



themelios

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EDITORIAL

Should Pastors Today Still Care about the Reformation?

— D. A. Carson —

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

Pastors devoted to their ministry have so many things to do.¹ Apart from the careful preparation week by week of fresh sermons and Bible studies, hours set aside for counseling and administration, care in developing excellent relationships, careful and thoughtful (and time-consuming!) evangelism, the mentoring of another generation coming along behind, the incessant demands of administration and oversight—not to mention the nurturing of one’s own soul—there is the regular array of family priorities, including care for aging parents and precious grandchildren and an ill spouse (or any number of permutations of such responsibilities), and, for some, energy levels declining in inverse proportion to advancing years. So why should busy pastors set aside valuable hours to read up on the Reformation, usually thought to have kicked off about five hundred years ago? True, the Reformers lived in rapidly changing times, but how many of them gave serious thought to postmodern epistemology, transgenderism, and the new (in)tolerance? If we are to learn from forebears, wouldn’t we be wise to choose more recent forebears? I offer nine reasons why the Reformation still matters for today’s pastors.

(1) A pastor is by definition something akin to a GP (a “general practitioner”). He is not a specialist in, say, divorce and remarriage, mission history, cultural commentary, and particular periods of church history. Yet most pastors will have to develop competent introductory knowledge in all these areas as part of their application of the Word of God to the people around them. Some pastors will feel the need to emphasize one area more than another: e.g., a pastor living in a neighborhood with many Muslims will want to devote time and energy to understanding Islam; an Arnold Dallimore will devote forty years’ worth of holidays to produce a magisterial two-volume work on George Whitefield. Nevertheless, pastoral ministry is much more akin to the work of a GP than to the work of an ears-eyes-nose-and-throat specialist, or to that of a surgeon who does nothing but Mohs surgery. And that means he is obligated to devote some time each year to reading in broad areas. One of those areas is historical theology. Well-chosen historical literature exposes us to different cultures and times, expanding our horizons, enabling us to see how Christians in other times and places have thought through what the Bible says and how to apply the gospel to all of life. Keep reading! I was exposed to John Chrysostom and Athanasius of Alexandria when I was a young man; only in recent years have I read much more of them. Reading Reformation sources is one part of this happy privilege and responsibility.

¹ An abbreviated form of this essay has appeared in *9Marks Journal*.

(2) More specifically, a growing knowledge of historical theology accomplishes wonders in destroying the illusion that insightful and rigorous exegesis began in the nineteenth or twentieth century. Not everything that was written five hundred years ago, or fifteen hundred years ago, is wholly admirable and worth repeating, any more than everything that is written today is wholly admirable. But such historical reading is the only effective antidote to the tragic attitude of one seminary (name withheld to protect the guilty) which long argued that its students needed to learn only good exegesis and responsible hermeneutics: they didn't need to learn what others think, for with exegesis and hermeneutics under their belt they could turn the crank and deliver faithful theology all by themselves. How naïve to think that exegesis and hermeneutics are neutral, value-free disciplines! The reality is that we need to listen to other pastor-theologians, both from our own day and from the past, if we are to grow in richness, nuance, insight, self-correction, and gospel fidelity.

(3) But why focus on the Reformation in particular? There are plenty of critics quite happy to write off the Reformation as a period with merely antiquarian interest. One pundit at an Australian institution recently protested that the Reformation was a great disaster because it “killed missions.” Sometimes one doesn't know whether to laugh or cry—but one thing is certain, such negations display no first hand knowledge of the primary sources. More broadly, any serious exposure to the Reformers' writings makes it hard not to see the sweep and reach of the Reformation. Although it was triggered by the question of indulgences, debate over indulgences soon led, directly or indirectly, to probing debates on authority, the locus of revelation (Should we seize on a deposit ostensibly given to the church embracing both Scripture and Tradition, or on *sola Scriptura*?), purgatory, the authority by which sins are forgiven, the treasury of satisfactions, the nature and locus of the church, the nature and authority of priest/presbyters, the nature and function of the Eucharist, saints, justification, sanctification, the nature of the new birth, the enslaving power of sin, and much more. All of these are still central issues in the theological syllabus today. Even the issue of indulgences is still important: both Pope Benedict and Pope Francis have offered plenary special indulgences under certain circumstances (though in a more restrained structure than that adopted by Tetzl). Moreover, the study of the Reformation is especially salutary as a response to those who think the so-called “Great Tradition,” as preserved in the earliest ecumenical creeds, is invariably an adequate basis for ecumenical unity—as if there were no heresies invented after the fourth century. On this front, study of the Reformation usefully fosters a little historical realism.

(4) In addition to the hermeneutical distinctiveness of the Reformation that sprang from *sola Scriptura*, the Reformers worked hard to develop a rigorous hermeneutic that was clear of the vagaries of the fourfold hermeneutic that crested during the Middle Ages. This does *not* mean they were simplistic literalists, unable to appreciate different literary genres, subtle metaphors, and other symbol-laden figures of speech; it means, rather, that they worked hard to let Scripture speak on its own terms, without allowing external methods to be imposed on the text like an extra-textual grid designed to guarantee the “right” answers. In part, this was tied to their understanding of *claritas Scripturae*, the perspicuity of Scripture. Without in any sense reducing the role of the teacher/preacher of Scripture, let alone the many perplexities of Scripture, they were convinced that Scripture does not need an authoritative interpretation of Scripture provided by the Magisterium. Although contemporary discussions of hermeneutics largely focus on slightly different agendas, the parallels are striking. In particular, Calvin's commentaries are so adept at following the line of the text that they are still read appreciatively today.

(5) It has been said that if you want good theology grounded in robust exegesis and expository preaching, turn to Reformed theology, but if you want spirituality, turn to Catholicism. In the past I have occasionally addressed that bifurcation: e.g., “When Is Spirituality Spiritual? Reflections on Some Problems of Definition,” *JETS* 37 (1994): 381–94. Catholic theory on spirituality commonly distinguishes between the living of ordinary Catholics, and the spiritual living of those who are really deeply committed Catholics. It’s almost a Catholic version of “higher life” theology. It is said to lead to mystical connection to God, and to be characterized by extraordinary spiritual practices and disciplines. But although I have read right through, say, Julian of Norwich, I find a great deal of subjective mysticism and virtually no grounding in Scripture or the gospel. And for the life of me I cannot imagine either Peter or Paul recommending monastic withdrawal in order to attain greater spirituality: it is always a danger when certain ascetic practices become normative paths to spirituality when there is no apostolic support for them. The contemporary generation, tired of merely cerebral approaches to Christianity, is drawn to late patristic and medieval patterns of spirituality. What a relief, then, to turn to the warmest of the writings of the Reformers, and discover afresh the pursuit of God and his righteousness well-grounded in holy Scripture. That is why Luther’s letter to his barber remains such a classic: it is full of godly application of the gospel to ordinary Christians, building up a conception of spirituality that is not reserved for the elite of the elect but for all brothers and sisters in Christ. Similarly, the opening chapters of Book III of Calvin’s *Institutes* provide more profound reflection on true spirituality than many much longer contemporary volumes.

(6) The Reformation is of central importance for understanding modern Western history. Three large-scale movements set the stage for the contemporary Western world: the Renaissance, the Reformation, and the Enlightenment. Each of the three is complex, and scholars continue to debate many facets of each. Nevertheless, the raw claim for the pivotal role of these three movements cannot easily be challenged. In addition to the focused clarity on the gospel fostered by the Reformation, many of its ideas—such as the emphasis on Scripture alone as the final authority, increased clarity on the distinguishable differences between giving to God and to Caesar their respective dues (which in turn led to developments in thought, some helpful and some unhelpful, on the relationships between church and state)—led directly or indirectly to Protestant denominations around the world, which in turn contributed, directly or indirectly, to worldwide missionary movements, and to several European wars.

(7) There are lessons to be learned from the Reformation about the sovereignty of God in movements of revival and reformation. After the fact, it is tempting to trace out what happened and view the sequence of events as almost inevitable—relatively simple arrays of cause and effect. We begin with Luther’s ninety-five theses and show the reasons why the Reformation unfolded the way it did. On the other hand, a little historical imagination easily conjures up an alternative world in which the posting of the ninety-five theses proved to be nothing more than a damp squib. After all, there were other reformers and reform movements that showed early promise, but that largely sputtered out. John Wycliffe (c. 1320–1384) was a theologian, philosopher, churchman, ecclesiastical reformer, and Bible translator, and the work he did anticipated the Reformation, but it could not be said to have precipitated it. Jan Hus (1369–1415) was a Czech priest, reformer, scholar, rector of Charles University in Prague, and architect of a reforming movement, often called “Hussitism,” but of course he was martyred and his movement, though important in Bohemia, achieved little more in Europe than predecessor status. Why did Luther, Calvin, and Zwingli live on long enough to give direction to a massive Reformation, while Bible translator William Tyndale (1494–1536) was murdered? Historical hindsight offers many reasons why this one lived and that one died, why this reforming action fizzled and that one ignited an

irrepressible flame. The historical details are worth understanding, but the eyes of faith will see the hand of God in genuine reformation, and remind us to offer him our praises for what he has done, and our petitions for what we still beg him to do.

(8) The Reformation stands out as a movement that sought to integrate exegesis of the biblical books with what we would today call systematic theology. Not all the Reformers did this the same way. Some acted as if they were expounding the biblical texts, but tended in reality to jump from seminal word or phrase to the next seminal word or phrase, stopping at each point to unload theological treatments of the various “loci.” Bucer, for example, followed the text more closely but also unloaded his treatment of the “loci” as he went along, making his commentaries extraordinarily long and dense. Calvin strove in his commentaries for what he called “lucid brevity,” and he reserved his systematic theology primarily for what grew to become the four volumes of *Institutes of the Christian Religion*. Indeed, Calvin’s commentaries are so “bare bones” that not a few scholars have criticized him for not including enough theology in them. But what is striking about all these Reformers, regardless of their successes or failures to bring about appropriate integration, is the way in which they simultaneously attempted to expound the Bible and engage in serious theologizing. By contrast, today few systematicians are excellent exegetes, and few exegetes evince much interest in systematic theology. The exceptions merely prove the rule. There are many reasons why the Reformers were models in this regard—but whatever the reasons, we have much to learn from them.

(9) The Reformers read their own times well. While leaning on the “norming norm” of holy Scripture, they truly understood where the fault lines lay in their own time and place. Some of the same issues prevail today. On the other hand, what we should take away from the Reformers in this regard is not simply the list of topics on which *they* majored, but the importance of understanding *our* times and learning how to engage our times with the truth of Scripture. Doubtless this is the place where it is worth including a few lines on some of the ways in which we should *not* slavishly seek to imitate the Reformers. Their agendas are not always ours, and should not be. Moreover, the mode of discourse they commonly deployed was far more inflamed than what is acceptable today—though it is not always clear if the contemporary restraint is a function of increased tolerance and courtesy, or the result of apathy and indifference to truth. After all caveats have been entered, however, the degree of invective in the age of the Reformation, especially (but not exclusively) from the pen of Luther, was not admirable, and his anti-Semitism was utterly without excuse.

There are three wrong approaches to the Reformers and their writings. First, we may ignore them, but that will simply guarantee that we impoverish ourselves. Second, we may idolize them, but like all idolatries this one displeases God and guarantees we will not listen very well to other voices in the history of the church. Third, we may do no more than remind ourselves of their errors, failures, and shortcomings, and in consequence dismiss them with contempt; but if we treat all historical figures this way, consistency demands that we listen to no one, starting with ourselves.

There is so very much that is good in the Reformation heritage, even if I want to distance myself from parts of it. So let me end by mentioning a diversity of sources one may use to get started. The collected works of Luther are available in CD: my copy (given to me by a former student) is much cherished. If you want to warm yourself with Reformation spirituality, start with the wholly admirable book by Calvin that I’ve already mentioned, viz., *A Little Book on the Christian Life* (Sanford, FL: Reformation Trust, 2017). This is a fresh and delightful translation of several of the opening chapters of Book III of the *Institutes*. I am currently reading it through with the students in my Spiritual Formation Group. Serious readers

will want to scan some of Calvin's commentaries and work their way through the *Institutes*. At some juncture, it is important to read good biographies of the main players. For Luther, the standout volume is still that of Roland H. Bainton, *Here I Stand: A Life of Martin Luther* (New York: New American Library, 1950). I first read it when I was in seminary almost fifty years ago; my wife has just read it, and found it no less gripping than I did. I have many biographies of Calvin; I cannot say which one is "best." Stimulating and challenging are the essays in the recent book by Eric Landry and Michael S. Horton, *The Reformation Then and Now* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 2017). For those wanting to immerse themselves in the way Genevan pastors, in the wake of Calvin's teaching and influence, gave themselves to pastoral ministry, one simply cannot do better than read Scott Manetsch, *Calvin's Company of Pastors: Pastoral Care and the Emerging Reformed Church, 1536–1609*, Oxford Studies in Historical Theology (New York: OUP, 2013)—a work both scholarly and lucid, both informative and edifying.

