. His exposition of Gal 2:11–21 carefully and thoughtfully sifts recent discussion in Pauline scholarship concerning justification and the Mosaic Law—all without a single footnote. His comments on Matthew and Mark present the mass of his scholarship on these two books in concise and mature form. The connections, for example, that Gundry observes between the OT and Matthew’s accounts of Jesus’ birth and death will inform student and scholar alike.

Gundry’s expositions also have an eye to contemporary issues. His treatment of 1 Tim 2:11–14 expressly addresses the question whether women may preach when the church gathers for public worship. He not only concludes that Paul is forbidding women from teaching the assembled congregation, but also constructively responds to the objections that Paul’s statements “apply . . . only to a local condition in Ephesus” or to “a cultural condition prevalent throughout the first-century Roman Empire and to any like condition in other times and places” (pp. 836, 837).

Gundry’s commentary at points leaves the reader wanting more. Gundry has purposefully “omitted scholarly documentation and discussions of authorship, date, sources, historicity [and] harmonization, and similar topics and concentrated instead on what is likely to prove useful for expository preaching, teaching, group discussion, and private edification” (p. ix). Sometimes, however, focused discussion of certain interpretative questions would have helped the reader. Three examples come to mind.

First, nearly three decades ago, Gundry famously classified portions of Matthew’s Gospel as “midrashic.” This approach towards Matthew occasioned considerable discussion within evangelical biblical scholarship. Given the controversy surrounding Gundry’s earlier publications, one wishes that an explicit discussion of the genre of Matthew had been included in this commentary.

Second, one must discover Gundry’s overall approach towards Revelation inductively. The result is that the reader is left trying to discern whether Gundry’s exposition of Revelation is futurist, idealist, or preterist; premillennial, amillennial or postmillennial. More beneficial to his readership would have been an initial statement in which Gundry situated his exposition within the interpretative landscape of Revelation.

Third, in his comments on Rom 5:12–14 Gundry observes that “the present repetition of [‘all have sinned,’ cf. Rom 3:23] points to everybody’s having sinned individually, for himself. It’s not that

God counted Adam's sin as everybody else's too. Paul isn't talking here about accounting. He's talking here about invasion: Adam's sin gave sin as a personified force entry into the world" (p. 587; cf. 589). The space constraints of a one-volume commentary have undoubtedly hindered Gundry from both interacting with the centuries of reflection on these verses and defending his reading of the apostle's words. In light of the importance of this issue to NT theology, one wishes that Gundry had provided his readers with an acknowledgment of the range of views that the history of interpretation has bequeathed the modern church.

In all, Gundry's *Commentary on the New Testament* is an exegetical achievement. It comprises a digest of the life-long labors of a careful and seasoned student of the NT. As such, it deserves a place on the shelves of serious students of the Scripture. In a day when many commentaries offer the reader *parvum in multo* (very little content in many words), it is refreshing to see a work that offers *multum in parvo* (much content in a few words). Provided that it is read with care and discernment, and alongside fuller commentaries of the books of the NT, Gundry's *Commentary* will richly repay the reader.

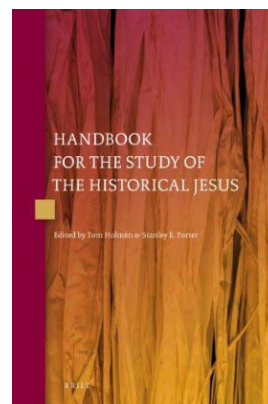
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Tom Holmén and Stanley E. Porter, eds. *Handbook for the Study of the Historical Jesus*. 4 vols. Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2011. xxii + 3,652 pp. £899.00/\$1,329.00.

The third quest of the historical Jesus is entering its fourth decade, even as some are calling for a fourth quest that takes the Gospel of John much more seriously as containing historical information. Before the landscape shifts too dramatically, wouldn't it be great to have a detailed, comprehensive "all-star" cast of third-questers contribute to an anthology of historical Jesus studies so that we can stock of our gains and assess the *status questionis*? This is exactly what Holmén from Helsinki University in Finland and Porter from McMaster Divinity College in Canada have assembled in this wide ranging collection of essays.

Volume 1 is subtitled *How to Study the Historical Jesus* and deals with methodological questions. The list of authors alone gives an idea of what to expect as most summarize positions they have already defended in greater detail elsewhere: D. Allison, E. Baasland, J. Becker, J. Charlesworth, B. Chilton, J. D. Crossan, J. D. G. Dunn, R. Horsley, J. Kloppenborg, J. Meier, P. Pokorný, S. Porter, R. Riesner, J. M. Robinson, J. Schlosser, E. Schüssler Fiorenza, G. Theissen, T. Holmén, C. Brown, A. Hultgren, G. Osborne, T. Nicklas, B. Malina, E. S. Malbon, A. Kirk, and D. Winter.

Allison prefers "recurrent attestation" to the traditional criteria of authenticity, Charlesworth argues for dissimilarity and embarrassment as the most important two for determining Jesus' own theology, while Meier continues to defend an eclectic combination of primary and secondary criteria. Chilton focuses more on divergent traditions in early Christianity that nevertheless converge on Jesus as Jewish *merkabah* mystic, Dunn stresses that all we have is "Jesus remembered" and highlights the flexible performances within fixed limits of the original oral tradition, while Kloppenborg continues to hope



(unrealistically) for a consensus surrounding the early, independent nature of the Gospel of Thomas. Porter lobbies for his three criteria of Greek language (textual variance, discourse features, and Greek linguistic context), Riesner stresses the importance of memorization in oral tradition, and Schüssler Fiorenza values only those reconstructions of Jesus that serve a liberating, pro-women position. Theissen ably digests his case for the plausibility criterion, Hultgren reminds us of what was most of value about form criticism, Malina emphasizes the need for social-scientific exegesis, and Struthers Malbon points to the potential for the new literary criticisms contributing to the quest in ways they thus far have not.

Volume 2 turns to *The Study of Jesus*, focusing on the ongoing quest, with issues both central and adjacent to it. A sampling of highlights include Colin Brown's contrasts of the quests of the unhistorical Jesus (Christology from above) and of the historical Jesus (Christology from below), Bengt Holmberg's prophecies that "the gospels will be seen as generally trustworthy evidence of Jesus" and that "Jesus research will use a more holistic method" (p. 891) and Scot McKnight's demolition of thoroughgoing forms of postmodernism. Teresa Okure discusses the "living" historical Jesus, the Jesus who actually transforms lives for the better especially in the Majority World, which ironically for the liberationists and feminists is far more often the evangelical and charismatic Jesus than theirs. Sven-Olav Back follows Hengel's approach to show that no non-messianic Jesus ever emerges, no matter how many layers one strips away from the Gospel traditions, reminding us of the little-remembered fact that W. Wrede moved in this direction near the end of his scholarly career as well. F. G. Downing argues again for a Cynic Jesus, S. Moyise for a Jesus who drank deeply from the wells of Israel's Scriptures, and M. Bird for one who pushed the boundaries of Judaism sufficient to be crucified. C. A. Evans explores Jesus as prophet, sage, healer, messiah, and martyr; H.-W. Kuhn updates the discussion on Jesus in light of Qumran (in the only chapter in the four volumes originally written in German but not translated into English); and J. Collins cautiously defends a Danielic Son of man behind Jesus' probably authentic self-references. C. Fletcher-Louis deals nicely with Jewish apocalyptic, L. T. Johnson with anti-Judaism, S. Mason with Josephus, and D. Instone-Brewer with rabbinic writings.

Volume 3 comes finally to *The Historical Jesus* himself, though the first two volumes have scarcely been without vigorous advocates for different perspectives on the topic as well as surveys of a variety of other approaches. Indeed, it is often unclear why certain contributions appeared in one volume rather than another. The bulk of the essays in this volume are not summaries of the full-orbed portraits of Jesus of an E. P. Sanders, M. Borg, or B. Witherington (or many others), as one might have supposed. Instead they focus on the historical Jesus of a certain strand of Gospel tradition—Mark, Q, M and L, Luke-Acts, John, Paul, Thomas, and so on. Then they survey, in equally discrete chapters, key aspects of Jesus' life and ministry—historical context, chronology, birth, death, resurrection, self-understanding, miracles, parables, and the like. Finally, and equally topically, they deal in turn with "Jesus and the Legacy of Israel"—including the Sabbath, Temple, Shema, Law, land, sinners, and so forth. Several of these essays helpfully highlight Jesus' revolutionary attitude to impurity laws—it is holiness more than uncleanness that is "contagious." Several also stress the "Christification" of key Jewish rituals in Jesus' thought, a welcome break from the unrelenting trend within major strands of the third quest to make Jesus *nothing but* a misunderstood Torahcentric Jew.

The final volume, subtitled simply *Individual Studies*, is the most amorphous and potentially dispensable of the lot. The editors nevertheless insist that all the essays are necessary because *some* of them will become "classics," but one can't predict in advance which ones. Quite frankly, while I could agree with that assessment about the spectrum of studies in each of the first three volumes, nothing

in volume 4 struck me as potentially receiving that acclaim. The best are Peter Balla's "Did Jesus Break the Fifth (Fourth) Commandment?," H.-W. Kuhn's, "Did Jesus Stay at Bethsaida?," Graham Twelftree's "Jesus and the Synagogue," Heinz Giesen's "Poverty and Wealth in Jesus and the Jesus Tradition," Rainer Riesner's "The Question of the Baptists' [*sic*] Disciples on Fasting," Tom Thatcher's "Riddles, Wit, and Wisdom," and Armand Puig i Tàrrach's "Why Was Jesus Not Born in Nazareth?" Volume 4 closes with 183 pages of meticulously compiled indexes of ancient sources and modern authors.

Many of these essays appear to have been written quite a while ago, several explicitly in the mid-2000s. It is a pity they are seeing the light of day only now. Thus, for example, it would have been good for Joanna Dewey not to have to rely solely on Theodore Weeden's unpublished critique of Kenneth Bailey in harshly condemning Bailey's model of informal, *controlled* oral tradition, but to see it in published form along with an equally vigorous rebuttal of Weeden by James Dunn in a 2009 fascicle of the *Journal for the Study of the Historical Jesus*.

In a collection of this size, there will inevitably be gaffes: John Nolland refers to the study of "B[arbara]. E. Reid" as "his" (p. 1913), Wolfgang Stegemann includes "well-off craftsmen" among "lower-class groups" in his pyramid of socio-economic strata in first-century Israel (p. 2307), and Charles Hedrick claims that no one has proposed a plausible explanation of the sequence of logia in Thomas but betrays no awareness of the numerous works of Nicholas Perrin, beginning in 2003 (and he *does* cite more recent scholarship than that).

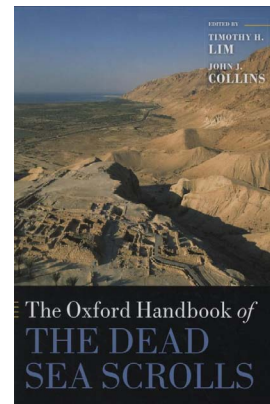
Because the editors have commendably included such a wide range of scholars, perspectives on the same or similar topics will vary widely (e.g., R. T. France on the birth of Jesus vs. P. Perkins on his resurrection or M. Goulder vs. C. Tuckett on the existence of Q, of many that could be noted). Far more evangelical scholars are included than one normally finds in international, ecumenical overviews of this kind, and far more liberal scholars are included than one normally finds in anthologies edited by evangelicals, both of which are welcome features.

I have two final laments about these four volumes, one minor and the other enormous. First, if Porter wanted to illustrate what linguists call the etymological fallacy, he could scarcely have found a better example than the title of this collection. But surely "handbook" still often enough refers to something that one can hold in one hand as a primer to a topic that nearly 3,000 pages spread over four volumes should be called something else ("encyclopedia" or at least "dictionary" comes to mind). Second, it is unconscionable for Brill to charge over \$1,300 or roughly £900 for this work. Only the very best endowed of academic libraries will ever own it, and it will tragically become the finest anthology of biblical scholarship never read!

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Timothy H. Lim and John J. Collins, eds. *The Oxford Handbook of the Dead Sea Scrolls*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010. 768 pp. \$150.00.

This “handbook” requires *both* hands to handle its hefty size. But the strain will be rewarded by the careful reader. The editors begin with an introduction to “Current Issues in Dead Sea Scrolls Research” (pp. 1–20) in which they distinguish this book from other volumes, such as *The Dead Sea Scrolls after Fifty Years* (1998–99), *Encyclopedia of the DSS* (2000) and *Dead Sea Scrolls Fifty Years after their Discovery* (2000). This volume “seeks to probe the main disputed issues in the study of the scrolls” (p. 1). And they want to “reflect on diverse opinions and viewpoints, highlight the points of disagreement, and point to promising directions for the future” (p. 2). These center on a variety of topics, delineated in the eight parts of the book covering archaeology, Jewish history, sectarianism, biblical texts, interpretations and languages, religious themes, early Christianity, later Judaism, and new methodological approaches.



The first part of the book concerns archaeology of Qumran and the Judean Wilderness, with essays discussing the environs of Qumran (Eric C. Meyers) and reassessing the cemetery (Rachel Hachlili). Part two has three chapters that cover the broad subject of the scrolls and Jewish History: a construction of ancient Judaism from the Scrolls (Martin Goodman), the origins of the Teacher’s movement (Michael O. Wise), and women at Qumran (Tal Ilan). Five essays address “Sectarianism” and the Scrolls in part three. These works include discussions of Sectarian communities (John J. Collins) and the Essenes in classical sources and the Scrolls (Joan E. Taylor). Much of the Collins essay is expanded upon in his *Beyond the Qumran Community: The Sectarian Movement of the Dead Sea Scrolls* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010). Other contributions consider sociological approaches to Qumran (Jutta Jokiranta), Qumran calendars (Sacha Stern), and the Qumran Scrolls’ relationship to Enochic Judaism (James C. VanderKam). Part four assesses the subjects of biblical texts, interpretation, and languages with respect to the scrolls. This diverse group examines text-critical theories of the Hebrew Bible. For this subject, Ronald S. Hendel posits a model of textual development that is eclectic and multidimensional-stemmatic in nature, incorporating layers of editions, locales, social settings, and textual groupings. Also in part four Timothy Lim examines canon at Qumran, proposing a model based on Qumran’s actual citations in the *pesharim* and other sectarian texts rather than simply what is found in the collection as a whole. He finds the sectarians had a “bipartite” canon, including a fixed Torah and a somewhat fluid set of prophetic books. Molly M. Zahn’s article on “rewritten” scripture is also found here. She discusses the place of various Qumran texts in biblical trajectory, suggesting the so-called “rewritten” aspect is best charted as distinct points along a continuous sequence. Part four concludes with a comparison between Qumran and rabbinic biblical interpretation (Bilhah Nitzan) and the languages attested in the Scrolls (Jan Joosten).

A variety of religious themes are considered in part five, including purity (Jonathan Klawans), apocalypticism and messianism (Michael A. Knibb), and potential connections with Jewish mysticism (James R. Davila). Knibb’s article challenges the description of the movement as “apocalyptic,” due to the ambiguity of the term and the fact that the sect’s worldview was not shaped only, or even primarily, by concern about the eschaton. The ambiguity with respect to messianism in the Scrolls (one or two messiahs) suggests some of the documents’ eschatology exhibit means of coping with the fact that the sect’s interpretation of Torah was not accepted by other Jews. Other topics in this section are wisdom

literature (Armin Lange), Iranian (Zoroastrian) connections with the Scrolls (Albert De Jong), and an assessment of identifying the Qumran sect as a “penitential movement” (David Lambert).

The three essays in part six concern the DSS and early Christianity. Here one finds discussion of critical issues pertaining to the Scrolls and the NT (Jörg Frey), monotheism and Christology (Larry W. Hurtado), and exegetical traditions (George J. Brooke). Frey’s analysis rehearses some of the more popular issues in the Scrolls in relation to the NT (John the Baptist, historical issues, messianism, etc.) to suggest that direct correlations are dubious but that comparative analysis does assist readers of the NT in gaining a wider perspective of its Judaic context. Hurtado’s work finds the dominance of a monotheism that allows for the existence of principal angels who were exalted agents of God, which serves as the context for binitarian Jesus devotion of early Christianity. Brooke’s contribution finds that the similarities in the interpretation of texts from the Hebrew Bible at Qumran and in the NT reflect some common exegetical tendencies of sectarians within the matrix of Second Temple Judaism.

The Scrolls and later Judaism is the topic for part seven, where questions of Halakhah (Aharon Shemesh), Jewish liturgy (Daniel K. Falk), and the Cairo Genizah (Stefan C. Reif) all receive attention. Finally, the eighth part of this book surveys recent approaches to the Scrolls, such as rhetorical criticism (Carol A. Newsom), the role of the reader in creating meaning (Maxine L. Grossman), and even some discussion of the legal definition of “authorship” with reference to the Qimron/Shanks legal proceedings (Hector L. MacQueen). A text index and a name index complete the book, and each essay is followed by its own bibliography.

Strangely, the editors’ summary of the essays in the introduction differs from the order of the chapters. The headings in the divisions of the book differ from the headings in the sub-divisions in the introduction as well. A number of important names in the field are not found here, such as James Charlesworth, Craig A. Evans, Jodi Magness, Gabrielle Boccacini, Peter Flint, Charlotte Hempel, Hannah Harrington, Lawrence Schiffman, Sidnie White Crawford, to name a few. Yet this is a stimulating volume, succeeding in its stated goal to expose readers to the diversity of views in the field. As such it is a welcome reference tool. Pride of place for an introduction to the entirety of the field still remains with James C. Vanderkam’s *The Dead Sea Scrolls Today* (2nd ed; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010).

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Frank J. Matera. *Romans*. Paideia. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2010. xvii + 382 pp. \$29.99.

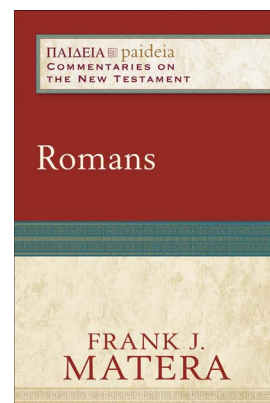
The Paideia commentary series is aimed at students and seeks to provide an accessible treatment of the final form of the biblical text with particular attention to the text in its literary and rhetorical units, leaving finer exegetical points and interaction with the secondary literature to other commentary series. Frank Matera provides the Paideia volume on Romans. Matera is professor of New Testament and Andrews-Kelly-Ryan Professor of Biblical Studies at The Catholic University of America. He has also written a volume on preaching Romans, released just a few months before the commentary.

The format of the series is already established for him, so Matera works through Romans with the usual breakdown set in the Paideia series, handling each larger thought unit by discussing (1) introductory matters; (2) the train of thought; and (3) key theological issues.

In light of the abundance of work on Romans, especially what has been produced in the past generation or so, we will be quick to forgive a response of yawning ambivalence on the part of students and pastors who learn of one more Romans commentary. Given the very specific intended audience, however, Matera's work certainly merits attention. This series as a whole aims at M.A.-level students, seminarians, and upper-level undergraduate students interested in biblical and theological studies, and Matera provides a marvelous volume for students just beginning to seriously engage the book of Romans.

With whom does Matera align in his reading of Romans? New Perspective, Old, or some third option? Does he read mainly against the backdrop of the Greco-Roman world, or early Judaism, or both? Does he see Romans as written to Jews, Gentiles, or both? At times it is a bit difficult to tell such things, not least due to the brevity and the treatment of units rather than individual verses and words. More than this, though, Matera writes with a gracious balance that resists the parochial tribalism that tends to infect much biblical scholarship. For example, although Matera is a Roman Catholic teaching at a Roman Catholic institution, one is hard-pressed to find overt evidence of this in the commentary. As far as New Perspective issues, Matera does not consistently settle one way or the other. The important and debated passage, Rom 9:30–10:4, exemplifies this. Regarding Israel's pursuit of the law "not of faith but of works" (9:32), Matera understands "of faith" as "an approach that trusts and relies on God" and "of works" as "human striving and exertion" (p. 242). Yet he then goes on to interpret Israel's mistake as articulated in 10:3 (establishing "their own" righteousness) as failure to see that in Christ "God was breaking down the barriers that separated Israel from the nations in order to bring all to salvation" (pp. 244–45). The reading of 9:32 sounds like the Old Perspective, that of 10:3 like the New Perspective.

For a few quick hits to get a sense of Matera's convictions about Romans on a macro level: the doctrine of justification "has been and remains central to Romans" (p. 23), and the "central theme" that courses through Romans is "God's saving righteousness" (p. 27), by which Matera means "God's saving justice as revealed in Christ for the salvation of all, Gentile as well as Jew" (p. 13). Romans 7 describes not the experience of a Christian but the experience of someone not in Christ from the vantage point of someone who is in Christ (pp. 166–67). "All Israel" in Rom 11:26 is ethnic Israel past, present, and future (p. 273).



In any commentary on a portion of Scripture as heavily analyzed as Romans, a reviewer will find numerous disagreements. One might puzzle, for example, at Matera's reading of "resurrection from the dead" in 1:4 as the general resurrection rather than Christ's resurrection (p. 30), his non-committal stance on issues such as *pistis christou* in 3:22, 26 (pp. 93–94) or the relationship between ethnic Israel and the church (pp. 119–20, 278–79), his punting on identifying the distinction between "good" and "righteous" in 5:7 (p. 134), or his conflating of obedience (*hupakoē*) with faith in 6:16 (p. 155).

Such idiosyncrasies are more than compensated, however, by page after page of sage and sober explanation of the biblical text. Matera's discussion of imperatives and indicatives, for example, is wise and penetrating (pp. 161–63). What stands out above all in this commentary, however, is its *clarity*. In a scholarly universe in which abstruse syntax and difficult-to-trace reasoning are often mistaken for erudition, Frank Matera refuses to play such games. He marvelously attains Calvin's supreme literary goal of "lucid brevity." Bible students young and old are in his debt.

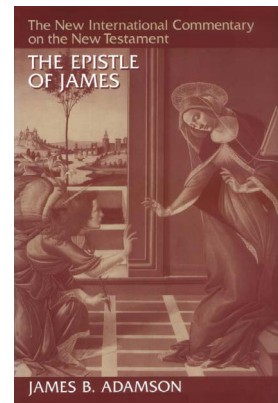
For seasoned readers of the Bible or well-trained pastors who already own a copy of Cranfield, Fitzmyer, Moo, or Schreiner, one need not invest in Matera's good work. For students just beginning to build their libraries and their understanding of Paul's most magnificent letter, however, Matera's new work, perhaps along with John Stott's Romans volume in *The Bible Speaks Today* series, will prove clarifying and rewarding.

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Scot McKnight. *The Letter of James*. New International Commentary on the New Testament. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2011. 497 pp. £35.99/\$55.00.

Scot McKnight's commentary on the letter of James is a greatly welcome addition to the field. This commentary replaces Adamson's 1976 NICNT commentary and more than doubles its length, but despite that it does not make for dry or pedantic reading. McKnight writes in an engaging, humorous, and thoughtful manner, drawing the reader into the various issues he approaches and bringing clarity to the various debates on introductory and interpretive issues.

The commentary follows standard format, with an introduction to the background issue of authorship in all its complexity for this epistle, a helpful guide on *how* to read James, and introductions to the (controversial) question of central themes in the epistle and how the epistle is structured. Perhaps less interested in questions of audience and remaining relatively non-committal on date (although opting for the 50s), McKnight's introduction seems more focused on helping the reader to read James themselves, understanding the character of the author and the literary context of the letter, so that the voice of the epistle can emerge in the canon. In this sense, McKnight follows through his introductory admonitions to "read James!" and then "read James in light of James!" (p. 1), first by helping the character and context of the author, as well as the themes and potential structures of the epistle, to emerge such that one approaches the text with a great deal of respect before even beginning.



As the commentary progresses, each pericope is given a brief introduction, a translation that usefully compares NRSV and TNIV interpretations, and then a detailed verse-by-verse discussion. As is normal for the series, the Greek is in footnotes, so as not to interrupt the flow of the text, and the transliteration and use of vocabulary is seamless, making this a useful text for those who know Greek and Hebrew as well as for those who do not. Likewise, detailed grammatical conversations are kept to a minimum and more often appear in the footnotes with the Greek, again supporting the notion of a comprehensive commentary that does not alienate various levels of readers. Where grammatical discussions are significant, he does include them in the text, such as the implications of the present tense in 2:9 as not simply “something currently going on” but, based on aspectual theory, actions “*depicted as incomplete and depicted as going on before our eyes*” (p. 209; see 71n12). McKnight balances well between technical discussions and keeping the reader aware of where they are in the theology and argument of the larger text.

McKnight does take some less established positions, such as seeing all of 1:2–27 as “a single unit addressed to a specific audience: the poor messianic community that is being oppressed by persons in positions of power” (p. 68), finding an economic twist to all the trials and temptations described in this chapter. This leads him, for instance, in 1:2–4 to see these “trials of any kind” as more particularly “socio-economic suffering” (p. 76). Likewise, he holds that “the entirety of 3:1–4:12 is addressed to teachers in the messianic community” (p. 267), which I would argue has some implications for how this is read *in* community. While he remains consistent, he also shows other prominent interpretations and, where he differs significantly, describes how they play out in the text. As such, the commentary does not swing into any isolated positions, remaining consistent to McKnight’s outline of the text even while fairly presenting the various interpretations. His use and awareness of the current scholarship is sound.

One of the greatest strengths is McKnight’s masterful use of external literature to help unveil the meaning in the text. With every verse there are at least parenthetical references to other NT texts with common vocabulary or teaching (e.g., his discussion of “wickedness” in 3:16, p. 309), but more often he gives citations to Wisdom, Deuteronomy, Proverbs, Sirach, the prophets, the Gospels, and other biblical texts, as well as to Greek and other early Jewish literature. In this, the commentary becomes a treasure-trove resource for those who wish to give the text a literary context and understand where James is both like and unlike other literature. Likewise, McKnight’s literary-theological reading of James allows him to see texts such as 2:14–26 as flowing “naturally from 2:1–13” (p. 223). His reading of James as a coherent and theological document may be one of the greatest contributions of this commentary. Even where one may disagree with his interpretation, McKnight demonstrates deft awareness of the Jewish-Christian world from which the epistle originated, the relevant literature (then and now), and a respect for the text that is refreshing. In my perspective, this greatly expanded NICNT commentary stands as a prize addition to the field as a widely useable resource.

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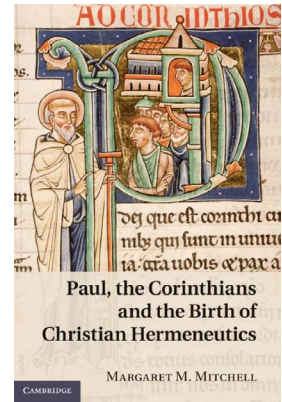
Margaret M. Mitchell. *Paul, the Corinthians and the Birth of Christian Hermeneutics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010. xiv + 178 pp. £50.00/\$85.00.

Paul, the Corinthians and the Birth of Christian Hermeneutics, by Margaret Mitchell, examines the “hermeneutical impact of Paul’s Corinthian letters on early Christian exegesis” (p. ix). Mitchell analyzes Paul’s use of his canon and the conclusions early theologians drew from Paul’s practices as they considered proper uses or interpretations of Scripture.

Mitchell finds the labels “literal” or “allegorical” unhelpful, for the mark of Pauline exegesis is “strategic hermeneutical and terminological adaptability” (pp. ix, 2, 10–13, 21; cf. 1 Cor 9:22). Paul’s exegesis is like “live radio”—quick witted and improvisational. According to the purpose of the moment, he appeals “either to the letter of the text or to its deeper intent” (pp. x, 22–34). Both Paul and Gregory of Nyssa, who model their exegesis after his, interpret “*in accordance with what suits them*” and the benefit of their audience (pp. 3, 10; all italics are Mitchell’s).

Chapter 1 shows that advocates of allegorical exegesis such as Origen and Gregory appeal chiefly to the Corinthian letters when justifying their method, citing 1 Cor 2:10–16, 9:9–10; 10:11; 2 Cor 3:6, 1:15–16. (She thinks 1 Corinthians is one unified letter and that 2 Corinthians is five, badly arranged [8; 2.14–7.4; 10–13; 1.1–2.13 + 7.5–16 + 13.11–13; 9]). Mitchell’s “key point” is that Paul’s entire Corinthian correspondence “*was occasioned and spurred on by conflict and misunderstanding*” (p. 5). Throughout, Paul seeks to restore a relationship and reassert his authority despite endemic suspicion, irritation, and misunderstanding. To achieve his ends, Paul regularly cites his Scripture, but his readings are driven by missional goals, not any systematic approach. His hermeneutic is “*practical, indeed tactical*” (p. 16). Thus the effect of Paul’s practices on later Christian hermeneutics is “a perpetual cyclone” rather than set theories (p. 17).

Chapter 2 argues that Pauline interpretation, and therefore later Christian interpretation, varied according to the perceived benefit of one strategy or another. It could be literal or allegorical; it might appeal “to the exact wording of the text” or “to its logical meaning and practical result” according to the need (p. 20). This, Mitchell argues, is consistent with recognized principles of Greco-Roman rhetoric. Rhetoric is combat. Cicero says the wise practitioner “will convert something in [any] text to his own argument” (p. 24). This is feasible since “*all texts are at least potentially ambiguous*” (p. 22), for one can appeal to the context or to the words themselves, to the beneficial or destructive effects or a given interpretation (“surely this cannot mean x, since . . .”). One can appeal to the plain sense: “Even a child can see . . .” Or one can deny the plain sense: The author “did not write for children” (p. 27). Rhetoricians learned to construct arguments to make a case—and were ready to use any method for either side of a debate. They didn’t operate from “linguistic or hermeneutical theories that represent an absolute commitment” to any theory of “the relationship between text and meaning” (p. 27). Interpreters might focus on “the author . . . the text itself [or] the reader” according to the need to “construct” this or that “textual meaning” (p. 27). Mitchell claims that Paul, Origen, Athanasius, and others operated as Cicero and Quintilian indicated, using literal and figural interpretation as necessary to make their case (pp. 29–37).



Chapter 3 explores the early church's reception of Paul's teaching that the spiritual do and the fleshly do not grasp his message. Chapter 4 argues that Paul sometimes insisted "upon the utter clarity of his utterances" but at other times urged his readers "to move beyond the bare letter to the deeper sense" (p. 106). Chapter 5 claims that Paul would use any helpful argument to defend his apostolic authority in the face of Corinthian criticisms.

Citing Gregory of Nyssa, chapter 6 asserts that the canon contains much that is obscure, scandalous, and even "empirically false." Interpreters had to do "considerable violence" to Paul's text to make it palatable and nourishing (pp. 95–97). The problems with Paul's letters were so severe that interpretive rescue operations were "a major *condition for their preservation*." Had interpreters not made his work "useful [and] honorable" his letters might have missed canonical status (pp. 106–9). "Texts do not just mean things," and the category "clarity of Scripture" should be abandoned in favor of concepts such as struggle, accommodation, and "the ends of interpretation" (pp. 111–15).

One wonders, if "*all texts are . . . potentially ambiguous*" and "clarity of discourse" is an outmoded concept, why does Mitchell bother to write? If she exempts her discourse from the rule, what is the basis? But since she seems to view "clarity" more as a category error than a fallacy, we might first admire her erudition and the way she joins NT and Patristic studies. That said, we note that Mitchell's view of canon is unusual. If people like Gregory of Nyssa (ca. A.D. 375–400) had to show the usefulness of the Corinthian correspondence to ensure its canonicity, why did Eusebius call it undisputed (*homologoumena*—universally acknowledged) several decades earlier? Why do scholars such as F. F. Bruce and Bruce Metzger find essentially no debate about the Corinthian letters' canonicity in antiquity? We also wonder how much Mitchell's view of Paul's obscurity is shaped both by the object of her study—Paul's dialogue with the Corinthians with their side missing—and by her extraordinary view of the disunity of 2 Corinthians.

More important, Mitchell's denial of Paul's clarity must itself be denied. Even Peter admitted that Paul could be obscure at times, but we could assemble a very long list of statements that defy misappropriation. Finally, Mitchell has neither demonstrated her view that Paul opportunistically uses any argument, if he can use it to win in his struggles, nor has she overthrown Pauline scholarship that sees more consistency in his work.

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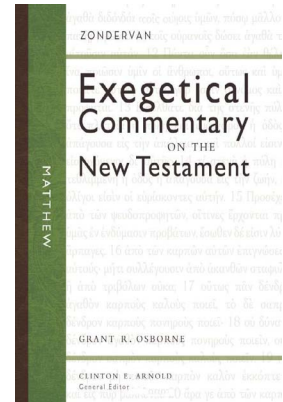
Grant R. Osborne. *Matthew*. Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010. 1154 pp. \$49.99.

It is much more difficult to write a review of a biblical commentary than it is to do so for a monograph. With a monograph one can assess the thesis of the book as successfully prosecuted or not: Are the arguments clear and well-researched, and do they take into account relevant considerations? But a commentary on Holy Scripture is a different beast. There is no singular thesis, and it is impossible for any author to interact with and evaluate all the secondary literature on even one passage of Scripture, let alone the whole of a book. A commentary certainly can be judged as clearly written and researched or not, but even this evaluation is somewhat dependent on the purpose and type of commentary: Where does it lie on the spectrum of popular to critical-academic?

Nonetheless, when a new commentary appears, especially one written by a seasoned scholar and in a new series, it is beneficial for us to provide some orientation to the work and evaluate its relative value and usefulness. Such is the case with Grant Osborne's recent weighty commentary on Matthew, one of the early volumes in a new series called the *Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament*. Osborne has been teaching NT at the seminary-level for nearly forty years while he has also been heavily involved in church-ministry. This not only qualifies him to capably handle a text so important as the First Gospel, but it also demands that we as readers listen with humility and expectation to what he has to say. Likewise, the editors and the contributors of this series comprise a virtual "who's who" of contemporary, mature American evangelical scholarship, and this causes us to take note.