Keep reading!

STRANGE TIMES

I'm (Not) Getting Sentimental over You

— Daniel Strange —

Daniel Strange is acting principal and tutor in Culture, Religion and Public Theology at Oak Hill College, London.

'Post-Diana, Britain will indeed be another country. That week we witnessed a defining moment in our history.'¹ Thus Professor Anthony O'Hear ends his infamous 1998 essay claiming that in the extraordinary public reaction to the tragic death of the self-styled 'queen of people's hearts' we were witnessing an apotheosis: sentimentality personified and canonised. The then British prime-minister Tony Blair called such commentators 'right-wing old-fashioned snobs'² Some of the tabloid papers revealed a darker side, labelling O'Hear as a 'poisonous professor, a rat-faced, little loser.' Now, on the twentieth anniversary of those tumultuous events, events which the media have made us live through *again* in painstaking detail, O'Hear would seem to be vindicated. For all the genuine sadness, solidarity, and determination of the human spirit, recent public responses to terror attacks, tragedies and celebrity deaths have highlighted a pervasive and unbearably icky sticky sentimentality, seemingly immune from criticism, which continues to seep into all areas of cultural life in the UK. Ostentatious public expressions of emotion, media interview after interview about how such-and-such an event made the interviewee 'feel', more frequent and increasingly lengthier 'minutes of silence' at major events, lapel badges that we feel obliged to wear, simplistic analyses ('terrorism has no religion'), and banal platitudes (pick any one of a thousand versions of 'we just need to love one-another') are slowly suffocating us. It's all too much because it's so false, or to be more apposite, fake.

Now immediately I'm caught in a dilemma. I want to say some things about this sentimentality epidemic to an international audience, but I fear I can't without coming across as that stereotypical Brit: somewhat repressed, 'buttoned-up', 'stiff-upper lipped' and worst of all, a cynic. And I'm not. I'm really not. Ethnically, I tick the amorphous UK Census box known as 'mixed' (I'm half English, half Indo-Guyanese). Environmentally, I'm not the product of the kind of English educational system sometimes associated with these characteristics. Personally, I like to think I'm fairly self-aware and consider myself prone to bouts of passion and excitability. I'm more a heart-on-my-sleeve guy than not. Moreover, theologically, in my seminary teaching over the years, I've enthusiastically supported and advocated the Reformed re-discovery of a 'kardiopitic' wholism in our understanding of Christian worldview, biblical anthropology, and cultural apologetics, all of which shape our preaching, discipleship and leadership. The work of scholars such as David Naugle, James Sire, and James K. A. Smith in these areas has been

¹ Anthony O'Hear, 'Diana, Queen of Hearts: Sentimentality Personified and Canonised', in *Faking It: The Sentimentalisation of Modern Society*, ed. Digby Anderson and Peter Mullen (London: Social Affairs Unit, 1998), 190.

² 'Blair's blast at the Diana 'snobs'' *Sunday Mirror*, April 19, 1998.

a helpful corrective to what can be a Cartesian rationalistic bent within conservative evangelicalism.³ I am sympathetic with John Frame's perspectival take on the human personality and his critique of the 'primacy of the intellect.'⁴ In short, emotion and affection are not second-class faculties. And yet, the corruption of emotion that we see in sentimentality is worrying and needs to be addressed because our individual and communal Christian lives are not immune to this blight.

Tracing the roots of sentimentality back to the Enlightenment Romantic tradition is pretty obvious.⁵ However defining what we mean by sentimentality is notoriously difficult. We may well have heard various aphoristic definitions. 'A sentimentalist', Oscar Wilde wrote, 'is one who desires to have the luxury of an emotion without paying for it.... Indeed, sentimentality is merely the bank holiday of cynicism.'⁶ D.H. Lawrence defines sentimentalism as

the working off on yourself of feelings you haven't really got. We all *want* to have certain feelings: feelings of love, of passionate sex, of kindness and so forth. Very few people really feel love or sex passion or kindness, or anything that goes at all deep. So the mass just fake those feelings inside themselves. Faked feelings! The world is all gummy with them. They are better than real feelings, because you can spit them out when you brush your teeth; and tomorrow you can fake them afresh.⁷

The novelist Milan Kundera is often quoted as catching the essence of the sentimental: 'two tears flow in quick succession. The first tear says: how nice to see children running on the grass! The second tear says: How nice to be moved, together with all mankind, by children running on the grass.'⁸

Jeremy Begbie helpfully delineates three linked elements in the sentimental: (1) the misrepresentation of reality through the evading or trivialisation of evil, (2) emotional self-indulgence and (3) the failing to take appropriate costly action.⁹ Sentimentality stifles. Drawing on Metrovic's study *Postemotional Society*¹⁰, Dick Keyes notes that 'our real and authentic emotions are there, but are buried under feelings that we feel we are *meant* to feel in whatever situation we are in.'¹¹ As a result, our emotions have become dead and abstracted with no commitment to action.¹² Sentimentality simplifies. There seems little room for nuance, complexity and fortitude. Our world consists of clear-cuts: of goodies and baddies, victims

³ See David K. Naugle, *Worldview: The History of a Concept* (Grand Rapids, Eerdmans: 2002); James W. Sire, *Naming the Elephant: Worldview as Concept* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2004); James K. A. Smith, *You Are What You Love: The Spiritual Power of Habit* (Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2016).

⁴ John Frame, *The Doctrine of the Knowledge of God* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 1987), 335–40.

⁵ For example see Lucy Sullivan, 'The Corruption of Christianity: The History and Origins of sentimentality' in *Faking It: The Sentimentalisation of Modern Society*, ed. Digby Anderson and Peter Mullen (London: Social Affairs Unit, 1998), 191–212.

⁶ Oscar Wilde, *The Letters of Oscar Wilde*, ed. Rupert Hart-Davis (London: Rupert Hart-David, 1962), 501.

⁷ D. H. Lawrence, *Selected Essays* (London: Penguin, 1954), 224.

⁸ Milan Kundera, *The Unbearable Lightness of Being* (New York: Harper & Row, 1984), 251.

⁹ Jeremy Begbie, 'Beauty, Sentimentality and the Arts', in *The Beauty of God: Theology and the Arts*, ed. Daniel Treier, Mark Husbans and Roger Lundin (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2007), 45–69.

¹⁰ Stjepan Meštrović, *Postemotional Society* (London: Sage, 1997).

¹¹ Dick Keyes, 'Sentimentality: Significance for Apologetics' in ed. Bruce A. Little, *Francis Schaeffer: A Mind and Heart for God* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2010), 94.

¹² Meštrović, *Postemotional Society*, 56.

and perpetrators, oppressed citizens and oppressive authorities. Every situation demands an immediate answer. Intractability is never entertained. In this sense sentimentality is infantile. Sentimentality is selfish. As Roger Scruton puts it, ‘Sentimentality is that peculiarly human vice which consists in directing your emotions toward your own emotions, so as to be the subject of a story told by yourself.’¹³ Although it pretends to care for the ‘other’, it really only care cares for the self to the detriment of the ‘other’ who becomes a peripheral means to an end.

Public sentimentality has a peculiar character that often accentuates these traits to monstrous proportions. Theodore Dalrymple speculates that the rise of public expressions of sentimentality relates to the impact of mass media: ‘In such a world, what is done or happens in private is not done or has not happened at all, at least not in the fullest possible sense. It is not real in the sense that reality television is real.’¹⁴ And as he later notes, ‘Emotions are now like justice: they must not only be felt, but seen to be felt.’¹⁵ If sentimentality means the need to show that you *really* care, then to be noticed in public one has to embark on a ‘*really* show you care’ one-upmanship programme which becomes more and more excessive in its expression and therefore less and less appropriate with the social situation itself. Add to this media and social media getting in on the ‘caring act’ and things are quickly whipped up into a care-fest frenzy. Is there any harm in this? Yes, because very quickly it is revealed that *not* to play the care game is to be seen to be cold or callous (cf. the ‘rat-faced loser’, O’Hear). In this way, public expressions of sentimentality are coercive and monolithic, demanding an emotional conformity or an emotional correctness which denies that emotional expressivity might differ among people and among cultures. I think this is partly what was underlying the criticism of British prime minister Theresa May’s response to London’s Grenfell Tower tragedy earlier this year.¹⁶ Public expressions of emotion should have a health warning attached. They should be engaged with responsibly, reflectively and possibly with restraint. As Dalrymple notes,

On the reasonable assumption that it is under conscious control, the degree to which an emotion is expressed is therefore a moral question. What is permissible and even laudable among intimates and confidants is reprehensible between strangers. Indeed, the wish or demand that all emotions should be equally expressible on all occasions and at all times destroys the very possibility of intimacy. If the entire world is your confidant, then no-one is. The distinction between private and public is abolished, with a consequent shallowing of life.¹⁷

Indeed, he goes even further. Not only should expressions of emotion be the subject of discipline but the emotion itself. He recognises that this is thoroughly counter-cultural to what he calls the

¹³ Roger Scruton, *Gentle Regrets: Thoughts from a Life* (New York: Continuum, 2005), 102, quoted in Keyes, ‘Sentimentality’, 93.

¹⁴ Theodore Dalrymple, *Spoilt Rotten! The Toxic Cult of Sentimentality* (London: Gibson Square, 2015), 83.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 144.

¹⁶ See Maya Oppenheim, ‘Theresa May is “not one of those people who shows emotion as openly as others”, says Tory MP’, *Independent*, 18 June 2017, <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/theresa-may-doesnt-show-emotion-bob-neill-grenfell-tower-criticism-a7796131.html>; ‘May’s Top Aide Defends PM’s Grenfell Response after Newsnight Interview’ *The Guardian*, 17 June 2017, <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2017/jun/17/theresa-may-avoids-questions-on-personal-response-to-grenfell-disaster>.

¹⁷ Dalrymple, *Spoilt Rotten!*, 87.

'Cartesian point of moral epistemology: I'm angry therefore I'm right.'¹⁸ To say to someone that they are not 'feeling' right does not go down well. However, emotions are not self-justifying and can be controlled to the point that a new disposition may be grown. Once again it is the appropriateness of our emotional response in a particular situation comes into question. Michael Hann has written that the mourning sickness felt over a celebrity death is down to the fact that "those born in the 1950s and 1960s were the first generations to be co-parented by popular culture."¹⁹ Therefore when a celebrity dies we feel we have lost a family member. But on reflection we haven't have we? We have had no real personal relationship with this person. We do not know them, only about them and the image they and others have manufactured of them. Sad and sympathetic yes, but grief-stricken and hysterical?

In terms of theological anthropology, sentimentality reflects the disintegration of human personhood that follows the suppression of human dependence on God. In modern society this is what Andrew Fellowes calls the intensity over profundity principle.²⁰ The modern self has turned in on itself and has lost its identity. We feel like ghosts – nothing is real and everything is an image: How do you make a ghost feel real? The criteria are simply physical sensations. When I feel something as a physical sensation then I know I am alive. The ghost comes alive. Physical sensations are tied to the body and that means search for myself will focus on my body. The more emotional I am the more alive I feel. However, sentimentality is an example of the rebellious image bearer's suppression of truth. It detaches us from reality because we do not want to face reality. As Scruton notes, 'Sentimentality causes us not merely to write in clichés, but to feel in clichés too, lest we be troubled by the truth of our condition.'²¹ Sentimentality is fantastical. It is tragically ironic that the loser in all this is the 'other' who forgotten and neglected. Sentimentality's pressure for simplicity and quick response means that authorities are bullied into quick fixes and not the hard slog of reflecting on what might be long term solutions which really would be caring. While it testifies to the ruined *imago Dei*, a stadium rendition of 'Somewhere over the rainbow', however heart-felt, is not going to defeat Isis.²²

But as well as confronting sentimentality, we are able to connect with it. Suppressed *truth* is exactly that. First, the public expressions of sentimentality we are witnessing, are a strange and unstable love-child of materialistic and pantheistic worldviews. Emotions are the way we participate in fundamental reality which when shared in mass movements offer a way of transcending the physicality of emotional response. Emotional openness is openness to the concerns of others which somehow opens up into ultimate concerns.²³ Second, while we note that under the sun, 'troubles do not melt like lemon drops'²⁴ the soaring rendition of a song like *Over the Rainbow* speaks to our inbuilt and God-given recognition

¹⁸ Ibid., 90.

¹⁹ Michael Hann, 'Co-parented by popular culture: why celebrity deaths affect us so deeply,' <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2017/sep/17/popular-culture-celebrity-deaths-harry-dean-stanton-husker-du>.

²⁰ Andrew Fellowes, 'Narcissism: The Worldview of Self,' <https://www.bethinking.org/human-life/narcissism-the-worldview-of-self>.