In terms of evaluating the series overall, it posits itself as part of the tradition of confessional commentary on Scripture with an eye toward the pastor especially. It also sees itself as a series that makes some unique contributions to the commentary genre. Particularly, this series stands apart in that for each passage the commentator provides a clear, succinct, and demarcated "main idea" of the passage. This is then followed by a detailed "exegetical outline" that includes a chart with a simple discourse-analysis type of outline of the passage, complete with indented clauses and tags that indicate the relationship of clauses to each other. Anyone familiar with the various tools for discourse analysis available (such as "arcings," "tracing," "thought flow diagrams," etc.) will recognize this kind of work and also that this is unique to the commentary genre. This is followed by the more normal verse-by-verse commentary on the text and some ventures into the "Theology in Application" of the passage. Overall the series appears to be scholarly in its research while pastoral in its orientation. These commentaries are written for the pastor and teacher who has had some level of Greek training, but with no expectation that this person is an expert or is interested in all the scholarly details and debates. This is wise and I think does aim appropriately at a large readership, including many readers of this journal. The editorial philosophy and aims of this series are evidently well thought-out, and if the Osborne volume is any indication, this series will indeed be of great benefit to the pastor and teacher of Holy Scripture.

Turning to Osborne's work in particular, the voice and level of discussion is very accessible and serviceable for its pastoral aims. Osborne personally testifies to his desire for the format and style of the commentary to be such that it will help pastors rediscover the centrality of the Bible in their ministries (p. 13). In most cases he successfully accomplishes this admirable goal. While not being a commentary that focuses on the academic debates, Osborne does regularly provide notes that clarify



which contemporary scholars hold certain views under discussion. His verse-by-verse comments are succinct and helpful. The layout of the commentary is also quite handy with clear and large headings that walk the reader through aspects of the text, including its place in the overall literary outline of the book, its main idea, its translation broken down via a phrase-by-phrase discourse analysis, followed by easily findable and succinct verse-by-verse comments. The “Theology in Application” piece at the end of each section has clear, numbered points and explanations that can easily be accessed and digested. Overall, the pastor who makes this one of the main commentaries in sermon preparation will not be disappointed, and in this it seems Osborne’s volume accomplishes its goal.

At the same time, in terms of evaluating this commentary relative to other ones, I may offer a few critiques and raise a few concerns. First, overall the academic engagement strikes me as a bit dated, or I should say, limited. This is certainly not to say that either new or very old is always better, but simply to note that in some instances the research behind the commentary could have benefitted from both more recent and more ancient approaches and insights. This is apparent in the first instance by observing that most of the footnoted references date from the 80’s and 90’s, and much in the bibliography from the 1970’s. Again, this is not necessarily a bad thing and in part reflects Osborne’s and our own situatedness. Nevertheless, this aspect is noticeable both in its lack of contemporary work and especially in its almost total neglect of any commentaries or homilies from the pre-modern period. This chronological short-sightedness is not atypical of the modern commentary, but it is lamentable nonetheless. This is especially true now when there is a groundswell of renewed appreciation of and accessibility to pre-modern Christian readings of Scripture. It seems to me that any commentary that seeks to serve and guide the pastor and teacher would ignore the great tradition of devotional preaching and commentary only to its own neglect. Ideally this is not an either-or between pre-modern and academic readings, but when push comes to shove and space is limited, it seems today’s pastor would likely benefit more from hearing from Augustine, one of the Gregory’s, or even Maldonatus than Betz, Casey, and what is on offer in *JBL*. But we mustn’t be too harsh or unfair. Osborne is balanced, sagacious, and pastorally oriented. But great treasures await us if we will begin to read more widely than modern academic works on Matthew.

This constrained range of resources and datedness also manifests itself in Osborne’s introduction. For example, while his method for interpreting the Gospels has much to commend it (pp. 21–27), in my opinion there is still far too much weight placed on the value of a Gospel-comparing, redaction-critical approach (all the rage in the 70’s). Likewise, his discussion of the relationship of history and theology and Matthew’s historical trustworthiness (pp. 27–30) misses what is now a further and very important step beyond that represented by the Third Quest (which Osborne describes as “1985 to the present”): work in epistemology and historiography in recent years has precipitated yet another valuable approach that gets beyond the history-theology impasse that the Third Quest and “critical realism” remains mired in, particularly with the idea of Testimony.

Moving beyond this concern about datedness, I may also raise a couple of questions about the way the commentary functions. First, regarding the discourse analysis aspect of the commentary, I sometimes wonder how effective this element is. I do see great value in reading the story closely and intensively, and such a tool helps toward this end; it is much better than what I call the typical WSM (“whatever strikes me”) approach to narrative. But in looking over the discourse charts of each passage, it is not immediately apparent to me how much these provide in analyzing the text or offering much insight, especially when applied to narrative. (I think there is inherently more value in this kind of

analysis with didactic literature.) This kind of analytic work does provide the opportunity to get one's hands dirty with the text, and this is very valuable. But it doesn't seem to necessarily lead to a more astute and thickly theological reading of the text. This manifests itself in the actual commentary in that it is difficult to see how the graphical discourse analysis of the passage actually has much or any effect on what is said in the commentary. That is, would the "Explanation of the Text" and "Theology in Application" sections be any different or lacking if the discourse analysis were absent? It seems not as far as I can tell. This is a question that will need to be asked of each volume in the series.

A second question to be raised is how theological the "Theology in Application" sections really are. That is, in terms of being actually *theological* comments or applications of the text, they seem a bit thin and not greatly connected to a robust intra-canonical, orthodox, or biblical theology of Scripture. Rather, they are more akin to "main points" of the passage or "things to highlight in a message" than actual theological reflections. For example, are such typical statements as those on 4:23–25 really best described as "Theology in Action": "An itinerant preacher and minister," "Jesus' incalculable power," "Great excitement," and "Jesus' miraculous works transferred to the disciples"? Some maybe; others not. There is great benefit in such succinct observations drawn from the passage. Nevertheless, in terms of pushing the reader (and thereby the preacher) to greater theological reflection and application, it seems to fall a bit short.

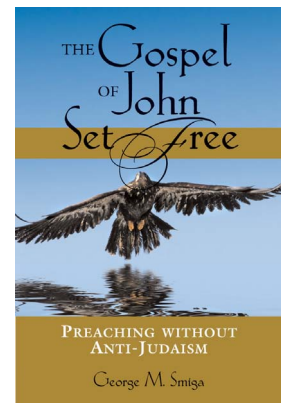
We must not end on a negative note, however, lest I give the wrong impression. The shortcomings articulated above are not deal-breakers and are not specific to this commentary only, though they should be noted in evaluating the work at hand. Professor Osborne's commentary is a notable achievement and will indeed serve its educated-pastoral purpose well in many ways. I would recommend it as one to have on any pastor's shelf as they go to study and proclaim the Gospel from the First Gospel.

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George M. Smiga. *The Gospel of John Set Free: Preaching without Anti-Judaism*. New York: Paulist, 2008. 183 pp. \$14.95.

The editors of this series of books by the Stimulus Foundation make a big claim in their preface: "These books mark a kind of revolution in the church's reading of the gospel. For here, as never before in a concentrated way, the reader is invited to consider how to read the gospels and epistles *free of anti-Jewish sentiment*" (p. ix, italics original). This series, therefore, emphasizes the importance of seeing the NT in its Jewish surroundings and how much Christians have come to read them in an anti-Jewish way.

All this is applied specifically to the Fourth Gospel by George Smiga. He sets out twenty-five passages from three cycles of the Roman Catholic lectionary, accompanied by critical commentary designed to highlight the historical, literary, and theological implications of the text. There are also rabbinic comments added to make clearer the Jewish background of the text and applied to specific passages in this Gospel to demonstrate how Jewish it is and effectively how good



and faithful a Jew Jesus was in his life and teaching. There are also discussion questions that can be used in Bible study groups.

There is much here that is helpful. It is valuable to read the Fourth Gospel in a way that is faithful to first-century eyes. Smiga draws out how so often in the past, this Gospel has been misused to support an anti-Semitic attitude. There is a need to examine the specific passages of the Fourth Gospel which have at least the appearance of being somewhat negative towards the Jews in their attitude towards Jesus and to ask what is really occurring.

Smiga has a helpful section assessing carefully what the term *hoi Ioudaioi* refers to (pp. 16–21). He notes it is usually translated ‘the Jews’. But he comments, helpfully, that it is important to differentiate between a ‘neutral’ and a ‘polemical’ use of the term. He lists John 5:1; 11:45; and 19:20 as examples of the former, and he discusses some of the thirty-one occurrences of the latter, which cause more difficulties. In answering the question, ‘To what group does the term refer?’ in these polemical uses, he notes that it is important to say that the term never refers to *all* Jews. He suggests possible referents such as ‘the Judeans’ or ‘the Jewish Temple leadership’. He calls for pastoral sensitivity when the term is used in John and thinks that when the term *hoi Ioudaioi* occurs, the preacher should state that sometimes it means ‘the leaders of the Jews’ or ‘the adversaries of Jesus’, which would prevent the writer appearing to criticise the Jewish people as such (p. 21).

These comments are generally valuable and valid. Some concerns arise, however, when Smiga considers the possible reasons for the evangelist having used the term *hoi Ioudaioi* when Jesus faces opposition from the Pharisees, chief priests, or crowds. Basically, he argues that one needs to appreciate that the development of the Johannine community and the opposition it faced have influenced the development of this Gospel and help to explain its theological convictions. These ‘shape the Christological debates between Jesus and his opponents throughout the entire Gospel’ (p. 22). So ‘plots against Jesus in John’s narrative do not accurately reflect an opposition that was levelled against the historical Jesus’ (p. 23). Indeed, we need to recognise that terms used to identify Jesus’ opponents ‘follow the historical stages of the Johannine community, which developed from its Jewish beginnings to an eventual separation from the synagogue’ (p. 18).

As one works through the various comments on readings from the lectionary, frequently valuable comments are modified by remarks that argue for the need to move through the various stages of the Gospel tradition in order to realise how Roman involvement in Jesus’ crucifixion becomes more limited and Jewish responsibility increased as time went on and the Johannine community had more influence on the composition of this Gospel. Thus, for example, the fear of the Johannine community arising from the struggle with the Pharisees at the end of the first century is reflected in John 20:19 (p. 63). In John 4, the origin of the narrative is the likely influx into the Johannine community of a group of converted Samaritans, and thus the story shows a bias towards them; John 4:21–24 demonstrates how ‘the faith of the Johannine community finds every opportunity to extol the superiority of Jesus over the religious claims of its Jewish neighbors’ (p. 72). John 9:22 ‘reflects the experience of the Johannine community towards the end of the first century CE’ and is not to be placed in the time Jesus lived (p. 81). Indeed, any reference to expulsion from the synagogue (e.g. John 12:42; 16:2) is ‘an interpolation into the text, later projected back into this particular story [i.e., John 9:1–41], since expulsion from the synagogue for Christians was not recorded until closer to 80 CE’ (p. 84).

Other commentators on the Fourth Gospel have also presupposed the influence of the Johannine community on its composition. The three-volume commentary by Urban C. von Wahlde (*The Gospel*

and Letters of John), for instance, has thirty-two tables of contents pages in volume one outlining how the commentary looks at three editions evident in the final edition of this Gospel and how one can supposedly identify the material in each edition (and attribute this to developments in the Johannine community). Andreas Köstenberger's *A Theology of John's Gospel and Letters* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2009), however, discusses the 'Johannine Community Hypothesis' (on pp. 51–58), the ways it has been challenged in recent times, and locates this Gospel's composition to a more unified process.

Thus, despite the Pope's recent book (*Jesus of Nazareth: Holy Week: from the Entrance into Jerusalem to the Resurrection Pt. 2*) arguing that those responsible for Jesus' crucifixion were the 'Temple aristocracy' and supporters of the rebel Barabbas and that 'the Jews' as a people were not responsible for his death, which fits in with many of Smigma's emphases, as an overall approach to this Gospel, Smigma's book has its weaknesses as well as being a useful introduction to how one may approach many passages in this Gospel as well as the references to 'the Jews'.

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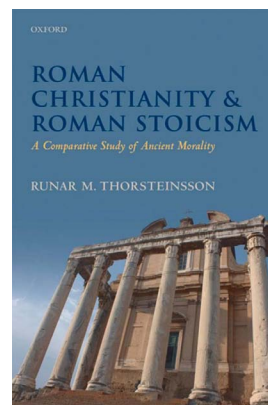
Runar M. Thorsteinsson. *Roman Christianity and Roman Stoicism: A Comparative Study of Ancient Morality*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010. xiii + 248 pp. £65.00/\$125.00.

Runar Thorsteinsson's book comparing Christianity and Stoicism in Rome in the first two centuries A.D. is a substantive contribution in what is a rapidly expanding field of scholarship comparing the NT and Hellenistic moral philosophy.

To introduce his book, Thorsteinsson notes that from the earliest period of Christian history, Stoicism and Christianity were thought by many to have striking similarities, especially regarding ethics. However, he also notes that in the last century and a half many scholars have begun comparing Stoicism unfavorably with early Christianity, particularly in arguing that Stoicism is wholly self-centered. In contrast, Thorsteinsson insists that a truly historical-critical point of view demands that Stoicism and early Christianity be compared apart from preconceived notions of whether one perspective is ethically superior.

In order to engage in a systematic comparison, Thorsteinsson examines the writings of three Stoics (Seneca, Musonius Rufus and Epictetus, in chs. 1–4) and three early Christian letters (Romans, 1 Peter and 1 Clement, in chs. 5–8), all of which he argues are associated with Rome in some way in the first century.

The main argument in chapters 1–4 is that Roman Stoicism has an exalted view of love, caring for others, and a basically other-minded focus, an ethic grounded in the Stoic view of universal humanity and human participation in the reason/divinity that holds the universe together. While there are differences among the three Stoics surveyed, they are united in their focus on doing good to others. Furthermore, contrary to misconceptions, many Stoics emphasize the theological grounding of ethics.



Chapters 5–8, on Roman Christianity, emphasize that the central ethic of the believing community is love directed toward others within that community. While there are differences in the three writings surveyed, these are ultimately inconsequential.

Chapter 9 compares the ethical teachings of the two systems, which Thorsteinsson finds to be strikingly similar: he notes that both emphasize worship as the proper mode of human life, that both prize logical thought and practical virtue, that both systems base their ethics on imitation (of Christ and of the Stoic sage, respectively), and that both emphasize love and non-retaliation. However, chapter 10 highlights the major difference between the two systems: whereas Stoicism teaches universal love (based on its view of universal humanity), Christianity circumscribes love to within the believing community, although urging other virtuous stances toward outsiders (respect, patience, etc.).

In appreciation, Thorsteinsson's book helpfully removes several misconceptions about the kind of Stoicism contemporary with Paul. He has shown clearly that Roman Stoicism has a very important social component, and that even virtues such as loving one's enemies are present in important Stoic figures. However, this aspect of Thorsteinsson's book ends up being something of a double-edged sword for his argument. Throughout his book Thorsteinsson insists that Roman Stoicism is just as outwardly focused as early Christianity and that scholarly disapproval of Stoic ethics stems largely from a Christian bias among scholars. Ironically, however, Thorsteinsson appears to have actually (although unintentionally) adopted a Christian view of morality as well. While this reviewer is certainly not opposed to doing this, it does seem strange that Thorsteinsson attempts to vindicate Stoicism by showing that it too is just as morally respectable as early Christianity, all along appearing to accept that Christianity is the moral standard by which all else is judged! The inherent inability of a strictly historical-critical interpretation to even assess the goodness or badness of an ethical system becomes obvious in this approach.

Problems also emerge in Thorsteinsson's approach to comparing Stoicism and Christianity. From the outset he is intent on showing the similarities between the two systems, since he believes older approaches inappropriately focused on differences. One wonders, however, why a comparison should focus on similarities *or* differences. Should not rather the two bodies of literature be interpreted according to the specific interests of the texts themselves and then compared? Thorsteinsson is indeed able to show high-level, structural similarities between the two systems (e.g., both are socially oriented), but in so doing he manages (for the most part) to mask massive dissimilarities on points of detail. For example, even though he occasionally notes dissimilarities such as the Christian view of Christ as savior, Thorsteinsson appears to view such dissimilarities as basically insignificant. One wonders, however, if the way in which Paul grounds his ethical exhortation in the believer's spiritual death and resurrection with Christ (in Rom 6, for example) can be discarded in the interests of showing that both Paul and Stoicism inculcate socially directed attitudes in their followers. Other examples could be multiplied, including the importance of Christ's and the believer's resurrection in Romans, as well as eschatological judgment (see Rom 2:6, etc.), both of which are ideas that would have been nonsensical, or even immoral for a Stoic, but which are foundational for Christian ethics. In essence, a focus on high-level, structural similarities at the expense of the details of the two ethical systems is bound to obscure the differences *and* similarities between Stoicism and Christianity as much as scholarship that is focused almost exclusively on differences.

In sum, this book is an interesting presentation of the moral worlds of Roman Stoicism and Christianity, the similarities of which have long been noted. However, it must be said that Thorsteinsson often overstates the similarities (which are real, but which usually do not go beyond such high-level

ideas as both systems being oriented toward the welfare of others) at the expense of some of the most fundamental differences between the two systems of thought.

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Sigve K. Tonstad. *The Lost Meaning of the Seventh Day*. Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 2010. 575 pp. \$29.00.

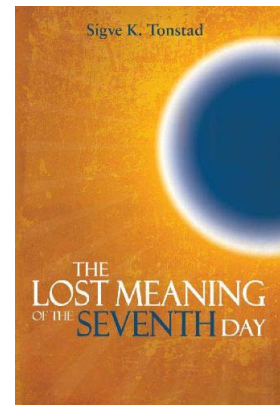
This book is an apologetic for a Seventh Day Adventist reading of Scripture, but it is much more. The author shares a personal vignette from his childhood about the importance of the Sabbath while growing up in Norway (p. ix). The Sabbath was a special celebration of food and fellowship that helped to soften the rigors of the rest of the week. This story simply shows that Tonstad is doing more than defending an understanding of the Seventh Day that has fallen on hard times; he is celebrating something that has held a special charm for him since childhood.

The passion that Tonstad brings to this topic has resulted in a wide-ranging and stimulating study that serves as an illuminating biblical, theological, and historical sketch of the Seventh Day. It has 27 chapters that the author arranges into four broad sections: (1) introduction, (2) the Seventh Day in the OT, (3) the Seventh Day in the NT, and (4) the Seventh Day in the post-biblical era and the issues that have come from its eclipse. I attempt to briefly summarize each section of the book, and then I analyze and assess it.

First, the introduction shows that this study serves as a sweeping study of the Seventh Day, while also making a sweeping claim for the Seventh Day: it serves as a theological symbol for God's faithfulness. In other words, the Seventh Day is a stirring reminder that God will set to rights all the wrongs of the world. The author admits that these claims seem "extravagant," but he writes the rest of the book to show that they are not as "pretentious" as they sound (p. 2).

Second, the author's study of the seventh day in the OT highlights the trajectory it sets for both creation and redemption. In chapter 2, Tonstad begins with creation (Gen 2:1–3), which stresses the "enchanted aura of distinction" that God gives the seventh day in blessing and hallowing it (pp. 20–21). The focus shifts in chapter 3 to discuss the entrance of the fall into the narrative, which further suggests that the seventh day is not merely a backward-looking memorial, but a promise that highlights God's presence and his "commitment to make right what went wrong" (p. 59). Chapter 4 attempts to bridge a noticeable gap between Gen 2 and Exod 16. If it was so important, why did the Patriarchs not explicitly observe the Sabbath? Tonstad argues that though it is never explicit, we should assume that Gen 26:5 implicitly mentions Abraham's Sabbath observance because he kept all of God's laws and there is no need to say anything because he "already grasps the unspoken ideal" (p. 71).

Chapters 5–10 trace the meaning of the seventh day in the rest of the OT. The seventh day is a distinctive marker for Israel's freedom and the ongoing promise of God's presence (p. 90). God's faithfulness is "the cornerstone" in the "reciprocal" relationship between God and Israel (p. 107).



Furthermore, just like the American flag stands as a symbol to “cement and commemorate the birth of a new country,” the Sabbath serves as a symbol that “keeps alive the identity-shaping event of creation” and recalls “God’s gracious intervention in Israel’s deliverance from Egypt” (p. 116). The Israelites lack of social concern shows that they have not grasped the true meaning of the Sabbath (chapter 8), but God’s faithfulness once again emerges as a central theme for the prophets as they offer hope in the midst of judgment and despair. This hope extends even to foreigners through Sabbath observance as highlighted by Isa 56 (ch. 9), while the Sabbath passages in Nehemiah show the attempt to cultivate a spiritual rebirth that will recover Israel’s identity, even if it involves coercive attempts to preserve the Sabbath (ch. 10).

The third section of the book addresses the use of the seventh day in the NT. Chapters 11–12 highlight that the healings of Jesus on the Sabbath and his concern for human need demonstrate God’s faithfulness because the Sabbath is the “pledge of God’s healing, restoring presence” (p. 220).

Tonstad also includes extended discussions of Gal 4:10 (ch. 13) and Col 2:16 (ch. 14). The author makes much of the faithfulness of God as a theme in Galatians along with an interpretation of the “faithfulness of Christ” (p. 237) as an identity marker emphasizing inclusion over against the Judaizing efforts towards exclusion (pp. 242–43). He also follows Troy Martin in taking Gal 4:8–11 as a reference to the Galatians returning to paganism, not a turning to the practices of Judaism (p. 231).

Tonstad follows Troy Martin (again) so as to affirm “actual Sabbath-keeping in Colossians” (p. 265) because Col 2:16 means that the Colossians should not let the opponents judge them as they practice their festivals, new moons, and Sabbaths. Furthermore, Col 1:15–17 shows that Christ is the Creator as well as the Restorer, which “proves the faithfulness of God” (p. 274). Tonstad’s final NT chapter on Heb 4:9–10 (ch. 15) also sees Hebrews as a “sabbatarian message” centered on the faithfulness of God because even though the Sabbath rest is coming in the future with the return of Christ, Christians can enjoy it now through the Sabbath (p. 293).

Fourth, Tonstad claims that the loss of the significance of the Seventh Day has impoverished the relationship that humanity has with God and His creation. This loss of meaning has led to consequences that are nothing short of epic in terms of the alienation between Jews and Christians (especially the holocaust), and (2) the estrangement of Christianity from the material world.

This study shines with two primary strengths. First, Tonstad’s study brims with passion. Reading this type of work is a rewarding exercise (even if one disagrees with the author) because one is never left in doubt as to what the author believes and why he writes as if it is so vitally important. Second, I loved the author’s emphasis on the faithfulness of God because it is an element of the biblical texts that tends to be underdeveloped in discussions of the Sabbath. Tonstad is right to point out the stirring reminders found in these texts to center our thoughts on God’s unshakeable plan to set all things to rights.

In the end, though I found Tonstad’s study helpful on many levels, his overall position left me extremely unconvinced for several reasons. First, his argument from silence connecting Abraham to the Sabbath based on Gen 26:5 failed to convince. Second, Tonstad’s treatment of the move from the seventh day to Lord’s Day in the Early Church was consistently too one-sided. He invariably was too quick to chalk up this movement to Anti-Semitism and Platonic or Hellenistic (pagan) influence (pp. 308–14).

Third, I appreciate his emphasis on the faithfulness of God, but it is overused as an argument for the continuity between the Testaments, even when the textual evidence calls this continuity into question. His rough and ready argument is that since God is both Creator and Redeemer one should

not expect major shifts in salvation history between creation and redemption. The NT texts, however, will simply not allow a one-sided approach to either continuity or discontinuity; an argument based on God's faithfulness cannot resolve the tension simply by muting one half of it.

Fourth, Tonstad's reading of Paul was the least persuasive and the most problematic. The author frequently appeals to the nature of God's faithfulness and the polemical context of Paul's writings. In fact, the author states that the narrative of the Gospel takes precedence over the situational nature of Paul's letters, which means that we should be slow to affirm that the "Sabbath that we find in the Gospels will be disaffirmed by Paul in his letters" (p. 227).

Three problems abound in his treatment of Paul: (1) he does not orient the reader to Paul's broader view of the Law; (2) he strangely ignored Rom 14:5; and (3) some of his exegesis seems strained and unpersuasive. He often speaks out of two sides of his mouth with regard to Paul. On the one hand, Tonstad adopts readings that make Paul a Sabbatarian, while on the other hand, he hedges his bets and reminds us that Paul is an unreliable guide because he is too polemical to contribute positive assertions about the Sabbath.

He surprisingly follows Troy Martin's idiosyncratic readings of Gal 4:10 and Col 2:16, even though his reconstructions are highly speculative and uncertain at best, which renders as suspect any conclusion based upon them. Tonstad consistently wants to mute or muzzle anything that might be critical of Judaism. This concern shows up repeatedly in his treatment of the Pharisees (e.g., pp. 206–7), his allegiance to the New Perspective on Paul, and his omission of any mention of the obsolescence of the Mosaic Law in Hebrews.

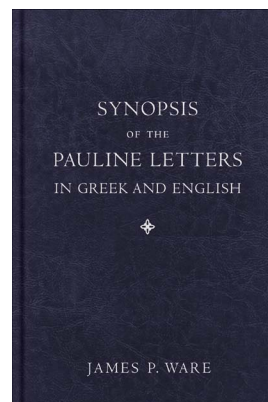
In conclusion, I find Tonstad's study fresh and stimulating in many ways. Unfortunately, Tonstad's arguments outstrip the evidence too many times, which renders much of his book unreliable.

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James P. Ware. *Synopsis of the Pauline Letters in Greek and English*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2010. xxxi + 317 pp. \$49.99.

James Ware has provided us with a useful resource for understanding the mind and theology of the apostle Paul, arranging Pauline passages topically to enable the reader to see on a page or two what Paul says about any given topic of importance to him. Readers familiar with the related volume edited by Kurt Aland, *Synopsis of the Four Gospels*, will have a sense already of what Ware has done for the Pauline material. Ware teaches New Testament at the University of Evansville in Evansville, Indiana.

Flipping open the book, one finds Greek text on every left-hand (even-numbered) page and the corresponding English text on every right-hand (odd-numbered) page. The Greek text is that of the Nestle-Aland 27th edition, and the English is the New Revised Standard Version. The book treats 177 different topics, which are further divided into six subcategories: Epistolary Structure, Epistolary Forms, Literary Forms, Themes, Key Events, and Co-Workers. By far the largest of these is



Themes, which handles topics 23 to 161. Examples in this subcategory include “The Second Adam,” “The Atoning Death of Christ,” “The New Exodus,” “Children of God,” “The Function of the Law,” and “The Body of Christ.” Passages relating to the 177 topics are drawn from all thirteen of the traditionally ascribed Pauline letters as well as Paul-related material from the book of Acts.

Other features round out the book. The Greek-text pages include a whittled down critical apparatus for readers who wish to be alerted to the more significant textual variants. Also helpful is the brief list, at the end of each topic, of further texts that might be included under any given topic. There is also included in the front of the book a Scripture index of all passages reproduced throughout the synopsis, what Ware calls a “Table of Parallels” (functionally a Scripture index) and which he says “is the indispensable key to the effective use of this scholarly tool” (p. xiii). In addition, the back of the volume appends a one-page glossary of semi-technical terms used in the topic labels (“commendation,” “household code,” “salutation”), and a subject index.

In a work such as this, in which an editor simply compiles passages from Paul and arranges them topically, one would think the theological convictions of the editor to be quite minimally transparent. Yet it is striking to note that Ware not only explicitly says (p. xii n. 2) that he has been influenced by certain NT scholars (Abraham Malherbe, James Dunn, Wayne Meeks, Richard Hays, N. T. Wright, and others) but that this actually comes through in his choice and labeling of topics. One does not, for example, find the topic “The Gospel” or “Justification,” predictable topics in the eyes of much traditional scholarship. We do find, however, “The Atoning Death of Christ” (where several “gospel” texts are handled) and “The Revelation of God’s Righteousness” (in which the “justification” texts are treated). This is not a strength or a weakness, simply an observation, and a reminder that even a project as objective as this one will be guided by the theological inclinations of the compiler.

This book will be especially helpful for those who preach and teach the Bible. When working on a given Pauline text, preachers and teachers can locate their passage in the Table of Parallels, flip open to the topics that include that passage, and see what parallel Pauline texts may shed light on the passage at hand.

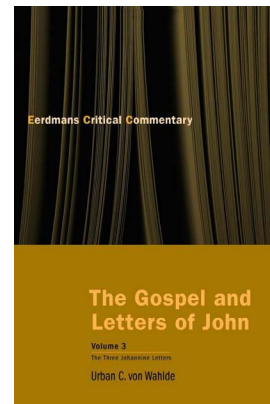
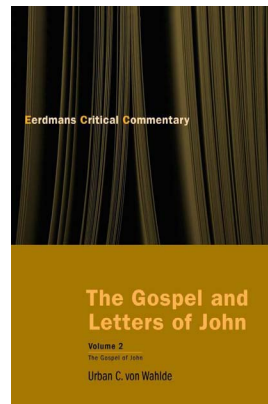
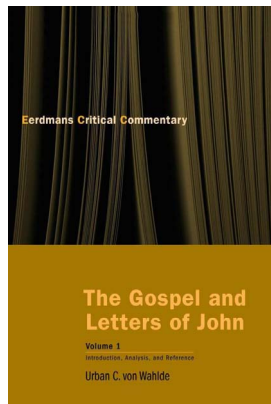
One oddity of the book is the way it breaks up continuous passages. For example, under topic #40, “Christ the Wisdom and Power of God,” the first three passages presented are 1 Cor 1:18–25, 1:26–31, and 2:1–5. Why is this not presented as one continuous passage (1 Cor 1:18–2:5)? One also wonders at times why a given text is included—what, for example, does Col 1:27 teach us about “The Spirit the Guarantee of the Resurrection”? Another element that would strengthen the volume is the identification of OT passages that are quoted or alluded to, as this would help readers see which Pauline passages draw on the same OT texts.

These are very minor matters, however. I intend to use Ware’s helpful resource in years ahead, and I commend it with gratitude to students, pastors, and teachers of the Word of God.

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Urban C. von Wahlde. *The Gospel and Letters of John*. Vols. [1](#), [2](#), [3](#). Eerdmans Critical Commentary. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010. xlv + 705 pp.; xvii + 929 pp.; xii + 441 pp. \$60.00 each.

Urban Cam von Wahlde's three-volume contribution to the Eerdmans Critical Commentary represents the most recent and extensive study of John's Gospel through the lens of source criticism. Von Wahlde's history of the development of the Johannine community and theology is crucial to understanding his proposal. The First Edition



(1E; circa 55–65 A.D.) was a narrative of Jesus' ministry. With the community's expulsion from the synagogue, their theology developed especially with regard to the importance of Jesus' work in the outpouring of the eschatological Spirit, and they wrote 2E (circa 60–65 A.D.). Conflict arose over the interpretation of the Johannine tradition in the written form of 2E, and the community splintered. The Elder, an eyewitness to Jesus, wrote 1 John and later 2 and 3 John to balance the roles of Jesus and the Spirit and infuse the story in an apocalyptic worldview (circa 65–70 A.D.). Shortly after the Elder died in 80–90 A.D., the community that was centered in Ephesus composed the 3E material as an understanding of the teachings of the Elder now called the Beloved Disciple (circa 90–95 A.D.). 3E corrects and nuances the interpretation of 2E by the community's opponents, and it makes use of both 1 John and the Synoptic tradition.

Volume 1 is divided into five parts with one part devoted to each edition of the Gospel and the fourth part tracing the development of Johannine theology according to the editions. Part Five contains the author's translation with different typefaces indicating the different editions. Aporias, for von Wahlde, alert the reader to the presence of editing by multiple authors. These aporias are breaks in sequence, thought, or structure that indicate where material from different editions was not integrated seamlessly. Note that aporias are not present every time there is a transition between editions. There are also places of repetitive resumption where the editor inserts new text and repeats thought from the prior sentence to smooth the transition. Von Wahlde also relies on other characteristics: differences in terminology (especially the different terms for religious leaders and miracles), narrative orientation, and presentation of the religious message.

Each edition contains distinguishable characteristics and criteria. These characteristics are sometimes adopted by a subsequent edition and should not be viewed too rigidly. 1E is a narrative of Jesus' miracles and ministry including his Passion, death, and resurrection. 1E focuses on miracles as signs that progress in intensity and lead others to faith in an almost formulaic way. The religious authorities are Pharisees, chief priests, and rulers who act as a unified group. The Christology is low—in the form of greater than Moses—and there is no mention of the Spirit or significant soteriology.

Jesus' opponents in 2E are "the Jews" who constantly dialogue among themselves and with Jesus and exhibit a consistent, unified hostility against him; now their charge against him is that he blasphemes. In contrast to 1E's "signs," 2E designates the miracles as "works" that have a christological function of

revealing Jesus as the Son, although there is not yet the explicit idea of preexistence. Belief results from the testimony of the witnesses—John the Baptist, works of Jesus, words of Jesus/Father, and Scriptures—not just on miracles. There is a distinction between the physical and spiritual elements that corresponds to a one-sided reading of Jewish eschatological hopes in the outpouring of the Spirit.

In turning to 3E, it must be remembered that 1 John is an intervening stage of development prior to 3E that shapes 3E. The most distinctive element of 3E, also present in 1 John, is the introduction of the apocalyptic worldview with the Son of Man, contrast of light and darkness, sons of Father versus sons of Satan, and Spirit of Truth in contrast to the Spirit of Deception (1 John). There is also the ethical command to love one another. The unique Son, now Jesus Christ in some places, is clearly preexistent and his death is the return to the Father. There is an emphasis on the permanent significance of Jesus' words and work; he did not come just to bring the Spirit but also as a sacrifice of atonement. 3E presents a radically different view of the material world as the physical death of Jesus becomes necessary for eternal life, bodily resurrection, and ritual sacraments.

Volume 1 of von Wahlde's work really must be evaluated with the accompanying volumes that comment on the texts, but it is helpful here to deal with issues introduced in this volume. The format is clear; section headings accurately represent the material; and the organization is exceptional. All three volumes are characterized by smooth and clear writing that makes his view accessible. Von Wahlde acknowledges that previous attempts at source criticism have been largely unsuccessful. Reviews of these attempts are readily available (cf. D. A. Carson, "[Current Source Criticism of the Fourth Gospel: Some Methodological Questions](#)," *JBL* 97 [1978]: 411–29). Von Wahlde's work, however, deserves to be evaluated on its own merits. Some attempts have relied too heavily on aporias, but von Wahlde avoids this by using aporias and repetitive techniques as starting places for his analysis. While incorporating these features, the bulk of his investigation rests on his analysis of terminology, narrative orientation, and theology. The result is a much more diverse approach to identifying editions that makes von Wahlde's work more plausible. He is also self-critical enough to admit texts that demand further analysis. As would be expected from a three-volume commentary, von Wahlde is very thorough; nevertheless, this reviewer would like a bit more in some areas. A longer evaluation of his work should determine the legitimacy and comprehensiveness of his eleven categories of theological analysis: Christology, the nature of belief, the notion of "knowing" God, eternal life, pneumatology, eschatology, soteriology, ethics, anthropology, ecclesiology, and the view of the material world. Moreover, von Wahlde's analysis of Christology focuses on titles for Jesus while drawing less from his actions and less explicit descriptions. This alerts us to the possible subjectivity of analyzing the data on the basis of theological categories, especially those that a first-century author probably would not have recognized. This reviewer would also like a thorough syntactical analysis of the material to determine if this type of analysis supports the editions even though von Wahlde disputes the usefulness of stylistic studies (1:19–21). There are some syntactical differences between 1E and the later editions, but this is likely due to the narrative orientation of 1E. There does not seem to be marked syntactical differences that could distinguish 2E and 3E. He does occasionally make reference to the structure as indicating a certain editor's preferences; see, for example, his comments on John 6:22 and 12:22.

The development of Johannine theology through the community's internal and external struggles provides an interesting lens through which to read John, but it raises additional questions. For example, one of the most notable theological developments in the editions is the role of the Spirit. Most significant is the overemphasis on the eschatological blessings of the Spirit in 2E that is corrected and reshaped by

1 John and 3E. The Spirit, however, is entirely absent from 1E, which suggests that the Spirit's role was not so crucial to the early community. Von Wahlde does not satisfactorily explain the sudden emphasis on the role of the Spirit in the community. If this is an inter-communal development, what factors steered their theology in such a remarkably new direction?

Volume 2 is devoted entirely to commenting on the text of the Gospel. But this volume is not a "traditional" commentary as its aim is not only to explain the final form of the text but also its genetic history and theological development. Each section provides the text of the Gospel marked according to the editions, textual notes, description of the text's composition in the editions, an interpretation for each edition's contribution, and the role of the text in the Gospel.

John 20:12–23 provides an example of a text that contains all editions and shows the logic of von Wahlde's explanation. 1E provides the basic narrative in 20:14–16; note the low Christology and translation of terms that characterize 1E. 2E, with an emphasis on lessening the importance of the physical, interjects the command not to hold on to Jesus' body because it was a spiritual body, not physical for 2E; note the strong distinction between spiritual and physical and 2E's preference for the spiritual. John 20:19 is clearly 2E because the disciples fear "the Jews" and because Jesus, as a non-embodied spirit, passes through the locked doors. 3E adds 20:20–21, which reinserts Jesus' corporality and commissions the disciples. 2E continues in 20:22 with an emphasis on the impartation of the Spirit—the primary christological function of Jesus in 2E. 3E qualifies this impartation in 20:23 by making human mediators and ritual important parts of forgiveness while 2E interpreted the OT to mean that the Spirit would do away with ritual and the need for mediation. John 20:24–29 continues 3E with its extremely high Christology and emphasis on the corporality of Jesus. Von Wahlde explains some difficult issues with the text such as the command not to hold on to Jesus and the impartation of the Spirit. But his analysis also creates some problems. Why did 3E allow 20:17 to exist in the final edition of the Gospel? 3E can omit other contrary theology, and 2E is definitely interpreting this verse in a way that 3E opposes in subsequent verses. See a similar example in 6:51–71, where the 2E statement in 6:63 remains in the text even though 3E opposes it in 6:51–58.

Although the layout of the commentary required some adjusting on the part of this reviewer, it is certainly accessible and the best arrangement for this kind of analysis. Despite the commentary's length, some questions remain. There is no manuscript evidence of separate editions of the Gospel. Even the very early Rylands fragment contains material from all three editions. What are we to assume happened to 1E and 2E, which von Wahlde views as written documents, as the tradition progressed? Did the community allow documents representing competing theological viewpoints to coexist? When we approach a document like Mark, additions leave a clear manuscript trail in the Longer and Shorter Endings. The story of the adulterous woman leaves such a trail in John, but the editions do not.

The notorious problem with aporias is developing a consistent and objective manner of identifying them—one reader's aporia is often seen as logical sequence by another reader. If the aporias can be established and if they indicate levels of editing, we might still question the ineptitude of a final editor that left such glaring inconsistencies. For example, the Synoptics' interweaving of material is much smoother to the point that it might be impossible to detect Mark in Matthew if we did not have manuscripts of Mark. Von Wahlde is undeterred by this because he sees other Jewish texts, such as Genesis, as marked by obvious signs of editing. Even if one accepts the existence of aporias in Genesis, we must question how similar the two texts are; Genesis' sources would arise from different communities and over centuries, but the Gospel's composition would be inter-communal within forty years. We must also

question why the Church Fathers do not seem bothered by these aporias since they were much nearer to the Gospel in time, culture, and literary techniques. To my knowledge, there is no patristic discussion about multiple editions of John.

Although the idea that the Letters precede the final form of the Gospel is not unique to Von Wahlde, he is the first to exegete thoroughly the Gospel and Letters with this view, so he must show how 1 John shapes the tradition. Volume Three contains about 70 pages of introductory material, 211 pages of commentary on the Letters, and 140 pages of Appendices. Readers will find the format of this volume more similar to other commentaries as 1 John is not composite. Von Wahlde provides a translation, notes, overview, structure, and interpretation for each pericope. He is especially astute in noting the structure of the passages with the frequent use of chaining and chiasm of which he might detect too many. He displays an impressive command of Johannine themes and theology. If one is convinced by von Wahlde's reconstruction of the inter-communal conflict and the editing of the Gospel, this volume will be most agreeable.

An explanation of von Wahlde's view of 1 John 5:6–12 demonstrates the content of this commentary. Verse 6 clarifies that Jesus came not only to give the Spirit to the community (water), the view of 2E and the opponents, but also has an atoning function (blood). This verse precedes John 19:34, and the latter must be interpreted in light of 1 John: "That Jesus came in water (that is, that he bestowed the Spirit) and that he came in blood (that is, the fact that his death was a sacrifice and atonement) are both elements of a proper understanding of what means to say that Jesus is the Christ" (3:193). The Beloved Disciple is correcting the errant pneumatology of the opponents (also represented in 2E) that diminished the ongoing role of Jesus' words and work in light of the Spirit that would give life and revelation. The Spirit does not sever the community's dependence on the Son but witnesses to the importance of the Son. Moreover, it is the Spirit of Truth in contrast to the Spirit of Deception (cf. 4:6) who witnesses to Christ. This apocalyptic dualism is the introduction of 1 John as the opponents have the Spirit of Deception but the community has the Spirit of Truth that points to Jesus. Verse 10 emphasizes the atoning role of Jesus in contrast to the opponents. In 5:11, both parties would agree that God gave the community eternal life that consists of having the Spirit, but the author emphasizes that this life is in the Son, a view that the opponents would not hold.

The appendices are invaluable to clarify views that have been expressed throughout or partially in the commentary, so they will be treated only briefly here. Appendix 4, "The Crisis that Divided the Johannine Community at the Time of 1 John," condenses the historical interpretation that runs throughout the commentary. The reader will find it profitable to read Appendix 4 with the Introduction to the commentary. Appendices 7, 8, and 9 deal with authorship issues and the identification of the Elder and the Beloved Disciple. Von Wahlde concludes, "There is a very strong likelihood that the Elder of the Johannine tradition, the Beloved Disciple, and Papias' John the Elder are one in the same individual" (3:434).

Most commentators posit some kind of adversary for the author of 1 John, but von Wahlde explains 1 John in its place in the theological controversy of the Johannine community. He certainly provides a coherent and consistent explanation of the text in light of his hypothetical historical situation. At no point should the reader have to wonder "why" a certain phrase or pericope enters into the text; von Wahlde gives a comprehensive explanation of what the author is doing with every phrase. And he should be applauded for his clarity and comprehensive explanation. However, one must accept his

reconstruction of the Gospel and the Beloved Disciple's correction of the aberrant theology of 2E to make sense of the Letters as he intends.

In evaluating the entire three-volume proposal, von Wahlde should be applauded for a number of things. Clarity of thought and written expression characterize all three volumes, and there are few typos. His attention to detail is evident in every line, and it is clear that he is aware of all the major discussions concerning John in secondary literature. He should also be commended for consistently applying his criteria to the text. Rarely does the reader feel that he is straining the evidence to make the text fit his paradigm, and he openly admits texts that demand further study to determine their genesis. Methodological criticisms have been detailed above, but it is also helpful to question how the Holy Spirit would function in the inspiration of the Gospel and Letters. Are we to understand inspiration as the work of the Spirit in the community's theological struggles? What are we to make of the authorship claims in John 21:21 if we accept von Wahlde's reconstruction? Moreover, 2E's pneumatology and anthropology are too exalted at the denigration of Christology, so I do not see how the Spirit could have inspired 2E, much less allow it to persist into the final Gospel. Nevertheless, Von Wahlde's contribution is not to be brushed aside dismissively. This is the magnum opus of a respectable Johannine scholar, and the volumes display that level of academic rigor.

Even if one does not accept von Wahlde's sources, his commentary has great value in explaining the text. No one will interact with von Wahlde and not see new things in the text and understand the Gospel and the Letters better as a result. For the person looking to purchase a single commentary on John and the Letters, this is not the place to start, but students and teachers of Johannine writings must wrestle with the thorough source criticism that von Wahlde gifts to the scholarly world. To this reviewer's mind, it is by far the best source-critical commentary on the Gospel of John and his Letters even if I am not ultimately convinced by all its conclusions.

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HISTORY AND HISTORICAL THEOLOGY

Aaron C. Denlinger. *Omnes in Adam ex pacto Dei: Ambrogio Catarino's Doctrine of Covenantal Solidarity and Its Influence on Post-Reformation Reformed Theologians*. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2010. 306 pp. £80.95/\$118.00.

When one thinks of the hallmarks of the Reformed tradition, the doctrine of a pre-Fall covenant with Adam quickly springs to mind: a covenant established moral solidarity between Adam and his descendants, and transgressing that covenant rendered those descendants culpable for Adam's transgression in the garden. The heirs of this tradition might well be surprised to learn that they owe an intellectual debt to a sixteenth-century Dominican named Ambrogio Catarino and shocked to learn that he developed his covenantal thought in defending, of all things, the Immaculate Conception of Mary.

In this fine study, Aaron Denlinger explores Catarino's doctrine of covenantal solidarity in Adam and investigates the possibility of his influence on later generations of Reformed theologians. Catarino was forced to reflect on the doctrine of original sin in his defence of Mary's immunity from Adam's guilt. Catarino came to believe that humanity's solidarity with Adam, and therefore participation in his guilt, had no *real* basis such as biological descent or share in a common nature derived from him. Concupiscence was transmitted biologically, but this was, properly speaking, an effect of Adam's sin rather than the sin itself. Participation in that sin and in Adam's guilt was *covenantal*, dependent on the conditions of the prelapsarian covenant established between God and Adam. Only this, thought Catarino, could explain how Mary remained untainted. Though biologically descended from Adam she was, by God's will, excluded from the covenant and therefore from the guilt of Adam's sin.

This doctrine of covenantal solidarity was first mooted in relation to Mary in 1532, but Denlinger shows how Catarino went on to integrate it into his theology more broadly considered. The result was a covenantal theology of some sophistication. Catarino posited a unity in God's purpose and in his dealings with his human creatures, even though the change in historical circumstances occasioned by the Fall dictated a change in the form of the covenant. The underlying unity was such that Catarino could reduce the diversity of God's covenantal relationships with his creatures to one covenant according to God's determination of their greater good. He also felt able to consider the various postlapsarian covenants under the rubric of one *novus pactum*. From this, Denlinger concludes that the unity of covenants was not an idea original to Reformed theology.

Denlinger moves on to consider possible pre-Reformation sources for Catarino's doctrine, examining Gen 1:26; Hos 6:7; Sir 17:10 and passages in Jerome and Augustine to which Catarino appealed. He notes that while these may support the notion of a prelapsarian covenant they do not explain its function in Catarino's thought as the basis of our solidarity with Adam. Nor can Catarino's doctrine be explained by his legal background or by contemporary social contract theory. The parallels which have been suggested are simply not close enough. Denlinger finds a more promising avenue of inquiry in the covenantal causality of late medieval theologians such as William of Ockham. There were, according to Ockham, two ways of relating cause and effect. Effect could follow cause naturally, simply because of the nature of the things themselves. Or effect could follow cause, not on account of the



nature of the things, but because this relationship was determined by the divine will, a will concretized in the form of a covenant. This idea of covenant causality had been applied in the areas of sacramental efficacy and the relationship between merit and reward. Catarino's genius, argues Denlinger, lies in his application of the covenantal causality model to the doctrine of original sin.

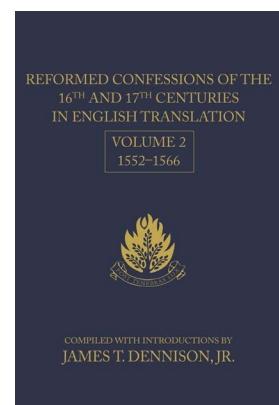
The final chapter, in which Denlinger considers the evidence for Catarino's influence on Reformed theologians, is fascinating. Before examining the Reformed sources, Denlinger shows how Catarino's ideas were represented in the writings of contemporary Catholic authors, whether sympathetic or critical. He rightly notes that this interaction increases the likelihood that Reformed theologians were exposed to, and influenced by, these ideas. He traces Catarino's influence in the writings of a range of British Reformed theologians, most significantly in the works of William Whitaker and Robert Rollock. He makes a strong case for Catarino's influence on the development of Reformed covenantal thought, specifically on the way in which the prelapsarian covenant came to function as the basis for humankind's moral solidarity with Adam.

This is a well-constructed study. The author is judicious in his handling of the evidence and has produced an important work which will be read with profit by students of Reformed covenantal theology and by those with an interest in the doctrine of sin, in Catarino himself, or in sixteenth-century Catholic thought. One of the most valuable features of the book is the well-organized review of the literature on the *foedus operum*, which would serve as a helpful orientation for those new to the subject. One might wish for a somewhat broader trawl through post-Reformation Reformed authors, but this is a minor quibble. Denlinger's book is an original and significant contribution to the study of doctrinal development in the post-Reformation period and is to be commended.

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James T. Dennison Jr., ed. *1552–1566*. Vol. 2 of *Reformed Confessions of the 16th and 17th Centuries in English Translation*. Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage, 2010. 909 pp. \$50.00.

James Dennison Jr., academic dean of Northwest Theological Seminary in Washington and professor of church history and biblical theology, has now produced the second of his projected four volumes of Reformed confessions of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Volume one compiles Reformed confessions from 1523 to 1552, and volume two from 1552 to 1566, many of which are translated into English for the first time. The English-speaking world now has access to numerous Reformed confessions that serve as a window into the history and theology of the Reformed tradition internationally. The thirty-five confessions are arranged chronologically, and Dennison introduces each with a brief sketch of its historical background and significance. While readers will recognize standard confessions of the Reformed faith such as the Belgic Confessions (1561), Heidelberg Catechism (1563), and Second Helvetic Confession (1566), many, if not most, of the confessions will be new to many even in the Reformed tradition. Confessions in volume two include:



34. The Forty-Two Articles of the Church of England (1552/53)
35. Anglican Catechism (1553)
36. Emden Examination of Faith (1553)
37. The Frankfort Confession (1554)
38. The Emden Catechism (1554)
39. The Confession of Piotrków (1555)
40. Confession of the English Congregation at Geneva (1556)
41. Waldensian Confession of Turin (1556)
42. Confession of the Italian Church of Geneva (1558)
43. Guanabara Confession (1558)
44. Geneva Students' Confession (1559)
45. Confession of Marosvásárhely/Vásárhelyi (1559)
46. French Confession (1559)
47. Confession of Pińczow (1559)
48. Lattanzio Ragnoni's *Formulario* (1559)
49. The Confession of Faith in the Geneva Bible (1560)
50. The Scottish Confession (1560)
51. The Waldensian Confession (1560)
52. The Prussian-Vilnian Discussion (1560)
53. Theodore Beza's Confession (1560)
54. The Confession of the Spanish Congregation of London (1560/61)
55. Waldensian Confession (1561)
56. Theodore Beza's Confession at Poissy (1561)
57. The Belgic Confession (1561)
58. The Hungarian *Confessio Catholica* (1562)
59. The Confession of Tarcal (1562) and Torda (1563)
60. The Thirty-Nine Articles (1562/63)
61. The Heidelberg Catechism (1563)
62. The Synod of Enyedi (1564)
63. The Second Helvetic Confession (1566)
64. The Antwerp Confession (1566)
65. The Netherlands Confession (1566)
66. The Synod of Gönc (1566)
67. Synod of Torda (1566)
68. The Synods of Gyulafehérvár and of Marosvásárhely (1566)

While justice cannot be done to each of these confessions in this review, several deserve mention. First, the Confession of the Italian Church of Geneva (1558), which Dennison translates from the Latin, is an important inclusion. In May 1558, Calvin wrote to Peter Martyr Vermigli explaining the difficulties being experienced by the Italian congregation in Geneva, specifically over the doctrine of the Trinity. The theology of Michael Servetus was resurrected by the Italian anti-Trinitarians Giorgio Biandrata, Matteo Gribaldi, Paolo Alciati, and Giovanni Valentino Gentile. While Calvin listened to Biandrata in personal interviews, it became obvious that at root was an anti-Trinitarianism that was beginning to spread like a disease in the Italian church. Therefore, the Confession of the Italian Church in Geneva

was written “because some . . . have deviated from the pure and true faith . . . as to the one and simple essence of God and the distinction of the three persons” (p. 113). Such deviation was apparent with Gentile, for example, when he argued for a “Trinity of persons of decreasing potency from the Father to the Son to the Holy Spirit” (p. 112). Gentile was not shy in his rejection of Calvin’s doctrine of the Trinity. Yet the Italian Church followed Calvin by arguing that the person of the Son is “still the true and natural Son of God, having thus united the two natures . . . still preserving the properties of each of the two natures” (p. 114). Here we see only the beginnings of the anti-Trinitarian battles that would characterize the Reformed churches (cf. Synod of Torda and Synods of Gyulafehérvár and of Marosvásárhely).

A second noteworthy confession is the Guanabara Confession (1558). In 1555, Nicholas Durand de Villegaignon founded a French colony on the island of Dieppe in Guanabara Bay, Brazil. Villegaignon wrote to Calvin requesting ministers from Geneva and extended a welcoming hand to persecuted Huguenots. Villegaignon received Calvin’s support in the commissioning of Pierre Richer and Guillaume Chartier, Calvinism’s first overseas New World missionaries, and in 1557, a Calvinist church was established. Unfortunately, the entire enterprise went wrong when Villegaignon became antagonistic with the Huguenots’s Calvinistic theology and decided he would return to the Roman Catholic faith. Fifteen Huguenots were expelled, and though they made their way back to Europe, five of them returned to Brazil instead. However, after wandering through the jungles of Brazil, they were arrested by Villegaignon, who “demanded that they respond to certain theological questions he posed by way of a confession” (p. 118). Sadly, with one exception, the signatories were all executed by drowning. Despite this tragedy, the Guanabara Confession is a testimony to this day of the zeal Calvinism has had in seeing the free offer of the gospel spread to unreached territories.

Many other confessions make Dennison’s volume valuable. For example, the French Confession (1559) demonstrates the influence that Calvin’s theology had on the National Synod of the Reformed Churches of France in Paris. The confession, drafted in the midst of persecution, was sent to Calvin for his endorsement as it closely followed his *Institutes*. Disagreement continues over whether Calvin authored the “augmented version or whether he enjoyed the collaboration of Beza and Viret” (p. 140). Other valuable contributions in Dennison’s volume include the Geneva Students’ Confession (1559), the Confession of Faith in the Geneva Bible (1560), and Theodore Beza’s Confession (1560) at Poissy (1561), all of which exhibit the influence Calvin’s theology had on his disciples. Scholars will also be pleased to see the insertion of the Hungarian *Confessio Catholica* of 1562 (over two hundred pages), a robust example of Calvinism’s theological penetration into Hungary.

Dennison’s second volume is a significant contribution to the ongoing study of Reformed theology. Volume two not only includes the most common Reformed confessions still used today but also rare confessions often forgotten but nonetheless important to understanding the history and development of Calvinism internationally.

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D. G. Hart. *Between the Times: The Orthodox Presbyterian Church in Transition, 1945–1990*. Willow Grove, PA: The Committee for the Historian of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, 2011. 340 pp. \$12.00.

June 11, 2011, marked the 75th anniversary of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church (OPC), a small denomination that was formed out of the modernist-fundamentalist conflict of the early twentieth century in America. To commemorate the church's anniversary, the Committee for the Historian of the OPC has commissioned and published two new volumes, including *Between the Times: The Orthodox Presbyterian Church in Transition, 1945–1990*, written by D. G. Hart.

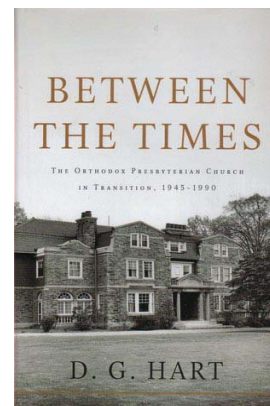
Between the Times recounts the history of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church during a transitional period from 1945 to 1990. Despite the denomination's small size, the OPC's history bears significance for the contemporary church. It is the story of a self-consciously Reformed denomination that began with J. Gresham Machen, its catalytic figure and the author of *Christianity and Liberalism* (1923). The OPC's story has great value today as denominations and churches seek to understand their place within the milieu of parachurch organizations, networks, and other theological movements. *Between the Times* picks up the story in 1945 when the denomination was attempting to understand its place amid the changing ecclesiastical landscape.

Hart, who is well-suited to take up the task of this history, has a tendency to force the reader to either agree or disagree with him. Loyal readers of Hart will know that he is nothing if not persistent. A champion of historic Presbyterianism to many and a determined provocation to others, Hart's Old School convictions are evident when he discusses ecumenical involvement. His treatment of the OPC's refusal to join the American Council of Christian Churches and the National Association of Evangelicals reveals his strong skepticism regarding the warrant and effectiveness of parachurch organizations. These views may seem novel or even peculiar to many evangelicals.

As hinted in its title, the book integrates amillennialism into its contextual analysis. Early Orthodox Presbyterians understood that the church exists in an overlap of ages—within a tension between this earthly world and the heavenly inheritance secured and inaugurated by Christ. Many early figures in the OPC understood that the Church must navigate between the two extremes: a social gospel (an overemphasis on this world) and a neo-Gnosticism (a tendency to be so heavenly minded as to be no earthly good). Hart argues that the church was able “to maintain a Reformed witness that attempted to preserve the best of Old Princeton and that branch of American Presbyterianism and to combine it with the insights of Reformed tradition outside America” (p. 30). Yet not all understood the OPC's distinctive response to doctrinal, ecumenical, and social issues. The communion would struggle through several decades trying to understand as well as fashion its identity in the changing evangelical world.

The chapters of *Between the Times* are somewhat independent of each other. This can be an advantage to those who prefer to read selective portions of the history, but others may find that occasional repetition of facts and information hinders the flow of a careful and continuous reading. Nonetheless, the book is more similar to a concept-album rather than a “greatest hits” since Hart unites the book by weaving several recurring themes throughout each chapter.

Readers may be surprised to find entire chapters devoted to the creation of a hymnal or controversies over Sunday school. Others may find chapters on the finer points of church membership and the



denomination's constitution to be trying, even tedious at times. Yet these accounts are bound up with the OPC's desire to maintain a distinctively Reformed identity. Perhaps the most intriguing sections of the book recount the highs and lows of the OPC's relationship with Westminster Seminary in Philadelphia, which was founded by Machen, the OPC's principal figure. Other Orthodox Presbyterian ministers such as Cornelius Van Til, John Murray, Ned Stonehouse, Paul Woolley, and Edward J. Young taught at the seminary for many years and came to be significant figures in the denomination. Hart, who previously taught at Westminster, navigates well through this history, including a sensitive controversy regarding the teaching of Norman Shepherd. The event has been considered by many to be the primary reason that the Presbyterian Church in America (PCA) did not receive the OPC into membership in 1981. To his credit, Hart's account of this polarizing event in Westminster's and the OPC's history is balanced and displays a dispassionate tone.

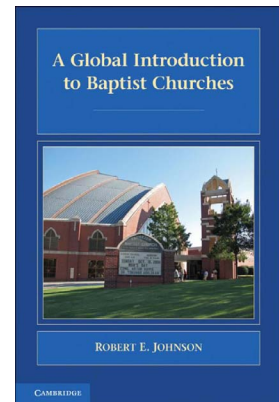
The book is well written and provides an interesting test-case by which readers might anticipate the future of other conservative communions. Yet outsiders may feel the book ascribes too much significance to such a small body of believers. Nonetheless, Hart makes a compelling case that the OPC faithfully represents historic, conservative American Presbyterianism, and he suggests that its history has much to say to today's evangelical church.

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Robert E. Johnson. *A Global Introduction to Baptist Churches*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010. xxvi + 444 pp. \$32.99.

The year 2009 marked the four hundredth anniversary of the birth of the Baptist movement. Among the numerous studies that were written in connection with that anniversary, none are more ambitious than Robert Johnson's *A Global Introduction to Baptist Churches*. Johnson's work is important because he bucks the scholarly trend among Baptist historians. As he correctly notes, "Most often when the Baptist story is told and contextual exploration is undertaken, the contours are confined to the Anglo Baptist cultural experiences" (p. 1). This typically means non-Anglo Baptists are either treated in a token fashion in a chapter or two or are hardly discussed at all beyond recounting American and British Baptist missions-advances. For his part, Johnson attempts to treat various Baptist groups on their own terms, without assuming that the experiences of English-speaking Baptists are normative. This approach is very much in keeping with current trends among historians of Christianity, notably Philip Jenkins, Adrian Hastings, Bruce Mullin, and Mark Noll. *A Global Introduction to Baptist Churches* is the first book to take a "world Christianity" approach to Baptist history, though it will almost certainly not be the last.

Johnson's book is divided into nine chapters spread over five sections. The first section, comprised of one chapter, tells the story of Baptist beginnings in the seventeenth century. This is the only section of the book that more or less follows scholarly convention among Baptist historians. The second section, also limited to one chapter, covers what Johnson calls the age of emerging Baptist denominational



traditions. This section highlights the growing diversity among British and North American Baptists, which Johnson interprets as foreshadowing the even greater variety within Baptist Christianity after it spreads to non-Anglo nations. The third section, which includes three chapters, focuses on what Johnson considers the “frontier age” of Baptist advancement from the English-speaking world to Continental Europe, Africa, Asia, and Latin America in the century following the formation of the Baptist Missionary Society in 1792. The fourth section, which also includes three chapters, is devoted to the proliferation of “traditioning sources” among various Baptist groups all over the globe. This focus on multiple Baptist traditions, each influenced by various biblical and cultural sources, constitutes a dominant theme in Johnson’s book. The final section is comprised of a chapter devoted to Baptist beliefs and a brief conclusion discussing the future of Baptist identity.

A Global Introduction to Baptist Churches is an honest attempt to take Baptist history where it needs to go—global. Unfortunately, the results are mixed. On the positive side, Johnson presents an excellent basic introduction to Baptist movements in regions all over the world. His work provides an accessible narrative to complement Albert Wardin’s *Baptists around the World: A Comprehensive Handbook* (B&H, 1995). Professors will likely find Johnson’s book to be an excellent resource to use in crafting lecture notes, while doctoral students will discover a wealth of possible dissertation topics, including many outside the English-speaking Baptist world. The timeline includes major global events since the seventeenth century, which helps to provide historical context for Baptists movements on every continent. Johnson’s emphasis on Baptists’ polygenetic origins reflects the best recent scholarship on an oft-debated topic.

Despite its usefulness, *A Global Introduction to Baptist Churches* suffers from significant shortcomings. Johnson is strongly influenced by postmodern philosophy and theology (pp. 3–4), which colors his interpretation of Baptist history. While any honest historian will concede that Baptists are very diverse, Johnson seems to view Baptist diversity as a virtue in and of itself. Perhaps for this reason, like many other moderate and liberal Baptist historians, Johnson overemphasizes “freedom” as a central theme in Baptist history. He downplays the “Anglo” emphasis on doctrinal precision while speaking glowingly of Native American or African attempts to synthesize Baptist Christianity with traditional animistic beliefs. While he helpfully emphasizes the role women have played in Baptist history, he consistently adopts feminist views of gender roles and at times seems strained in his attempts to find a woman or two to work into the narrative.

Much of this is common fare among progressive Baptist historians. While it is certainly true that Baptists have historically advocated liberty of conscience and local church autonomy, these beliefs were never viewed as ends unto themselves. For most Baptists prior to the twentieth century, freedom was closely tied to biblicism: Baptists wanted to be free to follow what they believed the Scriptures commanded, particularly in matters ecclesiological. They wanted the freedom to immerse professing believers, the freedom to form local churches comprised only of professing believers, the freedom to govern themselves congregationally rather than submit to any ecclesiastical hierarchy, etc. For the earliest Baptists, freedom was a means unto a greater end: biblical fidelity and gospel faithfulness. Like many of his moderate and liberal colleagues, Johnson consistently misses the forest of faithfulness for the tree of liberty. And while his postmodern sensibilities have helped him see the importance of emphasizing the uniqueness of contextual Baptist sub-traditions—a needed corrective among Baptist historians—it has also caused him to steer clear of any sort of prescriptive statements about Baptist

identity. Indeed, the only time he thinks it appropriate to judge a Baptist sub-tradition harshly is when that group questions the practices (and thus violates the freedom) of another Baptist group (p. 5).

Johnson's interpretations are also inconsistent at points. For example, Johnson argues Baptists are polycentric, lacking any unified center (p. 3). Yet he also contends Baptists do have a central theme: they dream of a better life, however such life is defined in their particular contexts (p. 9). (It is not at all clear how the dream of a better life is uniquely Baptist.) This confusion carries over into Johnson's discussion of Baptist identity. On the one hand, he thinks it futile to attempt to articulate any sort of central Baptist identity (pp. 5, 11). On the other hand, his final chapter is in fact a brief exposition of Baptist beliefs and practices. Though Johnson is quick to claim there is a diversity within each of these practices (p. 387)—which none would dispute—it seems that certain commonalities that transcend different Baptist groups point to at least some sort of central Baptist identity.

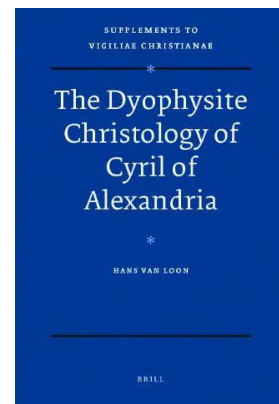
A Global Introduction to Baptist Churches is a flawed book on many levels, yet it remains perhaps the most important Baptist history text written in the past generation. Though his interpretations are at times questionable, Johnson's goal is commendable. All future Baptist histories that make any pretense toward being comprehensive must adopt a global perspective and listen to non-Anglo Baptist voices on their own terms. Scholars of Baptist Studies owe Johnson a debt of gratitude for providing a starting-point for future conversations about Baptist history and identity in an age where the West is no longer the geographic center of the Christian universe.

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Hans van Loon. *The Dyophysite Christology of Cyril of Alexandria*. Supplements to Vigiliae Christianae 96. Boston: Brill, 2009. xvi + 626 pp. £184.00/\$252.00.

In the aftermath of the Council of Chalcedon in A.D. 451, the Christian Church split, as some bishops rejected Chalcedon's dyophysite ("two nature") teaching, and upheld instead a miaphysite ("one nature") Christology. The central historical figure in this split was Cyril of Alexandria, who presided over the Council of Ephesus in A.D. 431 and successfully had Nestorius deposed by the council. The way this story is often told is that Cyril actually held to a miaphysite Christology (as a crypto-Apollinarian), but was forced to alter his position to dyophysitism in order to appease Nestorius' allies in the Formula of Reunion in A.D. 433. Then with the further support of Pope Leo's *Tome*, Chalcedon codified this dyophysite Christology, passing it on forever to the Eastern Orthodox, Roman Catholic, and Protestant churches, in distinction from the churches that reject Chalcedon, known today as the Oriental Orthodox, including, among others, the Coptic Orthodox and the Ethiopian Orthodox churches. These miaphysite Christians who disagree with Chalcedon therefore see themselves as the upholders of Cyril's true legacy, consisting of his miaphysite doctrine prior to his critical compromise with John of Antioch in A.D. 433.