²¹ Roger Scruton, *An Intelligent Person's Guide to Modern Culture* (South Bend, IN: St. Augustine's Press, 2000), 80.

²² I am thinking here of Ariana Grande's rendition as part of the benefit concert, 'One Love Manchester,' held on June 4, 2017, which was organised following the terrorist bombing after her concert at Manchester Arena two weeks earlier.

²³ For example, see the Facebook video, 'The Things that Connect Us,' <https://vimeo.com/57263769>.

²⁴ Taken from *Somewhere Over the Rainbow* by Arlen and Harburg.

that our home as we currently know it is simply not enough, that there is more, that there must be more, that something is broken and it needs fixing. This song is just another instantiation, albeit in the form of popular song, of what is known as *Sehnsucht*, the untranslatable and often mystical sense of longing and yearning for happiness and fulfilment in the face of reality which does not fulfil or provide happiness. J. H. Bavinck calls this the magnetic point of 'I and salvation'. It is the recognition of a need for redemption, that something somewhere has gone wrong and that deliverance is needed: 'man has that remarkable tendency not to accept reality as it presents itself to him, but he always dreams of the better world in which life will be healthy and safe.'²⁵ The opportunity for points of apologetic gospel connection are obvious.

How can the church follow a different path when it comes to sentimentality particularly its public expression? First, we need to confess that we have been affected. We live in cultures that shape our own ways of being. Our personal lives, corporate worship and theology have been impacted by sentimentality.²⁶ We need to be honest about that, come before God in repentance, and follow Christ in the better way he shows to us. Providentially such a better way was demonstrated to me as I prepared to preach at a student's induction around the same time as the Diana anniversary.

Os Guinness often states that contrast is the mother of clarity. In 2 Corinthians 6:3–13, we witness the apostle Paul's own outburst of emotion:

We have spoken freely to you, Corinthians, and opened wide our hearts to you. We are not withholding our affection from you, but you are withholding yours from us. As a fair exchange – I speak as to my children – open wide your hearts also.

Here we have the antithesis of sentimentality. Sin is taken seriously, there is no emotional self-indulgence and we see a demonstration of costly action. This is a cry from the heart which is really real and in no way fake. Paul's emotional plea is perfectly appropriate to the situation he is facing. He is not expressing emotion with strangers but with his spiritual children. He is passionate not about trivialities but about his children rejecting him and taking God's grace in vain. He does not avoid confrontation but tackles it head on. Most of all, he demonstrates that an authentic minister and an authentic ministry is not about himself and his fame but really does care for the other, not in a quick-fix, but in a hard slog:

Rather, as servants of God we commend ourselves in every way: in great endurance; in troubles, hardships and distresses; in beatings, imprisonments and riots; in hard work, sleepless nights and hunger; in purity, understanding, patience and kindness; in the Holy Spirit and in sincere love; in truthful speech and in the power of God; with weapons of righteousness in the right hand and in the left; through glory and dishonour, bad report and good report; genuine, yet regarded as impostors; known, yet regarded as unknown; dying, and yet we live on; beaten, and yet not killed; sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; poor, yet making many rich; having nothing, and yet possessing everything.

We thank God that he has preserved for us as public truth, a personal correspondence like this from which we can learn how to lead in a way that our churches and Christian communities can be and must be refuges from the sentimental and oases of the real. We learn from Paul as Paul learns from

²⁵ J. H. Bavinck, *The Church Between Temple and Mosque* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1966), 34.

²⁶ For more on this see Begbie, 'Beauty, Sentimentality and the Arts,' and Keyes, 'Sentimentality.'

Christ, our gloriously unsentimental Saviour and Lord who 'has put on our flesh, and also its feelings,'²⁷ and did so perfectly.

Positively and practically we should be focusing on virtue formation as a way our emotions are controlled and properly directed towards the fulfilment of human life. We don't need to reject the power of shared emotion in any of the examples of recent times. Neither should we compartmentalise or put in competition with each other human faculties: reason, emotion, imagination, etc. We aren't simply left as passive respondents to emotions we can't control. By the Spirit Christians are being formed into the likeness of Christ whose emotional life is the example we follow after. As Warfield says, 'We are not to be content to gaze upon him or to admire him: we must become imitators of him, until we are metamorphosed into the same image.'²⁸ Virtues are the way in which the emotions are directed eschatologically towards the fulfilment of our humanity in Christ. Our gathering together in our songs, prayers, liturgies and around the preached Word are patterns of worship that should lead us to increasingly sanctified shared emotional responses which we then take into all of life.

²⁷ John Calvin, *Commentary on Hebrews*, on Heb 4:15.

²⁸ B. B. Warfield, 'The Emotional Life of Our Lord', in *Biblical and Theological Studies: A Commemoration of 100 Years of Princeton Seminary* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1912), 88.

Tayloring Christian Politics in Our Secular Age

— Bruce Riley Ashford —

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Abstract: Charles Taylor’s *A Secular Age* explores the implications of Western civilization’s transition to a modern secular age in which theistic belief has not only been displaced from the default position, but is positively contested by various other options. It is merely one option among many, and an implausible and unimaginable one at that. Building on Taylor’s analysis, Christians have a unique opportunity to reimagine our political witness in light of our secular age, reframe public issues, reform public dispositions, reshape political activism, and recover the lost art of Christian persuasion.

The contemporary era in Western civilization represents a radical desacralizing of the social order, unprecedented in human history.¹ The German theologian Dietrich Bonhoeffer described it as a “world come of age,” an era in which we have learned how to manage life without any reference to God.² American sociologist Philip Rieff referred to it as the third era in human history, an era in which sacred order has been severed from the social and cultural order, leaving Westerners without a matrix of meaning or an obligatory code of permissions and prohibitions.³

But it is perhaps the Canadian philosopher Charles Taylor who, more than any other, has explored the implications of Western society’s transition to a modern secular age. Although his analysis and evaluation can be found in a number of significant works, including *Sources of the Self*, *The Malaise of Modernity*, and *Modern Social Imaginaries*, it crystallizes and peaks in *A Secular Age*.⁴

Here he describes our secular age as one that considers belief in God implausible or unimaginable.⁵ As modern Westerners, we live entirely within an “immanent” frame of reference. In the immanent

¹This essay is originally published as “Politics and Public Life in a Secular Age,” in *Our Secular Age: Ten Years of Reading and Applying Charles Taylor*, ed. Collin Hansen (Deerfield, IL: The Gospel Coalition, 2017), 87–98.

²Dietrich Bonhoeffer, “Letter to Eberhard Bethge (June 8, 1944),” in Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Letters and Papers from Prison*, Dietrich Bonhoeffer Works 8 (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2010), 425–27.

³Philip Rieff, *My Life among the Deathworks* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press), 1–44.

⁴Charles Taylor, *Sources of the Self: The Making of Modern Identity* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989); idem., *The Malaise of Modernity* (Toronto: House of Anansi, 1991); idem., *Modern Social Imaginaries* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2004); idem., *A Secular Age*.

⁵Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 83.

frame, theistic belief not only been displaced from the default position, but is positively contested by myriad other options. It is merely one option among many—and an implausible and unimaginable one at that.

This new context brings with it a new “feel” in which theists and non-theists alike are haunted by doubt. Within the immanent frame, we search for meaning, and find an explosion of different options. As a result we are “fragilized”; surrounded by competing options in close proximity to ourselves, we lack confidence in our own beliefs. We are “cross-pressured”; caught between the modern disenchantment of the world and the haunting of transcendence, we find ourselves in perpetual unease.

But none of this would have happened, Taylor avers, without a political shift in which the West cast off strong forms of sacral authority and embraced a generic sort of “natural” religion. Natural religion was unencumbered by Christianity’s code of permissions and prohibitions, and weakened or blocked out some of the ways Christianity had historically impinged on society and the public square.⁶

In a secular age such as ours, Taylor argues, Christians should avoid the error of secular humanists and Christian fundamentalists—namely, presenting our views with a smug condescension. Instead, we should present our faith humbly and sensitively to our cross-pressured and fragilized neighbors, suggesting that Christianity provides the key to human flourishing, moral transformation, and the unease caused by realities such as time and death. In short, we should allow Christian wisdom and virtue to animate our lives and shape our response.

Taylor’s account of modernity is richly suggestive and helpful for Christians who recognize that the gospel is a public truth that therefore must be brought into an interface with secularized society and culture.⁷ It’s helpful in particular for Christians who wish to make Christianity “imaginable” again in Western politics and public life. Just as the West arrived at the current moment via a political shift in which the West desacralized the public square was sacralized, so must we move beyond this moment by appropriately resacralizing our involvement in public life.

Politics is the art of persuading our fellow citizens—including elected officials—about matters of common concern. As Christians, we want to “win over” others to our point of view on public matters. The gospel is a public truth, and we want it to prevail appropriately on public life. The early church preached the gospel in a way that sacralized the public square and exposed the Roman kingdom as a fraud. How can we do the same in our own context? How can we make the Christian gospel once again plausible and imaginable in our fragilized and cross-pressured era?

As Taylor argues, we cannot offer a merely intellectual remedy. If we wish to make the gospel once again imaginable in our liberal society, we must offer a storied community who embodies its truth. And the church is this community, whose confession and members can make Christianity imaginable again. It alone can reintroduce strong forms of sacral authority, offer a narrative that reimagines public life, reveal a code of permissions and prohibitions that can cause society to flourish, and cultivate the virtues and dispositions that speak to a fragilized and cross-pressured society.

⁶Ibid., 234–42.

⁷The gospel is a public truth in the sense that it announces publicly God’s rule as king. The early church proclaimed the gospel in a way that exposed the Roman kingdom as a fraud. It is God through Jesus, not Rome via Caesar, who rules over all. See John Dickson, “Gospel as News: *Euangelion* from Aristophanes to the Apostle Paul,” *NTS* 51 (2005): 212–30; Lesslie Newbigin, *Truth to Tell: The Gospel as Public Truth* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991).

1. Church Gathered as Organized Political Assembly

In his essay “To Follow a Rule,” Taylor expands on an allusion he makes in *A Secular Age* against intellectualist accounts of public life that view “reason giving” as the end-all and be-all for justifying our beliefs and persuading others. Following Wittgenstein and Bourdieu, he argues that “reason giving has a limit, and in the end must repose in another kind of understanding.”⁸ Especially in a fragilized and cross-pressured context, reason-giving must be placed on the background of active and adroit bodily engagement with others and the world.

Taylor’s argument is consonant with biblical teaching that the local church is a community whose weekly gathering and liturgy embodies the gospel.⁹ One ought not diminish the centrality of the local church for public witness. When Christ ascended in bodily form, he left a new community to embody the gospel for the good of the world. This community is intrinsically political as it assembles weekly, gathering around the confession that the risen and ascended Christ is King. It nourishes our Christian identity and sends us out as public witnesses to Christ’s kingdom. It incubates the dispositions and virtues that advance the common good.¹⁰ In this way the church serves as a formation center for public righteousness.¹¹

The church should recognize that its political “power” is not found primarily in activism, but in its proclamation of the gospel—a proclamation that challenges the *cultus publicus* of any nation, including our American Empire. By proclaiming that Jesus is Lord (and, by implication, that Caesar is not), it nourishes our political identity and foreshadows the day when the King will return to install a one-party system and reconstitute the world under a reign of justice and peace.

Sunday morning public worship, then, prepares us for Monday morning public life.

2. Church Scattered as Organic Public Witness

The church’s political witness is rooted in the soil of the church’s corporate worship, but branches out to bear fruit far beyond the corporate gathering. Our corporate confession of Jesus’s lordship causes us to reimagine the political, reframe public issues, reform public dispositions, reshape political activism, and recover the lost art of persuasion. Each of these fruits nourishes a secular age starving for transcendence.¹²

⁸ Charles Taylor, “To Follow a Rule,” in *Philosophical Investigations* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1995), 179. For a brief exploration of the connection Wittgenstein makes between epistemological justification and embodied communities, and the implications of this connection for theology, see Bruce Riley Ashford, “Wittgenstein’s Theologians: A Survey of Ludwig Wittgenstein’s Impact on Theology,” *JETS* 50 (2007): 357–75.

⁹ James K. A. Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom: Worship, Worldview, and Cultural Formation* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2009), 131–214.

¹⁰ See James K. A. Smith’s *Awaiting the King: Reforming Public Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2017), which provides a corrective to the underemphasis on virtue in Reformed and evangelical accounts of politics and pluralism; John Inazu’s account of “aspirational virtues” and “living speech” in John D. Inazu, *Confident Pluralism: Surviving and Thriving through Deep Difference* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2016), 83–103; and David Brooks’s account of the connection between society and character formation in *The Road to Character* (New York: Random House, 2015).

¹¹ Richard J. Mouw, *Political Evangelism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1973), 35–50.

¹² Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 595.

2.1. Reimagining the Political

In *A Secular Age*, Taylor explores the complicated relation between Christianity and democratic liberalism in the Western political imagination. On the one hand, liberalism grew out of Christian belief and practice and continues to borrow capital from the Christian tradition. On the other hand, liberalism has increasingly distorted that tradition, even while drawing on it.¹³

Instead of positing an intrinsic antithesis between Christianity and liberal democracy, or between Christianity and any given modern political ideology, we should draw on the biblical narrative to help reshape the Western political imagination. God is always *sending* his people (e.g. Gen. 1; Matt. 28), preparing us to bring the gospel into an interface with new contextual realities. The church is always drawing us into worship to nourish our mission-political identity so that it can send us back into the world. Why would the disputed space of free markets, political elections, and public policies be an exception to our missional mandate?

In our secular age, therefore, we must cultivate the type of public witness that recovers the contours of the gospel's political vision—and then brings that vision into a “missionary encounter” with late-modern liberal democracy's political vision.¹⁴ We must find compelling ways to show that the biblical narrative—rather than the narrative of our preferred political party, public intellectual, or media outlet—is the true story of the whole world.¹⁵ We must be keen to identify the idols that haunt modern political ideologies.¹⁶ We must make clear, not only through spoken word but also through embodied habit, that our political affiliations and commitments are tentative in light of our allegiance to Christ. We are a people who believe occupants to Caesar's throne come and go, but Jesus remains forever.

2.2. Reframing Public Issues and Reforming Public Dispositions

Taylor describes the value our secular age places on human flourishing, yet notes that the secular vision for flourishing is stunted, having no transcendent source and no further purpose. In fact, an increasing number of public intellectuals do not merely lack a transcendent source; they urge our society to view “transcendent” morality as something that poisons society and undermines human flourishing.

In response, the Christian community has an opportunity to show how Christianity's transcendent vision not only provides the context within which society can flourish, but how it also does so better than rival visions. Following the lead of patristic fathers such as Augustine and modern intellectuals such as Groen van Prinsterer and Abraham Kuyper, we can argue theologically and philosophically that the “immanent frame” always and necessarily absolutizes some aspect of created reality and, in so doing, distorts cultural institutions and deforms society. We can substantiate our arguments by drawing on social scientists such as Philip Rieff and Robert Putnam to explore the ruinous effects of the “immanent

¹³ Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 234–59.

¹⁴ This point is integral to James K. A. Smith's thesis in *Awaiting the King*.

¹⁵ Lesslie Newbigin, “Evangelism in the Context of Secularization,” in *The Study of Evangelism: Exploring a Missional Practice of the Church*, ed. P. W. Chilcote, L. C. Warner (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008), 46–55.

¹⁶ For an exploration of the idolatrous tendencies of modern Western political ideologies, see David T. Koyzis, *Political Visions and Illusions: A Survey and Critique of Contemporary Ideologies* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2002).

frame” on specific cultural institutions and social goods such as marriage and family, sexuality, art, literature, education, and the economy.

Additionally, we can explore crippling effects of the “immanent frame” on the notion of public morality itself. Historically, all societies have justified moral codes by means of an outside source, but in an unprecedented move, modern Western society has reduced morality to self-authorization.¹⁷ This brings about an ironic situation: our secular age is increasingly concerned with moral permissions and prohibitions, but decreasingly able to justify them.¹⁸ This causes problems politically both in terms of public policy-making and civil demeanor, as citizens cannot articulate *why* “the other” should submit to their self-authorized moral code. Taylor calls this the “extraordinary inarticulacy of modern culture.”¹⁹ Referring to this inarticulacy, Tim Keller writes that we find ourselves in a situation in which “all we can do is shout the other person down.”²⁰

Finally, in a public square in which citizens are shouting each other down, we must build churches and communities that incubate Christian virtue. For example, Taylor bemoans the egocentric disposition fostered by our secular age—a disposition of “mutual display” and “confident smugness” in which we use every medium available to express ourselves loudly so others will overhear.²¹ In response, the church, by God’s grace, can inculcate in us a cruciform disposition of humility in which we use our gifts and resources to serve and empower others. If our Lord—the King of the universe—was willing to serve as a homeless itinerant teacher whose life was crushed on a cross, then we can be willing to work on behalf of persons and groups who are financially disadvantaged, ethnically downtrodden, or socially marginalized. If our Lord turned the other cheek to his tormenters, then we can refuse to respond in kind when we are mocked, demeaned, purposely misrepresented, or demonized.

2.3. Reshaping Political Activism and Recovering the Lost Art of Persuasion

Over the course of the past half-century, many American evangelicals have put their eggs in the basket of short-term political activism—with the emphasis on the *political* and the *short-term*. Often operating out of what Taylor calls a Secular¹ or Secular² mentality, we reduced culture to politics, and politics to short-term activism, assuming a large part of the remedy to our social and cultural ills lies in a quick political fix.²² Repeatedly, we’ve treated each presidential election or mid-term election as the one that—despite all historical evidence to the contrary—will finally deliver our hopes and ease our fears.

In response, the Christian community needs to draw on Kuyper and others to cast a vision in which culture is not reduced to politics. We should take the broad view of cultural influence by working faithfully to renew every dimension of culture—not merely politics, but marriage, family, art, science, business, and education. Our political witness—especially in a Secular³ context—will gain plausibility

¹⁷ Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 580–89.

¹⁸ Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 605–6.

¹⁹ Taylor, *The Malaise of Modernity*, 18.

²⁰ Timothy Keller, *Making Sense of God* (New York: Viking, 2016), 180.

²¹ Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 473–95.

²² In Taylor’s taxonomy of our secular age, Secular¹ represents the Classical/Medieval era, in which “secular” is the opposite of “sacred,” and represents the temporal realm instead of the heavenly. Secular² refers to the Enlightenment era in which the notion of “secular” refers to a purportedly neutral or non-sectarian standpoint. Secular³ refers to our current cross-pressured and fragilized era in which all religious belief is contestable and any particular religious view is merely one option among many.

from a unified and faithful presence in society's many spheres. Additionally, we need to play the long game by not putting all of our hopes in short-term power political power plays. Short-term activism has its place, but its ability to shape society and culture is limited, and it can tempt us to sacrifice long-term witness on the altar of short-term political gain.

As we take the broad view of culture and play the long game of sustainable public witness, we are seeking to recover, as Os Guinness puts it, "the lost art of Christian persuasion." In the decades and centuries immediately after our Lord's ascension, the church used two symbols for the art of Christian advocacy: the closed fist and the open hand. The closed fist represented *dissuasoria*, the negative side of apologetics that defends against attack. The open hand represented *persuasoria*, the positive side of apologetics that uses intellectual, aesthetic, and relational creativity in defense of the gospel. "Expressing the love and compassion of Jesus, and using eloquence, creativity, imagination, humor, and irony, open-hand apologetics had the task of helping to pray open hearts and minds that, for a thousand reasons, had long grown resistant to God's great grace, so that it could shine like the sun."²³

We must regain this lost art of persuasion in the midst of our radically unprecedented cross-pressured and fragilized age. Lesslie Newbigin's exhortation is prescient:

The call to the Church is to enter vigorously into the struggle for truth in the public domain. We cannot look for the security which would be ours in a restored Christendom. Nor can we continue to accept the security which is offered in an agnostic pluralism.... We are called, I think, to bring our faith into the public arena, to publish it, to put it at risk in the encounter with other faiths and ideologies in open debate and argument, and in the risky business of discovering what Christian obedience means in radically new circumstances and in radically human cultures.²⁴

We must embrace the moment God has given us—a secularized, cross-pressured, fragilized moment. When the Lord returns, we will meet him first and foremost as Christians. But we will also meet him as citizens of the modern West. Being a cross-pressured and fragilized Westerner is not the most important dimension of our identity, but it is an unavoidable one for which we will give account. For that reason, it is incumbent on us to tailor our witness for a secular age.

²³ Os Guinness, *Fool's Talk: Recovering the Lost Art of Christian Persuasion* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2015), 253.

²⁴ Lesslie Newbigin, *Truth to Tell: The Gospel as Public Truth* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991), 59.

A Paragon of Faith? Doubting Abraham

— Andrew Chinpeng Ho —

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Abstract: While encrusted generational layers of pious reverence for Abraham have made him out to be a hero of faith, he was not yet one when called at seventy-five. In fact, he would not too irregularly, even mendaciously, evince doubt in God's promises, probably until Isaac's birth. Only by the Aqedah, and then only for the last seventy-five years of his life, would Abraham be a man of faith unshakeable. Yet through this unfaithful man, God chose to solve the specific problem that arose when the families of the earth rebelled against him at the end of primeval history.

1. The Need to Doubt Abr(ah)am

Traditionally Abraham has always been seen as a hero of faith, unvarnished.¹ Most commentators assume faith on Abraham's part from the very start that either grew uninterruptedly over time or was simply maintained at its exalted heights throughout his life, with the occasional lapse or two.² This paper will argue instead that, as the Abraham narrative proceeds apace, the protagonist showed little sign of a growing faith. In the first 25 years after his call, Abraham was shown repeatedly to be weak in faith. Only when he was almost a centenarian, with Isaac's arrival, did he likely begin to grow such that he would act in faith unshakeable at the Aqedah, the binding of Isaac (22:11–19).

Uniformly, Abram's answer to God's call has always been seen as an act of great faith.³ However, Terah had already initiated a move from Ur of the Chaldean in south-eastern Mesopotamia "to go to the land of Canaan (11:31) taking with him Abram, Sarai and Lot. They stopped short in north-western

¹ On the esteem with which Abraham is held in Judaism, see Richard N. Longenecker, "The 'Faith of Abraham' Theme in Paul, James and Hebrews: A Study in the Circumstantial Nature of New Testament Teaching," *JETS* 20 (1977), 204–5. On the Christian side of the ledger, Waltke's remark is also typical: "The plot is driven by Abraham's struggle to trust the Creator in the face of a series of conflicts testing his faith [being asked] to sacrifice the child in whom his offspring will be reckoned." See Bruce K. Waltke with Cathi J. Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2001), 195.

² However, Claus Westermann notes that commentators typically "laud Abram's obedience, at times, in too fulsome a way" (*Genesis 12–36: A Commentary*, trans. John J. Scullion, CC [Minneapolis: Fortress, 1986], 152).

³ For example, Nahum M. Sarna opines that the assurance Abraham "was to become the progenitor of a 'great nation' ... could [not] possibly be fulfilled in [his] lifetime [so] Scripture intended to emphasize ... the magnitude of his act of faith" (*Understanding Genesis: The Heritage of Biblical Israel* [New York: McGraw Hill, 1966], 100).

Mesopotamia when they “came to Haran and dwelt there,” (11:32) where Terah died. It appears that Abram was only continuing what Terah had set out to do.

Indeed, leaving kin and country may have been no “test of faith,” or “a difficult injunction,” or “a tearing away,” or “a break with the ancestors,” Westermann notes. He adds that such explanations “make the serious mistake of understanding Abraham in the context of a sedentary life-style. But [the patriarchs] did not have the concept of “homeland” in our sense; this became possible only with sedentary life.”⁴

Haran was an important caravan center involved in Amorite (northwestern Semitic) migrations. If the Terah clan was involved in the caravan trade, then the move from Haran to Canaan likely involved no drastic lifestyle changes. A city slicker’s transition to a nomadic lifestyle would have been fraught with difficulties that would have made for interesting recounting, of which the text intimates nothing at all.

Even if Abram’s answer to God’s call were a peak in his walk of faith, the other indubitably being the Aqedah, these two acts bookending the Abraham saga should not, by themselves, mandate that he evinced unflinching faith everywhere in between. Yet most commentators might implicitly assume so, which may be why they proffer complicated excuses for Abraham’s obvious shortcomings in between.⁵ Abram put the progenitrix at risk in the harem of pagan potentates, not once but twice (12:10–20; 20:1–18), showing the duplicitous character he was. Not only would no giant of faith do that once but even lesser mortals would likely not. Yet Cassuto argues that Abraham harboured no “base” or “vile” desire to profit at Sarai’s expense. Instead, Abram wanted to protect Sarai’s honour, he says, failing to explain how this self-serving ploy could plausibly not lead to her being unceremoniously ravaged forthwith. Cassuto does admit here that Abraham might be guilty of a “lack of faith” and “falsehood,” but this is excused through some deft racial stereotyping that blames the Bedouin in Abram for his moral shortcomings.⁶

To be sure, some critics do take issue with what they see as Abraham’s duplicity. Of these, feminists predominate.⁷ But these are the exceptions: most commentators would not deign to call Abra(ha)m a man weak in faith. These may also include higher critics who generally see the two stories—Abraham claiming Sarai to be his sister first with Pharaoh and then with Abimelech—as duplicates since key words and expressions are common to the two stories.⁸ But are they motivated to do so because perhaps they implicitly assume that no paragon of faith would be so unspeakably underhanded, not just once but

⁴Westermann, *Genesis 12–36*, 148.