In the present volume, Hans van Loon attempts to rewrite this narrative. His task is to investigate exhaustively and systematically the christological writings of Cyril from the first two years of the



Nestorian controversy (pp. 429–30) in order to determine whether Cyril's Christology is miaphysite or dyophysite in the period prior to any supposed concessions made to the Antiochenes. The present study began as van Loon's doctoral dissertation at the Protestant Theological University in Kampen, the Netherlands.

Van Loon's argument proceeds as follows. He first considers Cyril's usage of Aristotelian logic in his early Trinitarian writings and provides the best discussion of this question to date, arguing that Cyril was well aware of Aristotelian logic as filtered through the neo-Platonic commentators on Aristotle (chs. 2–3). Van Loon notes that he made some logical missteps in his *Thesaurus* but apparently improved his knowledge by the time he composed his *Dialogues on the Trinity*. Van Loon then comes up with a series of small, capital-letter English terms (see the table on pp. 200–202), which he presents as the equivalents of Cyril's technical metaphysical vocabulary, including *ousia*, *hypostasis*, *physis*, *prosopon*, and *idios*. Key to his thesis is his argument that the terms *hypostasis*, *physis*, and *prosopon* are not synonyms for Cyril, as is often asserted in the secondary literature.

After meticulously setting up his argument by defining his terms and surveying the secondary literature—spending 250 pages doing so!—van Loon finally dives into the heart of his argument by examining Cyril's christological writings from the first two years of the controversy. The texts he includes are *De incarnatione*, *Contra Nestorium*, the *Orationes* to the imperial household, and a variety of Cyril's letters (see the chart on p. 262). For each text, he summarizes the content of the work and then looks at every occurrence of the above-mentioned key terms (chs. 5–7). Chapter 8 recapitulates and concludes the study.

Van Loon presents a compelling case that Cyril's Christology from his earliest works was dyophysite and that the archbishop did not fundamentally alter his position in the dialogues with the Orientals, though certain aspects of his terminology and emphasis shifted over time. Some of the analysis in the chapters devoted to Cyril's key terms seems too brief and cursory due to the large amount of primary text surveyed, and van Loon's strongest work is in the last chapter of the book, where he looks in more detail at several disputed passages and summarizes his argument. The phrase that figures most prominently in the debate over Cyril's Christology is his famous formula "one nature [*mia physis*] of God the Word incarnate." Though Cyril is often presented as "championing" this phrase and backing away from its use only with reluctance, van Loon points out that in the writings prior to 433, it occurs only three times. Two of these times it shows up when the archbishop quotes a passage from an Apollinarian letter, which he thought was Athanasian, but in these instances he gives no apparent significance to the formula. The one remaining time the phrase occurs, it is in Cyril's own language, but he immediately explains it using the dyophysite illustration of the body and soul of a human being. Therefore, the phrase can hardly be said to be Cyril's favorite, and he certainly did not champion it. It was only after the Formula of Reunion in 433 that some of Cyril's allies began to make such a fuss over it, and he had to give it more attention.

Furthermore, according to van Loon, when the archbishop does refer to the incarnate Son as a *physis*, he means not the divine nature, but the "composition of the two natures of the Word and the body," resulting in one "separate reality" (p. 524). Thus, Cyril affirms the abiding distinction between the deity and humanity in Christ and is even willing to allow for a separation of the two so long as the separation remains one only of contemplation and not in reality (p. 532). Therefore, his agreement with the Antiochenes actually represents the position he had always held: there are "two natures" in Christ. In his own writings he typically, though not always, avoided speaking explicitly of the "human nature"

in Christ, due to his concern to avoid all traces of Arianism, but so long as the unity of Christ was not in jeopardy, he had no problem with such language.

Van Loon masterfully engages with Cyril's works from this period. If his book is anything, it is thorough. However, sometimes he excessively summarizes Cyrilline works. The book could have been considerably shorter without weakening its thesis. However, on the positive side, those who want an overview of Cyril's works from these years, some of which have never been translated, now have it in this volume. Moreover, this study engages only very slightly with any fourth-century patristic sources. An even more nuanced understanding of Cyril's Christology might be possible if one considered his works in light of the fourth-century texts he drew upon as resources (e.g., Athanasius, Gregory Nazianzus, Didymus). The book is largely free of typographical errors, though it appears that "sinful" (used three times on p. 569) should be "sinless" instead.

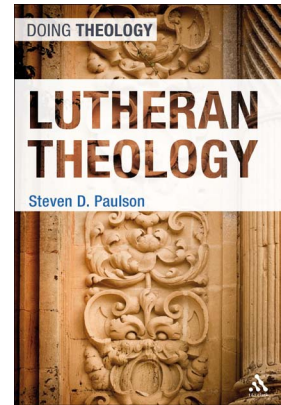
Despite these criticisms, van Loon persuasively shows that Cyril is hardly the miaphysite theologian he is usually taken to be. Accounts of the fifth century that present him as such need to be revised. Though the overriding emphasis of his work is on the unity of Christ, he still presents a dyophysite Christology that is largely in keeping with the Chalcedonian definition drawn up seven years after his death. Any future studies of Cyril's Christology will ignore van Loon's work to their own detriment.

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Steven D. Paulson. *Lutheran Theology*. Doing Theology. New York: T&T Clark, 2011. vii + 293 pp. £14.25/\$21.38.

"When Lutheran theology is worth its salt it is always offensive and perverse" (p. 4). So states Steven Paulson, professor of systematic theology at Luther Seminary, about Lutheranism's "attack on virtue"—though one senses Paulson would say that this is part and parcel of Lutheranism itself. In this volume, part of T&T Clark's Doing Theology series, Paulson takes up the task of setting forth the distinctive theological vision that owes its name to the sixteenth-century reformer, Martin Luther. Luther was a polarizing, radical figure in his own day, and Paulson seeks to hold Lutheranism accountable to the radical edge in Luther's thought, which has as its basis that God in Jesus Christ justifies the ungodly by faith alone, apart from works and law.

Paulson lays out the work in the classical style of *loci*, using Romans as a template for discussing doctrine, as Melancthon famously did and others following him—that is, until modern biblical scholars argued that Romans was not a compendium of doctrine, but an historical document with a specific purpose. Paulson knows this challenge, but understands Lutheran theology as the "unfinished business" of "commentary on Paul's letter to the Romans" (p. 15). Thus, for example, chapter 4 (Rom 3) focuses specifically on Christ's atoning work and its foundation in the christological doctrine of the communication of attributes (*communicatio idiomatum*), chapter 8 (Rom 7) on freedom from the law and the Christian life as *simul iustus et peccator*, while chapter 12 (Rom 13–14) looks at the doctrine of the Two Kingdoms and how Christians are both



to participate in and resist earthly, temporal authorities. The arrangement is straightforward, but gives a certain vibrancy to the flow of Paulson's argument as he attempts to present Lutheran theology and navigate Paul's letter in a coherent manner as the same task. It is not Paulson's structure, however, that makes this book special, but rather his single-minded insistence on a number of themes important in the Lutheran tradition. I will briefly summarize a few of these.

First, justification by faith alone and the right distinction between law and gospel. As Paulson states, "The key to any theology, especially done the Lutheran way, is to ask what role the law plays in its system" (p. 4). The role law plays in Paulson's presentation is twofold. Law's "alien use is to preserve and sustain life in the old Aeon until the preacher arrives" (p. 172). In this role, law preserves by giving order, but does not give life. In its proper (or theological) use, however, law magnifies sin and exterminates any possibility for salvation other than Christ. These two uses simply are what law does, no more and no less. Paulson seeks throughout the book to point out the error of believers when they allow law and works to play any role in salvation by smuggling a "Legal Scheme" into the gospel. While avoiding and arguing against antinomianism, Paulson's mission is to expound the "Lutheran passion on earth" (p. 5)—distinguishing between law and gospel.

Second is the role of the preacher and the Word. "Luther's great discovery" was, according to Paulson, "that preaching has always and only been the thing that makes faith, and so justifies" (p. 9). Likewise, "Preachers do not come with information about an election done elsewhere, outside of time; preachers actually do the electing here and now, in the present" (p. 25). This emphasis rests on the belief that preachers announce the two-fold Word of God, which, in distinction to human words that merely signify, actually kills and recreates sinners. Preaching reveals Christ and makes a hidden God no longer hidden. For Paulson, time is split between the time before the preacher, during which the person is under God's wrath, and the time with a preacher when Christ forgives sins (cf. p. 16). "Faith is created by a promise that comes externally, as an alien word" (p. 119)—externally through a preacher by the will of God.

Third is Luther and the history of Lutheranism. Paulson thankfully does not set up the work as a Lutherans-versus-Reformed-or-Catholics treatise—though distinctions necessarily happen here and there—but rather, in a surprising move, focuses his critique on his own tradition. Paulson sees the history of Lutheran theology as "an attempt to tame the wild animal of the end of the law, consequently an attempt to tame Luther himself" (p. 5). Paulson breaks up the history of Lutheran thought into four "episodes" (literal, allegorical, tropological, anagogical), with Luther representing the "literal" stage and the other three trying to figure out what to do with him; but the main solution is to readmit the law into God's salvific act in Christ. Consequently, past Luther, no thinker is safe from Paulson's critique. On the positive side, Paulson demonstrates the vitality of a tradition that is open to interpretation and thus self-critique. However, the negative effect this has is that the reader is left wondering which Lutherans, if any, can be trusted beyond Luther and Paulson.

But beyond this small quibble, which does not really detract from the work itself, I can speak only positively about the book. The occasional different theological judgment is to be expected, but Paulson sets about the task of explaining Lutheran theology not by rigidly moving from historical point A to theological point B, but by engaging with Paul and Luther and seeking to show the deeper logic behind why Lutherans believe what they do. And given Paulson's high view of preaching, it is no surprise that this book reads as proclamation—very dense proclamation, of course. The result is engaging writing

that will benefit the student, lay person, *and* scholar. Readers of any category could not ask for much more.

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SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY AND BIOETHICS

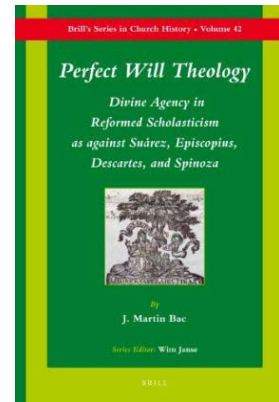
J. Martin Bac. *Perfect Will Theology: Divine Agency in Reformed Scholasticism as against Suárez, Episcopius, Descartes, and Spinoza*. Brill's Series in Church History 42. Leiden, Brill, 2010. xviii + 561 pp. £105.00/\$183.00.

The author is a member of a Dutch research group which has become persuaded of the central importance of the idea of synchronic contingency for an understanding of divine freedom, the contingency of the creation and of grace, as well as human agency. Synchronic contingency is the idea that when God or a human person chooses A, it is possible that they choose B. Such contingency is said to deliver Christian theology from necessitarianism, while preserving the proper influence of Reformed thought on the all-encompassing divine decree.

This influence is largely due to the work of Antonie Vos, who has researched extensively on Duns Scotus, translating, editing, and commenting on his significance for Western thought, culminating in *The Philosophy of John Duns Scotus* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2006). Some of the research output of this group in English can be found in the contribution of Antonie Vos to *Understanding the Attributes of God* (ed. Gijsbert van den Brink and Marcel Sarot; Frankfurt, 1999), papers in *Reformation and Scholasticism* (ed. Willem J. van Asselt and Eef Dekker; Baker, 2001), and particularly in *Reformed Thought on Freedom: The Concept of Free Choice in the History of Early Modern Reformed Theology* (ed. Willem J. van Asselt, J. Martin Bac, and Roelf T. de Velde; Baker, 2010).

What makes some of their work particularly interesting is that they hold that it is a part of the genius of seventeenth-century Reformed Orthodox theologians to have grasped the true significance of synchronic contingency, and as a consequence they have been able to provide an account of divine freedom, even an explanation of it, that is distinctive and consistent. 'The five dominant positions of seventeenth-century thought express different modal intuitions about divine knowledge and will. Modern logic enables a more detailed appraisal, which shows that the Reformed model is the only consistent position' (p. 400). So this view of the will, human and divine, as synchronically contingent, is at the centre. Bac focuses particularly on the divine will. Hence, *Perfect Will Theology*.

The influence of this idea of synchronic contingency (as it applies to the divine decrees) is evident in the structure of this work. Bac sees this distinctive view of divine freedom as the *via media* between four other contending philosophical movements prominent in Holland contemporaneously with the flourishing of Reformed Orthodoxy: the extreme voluntarism of Descartes, the necessitarianism of Spinoza, the Arminianism of Episcopius, and Suárez the Jesuit. The significance of synchronic



contingency is that while God's decree of a human action makes what is decreed actual, it leaves other actions as possibilities. This feature (and its advantages) is retailed quite a bit, but whether what Bac says is convincing is another matter.

That apart, without doubt one of the most useful contributions of Bac's work is the extensive attention he pays not only to Melchior Leydecker, who is prominent at the start of the book but who rather fades from the remainder, but also to William Twisse and Gisbertus Voetius. It is particularly valuable to have large chunks of Twisse's scholastic writings made available in English. He also offers informative discussions of Descartes and Spinoza, and takes the reader through a fascinating discussion of the question much discussed in the seventeenth century: is the time of a person's death fixed? In my judgment Bac offers illuminating commentary, with a reservation to be entered below.

For much as I would warm to the idea of Reformed Orthodoxy committed to synchronic contingency and being thrust into the centre of things, Bac is far from demonstrating this fact or coming near to it. For success requires that he demonstrates that the Reformed Orthodox view of divine sovereignty is consistent with synchronically contingent freedom, and I do not believe that he succeeds in doing this.

There are a number of interrelated reasons for this. The first is that whenever the Reformed Orthodox (such as Twisse) use the term 'indifference', Bac not unnaturally assumes that the reference is to the Scotian synchronic contingency. But the evidence cited (p. 434; see also, e.g., p. 199) warrants only the less strong conclusion that God's providence in which he 'determines the creaturely world' is consistent with the exercise of creaturely wills. Bac leaves himself with the problem of how libertarian freedom (which he believes the Reformed Orthodox reject) differs from the power to the contrary choice (which he thinks, wrongly in my view, that the Reformed accept).

A second reason is that at crucial places the author simply brushes aside modern work on the idea of freedom—libertarianism, determinism, compatibilism, and so forth. 'The present debate on free will is much too simplified by the common distinctions of (in)determinism, (in)compatibilism, (non)libertarian freedom' (p. 457). Yet he himself uses these terms. And in the passage that follows, the idea of dependent co-causality 'grants human persons a rather libertarian kind of freedom, but at the same time enables a strong doctrine of providence'. What is this 'rather' libertarian freedom? No doubt there are differences between modern compatibilism and the essentialist compatibilism of the Reformed Orthodox (as I believe it to be employing a faculty psychology). Bac asserts, 'The notion of superior and inferior cause allows creatures to be subject to God without losing their own causality'. No one doubts the essential superiority of divine intentionality. But is there an argument for the claim that transcendent divine causality is a causality that is consistent with synchronically contingent freedom that does not beg the question? As it stands I am afraid that these assertions amount to little more than a wish list. Success in showing the consistency of such a position, essential to successfully defending the distinctiveness of the Reformed Orthodox on the point, seems some way off.

It might appear churlish to complain of paucity in a work which provides so much, but the point is crucial. The Reformed view, with the centrality of the divine decree, is routinely charged with theological determinism and with making God the author of sin. If these charges are unfair because they fail to take account of the Reformed Orthodoxy's adherence to synchronic contingency in its doctrine of God or that God's primary causality is consistent with creaturely synchronic contingency, then Bac ought to show us why this is. His chapter on the issue of consistency cannot be regarded as a success.

It is not that the author is unfamiliar with modern discussion, for he devotes attention to the work of Alvin Plantinga and others on the problem of evil and has interesting things to say in comments on

this. As the book progresses, the work moves increasingly from its original historical nexus to more general theological and philosophical discussions. Bac tells us, for example, that he personally espouses a version of Augustinian universalism, and he offers reasons for his view. The work would have been better integrated, and perhaps more persuasive, had he spent his expertise in showing why, say, the rather negative answer that William Rowe gives the question posed in the title of his work, *Can God be Free?* (Oxford University Press, 2004), is ill-judged. The book is not cited in Bac's bibliography.

The third reason is that, as I mentioned earlier, Bac overstates the contribution of Reformed Orthodoxy to the topic of divine freedom and the contingency of the creation. Catholic Christianity has traditionally espoused the contingency of the creation. Why then single out Scotus and Reformed Orthodoxy for special mention? It may be that Bac and his *confrères* believe that the idea of divine synchronic contingency *explains* divine freedom in a way that has otherwise been kept from this catholic tradition. But far from explaining anything, the invocation of synchronic contingency reinforces the mystery. For God (for Scotus and Reformed Orthodoxy, to look no further) exists timelessly eternally. The various 'moments' of the divine life that Twisse, for example, makes use of, are distinctions of human reasoning designed to clarify our thinking about synchronic contingency. But there are no temporal moments to the divine life, only logical, structural 'moments'. Twisse understood this, of course. It is one way that he has of drawing attention to divine aseity and self-sufficiency. But this goes no way to telling us how the divine mind works, nor how God might have had a good reason for creating some alternative state of affairs to the universe he created, any more than does the bald claim that there is no self-contradiction in supposing that God might have created otherwise than he did.

The great thing about *Perfect Will Theology* is that even if these criticisms are cogent, Bac has nonetheless successfully provided a rich vein of textual data not otherwise easily available, together with a skillful and interesting commentary on it, and a wide-ranging discussion of the consistency of these and allied matters, such as theodicy. There is enough that is right about the book to make the rest intensely interesting as well. We must be grateful to the author for all that.

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Evangelical Convictions: A Theological Exposition of the Statement of Faith of the Evangelical Free Church of America. Minneapolis: Free Church Publications, 2011. 276 pp. \$25.00.

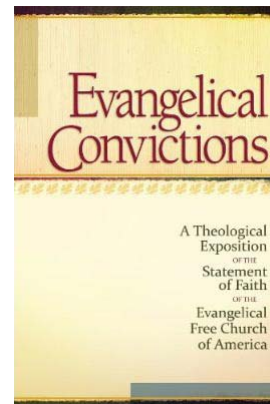
Evangelical Convictions is a product of the Evangelical Free Church of America's (EFCA) Spiritual Heritage Committee—particularly Bill Kynes, senior pastor of Cornerstone Evangelical Free Church in Annandale, VA for the past twenty-five years, and Greg Strand, Director of Biblical Theology and Credentialing for the EFCA. This theological exposition of the EFCA Statement of Faith (SOF) is intended primarily as a teaching resource for EFCA churches, but for reasons delineated below should certainly find a much broader readership.

One might fairly describe the book as a systematic theology of core evangelical Christian doctrine, though it is in some ways unfair to evaluate it as a systematic theology. After all, the authors were bound by the parameters of the EFCA SOF and therefore were not free to choose the topics covered nor the sequence in which they were covered (sequence is often telling in systematic theologies). These parameters create something of a tension between what the authors clearly want the book to be and what it actually must be (more on that below).

The framework of the book is simple and accessible. The introduction acquaints the reader with the SOF itself and explains that it is distinctively an *EFCA* SOF: “a Statement of Faith is a declaration of identity. Not only the affirmations made but also the choices of what to include or exclude locate a group on an ecclesiastical grid and define what it considers important. Our Statement of Faith reveals a great deal about who we are” (p. 19). That said, the introduction also makes clear that the book is intended for a wider audience than the EFCA because of the very nature of its SOF, which broadly speaking represents the core doctrinal convictions of evangelicalism as a whole: “We believe that our essential theological convictions are vitally connected to the gospel. . . . Our Statement of Faith is an expanded statement of the gospel” (pp. 20–21). Each of the ten chapters expounds an article of the SOF, in the following order: God, the Bible, the human condition, Jesus Christ, the work of Christ, the Holy Spirit, the Church, Christian living, Christ's return, and response and eternal destiny.

As a whole the book is masterfully done. Kynes and Strand are both exceptional pastor-theologians, and their work reads as such. Their writing is straightforward and clear without being insipid, precise without drowning the reader in unnecessary minutiae. Two other qualities of the book, in particular, deserve high praise. First, the authors effectively expound the tenets of the SOF itself while successfully avoiding tipping their hats on secondary matters that can produce more rancorous debate among evangelicals (e.g., dispensationalism vs. covenant theology; Calvinism vs. Arminianism; complementarianism vs. egalitarianism; paedobaptism vs. credobaptism). In other words, they have successfully kept the focus on the beliefs that unite evangelicals rather than on those that can sometimes divide. Their conscientiousness in this should ensure that the book is well-received by evangelicals of all stripes.

Second, the authors scrupulously avoid the lure so often set by systematic theology to lift Scripture texts from their context and bend their meanings slightly so as to give support to a doctrine that may not deserve it. Not only have the authors shown exegetical discipline in their citation of texts, but also quite often they actually quote the Scripture texts themselves so that readers (who rarely look up Scripture



citations) can see exactly what the Bible says about the matter. This will ensure that the book not merely teaches *doctrine*, but rather will unfold the *Bible's teaching* about doctrine.

Despite my enthusiasm for the book overall, three matters deserve critical attention—though perhaps only the first is really fair. If the primary purpose of this book is to help pastors in local churches instruct their congregations in core biblical doctrines, the authors would have done well to include a glossary as well as study/discussion questions so as to make it a more accessible tool for small groups and membership classes. This would be a useful addition to subsequent editions of the book.

Second, the book almost completely neglects discussion of the kingdom of God. This may not be an entirely fair critique because the EFCA SOF nowhere explicitly references the kingdom—an astonishing omission given the obvious centrality of the kingdom in Jesus' own teaching ministry. The nature and meaning of the kingdom could usefully have been discussed in the chapter on Article 5: "The Work of Christ," as the inauguration of the kingdom is certainly a central part of Christ's work.

Third, the book claims (because the EFCA claims) to highly value unity in essentials and charity in non-essentials. The Free Church forebears "united around the essentials of the gospel and did not want minor issues of doctrine to divide" (p. 24). However, the continued inclusion of premillennialism in the SOF (even after the 2008 revision) creates a tension with this ethos. Millennial views are increasingly understood to be a minor issue and Bible-believing evangelicals hold to disparate positions. Kynes and Strand explain in several places that premillennialism is more of a denominational distinctive rather than a doctrine central to the gospel. Nevertheless, the authors are putting forth their SOF as "an expanded statement of the gospel" (p. 21), which fairly opens them to this critique.

On the whole this book is a marvelous achievement. It should certainly become a cornerstone text for EFCA churches and is well-suited to serve in the same way for all sorts of evangelical communities.

Bryan C. McWhite

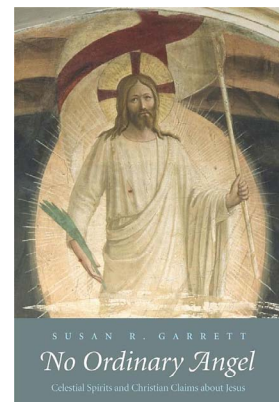
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Susan R. Garrett. *No Ordinary Angel: Celestial Spirits and Christian Claims about Jesus*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008. 333 pp. £18.99/\$30.00.

British wonky pop artist Dan Black teamed up with American rapper Kid Cudi in 2010 to remix an earlier song of Black's entitled, "Symphonies." The sound and beat are certainly fresh and slick, but the lyrics tend toward brilliance and embody a generation's yearning for something beyond the digitization of life and the technological tyranny of the visual. Black sings in the chorus:

Gimme, gimme, symphonies
Gimme more than the life I see
Score adds up
Angels play
Let my loneliness get blown away
Gimme, gimme, symphonies
Gimme more than the life I see.



And Cudi concludes the first half of the final verse:

I live, I live, I live, I live for symphonies.

I know that there's some place just right for me.

I live, I live, I live, I live for symphonies.

Oooohh, I know that there's some place just right for me. Yeah.

Despite the rage of certainties in all directions, there is a persistence of wonder with respect to what we can't quite quantify or see. "Is there another place, another dimension to life?" (p. 1). This supra-mundane questioning remains as pressing as ever. Entertainment and economies beguile a stubborn staying quality of the spiritual. We are witnessing in the "space of just a few decades . . . the reenchantment of the world" (p. 2).

Susan R. Garrett analyzes angels as a point of entry into this wider phenomenon. Though angels tend to be supporting players and bit characters in Scripture, attention to them offers a "fresh perspective on the larger story and its more central players" (p. 237). Moreover, guided by ethnographics, she peers into "our culture's governing assumptions about angels, by delving into the world of biblical angels and the ancient authors who wrote about them" (p. 5). In other words, her study of angels is a cipher for how cultures past and present view the world and figure our place within it. "The ways people talk about angels reflect common motifs in popular spirituality" (p. 5).

Garrett does not allow her project to be sidetracked by mere questions of existence. After all, what in the world (!) would count as evidence for angelic existence? Whether articulated in the mythic past, the environs of modernism, or contemporary New Age spirituality, "different presuppositions about the world produce different types of angel experiences" (p. 4). The book, then, is not so much about existence, but about meaning, how the celestial is employed in the service of meaning.

The book is divided up into six chapters with an introduction and conclusion that situate and summarize the book's findings. Each chapter begins by highlighting an issue or question that underlies current expressions about spirituality or angels, then turns toward the biblical material that address similar questions, and concludes with an "angelmorphic" reflection on Jesus and his work and the community's participation within that work. "Some of the most exciting recent discoveries in the study of ancient beliefs about angels pertain to the figure of Jesus. Immediately after Jesus' death his followers mined biblical and other textual traditions for imagery and language that could explain Jesus' identity and the nature of his reconciling work" (p. 11). Christology influenced by such traditions is "angelmorphic Christology." The early followers of Jesus explicated his identity within angelic traditions. Jesus, however, was *No Ordinary Angel*. The communal dimension is concerned with the authenticity of messaging. "Angelic communities emerge wherever and whenever love and mutual care, rather than enmity and egoism, govern the way the members of a body of people relate to one another" (p. 229).

The first chapter examines accounts of healing and seeing reality rightly; the second chapter with angels of the throne room and how we can enter the presence of the Most High. Chapter 3 looks at the complexity of desire and fallen angels and how Jesus leads a revolutionary modeling of right desire. Readers will find her work on the notorious "giants" of Gen 6 most intriguing. Chapter 4 deals with Satan, powers, and principalities. Chapter 5 works through the question of guardian angels and gives a helpful history of the doctrine. Chapter 6 is about death and the angelic escorting of the dead.

The brilliance of Garrett's work is that it performs several tasks at once: it performs careful analysis of both the classical world of the text and the contemporary expressions of our cultural context. Moreover,

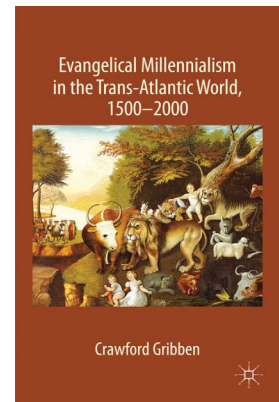
Garrett is both exegetically and theologically able, which allows her to play the role of cultural critic with an irenic and ironic spirit.

One does wish, however, that in chapter 4 the all too easy target of *Left Behind* would have been, well, left behind! The notion of the demonic and their influence in the world strike me as slightly more apt given their presence in mainline Hollywood films and how exorcisms were a central aspect of the earthly ministry of Jesus. But it is hard to find too many faults in this brilliant book. It is beautifully written, skillfully conceived, and widely researched—with citations ranging from primary classical texts, scholarly tomes on this or that point of exegesis, new age novels and memoirs, and even references to Wikipedia (pp. 296n61, 299n88)! I strongly recommend *No Ordinary Angel*.

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Crawford Gribben. *Evangelical Millennialism in the Trans-Atlantic World, 1500–2000*. Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire; New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011. 224 pp. £50.00/\$100.00.

Crawford Gribben has written numerous books on a range of topics including but not limited to early modern religious cultures, Reformation literature, Irish Puritans, and multiple volumes and articles dealing with Protestant and evangelical millennialism. *Evangelical Millennialism in the Trans-Atlantic World, 1500–2000* is Gribben's new attempt to explore what the publisher calls "the first complete overview of the intellectual history of one of the most significant contemporary cultural trends." In many ways this book complements his previous works, in particular, *Writing the Rapture: Prophecy Fiction in Evangelical America*. The latter takes into account Gribben's expertise in early modern print-culture, primarily by describing the emergence and development of the prophecy-fiction genre; this work, however, adds an account of the background, development, and perspective of evangelical millennialism.



Each chapter attempts to accomplish multiple goals that work together towards the development and future influence of millennial ideas. First, the book takes into account a broad historical definition of evangelical believers that includes people such as the sixteenth-century reformers and contemporary fundamentalist and neo-evangelicals. Second, Gribben seeks to give an account of the changing eschatological commitments and competing formulations of ideas by surveying print-culture. However, the goal is not an overall description of eschatology but focuses only on millennial interests. Third, the author discusses the divergence and the developed ideals between European and North American evangelicals, arguing, "the differences have always been as significant as the similarities in eschatological thinking represented in trans-Atlantic evangelical print culture" (p. 16). In addition, he tries to measure patterns of success of different paradigms and explain the divergent evolutionary process of ideas on both sides of the Atlantic. Lastly, this book is very fixed and clear in its goal. Gribben purposefully avoids questions of ecclesiology, psychology, and sociology to "highlight the importance of varieties of millennialism as frequently-repeated themes and as highly flexible discourses within which believers

have expressed some of the salient hopes and concerns of their evolving worldviews” (p. 19). He does this by chronologically illustrating the major themes and texts through their historical contexts.

After a very important and at times dense introduction of key terms, method, and context, the overall structure of the book is a five-hundred-year chronology dividing the progression of ideas into chapters exploring the emergence, formation, consolidation, expansion, contest, and dominance of evangelical millennialism. The first chapter looks into the changing theological patterns and the surfacing of millennial desires in the seventeenth century. In particular, this chapter tries to show how many found it difficult to reconcile a traditional rejection of a future millennium with the future conversion of the Jews.

Chapter 2 explores the influence and emergence of the “science of order” and a continuing mathematical revolution on new paradigms from 1600 to 1660, specifically of the English and American Puritans and the hope for an earthly millennium. Chapter 3 focuses on the gradual transformation of millennial thinking between 1660 and 1789. While many did not agree on the timing of the millennium, the reality of the age became increasingly well liked. Gribben focuses on the impact of the early systems of religious print and the spreading of millennial views of people such as Jonathon Edwards and Charles Wesley in comparison to the interpretations of others such as John Gill.

Chapter 4 explains the breakdown of “the traditional historicist method, the spectacular collapse of its chronological project, the widespread abandonment of traditional postmillennialism, and the rise throughout the nineteenth century of a new variety of futurist premillennial faith” (p. 73). Gribben studies the impact of negative social events such as the American civil war, the increasing attractiveness of dispensational premillennialism, and its proponents such as John Nelson Darby.

Chapter 5 studies the conservative evangelical retreat from culture in the 1930s and 1940s and then the revival of social and political engagement towards the end of the century. This chapter discusses the growth of paradigms such as premillennial dispensationalism, Protestant fundamentalism, and the influence of new political ideologies such as Zionism.

Gribben starts the final chapter by writing, “Evangelicalism in its modern guise, and especially in North America, is very much a creation of the 1970’s” (p. 110). His final chapter is an exploration of modern evangelical millennialism and the difference between the evangelical identity in America and Europe. In addition, it explores the growing dominance of premillennial dispensationalism in current literature and the popular understanding that it is representative of all Christian eschatology.

While Gribben successfully shows the advance of ideas in the context of each period, his work is far from a “complete overview.” While he does give a surprisingly thick description of millennial history in such a short volume, his discussion assumes that the reader knows the individuals to whom he is referring and that they represent the best examples for the thinking and publishing of their time. In addition, he fails to explain why he highlights some people and chooses to ignore others. For example, chapter 5 mentions William Blackstone and the million copies of his book *Jesus Is Coming* (p. 95), but fails to mention A. B. Simpson, someone with whom Blackstone worked closely. Simpson published pamphlets, magazines, and books that had a huge impact on the spread of millennial ideas, not to mention the founding of three colleges and a denomination.

With this said, his overall thesis seems to prove true, as he shows how certain millennial ideas slowly worked their way into society and ultimately become the predominate understanding of modern popular culture. This book is useful to anyone who is interested in the history, the context of millennialism, and the impact of print-culture on the social milieu of both Western Europe and North America. It would

be an interesting volume for a number of classes including sociology and eschatology. While it is not meant to be a theological analysis, this work can be useful to theology courses by showing how literature can influence and perhaps manipulate denominational doctrines that already tend to be theologically speculative. It is a very creative way to approach a long duration of time and get into the minds of those who developed precise millennial worldviews that ultimately diverged and influenced the entire world.

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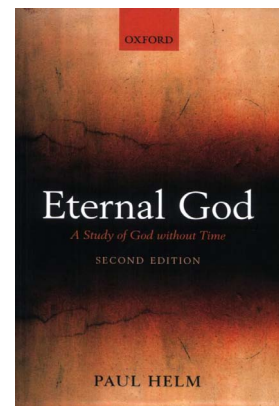
Paul Helm. *Eternal God: A Study of God without Time*. 2nd ed. New York: Oxford University Press, 2010. xvi + 302 pp. £19.99/\$35.00.

Helm's second edition of *Eternal God* contains four new chapters. The original eleven chapters of Helm's treatise on the unchanging God remain entirely unchanged from the first edition. Three of the new chapters have previously been published. Since *Themelios* already contains a review of the first edition, most of my attention focuses on the four new chapters.