⁵On Abram’s duplicity in passing Sarai off to Pharaoh as his sister (12:12), Hugh White rationalizes that Abram “hears the threatening voices of the Egyptians. This indicates that the forthcoming contest will be ... a contest between the new promise-formed, future-oriented character, and a representative of the type of existing power structure from which he was previously called to separate himself” (*Narration and Discourse in the Book of Genesis* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991], 179–80).

⁶Umberto Cassuto writes: “Abram was still afflicted by one of the faults of the Bedouin character; only in the future would he succeed, little by little, in purifying himself completely” (*A Commentary on the Book of Genesis, Part 2: From Noah to Abraham*, trans. Israel Abrahams [Jerusalem: Magnes Press, Hebrew University, 1964], 348–50).

⁷For instance, Ilona Rashkow muses: “Since discourse often reflects hidden desires, perhaps Abraham’s real motive is to receive gifts from the Egyptians – [he] sees Sarah as expendable because she has no child” (*The Phal-lacy of Genesis: A Feminist-Psychoanalytic Approach* [Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1993], 43). Likewise, Naomi Steinberg, *Kinship and Marriage in Genesis: A Household Economics Perspective* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993), 54.

⁸Gary Rendsburg, *Redaction of Genesis* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1986), 39–40.

twice. However, if Abram were no giant of faith for a long period after God's call, the possibility of this perfidious behavior becomes easier to accept, by virtue of which fantastical excuses for Abram become unnecessary.

Abraham's story begins with Terah's genealogy (11:27–32). Descended from Shem, Terah and his family would have been little different from those who rebelled against God and who tried to make a name for themselves generations ago. Thus also Abram at his calling. Immediately after the genealogy at 12:3b is a promise of blessing for "all the families of the earth."⁹ Prior to 12:3, the Hebrew word for "families" here occurs only in the Table of Nations. If this is an intentional word connection, then 12:3 declares that "all the families of the earth" who rebelled against God in Genesis 11 "are to be blessed in Abraham and his seed," a promise repeated at 18:18 and 22:18.¹⁰ If this was God's solution to the problem, then Abram was "a new Adam [for the] renewal of human life in history ...to reverse the curses of Eden."¹¹

For all this to come through Abram, that conduit ought to be a man of great faith. Yet if it were so, then all glory would redound to Abram, not God. On reflection, then, logic requires a fallible Abraham whose faith would not infrequently wilt under pressure but also stand firm (in)frequently enough for God's purposes to be realized through him. This paper will argue so in four parts: first, "Doubting Abram," from call to covenant cutting; next, "Doubter Still," from covenant man to the Abimelech perfidy; and, then, "Faithful Finally," from Isaac's birth to Abraham's demise, a period when he was arguably the hero of faith. Finally, this construal of Abraham's life is shown to be not incommensurable with that in the New Testament.

2. The Three Abra(ha)ms

2.1. Doubting Abram

At 12:1, God told Abram to leave his land. This is generally regarded as a test of Abram's faith to which he supposedly responded magnificently. If he obeys, he will be a blessing. It is not that he will represent a standard for blessings, for God says to Abram that "you shall be a blessing!" (12:2b), where the verb is in the imperative, that is, "be a blessing."¹² Placed right in the middle of seven phrases in God's

⁹ John H. Sailhamer, *The Pentateuch as Narrative: A Biblical-Theological Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992), 139.

¹⁰ Gerhard Von Rad, "Promised Land and Yahweh's Land," in *The Problem of the Hexateuch and Other Essays*, trans. EWT Dicken (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1966), 92. Likewise, Matthew A. Thomas argues that the five major *toledot* divisions move from all of creation (Gen 2:4) to humanity (5:1), to all living people after the Flood (6:9), to the line through Shem (11:10), and finally in 37:2 to Israel through Jacob (*These Are the Generations: Identity, Covenant, and the "Toledot" Formula*, LHBOTS 551 [London: T&T Clark, 2011], 73).

¹¹ Michael Fishbane, *Biblical Text and Texture: A Literary Reading of Selected Texts* (Oxford: Oneworld, 1998), 39.

¹² Lawrence Turner argues that the imperative בִּרְכֵךְ suggests "be a blessing!" so that v. 3 "should be rendered as consequences of that imperative: 'Be a blessing, so that I may bless those who bless you'" (*Genesis Readings: A New Biblical Commentary* [Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000], 64). Nahum M. Sarna, however, opines that it means "you will serve as the standard by which a blessing is invoked" (*Genesis*, JPS Torah Commentary [Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 1989], 89).

initial speech to the patriarch, “Abram must be more than a recipient. He is both a receptacle for the divine blessing and a transmitter of that blessing,” Hamilton ventures.¹³

But when he set out from Haran, Lot went with him. Abram did not leave his relatives behind: he had a whole caravan in tow. That Lot is important is hinted at by his introduction so early in Terah’s genealogy. But there is no clarification as to why Abraham brought Lot along. Perhaps “the oldest uncle assumed the guardianship of the child of his dead brother, which is clear in 14:12.”¹⁴ Yet 14:12 simply says that the kings of the east “took Lot, Abram’s brother’s son who dwelt in Sodom, and his goods, and left.” How does 14:12 begin to prove that Abram was culturally expected to take care of Lot? It is not even clear that Abraham was Lot’s eldest uncle.

Creative excuses for why Abram did not leave behind his relatives though explicitly commanded abound. For example, based on the 11:31 phrase “they went with them,” Cassuto postulates that Abram, Sarai and Lot “constituted a specific group within the general circle of the family,” one that urged the others to move to Canaan. As a group, they “influenced Terah and the other members of the family to ... travel together to their destination” such that “they went with them” simply means that “all the members of the family *went forth with them*, that is, with Abram, Sarai and Lot.”¹⁵

Yet the text offers no basis to think that Abram and a special group urged the whole clan to come along. And even if Cassuto were right, it simply shows Abram disobeyed God from the very start: he was to leave kith and kin behind. Only Turner correctly observes how this fact “clearly demonstrates that Abram did not” fully obey the command to leave family behind. What is more, it was a huge caravan (12:5) that came along, with “all their possessions that they had gathered, and the beings whom they had acquired in Haran.”¹⁶

Though Lot plays a significant role in Abram’s life, he is not directly mentioned as a beneficiary of the covenant nor is he present whenever God reveals himself to the patriarch. Still, Sarai is barren, so the next generation might have had to come through Lot. Perhaps it was for this very cause that Abram brought him along, being without any children at age seventy-five. But bringing Lot along was a grievous mistake. Abram went because God told him to whereas Lot simply followed Abram, as an orphan. It is only after Sodom’s destruction that Lot finally separates from Abram for good. It is only then that God issues his land grant promise to Abram that implicitly included the choice land he had given to Lot, progenitor of Israel’s enemies, the Moabites and Ammonites.

For several years after God called Abram, He would not appear to him again. In that extended period, Sarai remained barren. As they were not getting any younger, doubts must have assailed Abram’s mind. Then there was a famine, a parallel to Sarai’s barren womb, which would see Abram heading to Egypt, where his duplicitous ploy would lead to Sarai ending up in Pharaoh’s harem. While a vacillating faith explains Abram’s perfidy, it may have not been just him not waiting for God to act but, indeed, a gambit at ridding himself of Sarai, who was not going to bear him an heir anyway. As Steinberg notes,

¹³ Victor P. Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, NICOT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987), 373. Similarly Gordon J. Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, WBC (Waco, TX: Word, 1987), 330.

¹⁴ Sarna, *Genesis*, 90.

¹⁵ Cassuto, *From Noah to Abraham*, 280–81.

¹⁶ Turner, *Genesis Readings*, 64–65.

“Sarai is both primary wife and woman, yet she is never said to be the one whom Abram loves, as he is said to love Isaac in 12:22.”¹⁷

Abram claimed that he thought commoners might threaten his life (v. 12) but instead it was Pharaoh who did so (v. 15). Yet, things did work out for Egypt was indeed the good life. God would bring great plagues on Pharaoh and his house to preserve the progenitrix. Thus, Abram’s mendacity was punished with plagues, though inflicted on the cheated, not the cheater and, despite his faithlessness, Abram left Egypt materially enhanced (12:20).

At 13:8–13, problems in the land once again impelled Abraham towards “the plain of the Jordan [that] was well watered everywhere ... like the garden of God, like the land of Egypt” (13:10). A second Egypt beckoned, promising the good life but its end would be fire and brimstone from heaven. Yet all would end well for Abram and Lot. Just as Pharaoh’s officials made sure Abram departed from Egypt (12:20), God “sent Lot out of the midst of the overthrow” (19:29).

At this point, however, the land could not have appeared to be where Abram would become the “great nation” (12:2). Nothing had gone right for him there. He had thought he might make it in Egypt, but then he was sacked from it by the most powerful man in the known world. His presumptive heir, Lot, was saved but lost all the worldly riches he had accumulated while living in the land that God had promised to Abram. Was God’s promise ever coming to pass? Things must have looked bleak.

Then his putative heir was abducted by warring kings. At Mamre, against the most unequal of odds, Abram successfully rescued Lot (14:13–20). Did he go to war against such odds just to save the man whom he assumed would inherit God’s promise? Or did Abram have so much faith that God would deliver his assumed heir? The text gives no hint. But rather than this episode being a redactor’s infelicitous insertion, if Abram were motivated to save his presumptive heir, then the derring-do makes good sense.

After this exhilarating episode, the unfaithful Abram is evident yet again. Heretofore, God had said thrice to Abram that the land was to be his (12:7; 13:15, 17). At Genesis 12, God had sworn an unconditional oath to Abram, so no covenant was called for. Years later, at Genesis 15 and still without a son, Abram would have the chutzpah to tell God directly: “You have given me no seed, and one born in my house [Eliezer of Damascus] is my heir!” (v. 3).¹⁸

By this time, Abram might have given up on Lot as heir and begun to pin his hopes, however unwillingly, upon Eliezer instead. Abram’s unbelief thus voiced saw God deciding to cut a covenant with this mere mortal. A party to cutting a covenant was, in essence, swearing that should he fail to keep its terms, he was to die like these animals cut into pieces. Adopting such a death position assured the other party one was going to keep the covenant at all costs. However, “a deep sleep fell upon Abram ... a frightening great darkness fell upon him” (15:12). In that state, Abram could not walk between the pieces as required. Was it because God wanted for the burden to be solely his?

That this was God’s response to a man full of fear is suggested by the quixotic reassurance that “the word of God came to Abram in a vision, saying, “Do not be afraid, Abram. I am your shield, your reward is exceedingly great (15:1). But why was he afraid? At the end of Genesis 14, he was basking in victory at war but perhaps Abram feared retaliation. Yet, all three times that God announced “Do not be afraid” to

¹⁷ Steinberg, *Kinship and Marriage in Genesis*, 53n29.

¹⁸ Sarna, *Understanding Genesis*, 113. In the Hebrew, “to me” (לִּי) is placed before “give” (נָתַתָּהּ) for emphasis.

the patriarchs—Abram at 15:1, Isaac at 26:24 and Jacob at 46:3—neither Abram’s son nor grandson had just won a war, such that they would be wary of retaliation.

Three times, God had sworn to give Abram the land (12:7; 13:15, 17). Thus, in lamenting that Eliezer was going to be his heir, what doubting Abram was saying was: “I am not getting the land myself, and you have not even given me a son who might inherit it in due course. So why say you have given me the land?” If this, then God’s reassuring “Do not be afraid” makes sense.

That “he believed in God, and He reckoned it to him for righteousness” (15:6) also begins to make sense, but not as Sarna claims, that “Abram’s act of faith made him worthy of the Creator’s reward, which is secured through the covenant”.¹⁹ This need not be a proto-gospel of salvation by faith. Instead, it was just Abram expressing his fears anyway despite God’s reassuring him not to fear.

Abram is then assured that his seed would be as numerous as the stars “and he believed in God, and He reckoned it to him for righteousness” (v. 6), where righteousness involved a servant taking his master’s word as the unvarnished truth, rather than the meeting of some abstract moral standard. That righteousness involved one doing that which was expected of one in a particular relationship is exemplified in Genesis 38:26, where Judah said of Tamar: “She has been more righteous than I, because I did not give her to Shēlah my son.” Here, Judah admitted that Tamar who resorted to playing the harlot to get him to inseminate her as being “more righteous” than him. In their relationship of father-in-law to daughter-in-law, he had not given her his youngest son as husband he promised her so many years ago. Therefore, Judah had been unrighteous but Tamar righteous.²⁰

One’s righteousness was gauged only “by the specific relationship in which [one] had ... to prove himself true,” von Rad argues.²¹ If so, Abram was accounted righteous because he did what God expected of him, which was to believe in and trust his covenant partner to keep faith. But soon after he was declared righteous (15:6) and the land promise repeated (v. 7), Abram’s unbelief materialized again as he questions: “Master God, whereby do I know that I possess it?” (v. 8). God could well have thrown up his hands in despair, figuratively speaking, but he told Abram, perhaps in a huff, to bring a heifer, goat, ram, pigeon and dove, which were all cut in two (except for the two birds). Hastily, God cut a covenant with Abram to assure him that his seed would indeed inherit the promise but only “in the fourth generation” (15:16), at the cost of God’s own life, if need be.