Helm is known for his clarity and argumentation, and the *Eternal God* lives up to that reputation. His thesis is to defend the traditional doctrine of divine timelessness. Divine temporalists and atemporalist agree that God's eternity consists in existing without beginning and without end. The atemporalist further holds that God exists without succession. A timeless God has no before and after in his life and lacks all temporal properties including simultaneity and duration. A timeless God is immutable in the strongest possible sense: He cannot suffer any intrinsic or extrinsic change. Helm never claims that this is *the* biblical understanding of eternity. The Bible never gives us a clear theory on the metaphysics of time or eternity. Helm notes that any doctrine of time and eternity will be underdetermined by the biblical evidence. How can Helm argue that God is timeless if the Bible does not explicitly endorse this view? Helm's strategy is that timelessness coheres with scripture and Christian doctrine in ways that divine temporality cannot.

One of the significant weaknesses of the first edition was a complete lack of discussion on the philosophy of time. It makes little sense to weigh in on God's relationship to time and not answer crucial questions about time. What is time? What moments of time exist? Unfortunately, the second edition does not contain any significant discussion on time either. Based on his doctrine of divine immutability and creation, I assume that Helm holds to a relational theory of time where time is change. In regards to what moments of time exist, Helm endorses the B-theory of time. On the A-theory of time, the present is the only moment of time that exists. The past no longer exists, and the future does not yet exist. On the B-theory, the past, present, and future all exist.

Helm employs the B-theory to solve some problems related to creation. Chapter 12 deals with William Lane Craig's objection to divine timelessness based on creation *ex nihilo*. Craig holds the A-theory, which is the traditional view of time. Craig's objection goes as follows. The doctrine of creation *ex nihilo* holds that there is a state of affairs where God exists without creation. Then there is a state of affairs where God exists with creation. Once God creates He causally sustains each present moment of



creation. As such, God undergoes a change and is temporal. Helm adopts the B-theory of time to avoid this problem since, on the B-theory, creation is coeternal with God. There is no state of affairs where God exists without creation. Oddly, Helm neglects the way change is understood on the B-theory of time. The B-theory is still a theory of time and change, and Helm offers little by way of exposition as to how God relates to this type of temporal world.

Chapter 13 deals with some objections from Richard Swinburne. Swinburne's arguments against timelessness are technical, but Helm explains them well. The basic thrust is that atemporal causation is impossible. How can a timeless God cause temporal effects without himself being temporal? This is a serious question that Christians have examined for centuries and have failed to offer any satisfying explanation. Unfortunately, Helm continues this tradition of unsatisfying answers. He asserts that a timeless cause can have temporal effects. How is this possible? We can define "cause" in a non-temporal way. What does this look like? Helm claims we can be agnostic on this point and use "cause" equivocally.

Chapter 14 attempts to flesh out the doctrine of creation on the B-theory of time. Helm explains that we should look at things from two standpoints: the eternal and the temporal. From the temporal standpoint, it appears that the present moment is the only moment that exists. From the eternal standpoint, the past, present, and future all exist. From the temporal standpoint, there is a first moment of creation, but there is not one from the eternal standpoint since the entire space-time universe is coeternal with God. What Helm does not fully appreciate is that on the B-theory of time our belief that the past and future do not exist is mistaken. Further, our experience of change and the passage of time are complete illusions. From the temporal standpoint, things appear as Helm says they do, but in reality this is all false. The only standpoint that generates true beliefs is the eternal standpoint. Helm should instead say that there is the mistaken standpoint and the real standpoint.

In an attempt to justify Helm's two standpoints, he anachronistically interprets Augustine. Augustine held that the present is the only moment of time that exists. He also holds, like most in the ancient and medieval world, that God's knowledge is in no way based upon creation because God's knowledge is identical to himself. God has a perfect knowledge of himself and thus knows all things. On Helm's reading Augustine believes the exact opposite of this. Augustine turns out to be a closet B-theorist who holds that God knows all things because all things eternally exist.

Chapter 15 may be the thing that justifies a second edition of the book. Helm offers some serious objections to divine temporality based on the doctrine of the Trinity. Temporalism may entail Arianism. If atemporal causation is impossible, then the Father cannot atemporally generate the Son. As such, there would be a time when the Son was not. Interestingly, Helm notes that if the begottenness of the Son is understood as causation conceptual difficulties abound for everyone. It is difficult to see how the Son could have the same aseity as the Father. After noting the conceptual difficulties for eternal generation, Helm asks if the doctrine is something read back into the NT. He concludes by asking why we cannot hold simply that the divine persons are all equal and coeternal and be done with eternal generation.

Overall, Helm's defense of divine timelessness is modest. His articulation of the God-world relationship is significantly underdeveloped due in part to a lack of exposition on the nature of time. If

one is searching for a solid exposition and defense of divine timelessness one would be better served by Katherin Roger's *Perfect Being Theology*.

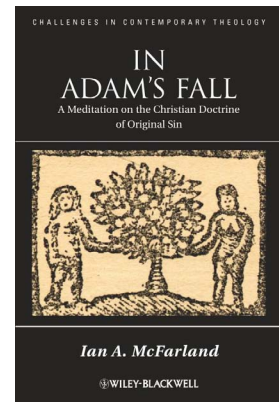
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Ian A. McFarland. *In Adam's Fall: A Meditation on the Christian Doctrine of Original Sin*. Challenges in Contemporary Theology. Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010. xiii + 238 pp. £70.00/\$119.95.

Most Christians will not have the time or the money to invest in this new book by Ian McFarland (see his earlier works *Difference and Identity* [Pilgrim, 2001] and *The Divine Image* [Fortress, 2005]). Like many academic books, it is dense, nuanced, tough-going in places, and therefore fatefully unsuited for bedtime or casual reading. But don't be deceived—it is an important book, a fresh and insightful interpretation of Augustine's doctrine of original sin. McFarland actually likes Augustine's doctrine and wants to bring it back in style, though he trims away what he considers weaknesses in traditional formulations (p. xi). Since it would take too long to give a full summary of his argument, I will simply highlight five themes that may be of interest to readers of this journal.

The first two chapters clarify why Augustine's doctrine of original sin beats out all the other competitors (McFarland criticizes in different ways thinkers like Schleiermacher, Kierkegaard, Niebuhr, and C. Plantinga). Augustine's insight is that we are radically responsible for sin and radically powerless in the face of sin (p. 18). Since we all need salvation through the atonement of Christ, we must all be congenital sinners (pp. 33–35). This theme recurs throughout the book: We all need salvation because of our original sin. Indeed, original sin cannot be separated from the gospel itself, and the flip side of the gospel is the doctrine of "total depravity," which McFarland therefore defends tooth and nail (p. x).

The second theme appears in Part II (chs. 3–5) and might be the most interesting part of the book. McFarland uses Maximus the Confessor to teach us a different way to think about "sinfulness" and "fallenness." Here's how the argument goes: Augustine, at his best, realized that human *willing* always follows human *desire*. That is how we are human. We do [i.e., *will*] what we desire, but we *cannot* change those desires by our own effort—so we need God's grace. The insight is anti-Pelagian since our "willing" is not independent and disconnected from our desiring. But Augustine was not always consistent, McFarland claims, which is where the book's hero, Maximus, comes in (in the sixth century, he defended the orthodox view that Christ had not one but two wills—divine and human). Maximus made a key distinction between *nature* and *hypostasis*. My human will is simply part of my human nature. It is what makes me a rational agent. But it is not my identity; it is not the source of *who* I am, the real me (i.e., my "hypostasis"). The source of my hypostasis is God. This raises a problem, however: Since original sin teaches that the human will is congenitally opposed to God, does this view imply that God created the human nature as evil? *Are our human natures sinful?* McFarland denies this inference in the strongest terms. His response is crucial: our human natures are fallen but they are not sinful. He draws this insight from his understanding of Christology (following Irving, Barth, and others): Christ



was *fallen but not sinful*. “A nature can be damaged (and thus fallen); but a nature cannot sin, because sin is ascribed to agents, and thus is a matter of the hypostasis” (p. 128). All of us have a *fallen nature*, which also implies that we have a *sinful hypostasis*. But this is not true for Jesus because *his* hypostasis is the Second Person of the Trinity, and so his sinless divine hypostasis “nullifies the fallenness of his (human) will” (p. 129). On this view, Jesus has a fallen nature, but his hypostasis is sinless. Many Christians will find these claims jarring because, traditionally, if you are fallen, you are by definition sinful. Augustinian realism and Reformed federalism are both flawed, McFarland thinks, because they conflate fallenness and sinfulness and thus miss the distinction between nature and hypostasis (p. 130).

This distinction paves the way for the third theme: McFarland rejects the historical fall of Adam and Eve, which he finds scientifically implausible (pp. 143–44). Adam was not the “cause” of our original sin; rather, we all have fallen natures/wills, and therefore our unique hypostases are always sinful. We need not look for a cause somewhere back in Eden because fallenness is a brute fact of our nature and is always enacted sinfully (excepting Christ). We are bound together with other human beings in original sin, and so God turns to all of us in grace. Interestingly, since original sin is now exclusively a function of soteriology, McFarland seems to lean toward universalism (see p. 168n64).

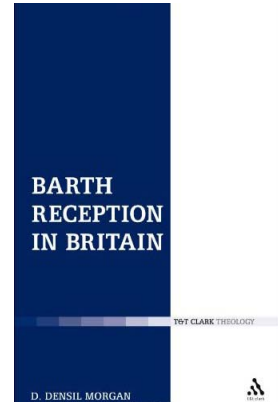
The last two themes that we might highlight appear in chapters 7 and 8. First, many criticize original sin because it makes personal responsibility meaningless; we can no longer distinguish victims and victimizers. Not so, McFarland says. Even though we sin necessarily, we do not all sin in the same way (our sinful hypostases are unique). Second, he addresses the concern that original sin leads to political or ethical quietism. Why stop abusing your spouse since everything you do is sinful? Again, not so. Because of original sin, we need *God’s forgiveness*, “and in knowing ourselves forgiven, we cannot help but seek to eradicate from our lives the sin that required such great mercy on God’s part” (p. 197). Affirming original sin engenders ethical activism! Many readers will appreciate these last two chapters even when disagreeing with some of the details.

The strength of this book is in showing the deep, abiding pastoral relevance of the doctrine of original sin. In our post-Darwinian age, many will be happy that he presents the doctrine in a way that does not fall afoul of modern science (cf. p. 169n67). And his use of Maximus’ Christology is especially creative, neatly resolving several theological tensions. But some of these strengths imply some fairly serious weaknesses. For instance, I do not think readers of this journal will be convinced by his denial of the historicity of the fall (and in my view, scientific concerns here are not decisive). Adam’s fall as a historical event has massive implications for the doctrine of original sin and Christian theology as a whole. And yes, McFarland is obviously right to relate original sin and God’s grace, but I suspect he overstates or misapplies the significance of soteriology—witness the troubling universalism implicit in his thesis. Finally, the distinction between sinfulness and fallenness made by many modern academics strikes me as problematic. Augustine, Maximus, and indeed the entire pre-nineteenth-century Christian tradition—none would have separated the two ideas, and for that reason it seems unlikely that the church faithful will adopt this conceptual shift anytime soon. No doubt these matters are all contested today, and I have great admiration for this book. But by the end I was left with the impression that McFarland was trying to have his Augustinian cake and eat it too.

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Densil D. Morgan. *Barth Reception in Britain*. New York: T&T Clark, 2011. 312 pp. £65.00/\$120.00.

Perhaps at a used bookstore you've come across old hard-bound books on the subject of Karl Barth, written by such figures as Adolf Keller or John McConnachie. While these and other books of their time are no longer considered necessary reading for Barth studies, they nevertheless have a significant place in understanding the field, and Densil Morgan takes it upon himself in this volume to make this place clear by writing the history of the reception of Barth's theology in Britain. The project is ambitious, canvassing half a century, a world war, and several distinct regions in Britain. These factors alone make this a daunting project, but Morgan adds a further layer of complexity in that he brings to the discussion a thorough awareness of the history of Christianity and theological study in Britain, such that he works not only with monographs and articles written on the subject of Barth's thought, but also works at a far more subtle level, exploring the role of schools, conferences, movements, lectures, and other events so as to provide a fuller picture. Moreover, he is able to fill in the picture with accounts of those who played indirect or behind-the-scenes roles in these developments. In short, this is a work of great depth which shows great command of the material at multiple levels.



The content of the book can be broken up into several sections or periods. The first stage is that of introducing Barth to Britain (with chapters devoted to Scotland, Wales, and England). The second section focuses on the mid-1930s and the events leading up to the second world war—an era characterized by translations of several volumes of Barth's work. A third section explores Britain's reception of Barth in wartime and beyond (which includes the growing reaction to Barth as well as a deepening Barthian movement as evidenced by the establishment of the *Scottish Journal of Theology*). A final section explores the last decade of Barth's life and the completion of the translation of the *Church Dogmatics* into English. A brief postlude carries the work up to 1986, but the current state of Barth reception in Britain is left for another time.

For those steeped in Barth and his interpreters, this is a helpful book in several ways. First, it provides a historical framework for appreciating the work of previous generations of scholars. Second, Morgan's comments about P. T. Forsyth are of great interest, showing how he prepared a generation of students ripe for Barth's influence. Third, Morgan brings the thought of Welsh scholars into the discussion—a feat that relatively few are competent to do.

What might the value of this book be for theologians with only a passing interest in Barth? The benefits are indirect, but significant nonetheless, in that they offer a qualitative study of significant theological change on a large scale and many of the dynamics involved in such a change. First, the change was in many ways a generational phenomenon (cf. p. 150). Second, the change was slow, with many setbacks, and in this case made particularly difficult by language-barriers and deeper divides in modes of thought. Third, the vehicles for change included publications, conferences, and lectures, but were also greatly helped by students travelling to study with Barth and Barth's own travels. In other words, theological change—and the theological task itself—is a very public and social enterprise, and the changes within the field were accomplished by a range of social interactions extending far beyond the printed word. In sum, by chronicling the path of this development Morgan reveals just how difficult it is to accomplish significant change within the theological world. Different theological traditions,

modes of thought, languages, political alliances, financial structures—all these come together to form a complex reality with multiple barriers preventing (and sometimes facilitating) change.

This valuable contribution to Barth studies begs for a sequel: Barth reception in America. The work of Cornelius Van Til in shaping early reception of Barth in Reformed circles, the role of Princeton and Yale seminaries, the way that Barth's thought was used within the Southern Baptist church, the Fundamentalist reaction to Barth as seen during his visit to the America, the current explosion of interest in Barth across American seminaries and universities—these and other topics call for a treatment of the same caliber as that of Morgan's work and would be greatly welcomed for two reasons. First, it is an area of considerable historical interest worth considering for its own sake. Second, and perhaps more significant, such a study would offer insight into the sometimes hidden fault-lines along which Barth studies in America continue to struggle, particularly in evangelical circles.

In sum, Morgan's work demonstrates great command of the material. While the book will be of most interest to Barth scholars interested in piecing together the history of Britain's interaction with Barth's thought, it will also be of value to those interested in how a significant theological movement ran its course. Finally, while this book is of great value, it begs for a sibling account of Barth's reception in America.

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Murray Rae. *Kierkegaard and Theology*. Philosophy and Theology Series. London: T&T Clark International, 2010. 217 pp. £14.99/\$24.95.

Søren Kierkegaard (1813–55) is a well-known Danish philosopher, theologian, and existentialist who criticized the works of G. W. F. Hegel, Friedrich W. J. Schelling, and Karl Wilhelm Friedrich Schlegel. Anyone endeavoring to study Kierkegaard's writings may initially be daunted by the invocation of pseudonymous characters who display complex dialogues in the midst of competing perspectives. This is where Murray Rae's work is an invaluable contribution to those who wish to gain an introductory exposure to Kierkegaard's thoughts.

The first chapter thoughtfully delimits the range of his interaction with Kierkegaard's theology and conveys the important caveat that not all scholars concur with his interpretation. Here the reader must pay close attention to the first footnote (p. 1), which indicates that other scholars (e.g., Alastair Hannay) advance a different reading from Rae. Kierkegaard has also been interpreted, for example, as fostering a consistent ambivalence towards Christianity, which Rae passionately takes exception to. The rest of the book builds upon, and in fact attempts to prove, Kierkegaard's positive relationship with the Christian faith.

Chapter 2 is a biographical chapter that illuminates and personalizes Kierkegaard's works. In a Christian home, Kierkegaard experienced the dark ironic reality of a depressed father who could not escape the haunting fear of having committed the unforgivable sin as a child. The reader must keep in



mind that Rae does not emphasize the father's domination or his moral failure but opts to highlight the positive facets of the father-son relationship. Rae also portrays Kierkegaard's interactions with the Lutheran church and the Moravian fellowship that impacted much of his writings.

Chapter 3 depicts Kierkegaard's polemics against Hegel, who averred that truth is something latent within the human soul. Hegel proposed that truth can be vitalized by the use of human reason. For Kierkegaard such a claim was averse to the very tenets of the Christian faith. Truth is not something that is already inherent within humanity; rather, humanity is estranged from truth and therefore must become accommodated to truth. In this chapter the reader can gain from Rae's understanding of Kierkegaard's discussions regarding objective and subjective inquiry in relation to the Christian life.

Chapter 4 is the Christology chapter. Against Hegel, L. Feuerbach, and D. F. Strauss, Kierkegaard defended the classic christological formulation of Chalcedon. Rae highlights Kierkegaard's disdain for needless academics that shuts divine metaphysics in the ivory tower. Jesus, Kierkegaard opined, is not an abstract idea; rather, he is known in his lowly state, the sacrificial savior of the human race. In sum, Kierkegaard contended against needless pedantic banter and was disinclined to Christendom's desire for Christ without sacrificial discipleship.

Chapters 5–6 comprise Kierkegaard's thoughts on anthropology and Christian practice. The former delineates Kierkegaard's hamartiology and highlights his existential component, the pitfalls and dangers of sin. He clearly outlines and argues for Kierkegaard's close affinity to orthodoxy. However, the reader is initially befuddled when Rae states that Kierkegaard departed from the "traditional Western *ordo salutis*" that viewed salvation as a process initiated by the individual's own power to discern sin (p.100). It would be helpful if Rae explained which "Western *ordo salutis*" he was referring to; for many in the Western tradition would not equate salvation with humanity's ability to repent before divine aid is engendered (p. 100).

Chapters 6–7 are especially helpful in expelling common misconceptions of Kierkegaard's theology. Karl Barth, for example, interpreted Kierkegaard as being too negative in asserting the divine "No" to human hypocrisy rather than focusing on the divine "Yes" in the forgiveness of sins. Rae proceeds to argue that Kierkegaard did not possess such a thin description of God's relation to humanity. Rather, Kierkegaard expounded a rich pastoral theology that encompassed this divine affirmation, but this "Yes" did not abnegate the call to risk faith even when all doubt had not been completely eradicated (p. 128). Chapter seven addresses the common critique leveled against this Danish theologian, namely, the accusation of being too individualistic. Rae argues that Kierkegaard was against a certain type of "human togetherness" (p. 134), namely, the herd mentality. Kierkegaard posited, according to Rae, a relational concept of the individual that conformed more to the patterns of the Christian faith.

The last chapter attempts to place Kierkegaard in the tradition of Christian theology. Rae acknowledges once again Kierkegaard's profound critique of the orthodox faith. True faith does not cheapen the demands of the gospel. Any orthodox theologian can resonate with Kierkegaard's call to sacrificial discipleship, which Christendom did not always emphasize during his day.

Rae's work on Kierkegaard is a must-read for anyone serious about or even inquisitive of Kierkegaard's theology. As indicated earlier, Rae is able to clearly delineate the major tenets of Kierkegaard's complex works, making intricate dialogues of pseudonymous characters sing of a lucid and harmonious chord, which gives the reader a solid framework to understanding this particular author. However, one must bear in mind Rae's initial and concluding admission that interpreters are liable to draw upon themes

that most appeal to their *a priori* convictions. If readers can keep in mind that Rae's work is one of multiple interpretations, they can profit from reading this powerful work.

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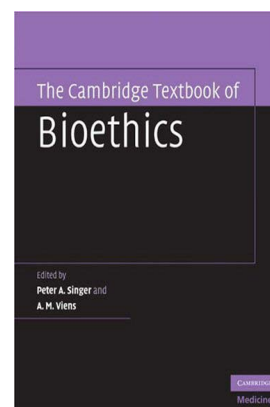
Peter A. Singer and A. M. Viens, eds. *The Cambridge Textbook of Bioethics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008. xv + 538 pp. £45.00/\$78.00.

The Cambridge Textbook of Bioethics is a comprehensive, helpful resource for understanding the breadth of ethical issues that emerge in medical settings. The book is edited by two capable bioethicists, Peter A. Singer, Sun Life Financial Chair in Bioethics at the University of Toronto (not to be confused with Peter Singer of Princeton University) and A. M. Viens, a doctoral student at the University of Oxford. Singer and Viens designed this book to be “a succinct yet authoritative text and reference for clinicians, researchers, bioethicists, and students seeking a better understanding of the ethical problems in the healthcare setting” (p. i). As such it is helpful to theological students and pastors who desire a thorough reference resource.

The book is divided into ten sections: information problems, end of life care, pregnant women and children, genetics and biotechnology, research ethics, health systems and institutions, using clinical ethics to make an impact in healthcare, global health ethics, religious and cultural perspectives in bioethics, and specialty bioethics. A helpful overview essay begins every section. The chapters (written by dozens of contributors from around the world) seek to answer three questions: *What is it?* (how the concept is to be understood and why it is relevant to clinical practice), *Why is it important?* (how the concept has relevance from the perspectives of ethics, law, policy, and empirical studies), and *How should it be approached in practice?* (how the concept can be applied to improve patient care). Each chapter begins with problems from case studies and concludes with potential solutions.

One of the biggest strengths of this book is its breadth. It serves as an excellent resource for getting the basic idea of varying issues, whether that be what is meant by “consent” (ch. 2), the technicalities of brain death (ch. 13), or the challenges presented by bio-banking (ch. 23). The variety of contributors is helpful as well. While the editors pitch in on several chapters, experts from around the world write most of them. This helps to prevent bias and makes the individual parts stronger since the book covers such a vast array of topics (sixty-five total chapters). The pastoral connections are clear. For instance, pastors will find the chapter on truth-telling helpful as they grapple with what role they are to play in telling the truth to patients while also preserving and promoting hope. As other medical issues emerge in the pastoral setting, this resource can provide helpful orientation for thoughtful biblical engagement.

The section on religious and cultural perspectives is interesting in some respects and weak in others. The introduction rightly notes that ethics is a form of worship, and so bioethics cannot be ignored. Alphabetized likely for political correctness (leading off with “Aboriginal bioethics” and concluding with “Roman Catholic bioethics”), the chapters explore unique bioethical problems that emerge in the



treatment of people of different faiths. For example, Jehovah's Witnesses refuse blood transfusions, forcing creative solutions in many cases. And Eastern perspectives, for example, often emphasize the authority of the family in making decisions rather than individual autonomy as in the dominant Western approach. The section is strongest when providing helpful details that will aid medical professionals in interacting with patients from these different perspectives, and it is interesting to learn about the various positions.

Two related weaknesses emerge in this section. First, the quest to be representative has led to an unbalanced treatment of perspectives. Aboriginal bioethics, Buddhist bioethics, and Chinese bioethics receive their own chapters, but then Protestant bioethics receives one and Roman Catholic bioethics receives one. Second and likely due to the first, the chapter on Protestant bioethics is too sparse. It does identify key theological themes such as God's sovereignty, which play a role in patients' perceptions of illness and their decisions. In addition, the chapter makes clear that great diversity exists within Protestant thought. However, the section would be more faithful to reality if it added more chapters on Christianity, especially giving more space to the explanation of evangelical perspectives distinct from more liberal Protestant denominations. In fact, a chapter combining conservative evangelical and Catholic perspectives might shed more light on the issues since Catholics and evangelicals often find themselves with similar bioethical concerns. This is not so much a problem with the authors of these chapters as with the overall organization of the section. The way the section is divided, how much space is allocated to different perspectives, and the way the more complicated perspectives are explained needs more work.

Overall, this book serves as a helpful resource for pastors and theological students. It has its place on a reference shelf for consultation on specific issues that come up in ministry. The full index makes navigating the sixty-five chapters and ten sections fairly easy. Professors teaching courses on bioethics could also assign it to broaden students' understanding of various issues, and the case studies in the individual chapters could prove fruitful for theological and pastoral reflection in the classroom. Although the book's treatment of religion and theology leaves much to be desired, it still serves as an important resource for engagement with this increasingly complex field.

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Christian Tapp and Edmund Runggaldier, eds. *God, Eternity, and Time*. Burlington: Ashgate, 2011. ix + 196 pp. £50.00/\$99.95.

In 2008, a conference was held in Munich to discuss the philosophical and theological issues surrounding divine eternity. This volume collects the papers from that conference. The intent was to bring together an international group of scholars from various disciplines and perspectives. The papers in section 1 defend divine timelessness; section 2 deals with divine omniscience and human freedom; section 3 discusses the so-called “Third Way” between divine timelessness and divine temporality; and section 4 ends the volume with issues related to divine temporality and science.

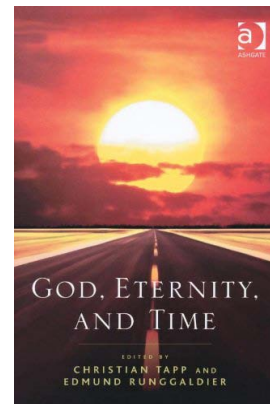
The first paper of the volume is “On Existing All at Once” by Robert Pasnau. In my opinion this is the best paper of the book. It contains a much-needed careful reading of medieval and scholastic texts on divine eternity. In our day theologians and philosophers continue to force anachronistic theories on the philosophy of time onto the classical tradition. Pasnau’s paper takes a close look at the perfection of eternity. What is the perfection that classical theologians predicated of God? The perfection is existing all at once. This is a perfection found in creatures who endure through time by existing as a whole, or all at once, at the present (the only moment of time that exists).

Eleonore Stump defends divine simplicity and timelessness. One of the objections to divine timelessness comes from omnipresence. How can a timeless God be present to temporal creatures? Stump gives a fascinating discussion of the nature of personal presence. However, her defense of simplicity and timelessness are oddly quick and vague. It is not clear how her account of personal presence can be instantiated by a timeless and simple God.

Thomas Scharl ends the section on divine timelessness with his paper “Why We Need God’s Eternity.” He seeks to defend divine timelessness against divine temporality as seen in contemporary systematic theologians like Wolfhart Pannenberg and Robert Jenson. The accounts of divine temporality among contemporary systematic theologians are very different from those developed by contemporary philosophers of religion and are subject to unique critiques. For instance, Jenson places God in the future, which makes it impossible to explain how God is present to creatures. Jenson’s account also makes the Son eternally incarnate. Scharl attempts to avoid these problems by maintaining divine timelessness.

Linda Zagzebski’s “Eternity and Fatalism” starts off the section on omniscience and human freedom. The main thrust of her paper is to argue that divine timelessness does not have any advantage over temporalism in solving the problem of divine foreknowledge and libertarian free will. Zagzebski fans will find this essay to be a nice concise treatment of her previous work. Christoph Jäger concludes this section by critiquing the standard accounts of Molinism. He offers a careful interpretation of Molina that will be important as the debates over Molinism continue.

Section three examines the so-called “Third Way” between divine atemporality and temporality. The papers in this section are fascinating, but they do little to develop a third way. This is because atemporality and temporality are logically contradictory positions. There can be a third way between logically contrary positions, but not logically contradictory positions.



Christian Tapp kicks off the section with a discussion of infinity and eternity. He distinguishes three types of infinity. There is quantitative, comparative, and metaphysical infinity. Temporalists see God's eternity as quantitative in that God exists for an infinite amount of time: without beginning and without end. Atemporalists see eternity as metaphysical in that God is pure act and unsurpassable. Tapp points out that temporality fits with the biblical portrayal of God, yet he worries it may put God on the same level as creatures. Temporalists disagree and say, along with the atemporalist, that God is infinitely greater than creatures. Tapp notes, however, that this blurs the distinction between quantitative, comparative, and metaphysical infinity. He offers some ideas in mathematics that might help theologians disentangle these issues.

Alan Padgett's paper updates his model of relative timelessness. I still find this such an unfortunate name because God, on Padgett's model, is thoroughly temporal. On Padgett's view God's time is infinite and immeasurable. Prior to creation God exists in a temporal vacuum—a state of pure duration without change. Since time is the possibility of change, it can exist without change. When God creates, he brings succession and change into his life. Padgett deals with various biblical issues before offering a critique of William Lane Craig's claim that God is timeless sans creation and temporal with creation.

Reinhold Berhardt ends this section with a model of timeless action. Instead of offering an analogy of the personal God's action based on personal agency, Berhardt suggests an analogy based on the non-personal force field. He claims his own view is of a God who is non-timely, but not timeless, but he never clarifies the difference between non-timely and timeless. Berhardt also offers a Trinitarian approach to divine action that is equally obscure. The first divine Person is the atemporal aspect of God, the second Person is related to all of time simultaneously, and the third Person is present in time. After affirming the A-theory of time—on which the future does not yet exist—he places God in the future. I don't understand why some systematic theologians want to place God in a non-existent future. This is basically asserting that God does not exist. I hope that Berhardt, just like Pannenberg and Jenson, does not really mean what he says.

The final section deals with issues related to divine temporality and science. William Lane Craig examines an argument for divine timelessness based on Einstein's interpretation of the Special Theory of Relativity. His essay here is a concise treatment of his previous work and would be a nice place to start for those unfamiliar with Craig's approach to this topic.

Hans Kraml concludes the volume with an essay on the process view of eternity. Despite offering an interpretation of classical theology that Pasnau's paper refutes, Kraml's essay presents a clear and brief account of process views on God and reality.

This volume is for advanced students. I would not recommend it as an introduction to divine eternity since it contains technical discussions that assume a familiarity with the philosophy of time and theology. Its strength lies in bringing together experts in systematic theology and philosophy of religion, something that is not easily done. The main weakness of the book is that many terms are left undefined. For instance, several authors assume a distinction between atemporality and timelessness, but no one states what such a distinction could be. Overall this is an important collection of essays on divine eternity, and a must-read for those who are invested in this topic.

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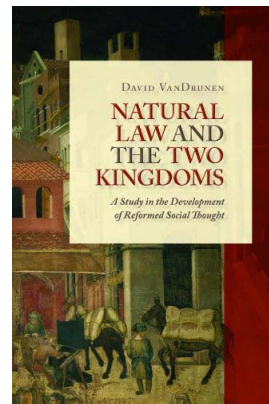
David VanDrunen. *Natural Law and the Two Kingdoms: A Study in the Development of Reformed Social Thought*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010. 480 pp. \$35.00/£23.99.

David VanDrunen, the Robert B. Strimple professor of Systematic Theology and Christian Ethics at Westminster Seminary California, offers us a thought-provoking treatment of a controversial subject with his *Natural Law and the Two Kingdoms*. Considering Christian engagement with culture has long been influenced by H. Richard Niebuhr's *Christ and Culture*, which offers five paradigms to understand various Christian responses to culture. Niebuhr's classic understands Calvinism to fall under the category of Christ transforming culture. VanDrunen joins others, such as D. A. Carson with his *Christ and Culture Revisited*, in showing the greater complexity of the picture.

There is no doubt that many within the Reformed community have understood the Christian task to be one of transformation of culture. Often the great Dutch polymath Abraham Kuyper is seen as the fountainhead of Calvinistic transformationalism. This would not be completely wrong. Kuyper's remark from his "Sphere Sovereignty" address that "there is not a square inch in the whole domain of our human existence over which Christ, who is Sovereign over *all*, does not cry: 'Mine!'" is well-known. However, VanDrunen argues in *Natural Law and the Two Kingdoms* that the Reformed tradition has not had a monolithic view of the relation of the Christian to culture. As an alternative to the Christ-transforming-culture paradigm, VanDrunen attempts to marshal evidence that the Christ-and-culture-in-paradox paradigm may in fact be another option on these matters. VanDrunen successfully demonstrates that there has been an early and widespread Reformed understanding, acceptance, and use of natural law and two-kingdoms categories. However, even if we grant the widespread *historical* embrace of these two doctrines, there are *normative* questions that remain. Are the two doctrines biblical and theologically sound?

The book contains ten chapters and a conclusion that traces the development of the natural law tradition and the doctrine of the two kingdoms from its precursors in the early church through the Middle Ages and the Reformation up to the time of Reformed apologist Cornelius Van Til. VanDrunen begins by surveying the lay of the land in contemporary Reformed circles with regard to the natural law and two-kingdoms doctrines (pp. 1–21). Here the author notes the respect with which the Reformed tradition is generally held for its robust social thought. This social thought is often understood in terms of a comprehensive Christian world-and-life view. The call of the Christian is understood to be the purposeful attempt to transform all facets of culture. Additionally, the kingdom of God is understood in singular and all-embracing terms. VanDrunen offers this study to remind the Reformed and broader Christian community of a different view of how the Christian relates to culture formulated in the Reformation and the developing Reformed tradition.

It is helpful to remember that VanDrunen is dealing with two distinct yet intertwined doctrines. Both the natural law tradition and the two kingdoms doctrine find critics in Reformed circles (e.g., John Frame criticizes both doctrines in his *Doctrine of the Christian Life* [P&R, 2008], 943–56). Typically, criticisms of natural-law theory revolve around a concern that it is often formulated in an autonomous fashion detached from God and his special revelation. Additionally, natural law is understood to be a virtual wax nose since it is not codified and so there are as many varieties of natural-law theory as there



are noses. The two-kingdoms doctrine appears to argue for a realm in which we can live, think, and have our being apart from God's Word and a realm where his Word rules.