The Genesis 15 covenant was more like a last will than a covenant in its unilaterality. The darkness that overcame Abram may have been the objectifying of his trepidation at the prospect of dying without heir. His was a dark disbelief even at the point that God deigned to cut the covenant. In that darkness, a disturbing prophecy of 400 years of slavery for his descendants was given, though that would be followed by freedom. Still, his unbelief was not mitigated by the covenant cutting. From the heights of the awesome rite, 16:1 brings the reader back down to earth with a thud: the existential problem plaguing Abram remained unsolved: “Sarai, Abram’s wife, had borne him no child,” recalling the opening

¹⁹ Sarna, *Genesis*, 113.

²⁰ Hermann Cremer argues: “Every relationship brings with it certain claims upon conduct, and the satisfaction of these claims, which issue from the relationship and in which alone the relationship can persist, is described by ... צדק ... a term denoting relationship ... in the sense of referring to a real relationship of two parties ... and not to the relationship of an object under consideration to an idea” (*Biblisch-theologisches Wörterbuch*, 7th ed. [Gotha, 1893], 273–75, quoted in Gerhard von Rad, *Old Testament Theology*, trans. D. M. G. Stalker, 2 vols. [Peabody, MA: Prince, 2005], 1:371).

²¹ von Rad, *Old Testament Theology*, 1:371.

dilemma hanging over the Abraham narrative: “Sarai was barren, she had no child” (11:30). It was back to square one.

In Genesis 16, Abram and Sarai’s despair hit rock bottom. If Abram had trusted God at the covenant’s cutting, that trust had evaporated. It must have seemed just too implausible to him for old Sarai to bring him his heir. At this point then, Abram did not do what was expected of him, which was to stay loyal to God by believing him. At this point, thus, he was unrighteous.

Still, nine years had gone by since they left Haran. Indeed, in Genesis 12, they had resorted to Egypt, where God intervened miraculously to resolve an entanglement of their own making. Then, in 16:2, Sarai would suggest Hagar “and Abram listened to Sarai’s voice.” In thus hearkening to Sarai’s suggestion, Abram would act unrighteously again. That is, he did not do that which was expected of him in his covenanted relationship with God: Abram had not learned the lesson from his dalliance with Egypt. Importantly, Abraham had not learned to trust God unreservedly.

Humanly speaking, this was perfectly understandable. It had been a decade since they arrived in Canaan. Sarai’s decision to use a surrogate was something she must have mulled over, reasoning: “It might be that I am built up by [Hagar]” (v. 2). Unfortunately, when Hagar conceived, “she began to despise her mistress” (v. 4). As a result, Hagar would have to leave the Abraham household eventually. Nevertheless, her son, Ishmael, would grow up to be blessed by God.

2.2. The Doubter Still

When Abram was ninety-nine, God reappeared to lecture him (17:1–22), though God did throw in a promise, then a command and yet another promise (vv. 1–8, 9–14, 15–22, respectively). Whilst God was reiterating the inviolability of his covenant, “Abraham fell on his face and laughed,” condescendingly presuming Ishmael to be the seed despite God’s definition of the seed to be “a son of eight days ... circumcised by you” (v. 12), a bill that Ishmael, by then a teenager of thirteen, could not fit.

The name of the son of promise, Isaac, in Hebrew, being built on the word for “laugh,” accentuated how grievous Abraham’s lack of faith was. In fact, Genesis 17 begins with God appearing and admonishing him to “walk before Me and be blameless” (v. 1). If Abram was ever to see the promises fulfilled, he had to do his part first, which was to walk blamelessly before God. He had been found wanting up to that point and would remain so until the Aqedah when he would do righteously, hearing and obeying. In turn, God would confirm his promises by an oath again (22:16–18).²²

Now 13 years since Ishmael’s birth, Abram had still not learned to be faithful. He was to be tested again: circumcision could endanger the male organ of procreation needed to bring children into the world. Requiring Abraham to endanger his son’s procreative organ at eight days of age was telling him to look to God and obey his commandments even if doing so posed the risk of cutting off his descendants, thus endangering even God’s ability to keep his promise.²³

Since this commandment came subsequent to the Hagar gambit, circumcision might have been intended as a lesson inscribed in the flesh to rein in the human assumption that one’s ability to reproduce

²² Genesis 17:1–2 evinces an imperative + imperative + cohortative + cohortative structure, which suggests that the two clauses beginning with cohortatives are promises conditioned on the main imperative being fulfilled; see Thomas O. Lambdin, *Introduction to Biblical Hebrew* (New York: Scribner’s, 1973), §107c.

²³ Circumcision “requires the cutting of the part of the male body through which God’s promise will be fulfilled,” according to John Goldingay, “The Significance of Circumcision,” *JSOT* 88 (2000): 9.

was something to be exercised at will.²⁴ If so, this commandment to circumcise indicated that Abraham was not walking before God blamelessly enough yet.

Genesis 15 defines the land that God covenanted to give Abram, and Genesis 17 defines the people of that covenant. The word “covenant” appears 13 times in God’s speech.²⁵ Gentry and Wellum suggest that Genesis 15 and 17 relate two aspects of one covenant. Both Genesis 15 and 17 deal with “seed,” “land,” and dependence on God; both fill out the Genesis 12:1–3 plan of moving to the promised land to become a nation at Genesis 15 (realized in the Sinai covenant) and becoming a blessing for all the families of the earth at Genesis 17 (realized through Christ Jesus in the new covenant).²⁶ However, some argue, as DeRouchie notes, that Genesis 15 and 17 are two covenants, “the first temporal, unilateral/unconditional, and national and the second eternal, bilateral/conditional, and international.”²⁷ For example, Sailhamer suggests that God was making a second covenant with Abraham, in that “the two covenants [were] distinct covenants—a covenant made in regard to the promise of the land (15:18–21) and a covenant made in regard to the promise of a great abundance of descendants (17:2).”²⁸

It is a novel reading that argues a second covenant was necessary for “a great abundance of descendants.” Against such a thesis, first, no animals were cut in Genesis 17 as in ch. 15. Secondly, if Abraham were not going to have descendants aplenty, how would the land promise be fulfilled? As such, it must be that the land promise as covenanted included implicitly an abundance of descendants. Finally, Ishmael might as well have been the promised seed.²⁹ At Genesis 17:20, God says: “I shall bless him [Ishmael], and shall make him bear fruit, and greatly increase him. He is to bring forth twelve princes, and I shall make him a great nation.” Yet at v. 21, God adds: “But my covenant I establish with Isaac, whom Sarah is to bear to you at this set time next year.” It seems that God was merely specifying in greater detail through whom it would be that the covenanted land promise would come.

A parallel concern arises at Genesis 21:16–18, which some scholars consider to be God ratifying his covenant with Abraham while others claim that this was the work of a less-than-careful redactor.³⁰ But there was arguably no second covenant if they were simply different parts of one covenant as suggested by Leviticus 26:42 (“Then I shall remember ... my covenant [*singular*] with Abraham”), Deuteronomy 4:30–31 (“In your distress ... in the latter days, then you shall return to ... God.... He does not ... forget

²⁴ The circumcision commandment finds its fulfilment at Luke 2:1, Peter J. Gentry and Stephen J. Wellum argue: “Jesus’ circumcision ... marks the fulfillment of circumcision in its purpose of preserving a line of descent from Abraham to Christ.... In Christ, Abraham’s true seed is now here, and as such, circumcision is no longer necessary.... In this sense, Jesus’ circumcision is the last significant covenantal circumcision recorded in Scripture. All other circumcisions, such as Timothy’s (Acts 16:3), were done only for principled pragmatic concerns in order to win Jews to the gospel” (*Kingdom through Covenant: A Biblical-Theological Understanding of the Covenants* [Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012], 701).

²⁵ That is, twelve times as “my covenant” or “eternal covenant,” and just one time in the phrase “sign of the covenant.” At 17:9–14, circumcision is designated a sign of the covenant, not the covenant itself that was cut at Genesis 15.

²⁶ Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 275–80, 89.

²⁷ Noted by Jason S. DeRouchie, “Counting Stars with Abraham and the Prophets: New Covenant Ecclesiology in Old Testament Perspective.” *JETS* 58 (2015): 453.

²⁸ Sailhamer, *Pentateuch as Narrative*, 156.

²⁹ Michael Riccardi, “The Seed of Abraham: A Theological Analysis of Galatians 3 and Its Implications for Israel,” *Master’s Seminary Journal* 25 (2014): 58.

³⁰ For instance, Westermann, *Genesis 12–36*, 357, 363.

the covenant [*singular*] of your fathers which He swore to them”), and Nehemiah 9:7–8 (“You are God ... who chose Abram ... and made a covenant [*singular*] with him to give the land”).³¹

Overall, it might be more apposite to say with DeRouchie that there was but one covenant, the everlasting one that was cut with Abraham at Genesis 15.

Genesis 17 distinguishes *two* progressive eras for the everlasting Abrahamic covenant—the first national or geopolitical (Gen 17:7–8) with a genealogical principle as its guide and circumcision as its sign (Gen 17:9–13); and the second international with the patriarch’s fatherhood being established by spiritual adoption and no longer bound by biology, ethnicity, or the distinguishing mark of circumcision (Gen 17:4–6; ... cf. Gen 12:1–3).³²

Through the Promised Seed was to arise a new humanity.³³ At 17:19, God reacted to Abraham’s derisive laugh of unbelief: “No, Sarah your wife is truly bearing a son to you, and you shall call his name Isaac. And I shall establish my covenant with him for an everlasting covenant, and with his seed after him.” (v. 19) Thus God repeated what He had said earlier, identifying Sarah as “your wife” twice as if to emphasize it was not “your concubine(s)” who would bring forth the seed.

Abraham had been waiting for these words for twenty-four years: “My covenant I establish with Isaac, whom Sarah is to bear to you at this set time next year” (v. 21). If we read God as being miffed by Abraham’s perhaps disdainful laughter which betrayed his lack of faith yet again, then v. 22 makes sense: “When He had ended speaking with him, God went up from Abraham”—God did not wait around to see what Abraham would do next. He just up and left.

Was God with Abraham all this time? God is said to have “appeared to him” at 17:1 (and at 18:1), so he arguably was speaking to Abraham face-to-face on earth, as it were, for why else would the verse say that it was *when he had ended speaking* that he *went up*? It reads naturally that God was speaking to Abraham on earth and when he was done, he *went up* (back to heaven, presumably). Thus, it is entirely possible to read the story in this manner and accordingly surmise that a displeased God did not wait

³¹ The word “covenant” in biblical Hebrew never appears in the plural; see Rolf Rendtorff, *The Canonical Hebrew Bible: A Theology of the Old Testament*, trans. David E. Orton, Tools for Biblical Study 7 (Leiden: Deo, 2005), 438.

³² DeRouchie, “Counting Stars with Abraham and the Prophets,” 482.

³³ This new humanity is to populate God’s kingdom, whose borders will transcend the promised land to include numerous peoples globally (Gen 1:28; Matt 5:5; Rom 4:13; cf. Eph 6:2–3; Heb 11:13–16), when his glory will fill all the earth, like the seas cover it (Num 14:21; Hab 2:14; Ps 72:19). See Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 468–70; cf. 703–16. In regard to this new humanity, it may be summarized, as DeRouchie does, that: “Jesus’ being the *last* Adam (1 Cor 15:45; cf. Rom 5:18–19), the head of a *new* creation (2 Cor 5:17; Gal 6:15), the “offspring” of Abraham and David ... mediates a *new* covenant (Heb 9:15; 12:24) that creates the church as one *new* man (Eph 2:15). All members in the new covenant are identified with Christ in the heavenly realms (Eph 2:5–6; Col 2:12–13; 3:3); they are children of ‘the Jerusalem above’ (Gal 4:26, 31; cf. Heb 12:22–24) ... regardless of one’s original heritage” (“Counting Stars with Abraham and the Prophets,” 485). DeRouchie examines the macrostructure of Genesis as signposted by the ten *toledot* in the book and surmises that the main theme of Genesis is “the means by which God’s blessing commission of kingdom advancement will be fulfilled in a cursed and perverted world is through an ever-expanding God-oriented, hope-filled, mission-minded community, climaxing in a single king in the line of promise who will perfectly reflect, resemble, and represent God and who will definitively overcome all evil, thus restoring right order to God’s kingdom for the fame of his name” (“The Blessing-Commission, the Promised Offspring, and the Toledot Structure of Genesis,” *JETS* 56 [2013]: 247).

around to see what Abraham was going to do—presumably foreknowing Abraham was about to obey the commandment wrongly, circumcising every male even though he was specifically commanded to circumcise baby boys at eight days of age

Wyschogrod calls circumcision “a searing of the covenant into the flesh of Israel,”³⁴ but how did it serve as a sign of the covenant? Perhaps it was to be a visible reminder of the covenant curse, of being cut off from the people for disloyalty to God. If so, it may be an everlasting warning about keeping faith with God. This reading is suggested by the parallels in Genesis 18 where Sarah was caught laughing at God’s declaring that she would have a child even at her age as nothing was too difficult for him (18:12; cf. 17:17). She was rebuked for laughing. At both 17:21 and 18:14, God declared Isaac would be born in a year and then at both 17:22 and 18:33, “God went up/away as soon as He had ended speaking to Abraham,” perhaps quite displeased each time.

Abraham may have misunderstood the circumcision commandment, which required him to circumcise a baby boy at eight days of age. Why this did not plainly mean just the next baby boy to be born in his household, and not the existing male members of his household, is not clear. Abraham circumcised all the males in his household, himself included, adding incomprehension to faithlessness. Still, he would get it right a year later, circumcising the eight-day-old Isaac “as God had commanded him” (21:4). The argument here is that God did *not* mean for Abraham to circumcise the males already in his household at that very time for they would have been well over eight days in age unless there had coincidentally been a newborn around. That is, Abraham misconstrued God’s command to circumcise at day eight of life, which applied to the next boy born in Abraham’s household. A plain reading of the text shows that God did not command all Hebrew males with intact prepuces at the time to also be circumcised; no such command could have been implied in the day eight requirement.

In Genesis 18, along with two messengers, God appeared again to Abraham to announce the coming birth of Isaac. At v. 10, it was “the LORD” and not “they” of v. 9, who announced Isaac’s impending birth and chided Sarah for laughing: “No, but you did laugh!” (v. 15). He added, “Is any matter too hard for the LORD?” (v. 14). Immediately after the stinging rebuke, which might have been still ringing in Sarah’s ears, God departed with the two.

But soon again, the one in whom “all the nations of the earth will be blessed” (18:13) would reprise his duplicity, entangling Sarah yet again with an ignorant but unblameworthy gentile, Abimelech, the king of Gerar (20:1–18). This interlude increases the suspense for the reader by delaying Isaac’s birth. This time, Abraham even blamed God for making him sojourn in that place where pagans had no respect for (his) life (20:11–13).

Yet, God did not hasten Abraham for his utterly dishonorable behavior here. What then might be the point of this unsavory story? Some critical scholars feel it is a duplicate tale redacted into the text from a different source, which is why the story sits here so uncomfortably. However, a less involved explanation is possible. Abram had jeopardized their marital fidelity by separating from Sarai in Egypt in trying to protect himself. But his Sarai-is-my-sister gambit in Egypt also stood for his infidelity to God. If so, his repeat Sarah-is-my-sister gambit with Abimelech might simply show an Abraham who continued to waver in faith. He may not have quite grasped that it was God being displeased at his unrighteous behavior that led to the circumcision commandment. If so, he may have had no qualms reprising his chicanery, having good reason to lie again as he feared being killed. Thus, 25 years after being called, Abraham’s faith was still lacking.

³⁴Michael Wyschogrod, *The Body of Faith: Judaism as Corporeal Election* (Minneapolis: Winston, 1983), 67.

2.3. Faithful Finally

As Genesis 20 closes, Abraham prayed for the women of the king's household, whose barrenness was lifted and proceeded to have children. Like these childbirths, that of Isaac would finally come though his mother's fecundity had also ceased, humanly speaking but God "visited Sarah as He had said, and God did for Sarah as He had spoken. Sarah conceived and bore Abraham a son in his old age, at the appointed time of which God had spoken to him (21:1–2).

The double emphasis here, "as He had said ... and as He had spoken," stresses that God is righteous, keeping his promises to those in covenant. At 100, Abraham was finally fit to have the true heir by Sarah, the true wife. Now he would finally learn to trust God completely, even unto death. The Aqedah was a test where 22:1 actually says God was going to try Abraham, which meant that he had yet to prove himself. But this time, the miracle of Isaac's birth had taught Abraham to be faithful even unto death. This time he was ready. This time, he passed with flying colors, so God declared: "By myself I have sworn ... because you have done this, and have not withheld your son, your only son, that I shall certainly bless you, and ... in your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, because you have obeyed my voice" (vv. 16–18).

This blessing is the ultimate of its kind in the patriarchal narratives. For while the blessing sounds like those elsewhere (12:2–3; 18:18–19; 26:4; and 28:14), it is only here that that reasons are given: "*because you have done this, and have not withheld your son, your only son*" (v. 16) and "*because you have obeyed my voice*" (v. 18).³⁵ This time, Abraham proved himself righteous, doing what his relationship with God required of him, to trust and obey God, even unto death.

While moderns may regard faith as inward mental conviction, faith in the Old Testament had to do with action. Thus, God tested Abraham to see if he would do what was expected of him. This time, Abraham declared thrice "Here I am" (vv. 1, 7, 11) indicating his willingness to listen, obey and do. Here, in contrast to his repeated failures, Abraham's obedience is stressed three times in respect of his son, his "only one" (אֶחָד) a term used three times here at vv. 2, 12, 16. This time, Abraham did what was expected of him and God intervened at the crucial moment.

Later, he sent forth his oldest servant to the old country to get a wife for Isaac, Rebecca (24:24), so Abraham saw God providing again the next generation's progenitrix. But once Isaac is married, unexpectedly, "Abraham took a wife, and her name was Keturah," who would then bear him six more sons (25:2–4). Here, the verb translated "took" (קָחָהּ) may also be rendered "had taken," as the NIV indicates in its margins. Though Keturah is called a wife at v. 1, she is a concubine in v. 6 and 1 Chronicles 1:32. If Keturah were a wife, then Abraham likely took her after Sarah's death; if she were a concubine, Abraham might have taken her while Sarah was still alive.³⁶ Like Ishmael, the six sons by Keturah would later be "sent away" to the east (v. 6) with gifts, so there would be no disputes after Abraham's death as Isaac had been made sole heir. The fact that her sons were sent away suggests that Keturah was indeed a concubine.

But why did Abraham take a concubine so late in life? Was it because he saw that Isaac was not getting any younger and yet no suitable wife was in sight? Isaac was forty years old when he took Rebecca (25:20), so Abraham was 140 when Isaac finally got married. If he was 137 when Sarah died, and Isaac was not yet married, perhaps in his widowhood, Abraham could not see how God was ever going to

³⁵ Emphasis in italics mine; R. W. L. Moberly, "The Earliest Commentary on the Aqedah," *VT* 38 (1988), 318.

³⁶ Victor P. Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 18–50*, NICOT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 165.

keep his promise through Isaac that he (Abraham) would “be the father of a multitude of nations,” seeing that Rebecca could not have children, at least at first (25:21).

Rebecca’s apparent infertility could have been the final straw, spurring Abraham to think that God was going to make him the father of many nations through not Isaac (alone) but also through Ishmael who had twelve sons (25:13–15) and, if so, why not through other sons he might sire even now?

Perhaps he thought of all the reasons that Sarah had adumbrated to him when she had urged him to take Hagar. Rabbinical commentaries offer another excuse to “rescue” Abraham’s name from calumny, arguing that Keturah was just Hagar’s new name. But Luther ably showed why this was impossible.³⁷ Perhaps the arguments for Hagar sounded persuasive all over again. If so, Abraham was simply reprising his faith in worldly methods of attaining to God’s blessings. If so, even in the last stretch of his life, he might have still been less the hero of faith that tradition makes him out to be.

But this seems out of character for someone who had had a change of heart at Isaac’s miraculous birth, a change indubitably proven at the Aqedah. It seems more likely that Abraham would have become a man of great faith in the final seventy-five years of his life. Moreover, the birth of six sons after Isaac would have been even more miraculous for Abraham who would have been at least 140. A better explanation might be that Abraham took Keturah after Hagar but before Sarah bore Isaac. If so, Isaac was really the eighth and last son to spring from Abraham’s loins. That Abraham took Keturah after Hagar but before Sarah bore Isaac may be hinted at in the sequence at 1 Chronicles 1:28–34: “The sons of Abraham; Isaac, and Ishmael. These are their generations: The firstborn of Ishmael.... These are the sons of Ishmael.... Now the sons of Keturah, Abraham’s concubine were ... Abraham begat Isaac. The sons of Isaac; Esau and Israel...”

After the Hagar problem, perhaps Sarai convinced Abraham to try again with a more compliant servant girl. Hagar could have been made an example of to Keturah. This is a plausible scenario, for it is not until Genesis 17:16, 19, 21 that God tells Abraham thrice it was specifically Sarah who was to bring forth the son of promise. That Abraham took Keturah is discombobulating only because the narrative is read as chronological, whereas this pericope might well been an appendix of sorts, inserted here to explain the origin of nations.

Thus this episode narrated out of time probably does not invalidate the deduction that the post-Aqedah Abraham was already a hero of faith, so that God would call him, after his life was over “Abraham, my friend” (Isa 41:8) and for 2 Chronicles 20:7 to hold him up as “Abraham, your friend.” At the end of his life, Abraham had secured God’s passing grade of final approval.

³⁷ Martin Luther argues, “Some maintain that Keturah is Hagar herself, whom he again received into favor after the death of his wife Sarah and later on took to wife, since she had now humbled herself and repented ... the computation of the years does not agree.... Hagar bore Ishmael when Abraham was 86, and she was married to him when she was about 30. Since her fifteenth year she had been reared by Sarah, who then took her into the house for the first time. There she remained until she was 30, when she became the mother of Ishmael. But Isaac is born 14 years after Ishmael’s birth. When these years are added up, they make 44 years, or at least 40. To these should further be added the 40 years of Isaac, who marries Rebecca in his fortieth year. Consequently, Hagar’s age adds up to 84 years, more or less, when she, too, in accordance with nature, had to be exhausted. And it is impossible to conclude that she bore six sons at that age” “Lectures on Genesis Chapters 21–25,” in *Luther’s Works, Volume 4*, ed. Jaroslav Pelikan, trans. George V. Schick [Saint Louis: Concordia, 1964], 300–1).

3. Conclusion

But is this reading of Abraham compatible with the construal of him as an icon of faith in the New Testament? The New Testament refers to Abraham 74 times in 70 verses, which is way more than any other Old Testament character apart from Moses, but it passes over the evidence of Abraham's lack of faith with neither mention nor excuse. It may be argued that the details of Abraham's perfidy on the various occasions do not eclipse the critical instances when he did what was right, critically at the Call and at the Aqedah. In those very instances when he did what was expected of him, he was declared righteous because, in doing what he was supposed to do, he did show that he believed God, not simply with an inner, mental affirmation of what God said, as moderns might imagine. Instead, Abraham did carry out precisely that which such mental assent must lead to.

This understanding of faith, which always includes active obedience, is why James 2:21–22 say rightly: "Was not Abraham our father declared right by works when he offered Isaac his son on the altar? You see that the belief was working with his works, and by the works the belief was perfected." Because he came to a place where he would do rightly, Abraham's faith "was reckoned to him for righteousness" (v. 22), where righteousness consists of doing what a particular relationship requires.

This is to say that Abraham was accounted righteous not because he believed God as a matter of giving pure mental assent to a propositional truth while he sat on his hands, doing nothing. The faith that Abraham exhibited at the critical junctures was always accompanied by his obedience to God's commandments. Indeed, at the end of his life, God would commend him, saying "Abraham obeyed my voice and guarded my charge: my commandments, my statutes, and my laws" (Gen 26:5). Thus, this article's understanding of Abraham is not at loggerheads with the New Testament's construal of the patriarch, his righteousness and faith.

While much has been made of Abraham as a hero of faith over the generations, he was not yet one when he was first called. Contrary to traditional models, he would not too irregularly, even mendaciously, evince doubt in God's promises. By elucidating his failures throughout his sojourn in the land, this man who is always called a hero of faith was shown to be, almost always, a man of little faith. Only by the Aqedah and thus perhaps for the last seventy-five years of his life would he be a man of unswerving faith.

Yet it was through this frequently unfaithful man that God chose to solve the problem that arose when the "families of the earth" rebelled against him at the end of primeval history. Numerous as the stars in the sky, his descendants would, four centuries later, begin to inherit the land and thence make Abraham the father of many nations.³⁸

³⁸ Both Jews and Gentiles in Christ would be Abraham's true "seed" (Gal 3:16) and both would be part of the true Israel (Gal 6:16; cf. 3:28–29; Isa 49:3, 5). See Christopher W. Cowan, "Context is Everything: 'The Israel of God' in Galatians 6:16," *SBJT* 14 (2010), 78–85.