The author delves into the precursors of the Reformed tradition in the second chapter (pp. 21–66), which covers a broad range of historical development from the early church up to the time of the Reformation. The next three chapters unfold the reformulation of the natural-law tradition and two-kingdoms doctrines by John Calvin (pp. 67–118) and its further articulation by Reformed resistance writers (pp. 119–48) and the Reformed Scholastics in the age of orthodoxy (pp. 149–211). VanDrunen next considers natural law theory and a doctrine of the two kingdoms in Puritan New England and Anglican Virginia (pp. 212–75). Following what VanDrunen labels Kuyper's "ambiguous" tradition, we find the erosion and rejection of the natural-law and two-kingdoms tradition. Chapter 8 considers Karl Barth's thought (pp. 316–47), and chapter 9 considers the influence of Herman Dooyeweerd and North American Neo-Calvinism (pp. 348–85). Further consideration is given to the influence of Cornelius Van Til (pp. 386–422).

The Reformed community originally embraced natural-law and two-kingdoms doctrines. As the late nineteenth century waned and the early twentieth century dawned, that commitment faded into the background and was rejected by many in the Reformed community. Interestingly enough, a new appreciation for natural-law thinking and two-kingdoms doctrine has arisen within the Reformed world. And so the author concludes by considering this rebirth of interest in Reformed natural-law and two-kingdoms doctrines (pp. 423–34). VanDrunen grants that not all the details of how to apply these doctrines have been fully worked out. But if these doctrines are biblical, then further thought must be given to fleshing them out (the author has gone some way towards doing this himself in his recent book, *Living in God's Two Kingdoms: A Biblical Vision for Christianity and Culture* [Crossway, 2010]).

David VanDrunen has offered his readers much theological food for thought. Whether one accepts or rejects a Reformed form of natural-law understanding (equated with the Decalogue) and the two kingdoms (think of the separation of church and state), it will not do simply to dismiss these doctrines. It seems clear that John Calvin and the Reformed tradition at large held to and further developed aspects of both natural-law theory and two-kingdoms doctrine, and appropriate forms of the doctrines can be formulated. However, the devil is in the details. Is it historically and theologically sound to group Augustine's doctrine of the two cities with a two-kingdoms doctrine? For VanDrunen, for instance, a Christian is *both* a member of the spiritual and the common realms *at the same time* whereas for Augustine one was *either* a member of the *civitas Dei* or the *civitas terrena* but not both at the same time. It is quite likely that other examples from history could be multiplied. Does history support the current expressions of these doctrines? And the normative question remains: Are the doctrines as expressed by the author sound? To give one example: Is it true that Reformed theologians individually or as a tradition ever advanced the idea that there was ever a time when natural revelation (or natural law) functioned properly in a fallen world on its own? While the idea advanced by Geerhardus Vos and Cornelius Van Til that natural and special revelation have been correlative since creation has not been embraced by everyone within the Reformed community, the idea is sound and biblically defensible.

At the end of the day, accepting natural law and a two-kingdoms doctrine ought to rest on whether they are biblically and theologically sound. It is this reviewer's position that appropriate forms of a

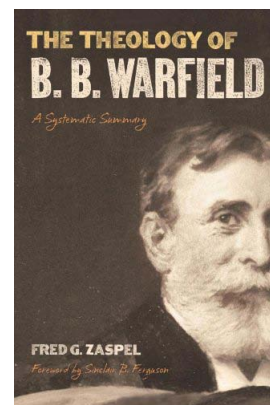
two-kingdoms and natural-law doctrine can be formulated. VanDrunen has spoken to issues of great moment in the life of the church. Has he spoken the last word? That is not likely.

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Fred G. Zaspel. *The Theology of B. B. Warfield: A Systematic Summary*. Wheaton: Crossway, 2010. 624 pp. \$40.00.

The adjective “magisterial” is perhaps used more frequently than it should be to describe the writings of contemporary theologians. In the case of the present volume, however, its use is more than warranted for at least two reasons. In the first place, *The Theology of B. B. Warfield* represents the best summary to date of the views of one of North America’s greatest theologians on the standard theological loci. This is a particularly noteworthy accomplishment because Warfield was, as Sinclair Ferguson notes in the foreword, “a scholar of Renaissance-man proportions” (p. 16) who wrote “at the highest scholarly level in the areas of biblical studies, Patristic theology, Reformation theologians, confessional history, and biblical and systematic theology proper” (p. 15). Second, *The Theology of B. B. Warfield* is a landmark volume that establishes Fred Zaspel as one of our leading authorities on the life and thought of the theologian who has come to be known as the “lion” of the Old Princeton theology. Incisive, comprehensive, and beautifully written, *The Theology of B. B. Warfield* does not merely compile quotations culled from Warfield’s voluminous writings, stringing them together and then sprinkling them with occasional commentary. Rather, it systematically synthesizes Warfield’s entire theological corpus that is grounded in years of meticulous, painstaking analysis of the primary sources, an integrative masterpiece that presents the reader with a compelling approximation of the systematic theology that Warfield would have written had he believed that he had been called to the task of theological construction.

For years, scholars with an interest in the history of North American Christianity have lamented that not only did B. B. Warfield never produce a systematic theology of his own, but also no competent scholar has ever produced “a comprehensive account” (p. 19) of his theology either. *The Theology of B. B. Warfield* admirably fills this “void” and in the process “reintroduce[s] Warfield to today’s theological discussion” (p. 19). Following a biographical analysis that situates Warfield in his historical context, Zaspel sets himself to the largely descriptive task of “condensing his whole thinking on the various theological themes” (p. 20) so that students and scholars alike can view Warfield’s theology “from a global perspective” (p. 19). While Zaspel is clearly a sympathetic interpreter who is eager to clarify “misunderstandings or misrepresentations” (p. 21) of “the views Warfield actually held and the arguments he advanced in their support” (p. 20), nevertheless, he is neither a fawning partisan nor an uncritical ideologue who is reluctant to challenge the conclusions of his theological mentor. For example, while carefully establishing what he calls Warfield’s “critical agnosticism” (p. 386) on the topic of evolution, Zaspel remains skeptical of Warfield’s insistence that Calvin’s doctrine of creation “was not simply evolutionism but ‘pure evolutionism’” (p. 384). Indeed, he acknowledges that Warfield’s interpretation of Calvin “is open to question,” and he consequently concedes that there is some plausibility to the



claim that Warfield was an evolutionist because “Warfield does represent Calvin as teaching a doctrine of evolution, and it is quite tempting to see in this a reflection of Warfield’s own leanings” (p. 384). An additional and perhaps even more obvious example of Zaspel’s capacity for critical distanciation is that he remains a convinced Baptist after having carefully considered Warfield’s arguments in favor of infant baptism (pp. 515–22). Apparently, Warfield’s presentation is compromised by what Zaspel believes are “conflicting ideas” (p. 519) regarding the final status of children within the covenant.

Among the many strengths of Zaspel’s unparalleled analysis, two are especially worth mentioning. The first has to do with Zaspel’s willingness to challenge the sacred cows that attend the historiography of Old Princeton in general and B. B. Warfield in particular. For example, with respect to the common charge that Warfield denied “human inability and the utter necessity of divine initiative” in order for sinners to embrace “the *indicia* of the divine origin of Scripture” (p. 156), Zaspel demonstrates that the work of the Spirit plays a decisive role in every aspect of Warfield’s religious epistemology, including his understanding of how the unregenerate come to appreciate the spiritual significance of biblical evidence. In short, Zaspel establishes that Warfield’s simultaneous and consistent affirmation of both the “self-attesting character of Scripture” (p. 154) and the absolute necessity of the *testimonium Spiritus Sancti* undermines the force of the common charge and proves that it is not just without merit, but altogether curious. “It would be an odd thing indeed for a scholar of Warfield’s stature,” he notes with a measure of justified incredulity, “to be so blind as to hold so vigorously a doctrine that fundamentally opposes another doctrine that he holds with at least equal vigor” (pp. 156–57).

The second strength is related to the portrait of Warfield that emerges from Zaspel’s analysis. Zaspel’s Warfield is neither an Enlightenment rationalist nor a wooden, uncompromising fundamentalist, but an advocate of “progressive orthodoxy” who embodies the ideal for which Princeton Theological Seminary was founded, namely, “a union of the most rigorous academic studies with a cultivation of the deepest evangelical piety” (p. 37). What Zaspel’s analysis makes refreshingly clear is that Warfield was not just a world-class scholar who engaged the life of the mind with confidence because he recognized that “God’s Word is truth, and adhering to its teaching we can never be proven wrong” (p. 556). More fundamentally, he was a “theologian of the heart” (p. 568) who “knew himself to be a sinner rescued by a divine Savior” (p. 563), a “christologian” (p. 289) who was relentless in “theological battle” (p. 555) and unwilling to make concessions “to ideas that contradict the sure Word of God” (p. 557), yet not so rigid that he failed to hold his positions with “generous allowance” for other views when Scripture did not speak “with clarity” (p. 399) to one particular topic or another.

Although Warfield was a theological giant whose work continues to speak to a host of contemporary issues with penetrating significance, he “has not been as widely read as he deserves” (p. 575), due in part to the occasional nature of many of his writings. *The Theology of B. B. Warfield* is a remarkable volume that goes a long way to providing a remedy to this problem, for it is a compelling synthesis of Warfield’s entire theological corpus that captures both the breadth and the depth—as well as the striking nuance—of Warfield’s theological genius. Its appearance is an occasion for celebration not just because of its landmark significance, but also because it makes Warfield’s genius even more accessible to a new generation of readers, readers who will soon discover the enduring relevance of his work to the world in which we live.

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ETHICS AND PASTORALIA

R. C. Sproul. *The King without a Shadow*. Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian & Reformed, 2000. 32 pp. \$17.00.

R. C. Sproul. *The Priest with Dirty Clothes*. 2nd ed. Orlando: Reformation Trust, 2011. 45 pp. \$18.00.

R. C. Sproul. *The Lightlings*. Orlando: Reformation Trust, 2006. 40 pp. \$18.00.

R. C. Sproul. *The Prince's Poison Cup*. Orlando: Reformation Trust, 2008. 35 pp. \$18.00.

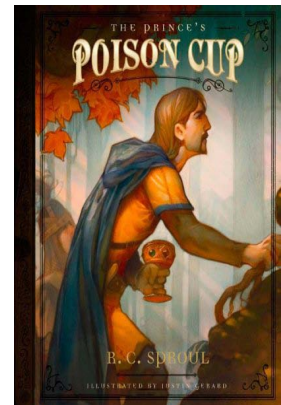
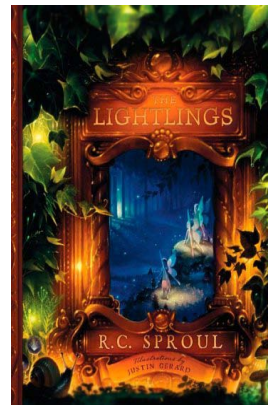
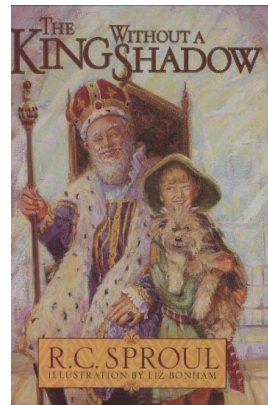
My pastor before I went to seminary used to tell me, “If you cannot explain your theology to a six-year-old, then you really don’t understand it.” Of course, he was overstating a point and encouraging me to think hard about God and his Word so as to best communicate sound doctrine to others. Yet there was another subtle point in his words: children can and should be taught theology.

R. C. Sproul models this for the church in his wonderful series of children’s books. Yes, this is the same R. C. Sproul of Ligonier Ministries, the author of more than sixty books, and one of the men whom God has used to influence an entire generation of pastors, teachers, and theologians around the globe. Known for his clear communication of Reformed theology and engaging defence of orthodox Christianity, Sproul has taken the time to communicate some of the wonderful, deep truths of God to children.

These four books were originally published in the order listed above. *The King without a Shadow* was originally published in 1996, and *The Priest with Dirty Clothes* was originally published in 1997 with Thomas Nelson but has been republished in 2011 with Reformation Trust. This newer edition contains new illustrations and an added “For the Parents”

section. This now gives three of the four books (*The King without a Shadow* being the exception) the look and feel of a unified series. These three have the same illustrator, Justin Gerard, along with helpful guides for parents as the books are used as tools for the instruction and training of their children in a family context.

The King without a Shadow is an enjoyable story about God as the one true king over all the earth and the only king without the shadow of sin. It is a story of a small boy during the times of knights and



castles who asks his king the simple question, “Where do shadows come from?” In seeking to find the answer to this question, the king is led to discover the truth about his own sin and God as the true king.

Although the story is well written and certainly communicates a profound truth in an enjoyable way, it is lacking in a few (mostly minor) areas compared with the other three books. First, the story is rather long with several portions being unnecessarily wordy. Younger children especially may find it more difficult to follow. Second, while the illustrations are of a high quality and quite enjoyable, their different style than the other three make this book seem not to “fit” with the others. Third, the story lacks the setting of a grandfather teaching his grandchildren. The other three stories are introduced by a grandfather answering a question posed to him by one of his grandchildren. This simple feature gives the stories a pleasant, family-feel to them and helps one see how teaching real theology to children can happen in everyday life. Fourth, this volume does not contain a “For the Parents” section and therefore lacks a helpful tool to assist parents in providing substantive instruction. Finally, of all the books, this story lacks a Christ-figure entirely. This really seems to be out of place and is the biggest weakness with this story. The story does teach a profound truth about the nature and character of God and even illustrates man’s sinfulness. Yet with no Christ-figure in the story, there is no real answer for human sinfulness nor an explanation of how sinful people can approach this “king without a shadow.”

The Priest with Dirty Clothes is the next story in this series. In it Sproul teaches children the truth of a text that is a personal favorite to Sproul: Zech 3:1–5. The important biblical doctrine of imputation is powerfully illustrated through the story of a priest who gets his very special garments dirty and cannot stand before the king until he is clean again. Children learn from this story that they can do nothing to rid themselves of the dirty clothes of their hearts (their sin), but Christ (the king’s son) can take their dirty clothes upon himself and give us his clean clothes (his righteousness). The story is set in the context of a grandfather telling his children a story that has grown out of an everyday occurrence: they’ve soiled their clothes by making mud pies.

The Lightlings was my first introduction to these books by R. C. Sproul. My wife and I purchased this book when our eldest daughter was six years old, our son was four, and our youngest was about two. We immediately fell in love with the clear communication of the message, the beautiful illustrations, and the great questions it stirred in our daughter’s heart and mind. We determined to get the other related books and read them frequently to our children. Our children are now nine, eight, and six and they love these stories. Moreover, we have noticed that the older they get the more they are able to understand and the deeper they are able to think about the truths communicated. It was a joy to read each of the stories to them again in preparation for this review and solicit their feedback.

The Lightlings vividly illustrates the story of original sin and mankind’s rebellion against God. Again it is set in the context of a grandfather answering an everyday kind of question from his grandson. In the story, God is pictured as the Father of Light who creates beings to image him and reflect his glory. These *Lightlings* rebel against him and find themselves living in darkness with no desire to seek the light. Only because of his love and grace does the Father of Light send his son as the light of the world and draws some *Lightlings* to himself. Children learn in this story that only through faith in Christ, by God’s grace, are they able to live the life God created them to live—a life imaging him and for his glory.

The Prince’s Poison Cup is my personal favourite. Essential gospel truths are communicated so clearly that my own soul is refreshed every time I read them to my children. Once again, Sproul sets this story in the context of a grandfather answering an everyday question from one of his granddaughters. This story powerfully depicts the reality of Christ taking upon himself the wrath of his Father, absorbing

the full punishment due to the sins of his people so they can be the recipients of God's mercy and grace. Here we have a king who sees his created people rebel and in disobedience drink of the very fountain, the only fountain, from which he had forbade them to drink. As a result, the people's hearts grow hard, and they flee from the garden paradise to build their own city, "the city of man." However, the king, who knew his people were going to rebel in this way, had already planned with his son that the son would go to the city of man and drink from the poisonous fountain of his father's wrath. The son would die, but as a result the father promised to change the hearts of his people from stone to flesh and draw them to himself through his son. The king then raises his son to life again and keeps his promise by giving the people faith to come and drink of his fountain of life.

Each of the latter three books in this series has been illustrated by Justin Gerard. Gerard is a talented and capable artist who has managed to appropriately illustrate the meaning of the story with beauty and clarity. The illustrations in these volumes serve to add a special clarifying force in communicating the message of each story.

With the inclusion of the "For the Parents" section in each of the last three books, they become more than stories to read to your children. They are fully developed teaching tools. Parents can read the questions and accompanying Scripture passages to help them gain a better understanding of the doctrines taught. They can then ask their children the same questions or tailor the questions to their child's age, helping them to think more deeply regarding the truths found in these stories.

Let us be thankful for the gifts God has given to his church, not least those who are gifted to help parents and other adults faithfully teach the wonderful truths of God's Word, and especially the person and work of Christ, to children. We are indebted to R. C. Sproul for his careful communication that draws in children and adults alike. May we follow his example and teach children sound theology and present them with a compelling picture of the majesty of Christ in the gospel.

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John Piper and D. A. Carson. *The Pastor as Scholar and the Scholar as Pastor: Reflections on Life and Ministry*. Edited by Owen Strachan and David Mathis. Wheaton: Crossway, 2011. 124 pp. £7.99/\$12.99.

Through most of my adult life, I have struggled with reconciling my own sense of calling described in the title of this book. Having served on administrative and/or teaching staffs at three theological schools and having served three congregations in various capacities, trying to discern whether I was a “scholar” or a “pastor” has been extremely difficult.

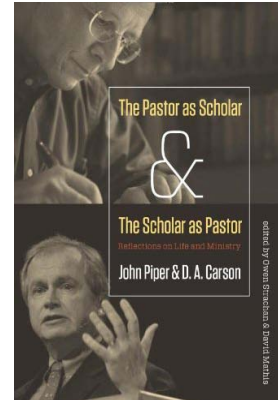
And so it was with great pleasure that I saw these talks first advertised in 2009 and then published in 2011. If anyone could give solid guidance on the topic, Piper and Carson would be the ones. Both have served in academic institutions; both served in pastorates; both think deeply about issues of life and calling in ways that inform all their writing and preaching. And what one finds in *The Pastor as Scholar and the Scholar as Pastor* is exactly this: personal narrative and application to those wrestling over how to reconcile what appears to be a twin calling.

I found the narratives more engaging and significant. Piper, pastor of preaching and vision at Bethlehem Baptist Church since 1980, told the story of how he came to academic awakening through Wheaton College and especially Fuller Seminary, his doctoral studies in Munich, his growing disillusionment with high-powered, German-focused NT studies, and his internal sense that his ministry calling and passion required congregational ministry. That passion—famously expressed in his sentence “God is most glorified in us when we are most satisfied in him”—led him to minister in a then-older, downtown Minneapolis congregation where he has invested his ministerial career.

On the other hand, Carson had come to congregational ministry seemingly by accident. Already working in a position that used his gifts in chemistry, he came to see that those with whom he worked viewed their work in the chemistry lab as either a god or a burden. As Carson wrestled with this, he recognized that he was receiving great joy in assisting a church plant in Ottawa, Canada. Over time, he served as pastor to a small church in Vancouver. While there, he began to assist a small Bible college; in order to be more useful, he went to Cambridge to do graduate work in NT. After receiving the PhD, he returned to the Bible college and went from there to Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, where he has taught since 1978.

Two commonalities struck me in these narratives: first, the sheer providential nature of each man’s calling. In writing on providence, Calvin famously declared that God is the keeper of the keys; the invisible hand of God clearly directed their pathways by opening and closing doors. A second commonality is a growing disillusionment in the initial pathway: for Piper, it was high-level, guild-oriented NT students; for Carson, it was chemistry. As God moved them into different spheres of usefulness, there was a sense that it was time to take another road yet untraveled.

Less helpful for those wrestling with their callings are the second parts of each chapter. Piper relates how his scholarly mindset and work served as the basis and motivation for the working out of Christian hedonism; Carson offers twelve lessons for seminary professors to maintain a more pastoral mindset. To be sure, there is insight here: as a former academic dean, I especially appreciate Carson’s pointed words to seminary teachers tempted by the guild.



But what I was looking for was more along the lines of this: how does one do ministry with this sense of being both academically oriented and pastorally focused? How does one think of calling as being a calling to ministry that will play out in a variety of spheres? How do we speak to seminarians and ministerial candidates to say that PhDs are useful academic degrees for *congregational* ministry (and if they are, exactly what pastoral value comes to the pastor and congregation from such a degree)? These questions, along with others, must be answered in order to integrate the twin calling of scholar and pastor sustainably.

In 2009 I returned to congregational ministry, leaving Covenant Theological Seminary to serve a congregation in south Mississippi. As I was leaving St. Louis, I had countless people say to me, “So what made you decide to return to *ministry*?” (As an ordained minister, I was tempted to reply, “I wasn’t aware that I had ever left the ministry.”) That question demonstrates the need for books like the one written by Piper and Carson. And that question demonstrates the need for further thinking and reflection on how to integrate this twin calling for God’s glory.

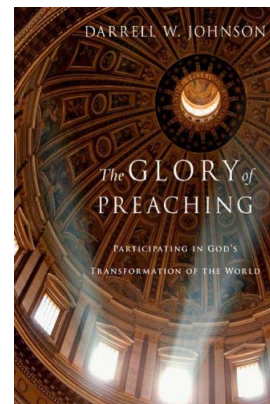
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Darrell W. Johnson. *The Glory of Preaching: Participating in God’s Transformation of the World*. Downers Grove: IVP, 2009. 278 pp. \$23.00.

What happens when we preach? Darrell W. Johnson, associate professor of pastoral theology at Regent College, makes three claims: (1) when God speaks, *something always happens*; (2) when a preacher speaks God’s Word, God speaks; and (3) when a preacher speaks God’s Word, therefore, something always happens. These claims form the foundation of Johnson’s theology of preaching. How does he explore these themes?

Chapter 1 opens Ezek 37 to answer why *it happens*. The bones came to life because of the power of God’s Word. His Word does not only inform—“it transforms” (p. 25). Johnson then tackles the question “Does it really happen always?” in chapter 2. After reviewing the context of Jesus’ parables in Matthew, Johnson asserts that the key to understanding the parable of the sower in Matt 13 is accurately understanding the verb *syniēmi*, which means to understand or *to stand under* (see F. Dale Bruner, *The Churchbook: Matthew 13–28* [Waco: Word, 1990], 491). When people choose to stand under God’s Word when it is preached, something always happens in their lives.

Chapters 3–4 consider where and how *it happens*. Grappling with both the world of the Bible and contemporary culture, Johnson describes how every biblical text participates in five works. One of these, for example, is *encounter*: “an encounter with God in Jesus Christ” (p. 60). Where and how do preachers speak about this encounter? Johnson first depicts contemporary contexts in which preachers communicate the Word ranging from outreaches in city parks to Sunday morning services to community civic events. He then unpacks the meanings of the seven Greek verbs that refer to preaching, applying these verbs to various contexts. For example, *kēryssō* is rooted in a noun that refers to a messenger sent and authorized by an emperor to speak the emperor’s message (p. 83). *Kēryssō*, or



heralding, argues Johnson, has a place both at public events and in Sunday morning services. By filling his book with illustrations, from SUVs to cobweb-filled sheds to the Matrix, readers have a model of how to communicate in various contexts. Throughout the book, Johnson strikes a balance between the academic rhetoric that echoes throughout seminary classrooms and the language of lay preachers resounding in church buildings, movie theaters, and store fronts.

Part Two delves into the mechanics of preaching. Perhaps his best advice here for preachers could be summarized as “Preach for the Ear” (ch. 6) and “Imply, don’t apply” (ch. 7). Chapter 6 demonstrates the principle of preparing sermons for the ear and not the eye. After all, the audience listens to rather than reads the text of a sermon. To illustrate this, he presents a paragraph prepared for the eye and then a second version of the same text rewritten for the ear. Johnson borrows from G. Robert Jacks’s *Just Say the Word: Writing for the Ear* to offer tips on how to prepare sermons for the ear, such as, “Write the way you talk, not the way you write” (p. 150) and “Speak in ‘breath bites’” (p. 152). Since Johnson often slips into a “preaching mode” during his book, his readers encounter many examples of preparing sermons “for the ear.” In this chapter and elsewhere, Johnson is so effective at summarizing others’ work that some readers may assess it as having the flavor of an annotated bibliography. This is a strength of this introductory book on homiletics. Johnson distills what might otherwise be difficult material, clarifying it while also directing preachers to further reading material.

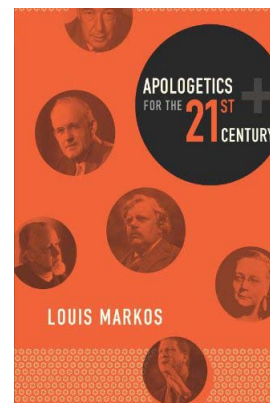
Chapter 7 speaks to preachers who tend to make applications WWJD-style. If a preacher applies a text by urging listeners, “We need to make this work in our lives,” then the preacher is wrongly encouraging his audience “to be perfected by the flesh” (p. 166). *People* do not make it happen. God does. If preachers should not encourage listeners to “throw themselves on themselves” (p. 166), what then should they do? Johnson asserts that if preachers “are to give any imperative, any steps to take,” their steps should be within the “context of the text’s own inherent implications” (p. 163). Johnson poignantly illustrates *implying the text* in a manuscript of one of his own sermons on Matt 11:25–30, which is found in the epilogue.

The Glory of Preaching balances a fresh presentation of homiletics with tried-and-true approaches from experienced preachers. Johnson strikes the reader as a diligent student of the Word, an enthusiastic preacher, and an experienced coach who longs to see other preachers participate in God’s transformational work. This book can reignite the preaching of pastors, regardless of their preaching experience. It is also highly recommended for seminary students.

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Louis Markos. *Apologetics for the Twenty-First Century*. Wheaton: Crossway, 2010. 271 pp. \$17.99.

Louis Markos gives us his purpose for writing and his basic outline in one statement: “In this book I will survey both the major apologists and the major arguments that have come to the defense of historical, orthodox Christianity over the last century” (p. 11). The first half of the book introduces the modern apologists that Markos considers most significant: C. S. Lewis, G. K. Chesterton, Dorothy Sayers, Francis Schaeffer, and Josh McDowell. The second half of the book addresses a litany of apologetic arguments and issues: the classical proofs, evidences, theodicy, the reliability of the Bible (especially the Gospels), the liar-lunatic-or-Lord trilemma, the exclusivity of Christianity, the Gnostic Gospels, modern spirituality, intelligent design, and the new atheism. The final chapter recounts Anthony Flew’s late-life embrace of deism. Markos also includes three helpful appendices: a glossary of apologetics terms, a Who’s Who of prominent figures in recent apologetics, and a wide-ranging annotated bibliography. The book is not indexed.



As a survey, Markos’s book is quite useful; his biographical and topical structure allows him to address a host of issues while writing a coherent book. While it is not possible in a book of this size to attempt to cover each apologist and every argument in great detail, Markos offers his reader a commendably complete picture of the current apologetic landscape. Markos does, at times, appeal directly to the unbeliever to consider the arguments and evidence; in the main, however, his survey would be most useful to the beginning student of apologetics.

Without question, the leading figure in the book is C. S. Lewis, who is, in Markos’s estimation, the chief apologist of modern times: “Lewis made it possible to be an intellectually fulfilled Christian while still living in a modern, post-Enlightenment world” (p. 23). Six of twenty four chapters are specifically about Lewis, and Markos’s deep appreciation for Lewis is apparent in most of the rest. Lewis’s own writings are always compelling, and Markos’s enthusiasm for and thorough understanding of Lewis’s apologetic make the chapters on Lewis (and his thought-world companions Chesterton and Sayers) especially enjoyable.

Opting for Lewis as an apologetic mentor, however, is not without risks. When Lewis defends mere Christianity, Christians everywhere claim him as their spokesman. Lewis manages to be such a winsome and effective communicator that Christians are willing to overlook the occasions when he dismisses or discounts their distinctive doctrines. Unfortunately, when a less masterful writer than Lewis (and who isn’t?) attempts to defend mere Christianity, he runs the risk of alienating each branch of Christendom in turn. Many Protestant readers, for instance, will be less than comfortable with Markos’s implicit endorsement of Roman Catholic apologists.

Further, Markos’s work is sullied by a number of peculiar claims, many of which stem from his dependence on Lewis’s own uneven theology. The most significant of these is his apology for hell, which seems rooted in a commitment to the privation theory of evil (p. 34). If the privation view is correct, to the degree that a thing is less than good, its existence is diminished; assuming this, “Hell does not violate Christ’s call to love sinners, for there are, ultimately, no ‘sinners’ in hell—all that there are in hell are sins going on forever and ever. . . . What is cast into hell, Lewis warns us, is not a sinner but the remains of what once was a sinner” (p. 61). This defense of hell seems unsubstantiated by any biblical depiction of the future state of unbelievers.

Others of Markos's dubious statements cannot be laid at the feet of Lewis. For instance, he says that many of us have been "inspired" to "write down [revelations from God] in a book and share them with others" (p. 39). Some may feel uneasy at the employment of the language of inspiration here. In another place he writes, "God *became* a man in Jesus, and as such, he became also a fetus, a zygote, and a sperm!" (p. 54). I fail to see how any orthodox statement of the incarnation entails Jesus being a sperm.

Despite these missteps, if we are to evaluate his book on the basis of his purpose statement, Markos's work must be judged a success, albeit with one notable qualification: his almost complete neglect of the apologetics of Cornelius Van Til. Van Til is discussed only as an influence on Francis Schaeffer (pp. 105–6); Markos's rationale for not giving Van Til any further attention is confessedly pragmatic. Markos is entitled to his commitment to evidentialist apologetics, but a Who's Who of twentieth-century apologists that leaves unmentioned Cornelius Van Til, John Frame, and Greg Bahnsen may undermine its own authority.

Michael P. Riley

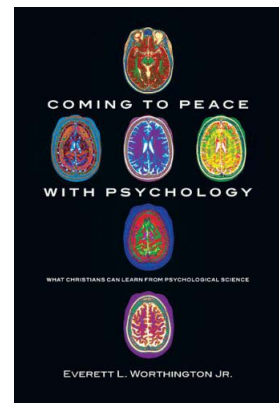
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Everett L. Worthington Jr. *Coming to Peace with Psychology: What Christians Can Learn from Psychological Science*. Downers Grove: IVP, 2010. 304 pp. \$24.00.

When it comes to the intersection of psychology and Christianity, there are few figures who deserve more attention and acclaim than Everett Worthington. For the past two decades he has been challenging those within Christian circles to be less confrontational with the discipline of psychology and has increased the cache of Christian intellectuals among those who are outside the church. In his most recent book, *Coming to Peace with Psychology: What Christians Can Learn From Psychological Science*, Worthington directs his attention to the way that Christians should be engaging psychological research.

The first section of the book deals with a number of philosophical, theoretical, and theological issues that are helpful for both veterans and novices. Loaded with examples from personal experiences, contemporary books, and popular culture—while armed with an extensive and deep knowledge of the psychological research-literature—Worthington impressively crafts a tale of how psychology and the Christian faith can be mutually beneficial. Dealing with broad questions about the nature of scientific inquiry and the place of theology among the disciplines, he provides a framework that is as intuitive as it is developed. In several chapters from the first section of the book, he expands on the notion of science and faith as relational partners. He provides a fair and informed analysis of the scientific method and examines in his relational model how theology and psychological science dance together. He is quick to challenge weak arguments from both sides of the aisle against such a relationship and avoids being overly strident, always careful to highlight the strengths when they inform each other well.

In the second section, eight chapters highlight ways that psychological science can contribute to theology. These chapters handle topics such as psychology as a new voice in matters of theological importance, examples of convergence to strengthen theological claims such as the dignity of individuals,



and the role of forgiveness in relationships. This section contains some of the best writing of the book and addresses a range of current hot-button issues. The elephant in the room, however—homosexuality—is noticeably absent. My impression is that its absence is understandably intentional. Given the broad aims of the book, the inclusion of homosexuality (which is not so much a hot-button topic as it is, unfortunately, a nuclear topic in contemporary discourse) would have significantly distracted readers from the primary purpose of the book. Another topic given less space than it deserves is the neurobiological nature of psychological experience. This was particularly surprising given the cover art, which depicts several brain scans ordered in the shape of a cross and implicitly equates brain with mind. Given the direction of much of the brain-imaging research that is being conducted (and has been noted by research coming out of Worthington's lab), a more extensive section that went into depth on the mind-brain link would have been a welcome addition.

Overall, the text is exceptionally well-written, and the flow of ideas is coherent, concise, and consistent. Those who have an undergraduate-level understanding of psychology will find this book incredibly useful and enlightening. It honestly assesses the limitations of psychology, but does so in a balanced tone of confidence and humility when handling the scientific data that psychology produces. The theoretical foundation of the first section is one of the better treatments one can find, and the number of analogies and examples that are used are helpful and succinct. It is a bit surprising that a text like this is needed today as a way for psychologists to justify themselves within the church. Yet for those who are looking for a sound and thoroughly irenic argument for the integration of faith and psychology, there are few texts that will surpass this one.

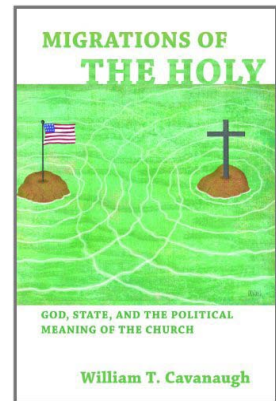
My guess is that many theologians will find Worthington's arguments to be adequate and straightforward, though they may quibble with him on some of the minutiae. In the same way, psychologists may feel there are some important methodological or theoretical matters that warrant additional space (as indicated in this review). Nevertheless, I found myself caught up in the interdisciplinary mindset that Worthington brings to the table, and this is exactly what the text is designed to do. It draws readers off of their intellectual and academic turf, challenging both theologians and psychologists to appreciate the nuances of how both speak to the human condition. Do not read this book if you wish to have dogmatic, discipline-centric assumptions confirmed. It will, however, expand the reader's understanding of the dance of life, knowledge, and faith. There are few books that manage to contain the intellectual rigor and whimsical tenor that are as accessible as this book. I highly recommend *Coming to Peace with Psychology* and anticipate assigning it to students as required reading in years to come.

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MISSION AND CULTURE

William T. Cavanaugh. *Migrations of the Holy: God, State, and the Political Meaning of the Church*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2011. 200 pp. \$18.00.

To those familiar with the previous work of William Cavanaugh, *Migrations of the Holy* covers familiar territory. He picks apart the standard history of what Cavanaugh has taught us to call “the so-called wars of religion”; he offers compelling critiques of popular defenses of American church-state relations (Martin Marty, John Courtney Murray); and he highlights the political character of the church and its Eucharistic feast. He consistently calls readers back to first things with statements like: “Strictly speaking, the world is a theocracy: it is ruled by God” (p. 4). The overarching thesis is freshly stated yet classic Cavanaugh: Modern political order is not secular, but the product of a migration of the sacred from the church to the nation. Or, more simply: Not secularization but idolatry. In Cavanaugh’s view, the recent buzz about the global resurgence of public religion does not alter the fundamental landscape of contemporary politics, in which the political imagination of both secularists and Christians is “colonized” by the nation-state.



Cavanaugh employs his usual genealogical, sometimes etymological, method. Christian political thought, he argues, has too often taken “the State” as a natural given, and his corrective history probes the artifice involved in its formation in order to “unthink the inevitability of the nation-state” (p. 3). Following Charles Tilly and other historians, he rehearses the formation of the state as an apparatus of extraction (taxation and recruitment) for the purposes of war-making. Once the state was in place, rulers constructed and fused on the sacrificial rites and mystical mythology of “nation.” “Society” is likewise taken as a given, but Cavanaugh demonstrates that a unitary society emerges only when states demolish the sub-societies that constitute the patchwork quilt of the medieval world. In another chapter, he acknowledges that American exceptionalism is as old as America, but he adds the crucial point that contemporary civil religion has degenerated from its original Calvinist/Puritan form, which recognized that America, whatever its uniqueness, stands under judgment like any other nation. Elsewhere in the book, he points out that there is little empirical evidence that globalization dissolves the nation-state. To the contrary, globalization is the *maximization* of the nation-state.

His deep sense of the contingency of social order lends his analyses a clarifying cynicism. For instance: Why, he asks, doesn’t the U.S. solve its migrant worker problem? Cavanaugh argues that the liminal status of migrant workers is essential to the use we make of them. He demonstrates his accustomed sharp eye for illuminating detail. He illustrates the “complex space” of medieval society by pointing out that in premodern Europe a criminal would not be tried by the court of the territory where the crime was committed but in the court of the one to whom he was attached by feudal, or kin, or religious bonds (p. 9). He muses brilliantly on varieties of mobility and stability by examining the different aims of the tourist, the migrant, the pilgrim, and the monk (ch. 3).

To say that this book is familiar is not a criticism. Though I have read most of Cavanaugh’s books, he always impresses me again with his refusal to take myth for truth and his passion for empirical verification to cut through our illusions. He writes with bracing common sense, as when he returns again

to his insistence that the church must assert its political authority directly through church discipline. I do not share Cavanaugh's commitment to nonviolence, but the pacifism is muted here. The church must at least, he says, reassert its authority to tell Christians if and when they may kill, rather than ceding that authority to the nation-state. We do penance for the inquisition by refusing to fight in unjust wars using unjust means (p. 114). There is very little for a just war theorist to disagree with.

Migrations of the Holy exhibits what seems to be a trajectory in Cavanaugh's work: Though remaining a specialist in political theology, his work has become more expansively *theological*. One does not normally think of going to Cavanaugh for insights into eschatology or Christology, but here he provides fresh insight into both. Realists commonly appeal to the "already/not yet" eschatology of the New Testament to support a "balanced" or tragic political theology, but Cavanaugh argues that there is no "countervailing principle" to the coming of the kingdom. The already has absolute "ontological priority": "The *already* is what really is" (pp. 60, 62). Not only is this *right*, it is *startlingly* right, the ground for a refreshingly hopeful political outlook, for if history is the comedy of redemption then the principalities and powers that oppose God's rule are fading, and in the end are *nothing*. His Christological account of the sinfulness and visibility of the church (ch. 8) works from von Balthasar's meditations on the Pauline declaration that Christ was "made sin for us" (2 Cor. 5:21) to conclude that the church manifests itself as Christ's visible body precisely in its honest and penitent cry for forgiveness.

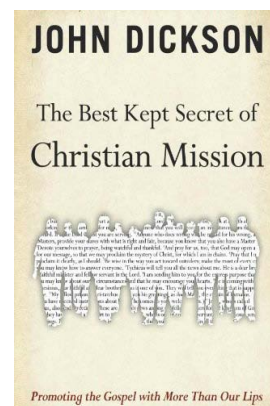
Not least, *Migrations of the Holy* gives us much of the essential Cavanaugh in an *affordable* form and thus is well suited to the classroom, where it is sure to be a provocation in the best sense.

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John Dickson. *The Best Kept Secret of Christian Mission: Promoting the Gospel with More Than Our Lips*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2011. 240 pp. \$22.99.

The best-kept secret of Christian mission, according to John Dickson, is that "the Bible lists a whole range of activities that promote Christ to the world and draw others toward him" (p. 22). To underscore his thesis, Dickson emphasizes two common errors in understanding the Bible's teaching on mission. First, Christians have often thought of mission as limited to verbal proclamation of the gospel ("evangelism") without sufficiently emphasizing the diverse activities Scripture connects to the task of mission. Second, there is often a failure to distinguish the general responsibility the Bible gives to all believers from the special responsibility given to a subset of believers with the calling of "evangelist." For Dickson, these errors lead to some Christians being wrongly pressured to act as evangelists, though they may not be called and gifted for this role. As a result, such believers may lack the joy they should take in mission and neglect the ways they should be involved in mission.

Dickson attempts to unlock this secret by describing six specific ways the Bible calls all believers to be involved in mission: promoting the gospel (1) with prayers, (2) with money, (3) through the works of the church, (4) through Christian behavior, (5) through public praise, and (6) in daily conversations.



Each of these activities receives a chapter wherein Dickson carefully explains how Scripture explicitly links the activity to the gospel's advance and personal conversion. Readers are encouraged to see these activities not as peripheral to Christian mission, but the heart of it—thus applying their hearts for mission in these various ways.

The six chapters on ways to promote the gospel comprise about half the content of the book. Remaining chapters (interspersed throughout the book) introduce, conclude, and support the book's main idea by focusing on related issues. They discuss subjects like reasons for involvement in mission, the challenge of pluralism, the content of the gospel, and the role of the evangelist. A closing parable effectively demonstrates how a community of believers practicing biblical principles highlighted in this book might come together to influence unbelievers toward Christ.

A spate of books have been released on the subject of mission in recent years, and it is appropriate to ask where Dickson's book fits among them. Unlike many volumes written about mission, Dickson is not writing for an audience of pastors, church planters, or biblical scholars (though all would likely benefit from reading the book), and thus his focus is not on interacting with other literature on the subject. Instead, his intended audience seems to be believers in general, and his focus is on interaction with the biblical text, especially the gospels and Pauline epistles, seeking to show what Scripture says about mission for all Christians. Though Dickson never uses the word "missional," his message is essentially that all Christians ought to live missionally in the sense of living the whole of their lives with a commitment to God's mission.

This book implicitly wades into the waters of "mission as evangelism" vs. "mission as social action." Both sides of that debate might find reason to criticize Dickson. Emphases on good works and Christian behavior might dismay some who rigorously hold to evangelism's priority, but his identification of "promoting the gospel" as the goal of those activities might be too narrow for the social justice crowd. Likely, both camps could benefit from reflection on the passages Dickson brings to the forefront.

Like any book, this one is open to criticism. While calling all believers to be deliberately faithful to mission, the lack of emphasis on the Great Commission (Matt 28:18–20) and Jesus' other final commissions (e.g. John 20:21; Luke 24:46–49; Acts 1:8) is conspicuous. The omission is explained on page 34, where Dickson makes passing mention of his belief (which he acknowledges as controversial) that only the "broad thrust" but not the specifics of the Great Commission apply to all followers of Jesus. But this position is not essential to the central argument in the book. In fact, if the Great Commission applies to all believers, this actually strengthens Dickson's argument about the importance of all believers diligently promoting the gospel in a variety of ways.

Another potential criticism has to do with the book's organization. Dickson's understanding of the distinction between all believers and the specific role of "evangelist" is foundational to his argument. However, this distinction goes undeveloped until chapters 9 and 11. Much of the earlier material, especially on different ways of promoting the gospel, could be strengthened had these later ideas been introduced earlier.

As a whole, this is a valuable book that should be widely read. As a pastor, I've often struggled to recommend a book providing a good introduction to mission. Many books focus on evangelism and can be helpful as far as they go, but fail to communicate that the mission of a believer is more comprehensive than specific opportunities to verbally share the gospel. Other books do a marvelous job of expounding missiological strategy or a biblical theology of mission, but are too technical for most non-scholars. I've hoped for a book that would help church members see that mission is not simply a ministry of the

church, but the pursuit of their whole lives; that verbal proclamation of the gospel is essential but is not the entirety of mission—in other words, a book teaching a biblical view of mission.

At last, I have found *The Best Kept Secret of Christian Mission* teaches a biblical view of mission in a manner accessible to anyone in the church I am privileged to serve. I am thankful for the way Dickson combines exegetical and historical depth with the engaging tone of a pastor and evangelist. Scripture is handled well, being explicated and illustrated in ways that allow it to speak for itself. This is now the first book I would recommend to a believer seeking to understand what it means to live with a mission, and any pastor or Christian leader would do well to buy it, read it, and reflect on it.

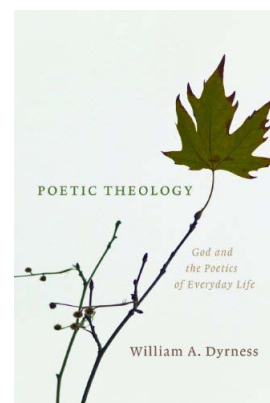
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William A. Dyrness. *Poetic Theology: God and the Poetics of Everyday Life*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2011. xiii + 338 pp. £17.99/\$26.00.

With the title *Poetic Theology*, you might expect a book brimming with iambic pentameter, but the subtitle hints at another purpose: to explore the poetry inherent in all of life and to do so in “the pigeon-toed prose of theology” (p. ix). By speaking of *poetry*, therefore, Dyrness is not referring to a particular kind of literature, but the creative-making—the *poesis*—at the heart of all human activity. To unpack the parameters of this proposal, it is helpful to approach poetic theology from three different angles as apologetic theology, aesthetic theology, and active theology.

First, poetic theology is a proposal for how to respond to the ubiquitous hunger for beauty in contemporary culture, to offer an apologetic. Why is it that humans have a desire to make something beautiful out of their lives? Dyrness identifies this poetic desire as ultimately a desire for God, a natural response to living in a “God-graced” created order (p. 296). Consequently, poetic theology recognizes the legitimate desires humans possess and express regarding the poetry of everyday life. As a result, the products of human creativity—culture—symbolize these poetic desires and indicate God’s continued presence and work within his creation. By celebrating the goodness of creation, recognizing common poetic desires, and affirming the value of culture despite the blight of sin, poetic theology offers a compelling apologetic.

Second, Dyrness demonstrates how poetic, apologetic theology generates a unique approach to theological aesthetics and aesthetic theology. After summarizing over the space of several chapters both Catholic and Protestant theological aesthetics, Dyrness suggests that poetic theology makes it possible to bring these traditions together. If Dante’s *Divine Comedy* represents Catholic aesthetics emphasizing form, images, vision, and affections, and if Bunyan’s *Pilgrim’s Progress* represents Protestant aesthetics accentuating content, words, action, and the will, then poetic theology encompasses the best of both worlds. Although poetic theology encourages aesthetic delight and contemplative encounter with beauty, this should never be divorced from action and participation in the beautiful drama. In short, contemplation without action is empty, but action without contemplation is blind. The particular vision



imparted by Christian theology is a world of broken beauty, but a world in which the poetic performance of Christ makes possible Spirit-empowered performances in anticipation of beauty fully restored.

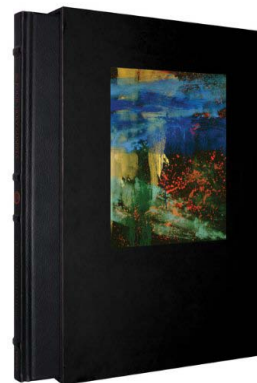
Third, the fusion of performance and perception in poetic theology makes it an inherently active theology. In fact, Dyrness critiques ideological and reflective approaches to culture where the goal is mere understanding. He prefers holistic approaches that encourage cultural creation as well as cultural critique. In fact, if we see our entire lives as a dramatic performance of the vision that captures our imaginations, then every activity, whether making spaghetti or a sculpture, is a cultural performance and an expression of poetic theology. In addition, because poetic theology recognizes the aesthetic desires common to all humanity, expressing these desires will be central to any account of human flourishing or development. For example, Dyrness explains how healthy communities will find fulfillment to their basic physical needs but also have the opportunity to play, celebrate, and express their creativity. Transformational development should not just be concerned with providing food, water, and shelter, but with enabling communities to party and celebrate the poetry of life.

Overall, *Poetic Theology* is an impressive achievement and a compelling admixture of apologetic, aesthetic, and active theology. Readers may not agree, however, with the process of “reversing the hermeneutical flow” (p. 80) that uses contemporary culture to illumine Scripture rather than the other way around. That being said, Dyrness does claim “Scripture in the hands of the Spirit” as his final authority, and the paucity of biblical exegesis does not preclude a vision permeated with biblical truth, which emerged most explicitly in the last chapter (p. 286). But if Dyrness values Scripture and *lectio divina* so highly, it would have been refreshing to see more poetic interactions with particular passages. In addition, one might question at times if “poetic theology” is really the best moniker for the approach presented in this book, especially given the prominence of a dramatic model. In fact, there is an uncanny propensity for both Catholic and Protestant theological aesthetics to gravitate toward a dramatic model. Dyrness follows suit, pleading for an approach that links accurate perception of the divine drama with faithful performance. As such, “dramatic theology” may be an accurate description, but Kevin Vanhoozer already presented this model in *The Drama of Doctrine*, and there is a sense in which the poetic (in terms of all human creativity) encompasses the dramatic. These comments aside, Dyrness effectively demonstrates that theology cannot ignore beauty, and that theology is always related to everyday life. And for that, this book is not only a convincing plea for poetic theology, but is a preeminent example of poetic theology in practice.

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Makoto Fujimura. *The Four Holy Gospels*. Wheaton: Crossway, 2011. 168 pp. £84.00/\$129.99.

Virtually unprecedented in recent history, an individual artist has been commissioned to illuminate the four gospels in contemporary artistic idiom, and the leadership of Crossway Books, the commissioning agent, gave him “complete artistic freedom.” The artist, Makoto Fujimura, is well known as founder of the organization IAM (International Arts Movement, New York and Tokyo) and as a Presidential appointee to the National Council on the Arts (2003–2009) in Washington. Fujimura has contributed internationally as an ambassador for the arts, speaking with leaders in churches, businesses, and arts organizations as well as through his participation in American governmental policy-making for the arts. His own paintings are exhibited in museums and commercial galleries internationally.



President of Crossway Books, Lane T. Dennis, took a bold step in 2009 when he contacted the artist to commission the illuminations. Engaging a fine artist, not an illustrator, could easily move the project away from the taste of the majority of the publisher’s buyers. Moreover, hiring a practitioner of an art form marked by near-total abstraction to illuminate the Word of God might also easily result in alienation of the more conservative in the publisher’s constituency.

Yet *The Four Holy Gospels* is a success story from the beginning despite the risks involved. First, the quality of the art generated by Fujimura is of the highest order and is surprisingly embraced by both modern art aficionados and those whose artistic tastes are more traditional. Second, the artist himself is a winsome apologist for contemporary artistic style wedded to his passionate advocacy for the legitimacy of Christian faith within the secular arts community. The artist’s life speaks volumes and goes a long way to reconciling the apparent paradox of traditional Christian faith and avant-garde artistic sensibility.

Fujimura lives and works at Ground Zero in New York City—and survived, along with his young family, the devastation of the 9/11 attack in 2001. He has written extensively about the experience and even recently stated that one of the main paintings for *The Four Holy Gospels*, entitled *Tears of Christ* (which serves as frontispiece and cover for the entire project), was directly inspired by that traumatic time in his personal life and in the national experience. Fujimura states, “Today we have an artistic language of waywardness and fragmentation, but we do not have a cultural language of homecoming.” *Tears of Christ*, taken as it is from John 11 and the shortest verse in the Bible, communicates deeply the spirit of the entire project: a vision of hope and homecoming amidst the ruins, akin to Isaiah 61:3–4:

to grant to those who mourn in Zion—
to give them a beautiful headdress instead of ashes,
the oil of gladness instead of mourning,
the garment of praise instead of a faint spirit;
that they may be called oaks of righteousness,
the planting of the Lord, that he may be glorified.
They shall build up the ancient ruins;
they shall raise up the former devastations;
they shall repair the ruined cities,
the devastations of many generations.

Fujimura completed five major paintings for this project—four to be used as the main plates for the introductions to each of the Gospels and a fifth (*Tears of Christ*) for the frontispiece. He created eighty colorful calligraphic characters as chapter heading letters, along with one hundred and forty page embellishments. All of the visual elements are tied to textual moments or emphases on a given page or chapter, and all of them harmonize sensitively with each other and the undefined “white space” of the page itself.

Japanese artistic sensibility is characterized by contemplative response to space, to time, and to nature—and a particular reticence with regard to human interventions therein. Consequently, the undefined spaces of a painting—the white spaces—become pivotal parts of the emotional and aesthetic experience for the reader/viewer. And the page embellishments Fujimura created for *The Four Holy Gospels* convey much of that tradition, employing drips, apparent accidental marks and strokes, and a playful quality that is nevertheless masterfully disciplined and seldom *merely* spontaneous. All is steeped in discipline, prayer and skillful practice.

Fujimura’s technique is complex—a hybrid of traditional Japanese and modern American painting practices. *Nihonga*, the traditional method, means simply Japanese-style (as contrasted with Western painting, called *Yo-ga* or Western-style). In *Nihonga*, the artist carefully grinds mineral pigments, mixes them to varying consistencies in animal hide glue, and applies them most often to mulberry paper or silk. Fujimura, who was born in Boston but raised and educated in both Japan and the States, has artfully joined the two traditions, employing traditional mineral pigments on many different sorts of surfaces in both traditional and innovative strokes. The particular virtue of the Nihonga technique is the lovely manner in which the pulverized mineral fragments refract ambient light, giving a crystalline glow to the colors, to the surface of the painting, and to the very space the art occupies.

Akin to the Japanese reluctance to intervene heavily in nature’s appearances, the artist applies colors in careful, lightly applied layers, allowing the paint to pool and slip across the surface of the paper and to intermix “wet-into-wet.” Often the final abstract image emerges mysteriously in and through these light touches, with what Fujimura calls *grace time* being enacted via the very act of painting—with no set “picture” in mind. “Grace time” is the literal translation of *Charis-Kairos*, a coined Greek term that is also in the title of the book’s frontispiece, the full title being *Charis-Kairos: Tears of Christ*.

Like the Abstract Expressionists of the New York School (ca. 1940s and 50s), Fujimura believes the act of painting itself has significance, and the art object that results is, in a very real sense, a fossil of that free act.

This may seem a far stretch from the traditional text-and-image relationship we are accustomed to in the Western traditions of art. And it is. But this approach—blending traditional Nihonga and Abstract Expressionist modern painting—brings a vitality and beauty to Fujimura’s illuminations, allowing this volume to breathe new life into visual theology. Furthermore, the blending of Eastern and Western sensibilities has much to offer by way of trusting in the Holy Spirit’s leading in both art and in speech. Real conversation can emerge only when those involved refuse to over-determine outcomes and each listens responsively to the other. The Eastern reticence to intervene forcefully is a great boon in correcting our own overly “chatty” dispositions with regard to the mystery of the Word made Flesh. In Col 1:15–19, Christ is called the “true *eikon*” of the invisible God—the same God whom no human being may look upon and live. So Fujimura’s very refusal to define and delimit in his imagery communicates what is fitting for the holy subject he attempts to evoke.

One might ask why it is important on the 400th anniversary of the King James Bible to render the text in the ESV and illuminate it with a contemporary hybrid of Japanese and modernist American fine art—instead of more familiar sorts of illustrations for such an august translation. Regarding the translation, the KJV was created as an easily readable version for a then-contemporary readership. Regarding the art, juxtaposing abstract illuminations with sacred words seems only right given the intentions of the artist and his commissioning agents, namely, to “let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.”

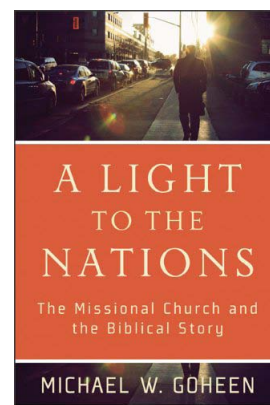
Shining one’s light requires that it indeed *be* one’s *own* light—not a generic sort of illumination fulfilling static expectations of an audience—but the honest, earnest expression of love for God and God’s glory that can be seen only in the fitting form mediated through an individual person. In this case, Makoto Fujimura has indeed let his light shine in order that God may be glorified. And proof of this is the fine example of this man of God who unstintingly gives of his time and talent for the furtherance of the gospel and for the illumination of *The Four Holy Gospels* in a contemporary light, which is the task of every succeeding generation as we seek to translate those accounts to our own people in our own time. Those who painstakingly forged the KJV four hundred years ago for their generation would be happy to know that ours has been faithful in doing the same. Thanks to Crossway and to Fujimura, we have a fine example of this very thing.

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Michael W. Goheen. *A Light to the Nations: The Missional Church and the Biblical Story*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2011. xiv + 242 pp. \$22.99.

When evangelical authors publish books on the church, more often than not they focus on strategies or principles of church growth and on various “practical” topics such as worship, church order, leadership, and budgeting. As regards books on missions, there is usually a similar focus on strategy and methods and questions of contextualization. Studies on biblical and theological foundations are rare. Michael Goheen, who teaches at Trinity Western University and at Regent College in Vancouver, has written just such a book: as he analyzes the nature of the church, he describes the task of missions. While acknowledging that in the last twenty years or so numerous books have appeared on missional ecclesiology, Goheen insists that few have provided a sustained discussion of biblical-theological and exegetical matters, particularly as regards the OT. Goheen wants to fill this gap, writing for theological students as well as pastors and leaders in the church, seeking to provide not “quick-fix strategies” but “scriptural and narrative theological work struggling with our biblical identity and role in the original historical context” (p. ix).

Chapter 1 on “the church’s identity and role” clarifies the term “missional”: it “reminds the church that it is to be oriented to the world and to remain true to its identity as an agent of God’s mission and a participant in God’s story” (p. 5). Goheen then briefly surveys the history of the Western church that started with the self-awareness of Christians being “resident aliens” in terms of a fading of the missional



identity of the established church, which became captive to contemporary, post-Enlightenment culture. After noting problematic images of the church that shape our understanding of the church (e.g., the church as community center, as theater, as classroom, as social advocacy-group), he describes the “starting points” or landmarks that help Christians understand the church, the first being the biblical story in which Jesus Christ is central as the true story of the world.

Chapter 2 describes the missional role of Israel as seen in the patriarchal promises and in the events of the exodus. Chapter 3 illustrates Israel’s missional calling in terms of tribal confederation, priestly kingdom (monarchy), and a scattered people among the nations (exile and diaspora).

The next five chapters are devoted to the NT. Chapter 4 interprets Jesus’ proclamation of the kingdom of God in terms of the gathering and restoration of Israel. Chapter 5 describes Jesus’ death and resurrection as bringing the reign of evil and the power of sin to an end, as making the power of the “age to come” a reality, and as establishing the missional nature of the community of Jesus’ followers. Chapter 6 traces major aspects of “the missional church in the NT story,” i.e., in the Book of Acts. Chapter 7 mines the NT epistles for “images of the missional church,” such as people of God, new creation, body of Christ, temple of the Holy Spirit, and diaspora.

Chapter 8 summarizes Goheen’s findings in terms of participating in God’s mission, continuing the communal mission of Israel, the mission of Jesus, and the witness of the early church. Chapter 9 (“What might this look like today?”), rather than pointing to specific churches or congregations that exemplify Goheen’s vision of a missional church, presents his list of thirteen things that he has attempted to implement in his local church first in Hamilton, Ontario, then in Burnaby, British Columbia. Goheen emphasizes that these are not “new insights for reinventing church structures,” nor “easy and surefire steps to a growing church,” nor “miraculous fixes that can cut through complexity, difficulty, time, and hard work” (p. 202). These thirteen perspectives begin with “a church with worship that nurtures our missional identity” and “a church empowered by the preaching of the gospel,” and they end with “a church with small groups that nurture for mission in the world” and “a church that seeks and expresses the unity of the body of Christ.”

Strong convictions sometimes prompt their proponents to construe false alternatives, exaggerating the problems believed to be inherent in other positions. It is not necessary to argue that an understanding of “mission” in terms of (geographical) expansion is “obsolete” (p. 4): as long as there are neighborhoods, villages, towns, and regions without churches, “mission” by necessity involves “expansion.” While “missional” should indeed describe “the very essence and identity of the church,” there is no need to say that the term “at its best” should not describe “a specific activity of the church” (p. 5); in the last chapter of the book, Goheen himself describes a host of activities that leaders in missional churches should engage in. While “community” is without doubt an important category in a discussion of God’s purposes, it must not be allowed to control the interpretation of all “missional” passages: in the commission texts (Matt 28:16–20; Luke 24:44–49; Acts 1:8), Jesus did *not* send a “community” into the world (p. 114) but indeed individuals whom Luke 6:14–16 mentions by name as those whom Jesus called and chose to carry on his mission. When Jesus sends the twelve disciples, “twelve” is not merely a symbolic number (p. 98) but to be taken literally: he sends them two-by-two. And the outward movement described by Luke in Acts, while certainly “ecclesiological” (p. 131), is without doubt also individual: it is Peter who preaches the gospel, then Stephen and Philip, then Barnabas and Paul. While Goheen allows that the sending out of individual Christians as evangelists or missionaries is “legitimate,” it is both unnecessary and unwarranted to assert that “the story told in Acts is different: it is an account of how ecclesial

communities that corporately embody the gospel (like the one in Jerusalem) are spread throughout the world,” or that “the centrifugal movement of the book of Acts concerns communities sent out by their Lord” (p. 131). The commission of Acts 1:8 is linked with the specific names of Jesus’ disciples (Acts 1:13): at least in this text, it is not a community that is sent, but individuals. The “feet” of those who are sent (Rom 10:15) are not the feet of communities, but of individuals. When Paul speaks of the origins of his missionary work, he speaks of God calling and sending him (Rom 1:1; 1 Cor 1:1; Gal 1:1). Describing the missional nature of the church must not lead the interpreter to minimize, downplay, or negate the significance of individual evangelists and missionaries. Without the latter, the gospel will not be preached.

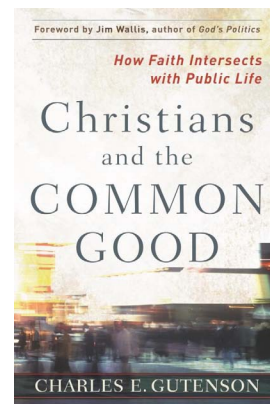
This is an important book in what it affirms concerning the missional nature of God’s purposes and hence of God’s people. Too many churches are so self-absorbed in ministries and programs that they lose sight of the larger calling of the church to participate in God’s mission to “restore all creation and the entirety of human life from the ravages of sin” (p. 191). Readers will learn much about the biblical story of God’s purposes in general and about numerous passages that describe God’s mission in particular.

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Charles E. Gutenson. *Christians and the Common Good: How Faith Intersects with Public Life*. Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2011. ix + 180 pp. \$19.99.

In this popular-level work, Gutenson constructs a biblical account concerning Christian thinking about public policy that aims at the “common good.” Although this work follows the vein of Jim Wallis’s *God’s Politics* (HarperSanFrancisco, 2005), it differs by dedicating almost two-thirds of the book to scriptural interpretation. Gutenson’s exegesis surveys the “biblical vignettes” informing our political thinking. The conclusions could be summarized in five statements:

1. God has created us as political creatures.
2. God ordained both Israel’s theocracy and all other political agencies within which Christians find themselves since Israel.
3. “Thinking Christianly” in political life entails considering how government can enable human flourishing beyond what churches and individuals are capable.
4. Prophetic revelation has shown God’s special concern for the most vulnerable in our societies.
5. Christians should pursue the Bible’s program of social justice in our private lives, church mission, and governmental actions.



This is an intensely fascinating book. The concluding chapter (ch. 6) will be controversial for many, and his method of employing his exegetical gleanings equally so. But Christians, especially American Christians, must not neglect the core message of this text. This last caveat also forms the basis for one initial critique: its possibly misleading title. The problem of appealing to the reader as “Christians” is

initially begged when considering Gutenson's "we" and "they" usage throughout the text. The reader suspects that the author has a narrower group of people in mind beyond Christianity writ large. As the book progresses, the reader suspects that the "we" is best pictured as a white Protestant (probably Wesleyan) male Baby-Boomer American who shares substantial presumptions with the author about social contract theory and the need for natural law/theology. This is a tall order for the average reader, especially undergraduate readers (the so-called Millennials) who are desperate for guidance on issues of political and religious integration. Correspondingly, a subtle demonization of the "they" persists, who are often pictured as "wealthy, powerful" people (p. 146) who live in a world where "profits soar" (p. 159). Or, Gutenson talks about "they" as his fundamentalists forefathers who sold "us" on the idea that Christianity was entirely concerned with individual salvation.

Gutenson is unrelenting in presenting a text that follows the trope of ethico-political responsibility throughout the Protestant canon. Whenever the reader is tempted to quibble with a lesser point, the author returns to his central reiteration from the Scriptures: "The particularly vulnerable condition of the poor makes them a group to which God seems especially attentive" (p. 89). While it feels like Gutenson is clubbing the reader with this detail, he effectively demonstrates that the Scriptures themselves club God's people for their neglect of the poor and oppression by means of public policy.

Although I offer a few more points of critique below, these could easily double as substantive discussion topics if the text were used in a group or class. First, in more than one instance, Gutenson extrudes a tenuous principle from a passage of Scripture and then quickly draws implications from it. For instance, using Lev 19 as a paradigm for the construction of civil laws, he derives the idea that today, we fulfill Lev 19 by treating "all equally under the law" (p. 91). It is not entirely clear whether this is the core meaning of Lev 19 (if there is a core meaning), nor is it clear exactly how he came to this conclusion. Even more, this is not the principle that Jesus examines when he cites Lev 19. More explanation would have helped make his case convincing. Other central tenets, from the meaning of "holiness" to the necessity to "imitate God," are presumed more than demonstrated. One or two examples are forgivable, but more robust footnotes would have eased the reader into Gutenson's assumptions. By the end, there was a sense of working freely with the biblical material and a general acceptance of social contract theory apart from any biblical demonstration in its favor.

Second, because Gutenson rightly focuses on poverty and exploitation, it was surprising that he repeatedly advocates "curing" or "ending" poverty *in toto*. Even when examining Jesus' statement, "the poor will always be with you" (Matt 26:11), he neglects the complex issues surrounding the culture of poverty that engenders so much of his discussion of the policies involved. In other words, there appears to be a theology undergirding his thoughts about perfecting Christianity's poverty response that simultaneously appears to reduce poverty to a flat topic. Similarly, his brief discussion of homosexuality treats sexuality as a singular issue. No tip of the hat is acknowledged toward the complexities of gender identity, sexual attraction, or gay and lesbian differentiations. Of course, Gutenson is attempting to get his readers to think broadly about Christian responses to public policy, and so we should not expect in-depth treatments of each circumstance. However, there is no discussion of how Christians who want to think through these issues must distinguish diverse mitigating factors. In the end, poverty and homosexuality come across as monolithic concepts, and Gutenson does not offer an adequate enough grasp of the nuances behind social matters to aid a thoughtful Christian response.

Third, Gutenson argues convincingly for a canon-wide view of God's special care for the vulnerable. In the first chapter, he advertises the Bible as the normative guide for thinking about public policy: "I

intend for them [i.e., biblical passages] to serve as data points that will allow us to draw preliminary conclusions about the way God intends for us to live together” (p. 14). Yet in the final chapter, where all the conclusions are actually drawn, biblical data appear to be shelved in favor of contemporary theories in social and political philosophy. The connectives between the biblical data and the contemporary theories may be valid, but the author does not explore them.

Christians and the Common Good made me think deeply about my individual, ecclesial, and national participation in social issues. Gutenson forces readers to consider what God has said and measure our lives accordingly. But despite this helpful path laid down for Christians to think through policy issues, it is difficult to imagine a wide-reading audience. On the one hand, Gutenson uncritically cites the likes of Paul Tillich, John Howard Yoder, John Locke, Thomas Hobbes, Karl Barth, and Stanley Hauerwas in support of various positions. If the reader had any familiarity with this disparate group of thinkers, they would certainly want more interaction than cold approving quotations. On the other hand, he details the ethico-political thread sewn throughout Scripture’s meta-narrative as if his audience has little familiarity with those biblical texts.

Notwithstanding the concerns of this reviewer, this text fascinates and compels the reader to wrestle with the relevant biblical motifs. Benefits of this book as a discussion text in a church or classroom far exceed its areas in need of clarification. It deserves to be read in the church and possibly undergraduate classes, but with a critical eye toward fleshing out some of the deficiencies identified above.

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Grant Horner. *Meaning at the Movies: Becoming a Discerning Viewer*. Wheaton: Crossway, 2010. 223 pp. £10.99/\$16.99.

What literature was one hundred years ago, cinema is now. Through film, worldviews flow to our minds in torrents. What is needed is discernment, and this is what Grant Horner's guide to Hollywood's art form promises.

The book presents a specifically theological perspective on the movies. Horner has a high view of Scripture and often alludes to biblical passages, especially Rom 1 and Ecclesiastes. These passages set the tone for the whole book. In the introduction, Horner presents his theological presuppositions regarding culture, specifically film: human beings know God but suppress this truth (Rom 1:18ff.); culture flows precisely from this suppression, from a doomed quest for meaning after the Fall (Ecclesiastes); nonetheless, truth returns and haunts us. Films, then, are philosophies in story form that attempt to keep God at a distance even as they gesture toward that suppressed truth.



Part I (chs. 1–3) concerns methodology, a framework for engaging filmic worldviews. Chapter 1 presents his method for watching movies with biblical-critical discernment, namely, ferreting out the philosophy/worldview perspective that motivates the story (he elides the categories of “philosophy” and “worldview” throughout). Chapter 2 presents the possible worldviews that viewers should look for. In essence, it summarizes James Sire’s famous *The Universe Next Door*. As someone who teaches a course on comparative worldviews, I was disappointed to see Romanticism completely ignored. Chapter 3 explores categories that can be used to interrogate a film: what the film says about humanity, its plot, tone, whether reality in the film tends towards determinism or chaos, optimism or pessimism, and so on.

In Part II (chs. 4–8), Horner analyzes film genres. He teaches literature and film, and it shows in his sensitivity to the forms, styles, and themes unique to each genre. He devotes a chapter each to comedy, horror, romance, noir, and what might be called “memory films,” to which he attaches a special theological importance, since his reading of Rom 1:18ff. involves specifically the suppression of memory (ch. 8). Using plenty of analyses of specific films, he follows each genre into a theological theme, certain truths about humanity as God’s creatures that are suppressed, but which inevitably make their return. Sometimes, this results in profound and surprising insights, such as his reading of the “pleasurable fear” that motivates horror films as a control mechanism for keeping a deeper fear of God at bay (pp. 126–32) or the tracing back of noir’s *femme fatale* to certain patriarchal interpretations of Eve (that is, the *femme fatale* as a very male way of dodging our culpability before God) (pp. 171–73). However, sometimes his readings of these genres seem heavy-handed. Are we to believe that comedy is nothing but a reaction to the despair of existence in a world darkened by post-fall absurdity (pp. 115–19)? Or that noir tells the truth *because* of its cynicism about man, even as it betrays the biblical injunction to love as Christ loved us (ch.7)? All of this is to say: Horner is obviously a movie buff who knows his stuff, but his marriage of movies with theology produces mixed results: flashes of insight at times, forced interpretations at others.

Part of the blame for these mixed results lies with his theology of culture. All human culture is a mixture of light and darkness; but for Horner, the center of gravity is on the darkness. He defines culture as a result of the Fall. Culture is what happens when we humans gave God his walking papers and found

ourselves trapped. Culture is “our futile attempts to understand the world,” especially its meaningless and approaching death (p. 39). Our cultural efforts are doubly doomed because we suppress the truth we have, desperately wanting to forget (and to forget that we’ve forgotten) the existence of a God to whom we owe allegiance (Rom 1:18ff., see pp. 42–47). One gets the feeling that once the Lord returns, culture will become obsolete, along with despair and meaninglessness. But isn’t culture more than a response to the Fall? In tending the Garden, weren’t Adam and Eve doing culture *as a response to the structures of creation*? Mystery arises not only from meaninglessness, but also from beauty and subtlety built by God into creation itself. Solomon hints in this direction when he says, “It is the glory of God to conceal a matter; to search out a matter is the glory of kings” (Prov 25:2).

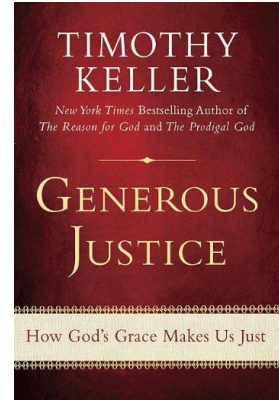
That is to say, common grace, God’s generous sharing of truth and beauty, needs to be as much a part of our cultural analytical vocabulary as idolatry, distortion, and suppression of truth. Horner comes close to common grace in his “conservation of truth” principle, modeled after the conservation of mass in physics (pp. 45–46). He explains the principle this way: In culture humans suppress the truth in unrighteousness (à la Rom 1), desperately trying to forget God, but truth always returns as it must (pp. 42–47)—it is part of the cosmic equation. So while movies twist and suppress the knowledge of God, truth always returns to haunt the story, almost automatically (or better, symptomatically, like a psychological complex). Movies are occasions for groping in the dark while shying from a light they cannot escape. Fair enough. But missing from this theological portrait of culture is the God who himself reaches out to rebels through common grace. Paul tells the Lystrans in Acts 14:17 that God leaves signs of his presence as he “fills your hearts with joy.” Horner’s “conservation of truth” principle obscures the generosity and closeness of God to those who rebel against him that Paul refers to in Acts 17:28. We fairly breathe the presence of God all the time. If that is true, film (and culture) is more than a suppression of truth and memory haunted by the knowledge of God that makes a return. Film is a wrestling and engagement with *God himself* as he makes himself known through his many powerful gifts. Such a sensibility comes through better in books like Roy Anker’s *Catching Light: Looking for God in the Movies* (Eerdmans, 2004). Even in movies like the *Star Wars* saga, Anker’s interpretation suggests the grace of God everywhere, cropping up in the unlikeliest of places. By contrast, in many of Horner’s analyses, it feels as if God were in a galaxy far, far away.

Of course, this is a question of balance, like theology itself. An overemphasis on common grace can lead to spiritual naiveté, blindness to idolatry and truth-suppression. Horner is right to urge caution. And to be fair, he does sometimes mention grace in filmic moments, such as the joy of finding love unlooked for in romantic comedies (ch. 6). But more often the emphasis falls on truth-suppression in a world that has abandoned God. The thing to remember is: God has by no means abandoned us in our cultural struggles—not even at the movies.

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Timothy Keller. *Generous Justice: How God's Grace Makes Us Just*. New York: Dutton; London: Hodder & Stoughton, 2010. 256 pp. \$19.95/£12.99.

Justice is currently undergoing a renaissance in interest, in both academic and wider public concern. So it is no surprise to see Timothy Keller publish his latest work, entitled '*Generous Justice: How God's Grace Makes Us Just*'. Yet Keller, in his introduction, boldly asserts that the Bible is a book devoted to 'justice in the world from first till last' (p. xiv). While many people would concede justice is an important concept, and a biblical one, could we term the Bible a book devoted to justice? Keller is evidently set upon dispelling preconceptions, and *Generous Justice* aims to both dispel evangelical assumptions and inform our understanding on this issue.



However, the intended scope of the thesis may prove problematic for the audience. Keller clarifies in his introduction that he is writing to inform both believers and non-believers. This is the book's intended purpose. Is the book evangelistic or more formative for Christians in approach? Or is Keller attempting to do both at the same time? Ultimately, the book tends to be at parts more of an in-depth commentary on key Bible passages, more instructive for Christians in their approach to justice than a book encouraging non-believers to put their trust in Christ.

Moreover, this dual purpose raises questions concerning the overriding narrative and structure. Chapter 4 provides an expanded sermon, drawing out characteristically perceptive comments on the parable of the Good Samaritan. For the next few chapters Keller labours on contemporary human rights discourse and justice related jurisprudence—drawing on scholars such as Nicholas Wolterstorff, Richard Rorty, Michael Sandel, and Aristotle. Is Keller really certain of his audience? Like Keller's *The Reason for God* (New York: Dutton; London: Hodder & Stoughton, 2008), *Generous Justice* distinctly targets his Manhattan professional audience. Yet does this exclude those who have not received a tertiary level education from fully engaging with Keller's insights?

Generous Justice challenges every person to generate a new thesis about justice. He writes, 'if a person has grasped the meaning of God's grace in his heart, he will do justice' (p. 93). Justice follows justification. 'For when the Spirit enables us to understand what Christ has done for us,' Keller writes in his introduction, 'the result is a life poured out in deeds of justice and compassion for the poor' (p. xiii). The Christian's response to grace offered in the cross of Jesus Christ is one of justice, both in thought and deed.

Moving from theory to practice, the reader is given a practical chapter on how we should do justice, moving from self-focused to a societal view encompassing the work of the church as central to social justice in the community. Keller's appreciation of justice is an all-encompassing one, containing all spheres of life and all of society. For a Christian a life poured out in doing justice for the poor 'is the inevitable sign of any real gospel faith' (p. 189). Further to this, *Generous Justice* evokes a response from the reader: Keller's vision of biblical justice finds application for every Christian. Keller draws a standard here—any Christian failing to meet this standard fails 'to live justly and righteously' (p. 112).

Generous Justice seeks to dispel myths and critique assumptions. One way it effectively does this is through Keller proposing a different way to understand evangelism and social justice. Keller's understanding is that the concepts should exist in an 'asymmetric, inseparable relationship' (p. 139). He

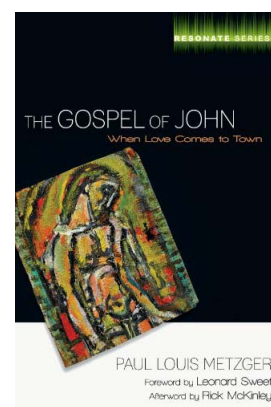
formulates a critique of the relationship concerning evangelism and social justice aimed at Christians, and he criticises Christians who suggest that justice should be performed only as a means to the end of evangelism. For Keller this is inherently wrong. Justice is not simply a means to an end. Rather, justice should be the natural action of a saved believer, not just something done for the sole purpose of evangelising others. At the same time, Keller believes that there is no better way for a Christian to lay a ‘foundation for evangelism than by doing justice’ (p. 142). This is because if someone is to share their faith with a person yet does nothing to meet that person’s practical and material needs through deeds, this ‘fails to show Christ’s love’ (p. 143). First John 3:16–17 is rightly brought to mind.

Yet would justice not entail evangelism? Here, once again, Keller controversially separates the two concepts. Adamant that the concepts should be separate, Keller draws the concept of grace into the argument. Keller defines grace as ‘giving the benefits that are not deserved’ while justice ‘is giving people exactly what they do deserve’ (p. 49). Grace entails that evangelism and discipleship cannot be effective without meeting the practical and material needs of those we meet (for example, caring about the conditions they live within). Social justice is a key calling of the Christian life, a fact that many churches and Christians often forget. Once again Keller should be commended for the way he dispels myths and provides a thoroughly biblical account of justice incorporated into life, all in a relatively short book. Clear biblical teaching is needed to provide questions and answers on this subject. *Generous Justice* gives a timely reminder of the importance of social justice, providing clear challenges, questions, and answers for every Christian.

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Paul Louis Metzger. *The Gospel of John: When Love Comes to Town*. Edited by Paul Louis Metzger. Resonate Series. Downers Grove: IVP, 2010. 304 pp. \$18.00.

The traditional commentary focuses all its energy detailing and explaining the Bible by means of its original social-cultural context. The life-setting with which it is most concerned is the ancient one. Such an approach, unfortunately, might be viewed as highlighting the differences between the world of the Bible and the contemporary world, that is, between the scholar and the pastor/pew, adding to an ever-accumulating biblical illiteracy. A new model of commentary called the Resonate series, edited by Paul Louis Metzger, attempts to bridge these worlds by reconsidering the appropriate intersection between them. In the series introduction to the first published volume, *The Gospel of John: When Love Comes to Town*, Metzger admits that both worlds need to be understood and addressed. But for the Resonate series, the starting place is not the Bible’s original context, but its contemporary context. Even those who do not come from a Christian background or know the Christian message are normally “well equipped at engaging pop culture” (p. 11). Metzger writes, “The aim of the Resonate series is to provide spiritual nourishment that is biblically and theologically orthodox and culturally significant. The form each volume in the series will take is that of an extended essay—each author writing about the biblical book under consideration in an interactive, reflective and culturally engaging manner” (p. 12). While other commentaries are concerned to bring



the pastor into the ancient, cultural context of the Bible, the Resonate series wants to help the pastor understand the Bible within their contemporary, cultural context. There is “an increasingly urgent need for pastors who feel right at home within the biblical text to bring that text home to today’s Christ-followers by interacting with the text expositively, by placing it within the context of contemporary daily life, and by viewing their personal stories in light of the original context and unfolding drama of ancient Scripture” (p. 12). And while other commentaries speak a foreign language to the lay reader, the Resonate series wants to bring the Bible into the lay reader’s cultural idiom, for people “who feel right at home within contemporary culture but who are foreigners when it comes to Scripture to inhabit the world of the Bible without abandoning their own context” (p. 12). The Resonate series sees itself as a “distinctive new genre or approach” which has “one finger in the ancient Scriptures, another in the daily newspaper, and another finger touching the heart, all the while pointing to Jesus Christ” (p. 13).

In light of this three-finger approach, *The Gospel of John* deals not verse by verse but pericope by pericope. By not locating the exegesis at the level of the verse, the theme or message of each passage becomes the locus of interpretation. Only rarely are details discussed or historical insights given. The entry point for the reader becomes the way Scripture “resonates” in us and in the world. For example, Metzger begins his interpretation of 1:1–18 with this statement: “Deep down in our souls, we all long for a sense of touch” (p. 28). Such a starting point is the message Metzger derives from the passage as a whole, unconfined to an “original” meaning, and explored through a point of connection that begins with our culture and in our hearts. And the theme is interpreted by means of synonymous examples and analogies taken from pop culture. For example, longing for a “sense of touch” is explicated through the movie *Crash*, which explicitly discusses “the sense of touch.” Another example is 2:1–12, where Metzger’s point of connection is “Jesus does know how to have a good time” (p. 55), which for him expresses well the vision the scene projects: the marriage supper of the Lamb. A final example is 3:1–21, where in describing Jesus as “personal,” Depeche Mode, Marilyn Manson, and Johnny Cash are all mentioned in the first paragraph (p. 63). If we could compare translation theory to a commentary, the Resonate series is a paraphrastic commentary.

There are some obvious strengths of *The Gospel of John* and the entire Resonate series. First, the commentary is willing to allow the biblical text to speak within and through contemporary culture. Metzger is right to demand that our present context be part of our interpretive matrix—a contributing and voting member of the exegetical committee. This focus allows a richly theological gospel like the Gospel of John to speak more directly into our personal lives and world. Second, the commentary helps make connections between pop culture and the message of Scripture. It serves to give examples of how one moves from the text’s larger meaning to a culturally engaging application.

There are, however, some questions that need to be asked. First, what kind of responsibility does a “commentary” have in regard to the text? Since the commenting is mediated through pop culture, the actual exegesis is implicit and behind the scenes. The reader is certainly helped to make connections from an already developed message, but minimal assistance is given to the actual reading of the text on its own terms. Second, what does it mean to be culturally relevant? While the use of analogies and categories from pop culture might resonate with the reader, it is difficult to safeguard against either imposing a foreign category upon Scripture or adjusting (even if slightly) the biblical categories themselves. This is not to deny the benefits Metzger and the Resonate Series bring to the analysis of

Scripture, especially with an eye to the contemporary context, it is simply to ask what kind of help is provided for the pastor and the church.

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Jeff Van Duzer. *Why Business Matters to God (And What Still Needs to Be Fixed)*. Downers Grove: IVP, 2010. 206 pp. \$20.00.

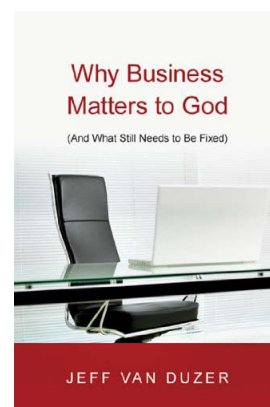
Most Christians spend most of their time working, often in business. Many feel their work is meaningless in God's eyes. But Van Duzer argues the opposite. Business is an essential sphere in the unfolding work of God in Christ.

Van Duzer grounds his theology in the "creation mandate," God's call to people to "till and keep" the Garden of Eden and to "be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it" (Gen 1:28). In fulfilling this mandate "business appears to be uniquely well situated to work the fields, to cause the land to be fruitful, and to fill the earth—what we might in modern parlance characterize as 'to create wealth'" (p. 41). The Fall has corrupted the world, including business, but business matters to God because the creation mandate is still in effect.

Given such a noble mission, maximizing shareholder wealth seems an inadequate purpose for business. Could the creation mandate really boil down to, as Milton Friedman put it, that "The social responsibility of business is to increase its profits" ("The Social Responsibility of Business Is to Increase Its Profits," *The New York Times Magazine*, September 13, 1970)? Van Duzer says no: "Nothing in this Genesis model supports the conclusion that business should be operated for the purpose of maximizing profits" (p. 45). Instead, he derives two purposes for business from Genesis: "(1) to produce goods and services that enable the community to flourish, and (2) to provide opportunities for meaningful work that will allow employees to express their God-given creativity" (p. 42). Profit is a necessary means to achieve these purposes.

In the fallen world, business fails its noble mission again and again. Van Duzer examines dumping in India, sweatshops in Nicaragua, fraud at Enron, child labor in Chinese kiln factories, racism at Texaco, cigarette ads featuring Joe Camel, and deaths due to faulty fuel tank design in the Ford Pinto. He argues that maximizing shareholder returns causes—or at least exacerbates—these failings. The Ford Pinto seems a clear-cut case. Ford estimated that fixing the problem would cost about \$140 million, while paying death and injury damages would cost only \$50 million (p. 54). The duty to maximize shareholder return meant Ford was ethically bound to leave the hazard unfixed, which resulted in several hundred burn deaths.

God wants more from business—or at least from Christians in business. Christians in business should participate in the redemptive work of Christ *in their business work*. Although we cannot reproduce it here, Van Duzer makes skilled use of the work of R. Paul Stevens, H. Richard Niebuhr, and Andrew Crouch to develop practical implications for business. In particular, business needs to be transformed from self-enrichment to service, sustainability, and partnership with the rest of society. He concludes by demonstrating that his model would not destroy a viable business sector, but actually strengthen it.



Why Business Matters to God is a major development in the theology of work. Van Duzer realistically applies the best theological materials to the actual practice of business. You could actually make business decisions based on his arguments. He works within the market system, but he assesses it not by its own idolatries but by God's word. His writing is clear, his argument rigorous, and his conclusions specific.

But has he cracked the nut? I'm not convinced. On the one hand, I'm not sure the major paradigm shift he proposes is worth the effort. The practical difference between Friedman's model and Van Duzer's is less than you might predict. Friedman acknowledges that profit-seeking must be constrained by the laws and ethical norms of society. Van Duzer acknowledges that business needs to make a reasonable profit. The two diverge only when a business could legally and ethically make a higher profit by *not* providing needed goods and services or *not* providing meaningful jobs. How often is that?

On the other hand, if it turns out that Van Duzer's and Friedman's outcomes frequently do diverge, are Van Duzer's really better? His argument is theoretical. He starts with principles from Scripture and applies them to business practices as best he can, not an easy task given the change in economic conditions over the past 2000 years. Friedman's argument is empirical, taken from Adam Smith. History shows that *society* is better off when each business seeks to maximize shareholder return, paradoxical as that may seem. When theory clashes with data, theory usually loses.

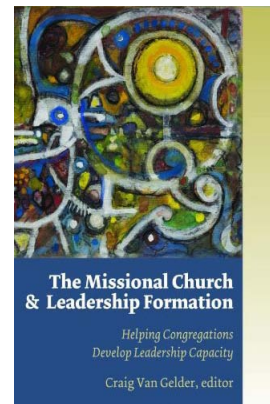
Perhaps searching for only one or two purposes of business is futile. Within society, there are competing interests such as generating tax revenue, providing jobs, producing needed goods and services, and protecting the environment. Within any business enterprise, there are competing interests such as shareholder wealth, innovation, meeting social needs, and growing market share. And individuals want a variety of things from the business they work for, including a high salary, an interesting job, social prestige, or a chance to create products that serve society.

Rather than defining one or two purposes of business, perhaps we should search for better ways to mediate a great variety of purposes. Two major mechanisms already exist for social mediation: markets and governments. A business enterprise is a kind of market where many individuals exchange items of value, such as labor, pay, dividends, intellectual property, and emotional engagement. Does God have anything to say about how markets should operate? A business enterprise is also a body politic in which elected and appointed officials (boards, managers, team leaders, etc.) set goals, resolve disputes, administer justice, and provide for a flourishing common future. Does God have anything to say about political governance amid competing interests? Van Duzer is a lawyer with business experience. He writes with clarity, theological rigor, and practical wisdom. Would he be willing to write a sequel: *Godly Ways to Manage the Many Purposes of the Business Enterprise*? I'd buy a copy.

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Craig Van Gelder, ed. *The Missional Church and Leadership Formation: Helping Congregations Develop Leadership Capacity*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009. x + 238 pp. £12.99/\$20.00.

Craig Van Gelder's edited volume *The Missional Church and Leadership Formation* results from the third annual Missional Church Consultation, hosted by Luther Seminary, and is the third book in Eerdmans's Missional Church Series. In the words of Van Gelder, this book seeks to bring "further clarity to the word 'missional' and to contribute to the ever-widening missional church conversation by engaging the issue of leadership formation" (p. viii). Contributors are drawn primarily from leaders within the mainline tradition, including Richard Bliese, Sharon Henderson Callahan, Scott Cormode, Dave Daubert, Terri Martinson Elton, Kyle J. A. Small, Kristine M. Stache, and Craig Van Gelder.



The first section examines the relationship between theological education and leadership formation, with essays from Van Gelder, Small, and Bliese. The second section explores how "missional leadership formation can best be cultivated within and through congregations" (p. 97), with essays from Cormode, Callahan, and Daubert. The final section hosts chapters from Elton and Stache, seeking to answer the question, "What does all of this actually look like within real congregations?" (p. 173).

Rather than offering a detailed response to each essay, the following paragraphs highlight three notable aspects of the book.

A Mainline Conversation. This book is clearly situated in the mainline Protestant context. To orient newcomers, it will help readers to know that in many ways the missional church movement is to the mainline tradition what the emerging church movement is to evangelicalism, only in reverse. Whereas the emerging church movement is pushing evangelicalism toward concerns often championed by the mainline tradition, the missional church movement is pushing the mainline tradition toward concerns more in line with historic evangelicalism. The net effect is that the missional church movement and the emerging church movement tend to meet in the middle space between evangelicalism and the mainline tradition. Like leading voices in the emerging church movement, *The Missional Church and Leadership Formation* emphasizes social justice, Trinitarian theology, the importance of community, and egalitarianism (relating both to gender-issues and congregational polity). Those critical of the emerging church will find similar ground for critique in this book. And those sympathetic to the concerns of the emerging church will find much that resonates. However, *The Missional Church and Leadership Formation* lacks the disenfranchised, polemical tone often found in the emerging church literature; evangelicals are not the foil of this book, making it more palatable to traditional evangelical readers.

Regarding Theological Education. While the subtitle of the book is "Helping Congregations Develop Leadership Capacity," the first section of the book addresses the topic of theological education in the seminaries. Since the inception of the seminary, theological education and ministry training has often been characterized as not sufficiently connected to the local church. The mainline tradition has not escaped this critique, as the first section's essays show. Van Gelder appropriately raises the question about the key focus of the seminary: Does it exist for catechetical formation, research, or professional training (p. 36)? The failure of a seminary to answer this question, Van Gelder argues, inevitably results in mission confusion for both professors and students. Small's chapter distinguishes between *wissenschaft*

(scholarship) and *paideia* (wisdom) as categories for orienting the focus of a seminary, helpfully arguing for the *via media* of “critical *paidea*” (p. 50). And Bliese rightly criticizes the “encyclopedic” approach to theological education that has come to characterize seminary training due to the influence of the German system (pp. 87–89).

While I find myself sympathetic with the critiques leveled by Van Gelder, Small, and Bliese—and correspondingly sympathetic with some of their solutions—the essays do not, in the end, offer a paradigm-shifting way forward. To be sure, the seminary must retain a robust place in theological education. But after nearly three hundred years of trying to dial-in seminary education, it is past time to acknowledge that leadership formation cannot take place fully in a classroom context, nor can theological scholarship be delegated entirely to the academy. The social location of the church and the academy are simply too far removed from each other. The pastoral community must once again become a significant theological voice in the church, and the local church the primary means by which the future leaders of the church are trained. I would have liked to have seen an awareness of this reality more fully reflected in the proposals offered by Van Gelder, Small, and Bliese.

Unhelpfully Abstract. The most disappointing aspect of this book, particularly as it relates to the last two sections, is its inability to speak concretely. For instance, one contributor observes, “Since culture refers to the whole social practice of meaningful action, then Christian theology has to do with the meaning dimension of Christian practices. . . . The cultural dynamics of an active view of God and discipleship as a way of life have at their core this issue of the meaning-making of Christian practices” (p. 194). This sounds, of course, especially significant. But what it actually means—in concrete terms—is difficult to say. On the whole, the book conveys more a theological *sense* than an actual *plan*. We must say more than “relationships are important in leadership formation” and “the congregation must be empowered for leadership,” etc. Everyone, of course, agrees that relationships are important and that congregations should be empowered. But what does this actually look like in real time? Does a focus on Trinitarian theology and its corresponding emphasis on relationships mean that a congregation should adopt small groups as its principle mechanism for leadership formation? Or that local churches should embrace a congregational polity over an episcopal structure? It’s not clear. Even the final two chapters, which attempt to provide a concrete “life on the ground” picture of leadership formation, fail to offer practical ways forward.

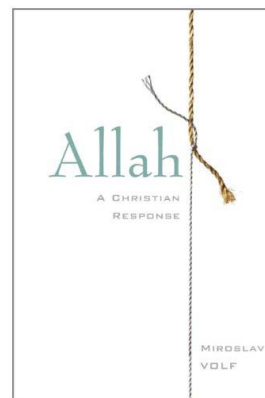
The essays in *The Missional Church and Leadership Formation* demonstrate theological sophistication and learning. But in the end, the book offers very little to critique, primarily because it fails to make enough concrete assertions. Readers looking for a book on leadership formation that terminates in concrete proposals will likely be disappointed.

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Miroslav Volf. *Allah: A Christian Response*. San Francisco: HarperOne, 2011. 336 pp. £18.99/\$25.99.

Born and raised in former Yugoslavia, Miroslav Volf currently serves as professor of theology at Yale Divinity School. His writings have earned him the reputation of being a leading expert on religion and conflict, and he won the 2002 Grawmeyer Award in Religion.

Allah: A Christian Response addresses how Christians view the God of the Qur'an. Writing as a committed Christian, he aims to reach peace between Christians and Muslims. He also writes to Muslims, calling on them to reflect on his proposal. The bulk of the book attempts to show that both Christians and Muslims worship the same God based on their belief that there is only one creator God, who is good and calls people to love him and their neighbors. Acknowledging differences between the two religions that require them to remain different religions and not one religion, Volf attempts to minimize these differences: what the Qur'an denies about the Trinity is what the Bible also denies, and it is possible for a person to be both a practicing Muslim and committed Christian.



Volf should be commended for championing peace and tolerance between Christians and Muslims and for calling on freedom of expression in healthy dialogue. He admirably calls on Christians and Muslims to work together for the common good of humanity.

Volf also highlights Christian and Muslim mistakes through history, referring to historical figures spanning the Crusades, the Turkish invasions, and events surrounding the Common Word document (2007). Volf acknowledges that the Crusades had no biblical warrant, and he calls on Muslims to renounce all forms of violence.

Volf defends the doctrine of the Trinity against Muslim critics, and he correctly connects the Trinity to the attribute of love. He boldly shows the contradiction in Islam's claim to believe in the same God Christians do while believing that the doctrine of the Trinity compromises God's oneness. Volf also shows that the punishment for disobedience in the Qur'an is much more severe than in the Bible and that God's love is less obvious in the Qur'an than the Bible. He notes that Muslims, as a whole, insist on punishing conversion to another religion while modern Christians do not.

The book has several serious weaknesses. First, while Christianity and Islam may have the same starting point or referent in the word "Allah," their descriptions of this Allah are much further apart than Volf claims. He accurately stresses that "Allah" is the Arabic word for God used in the Arabic Christian Bibles today (while inaccurately stating it includes a definite article). It could be added that "Allah" comes from the original Aramaic, appears in the Aramaic portions of the OT, and is the very word Jesus would have used in referring to God. In other words, the word "Allah" did not originate with Islam. The point is that what is said about this Allah is what counts. For Volf, it is as though Christianity and Islam have the same subject but different predicates. But then the predicates are so different that they redefine the subject so as to question the premise of being the same God. Volf fails to acknowledge that by Islam's claim to believe in the God of the Bible, while denying not only the Trinity but all the theology behind it, they end up attacking the very God they claim to believe in!

Second, Volf seeks to reach peace at all costs, even if it means compromising (or hiding) the truth. He calls for "striking deals," seeking "charitable interpretations of others' views," and building on "sufficient similarity." But he fails to show that settling for "sufficient similarity" deprives the other side of unique

claims deemed critical to eternal destiny. Regardless of whether the two groups worship the same God or not, their views should prompt them to rise to the highest level of living at peace with each other. In the end, however, Volf's idea of elevating relationships over truth eventually leads to losing both.

Third, the author recognizes that for moral attributes to be active in God apart from creation requires a relationship within God; otherwise, God would need to become dependent on creation to exercise them. But Volf finds this relationship expressed in God's self-love in Islam as adequately similar to the inter-trinitarian relationships in Christianity. There are serious flaws here. No adequate relationship can exist in one unipersonal being, and the triune relationship is others-love and not self-love. In fact, the glory of the Trinity is in the honor each person gives to the others. This love and humility not only overflowed in creating but also in Christ's death on the cross. Volf finds the self-love concept in the minor Sufi sect of Islam that does not represent all Islam, ignoring the formal dominant historic Ash'arite position on the attributes of God, which emphasizes that all moral attributes stem from God's powerful will (not his nature) so that they are accidental and not essential to his nature. Herein, God loves not because he is love but because he chooses to love and could choose not to. Similarly, God being "merciful and compassionate" in Islam describes only what he can *do*, not what he *is*. In Christianity, however, God's mercy and compassion are grounded in eternal relationships between persons in the perfect unity of God's being. Additionally, God's relationship to his people in the Bible is further described as that of a spouse, a lover, a father, a brother, a friend, etc.—concepts foreign to Islam, and possibly offensive. Love in Christianity is initiated by God, not man (1 John 4:10). Finally, why would Islam close the door on God revealing truths about the mystery of his oneness in ways above Muslims' understanding?

Volf tries very hard to dress Islam with Christian values wherever he can. For example, in showing that Islam calls people to love God, the only supporting reference Volf cites is the qur'anic assertion that there is no God but Allah. Similarly, he cites no qur'anic verse calling for love of neighbor, but only in the Hadith, while ignoring so much in both the Qur'an and the Hadith calling for the exact opposite. Though Volf's motive may be noble, it seems very forced.

Volf forces Christianity into the confines of Islamic theology. Responding to the strong qur'anic teaching that God's love is conditional, he tries to show that Christianity is the same, ignoring the notion that obedience in the Bible is a result of a regenerated and justified life, truths absent in the Qur'an. Here Volf confuses the root with the fruit of Christian life. He also constantly compares the behavior of select historical Muslim figures or nations with behavior of select Christian figures or nations. However, the question should be this: Does a person's behavior become better or worse the closer they come to the Bible or to the Qur'an? At one point, Volf attempts to define "normative versions" of Islam and Christianity without consistently tying them to the Bible and the Qur'an.

This book purports that just as Christians hold that Jews believe in the same God while denying the Trinity, they ought to say the same about Muslims. However, Volf fails to show that the OT understanding of God lays the foundation for the NT revelation of the Trinity. This foundation includes elements about God that are absent in the Qur'an, including many references to God's desire to be known and trusted based on his unchanging attributes, the acceptance of the many anthropomorphic expressions of God, numerous references to God's diversity in unity, and the frequent theophanies. In other words, Volf fails to see that Jewish monotheism differs drastically from Islamic monotheism, and he glaringly ignores what the resurrection did to the early Jewish Christians who were steeped in monotheism and who had

an overnight change bringing them to worship a human being! Why? They were impacted by the power of his person and the reality of his resurrection, coming to see that the fullness of deity dwells in him.

Volf also displays a serious misunderstanding of God's OT command to obliterate entire nations. It is very different than the qur'anic Jihad. The biblical conquest is marked by the following:

1. It is limited to one time, not all times.
2. It is limited to one land, not all lands.
3. It judges sin to fulfill prophecy, not to adhere to a religion.
4. It shows God's holiness, not his power.
5. Its goal is to bless the whole earth, not subdue it.
6. It is God fighting for his people, not the people fighting for God.
7. It is according to God's trustworthy nature, not according to a capricious nature.
8. It prefigures God finally absorbing the deserved judgment and wrath on all nations in Christ's death on the cross. Judgment deserved became judgment absorbed.

Just because the NT is continuous with the OT does not mean that the Qur'an is continuous with the NT as Volf implies. This is a very dangerous thesis. The Muslim claim to believe in selected portions of the Bible does not require Christians to do the same with the Qur'an. The main reason is that the Qur'an presents different versions of the stories of the Bible and gives an incomplete picture of Christ and salvation, meanwhile contradicting many teachings and accounts of the Bible.

The lack of freedom in Muslim countries today is also more serious than Volf maintains. In the relatively rare conversion of a Muslim to Christianity, while patience is called upon for the new believer in Christ from a Muslim background, the NT calls on all Christians to grow to maturity in Christ, who as God is superior to all other revelation and to all prophets and angels. While a Christian from a Muslim background could retain their cultural identity, their new identity is in Christ alone.

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