Covenant, Creation and Children: A Response to David Gibson's Critique of Credobaptism

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Abstract: David Gibson's 2015 *Themelios* article on baptism asked whether credobaptism was compatible with a strong, Reformed, doctrine of creation, arguing that credobaptism risks 'being sacramentally docetic' since it weakens the relationship between nature and grace. This article offers a credobaptist response to this challenge, examining the three main elements of Gibson's argument (covenant, creation, and children), arguing that, far from evacuating the created order of significance, credobaptism gives fullest weight to the outworking of salvation history within the created order. The article concludes by offering a brief sketch of a credobaptist theology of baptism placed within a robust theology of creation.

David Gibson's latest article in these pages on the question of baptism made an attractive and sweeping case for paedobaptism.¹ In a well-worn debate, Gibson strikes a new note in linking the issue of baptism and the doctrine of creation. For Gibson, the baptism debate turns on 'the proper relationship of nature and grace: does the natural world have anything in common with the spiritual world?'² His argument is that 'the bond between God and the world is broken in credobaptist soteriology' such that credobaptism risks 'being sacramentally docetic' and that 'the credobaptist worldview is ... in the end a fundamentally unattractive aesthetic.'³ Gibson paints with bold strokes on a broad canvas, and in connecting the doctrine of creation to the question of baptism he opened up a fresh angle on a long-standing debate. What follows is not so much a rebuttal of Gibson's arguments as an example of a credobaptist attempt to wrestle with the issues he raises. I hope that these reflections may strengthen the credobaptist convictions of a few and reassure others that credobaptism need not

¹David Gibson, "Fathers of Faith, My Fathers Now!": On Abraham, Covenant, and the Theology of Paedobaptism," *Them* 40.1 (2015): 14–34. I am very grateful for Dr Gibson's charitable comments on an earlier draft of this paper.

²Ibid., 27.

³Ibid., 28.

have such a deleterious effect on the rest of one's theology and practice. Therefore, I will consider the questions of covenant, creation and children and examine how a credobaptist might approach these issues in view of Gibson's paedobaptist arguments.

1. Covenant

At the heart of the debate between paedo- and credobaptist lies the question of covenant, and it is therefore well-worn ground in the debate. Venema puts the question well, 'Does the covenant of grace in its New Testament administration embrace the children of believing parents just as it did in its Old Testament administration?'⁴ It is difficult to add anything new to what has already been written on this subject, but since it is so central to the question of baptism, some discussion of the matter is necessary. The argument for infant baptism in a nutshell is that since Paul in Galatians 3:6–8 regards God's covenant with Abraham as a Gospel covenant, and he describes circumcision as the sign and seal of that covenant in Romans 4:11, and since that sign was then applied to Abraham's children, and since Abraham is a model for Christian belief, it must be valid to apply to the children of Christian believers today.⁵

Two key premises underlie this argument. The first is that circumcision represents the same reality as baptism and that, therefore, appropriate subjects of both remain the same. As Sinclair Ferguson puts it, 'If one applied the underlying principles of some credobaptist arguments one would also become a credo-circumcisionist.'⁶ Likewise Calvin argued, 'If it enters anyone's mind to jest at infant baptism on this pretext, he is mocking the command of circumcision given by the Lord. For what will they bring forward to impugn infant baptism that may not be turned back against circumcision?'⁷ The second premise is that the covenant structure established with Abraham in Genesis 17:7 – 'to you and your offspring' – is maintained into the new covenant, such that there is a distinction between covenant and election that continues into the new covenant.⁸ Thus for the paedobaptist, membership of new covenant community is, in principle, discontinuous with membership of the elect. Venema explains that the covenant of grace 'embraces all believers and their children, not all of whom are elect in the strict sense,' and that while 'the life and salvation promised in the covenant of grace are inherited only by the elect ... the covenant promise, together with its accompanying obligation, is extended to Abraham and his seed.'⁹ We shall examine each of these ideas in turn.

It is surely correct to say, as Gibson does, that 'it is impossible to read Gen 17 all the way through and conclude that circumcision's physical or national significance is primary. Circumcision was always

⁴ Cornelius P. Venema, "Covenant Theology and Baptism," in *The Case for Covenantal Infant Baptism*, ed. Gregg Strawbridge (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2003), 202.

⁵ This is a summary of Gibson, "Fathers of Faith," 23.

⁶ Sinclair B. Ferguson, "Infant Baptism Response," in *Baptism: Three Views*, ed. David F. Wright (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press Academic, 2009), 59.

⁷ John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, ed. John T. MacNeill, trans. Ford Lewis Battles (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1960), 4.16.9.

⁸ For further discussion of the distinction, see Peter A. Lillback, *The Binding of God: Calvin's Role in the Development of Covenant Theology*, (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2002), 226; Cornelius P. Venema, "Covenant and Election in the Theology of Herman Bavinck," *MJT* 19 (2008): 69–115.

⁹ Venema, "Covenant Theology and Baptism," 214.

a gospel sign.¹⁰ This, however, is not to say that circumcision has *no* physical or national significance. James Dunn argues that, for Paul and his contemporaries at least, ‘Covenant, law, Jewish ethnic identity, circumcision were mutually interdependent categories, each inconceivable without the other.’¹¹ Clearly, in God’s plan, the promises of justification and salvation are, for a time, channelled within the Abrahamic lineage and nation as God’s covenant people. The modern distinction between family and nation is a foreign notion to the Bible, for nations are simply families writ large. Ferguson argues, ‘The organic unity of the family is a feature of the whole Bible. The new covenant does not introduce a different view of the family in relation to the administration of God’s purpose and its sign, but is in organic continuity with it.’¹² This, it seems to me, does not reckon with the fact that circumcision is not given to Abraham merely as the head of a household, but as the head of a *nation*.¹³ The seventeenth century Particular Baptist theologian Nehemiah Coxe makes the point that in Genesis 17 it is both Abraham immediate and subsequent generations with whom the covenant is made. ‘It was a covenant in force for the benefit of both more remote and nearer generations.... The right of the remotest generation was as much derived from Abraham and the covenant made with him, as was that of his immediate seed, and did not depend on the faithfulness of their immediate parents.’¹⁴ Gibson, in his first *Themelios* article on baptism, recognises this, but fails to see the difficulty this presents for paedobaptists who only baptise the first generation of believer’s children.¹⁵ Coxe outlines the difficulty of this position: ‘If I may conclude my concern in this covenant is such that by one of its promises I am assured God has taken my immediate seed in covenant with himself, I must on the same ground conclude also that my seed in remote generations will be no less in covenant with him, since the promise extends to the seed in their generations.’¹⁶ That is to say, Genesis 17 establishes not simply a genealogical principle but a national principle, and it is questionable whether contemporary paedobaptist practice and theology adequately reflects the text and detail of Genesis 17.¹⁷

The national nature of the circumcision means that it is applied to two kinds of sons through redemptive history. Calvin comments that in Genesis 17:7 ‘a twofold class of sons presents itself to us.’¹⁸ Calvin is clearly reading Genesis 17 through the lens of Galatians 4:22, where Paul explains that

¹⁰ Gibson, “Fathers of Faith,” 22.

¹¹ James D. G. Dunn, “What Was the Issue between Paul and ‘Those of the Circumcision?’” in *The New Perspective on Paul: Collected Essays*, WUNT 185 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2005), 153. See also Martin Salter, “Abraham in Reformed Baptist Perspective,” *Them* 40.1 (2015): 47.

¹² Sinclair B. Ferguson, “Infant Baptism View,” in *Baptism: Three Views*, ed. David F. Wright (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2009), 104.

¹³ See, for example, 2 Samuel 5:1 where the two are linked.

¹⁴ Nehemiah Coxe, “A Discourse of the Covenants That God Made with Men before the Law. Wherein, The Covenant of Circumcision Is More Largely Handled, and the Invalidity of the Plea for Paedobaptism Taken from There Discovered,” in *Covenant Theology from Adam to Christ*, ed. Ronald D. Miller, James M Renihan, and Francisco Orozco (Palmdale, CA: Reformed Baptist Academic Press, 2005), 97.

¹⁵ David Gibson, “Sacramental Supersessionism Revisited: A Response to Martin Salter on the Relationship Between Circumcision and Baptism,” *Them* 37.2 (2012): 197.

¹⁶ Coxe, “A Discourse of the Covenants,” 106.

¹⁷ Salter makes this point in “Abraham in Reformed Baptist Perspective,” 38n13.

¹⁸ John Calvin, *Commentaries on the First Book of Moses Called Genesis*, trans. Thomas King, reprint ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2003), 449.

there were some true spiritual sons of Abraham who shared his faith and others who were sons only according to the flesh. The latter participated in the typological blessings and curses of the Abrahamic and Israelite covenants but did not enjoy the eternal blessings to which they pointed. Therefore, the Abrahamic nation is exhorted in Deuteronomy 10:16 to ‘circumcise your hearts,’ since it cannot be assumed that the Abrahamic nation enjoyed the reality to which the Abrahamic sign pointed.¹⁹

The question is, does this two-fold nature of the covenant community continue into the new covenant? Does baptism encompass two kinds of sons in the way circumcision did? Paul writes in Galatians 3:27: ‘for all of you who were baptised into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ’ (ὅσοι γὰρ εἰς Χριστὸν ἐβαπτίσθητε, Χριστὸν ἐνεδύσασθε). The key word ὅσοι is translated ‘all’ in all the examples listed in BDAG.²⁰ The argument is that while circumcision is applied to two kinds of sons, baptism now designates just one kind: true sons of Abraham, ‘heirs according to the promise.’ On this basis at least, we must conclude that circumcision and baptism, though connected to similar spiritual realities, connect to that reality in a different way. Therefore, Gibson is correct that Galatians represents ‘a change in scale, not in soteriology.’ He is mistaken, however, to imagine that such a soteriological change is part of the credobaptist argument. The Second London Baptist Confession 7.2 is clear: ‘It is alone by the grace of this covenant that all the posterity of fallen Adam that ever were saved did obtain life and a blessed immortality.’²¹ What Galatians does represent is a change of ecclesiology, since under the Abrahamic covenant the uncircumcised were excluded from the covenant community, something that is reversed in the new covenant. Paul is showing in Galatians that Abrahamic soteriology leads, eventually in salvation-history, to new covenant ecclesiology.

The reason for this is that the death and resurrection of Jesus has historically instituted the new covenant in his blood.²² It is in Christ’s coming the new covenant is definitively established. John Owen describes the shift that takes place at the death of Christ, the new covenant ‘had before the confirmation of a promise, which is an oath; it had now the confirmation of a covenant which is blood.’²³ Christ has now been definitively established as the physical, historic head of the covenant, and it is upon him that the blessings and curses of his covenant people depend. Thus, Ferguson’s account of covenantal conditions, where the outcome of the covenant for each person is conditioned on their response, risks being too individualistic and atomised since he places the outcome of the covenant on the response of each individual baptised.²⁴ But, in the new covenant, Christ’s death has sanctified his people, as their

¹⁹ See on this point, Henri Blocher, “Old Covenant, New Covenant,” in *Always Reforming: Explorations in Systematic Theology*, ed. A. T. B. MacGowan (Leicester: Apollos, 2006), 264.

²⁰ BDAG 729.

²¹ William Lumpkin, *Baptist Confessions of Faith* (Lexington, KY: Judson Press, 1969), 260.

²² This does not mean that Christ was not the head of the Abrahamic covenant, as Gibson charges Baptists with believing (“Fathers of Faith,” 18–20). In fact, Coxe states that, ‘this covenant was made in and through Jesus Christ. It is not Abraham but Christ that is its first head’ (“A Discourse of the Covenants,” 76). The point is that Christ, in the flesh, is head of the new covenant in a different way.

²³ John Owen, “An Exposition of Hebrews 8:6–13. Wherein, the Nature and Differences between the Old and New Covenants Is Discovered,” in *Covenant Theology from Adam to Christ*, ed. Ronald D Miller, James M Renihan, and Francisco Orozco (Palmdale, CA: Reformed Baptist Academic Press, 2005), 173. Owen is discussing Heb 8:6.

²⁴ Ferguson, “Infant Baptism View,” 96–97. Gibson’s account is open to a similar critique in “Fathers of Faith,” 32–33.

priest, in order that the blessing of the Spirit might come to them.²⁵ Thus, there are no longer two ways of being in the covenant – by faith and genealogy or by genealogy alone. Rather there is now one – faith alone – and all those who are so included receive the blessings won by Christ’s mediating work. Thus circumcision, a symbol of promises made to a particular lineage and administered to those of that lineage, is replaced by baptism, a symbol of those promises kept and administered to those regenerated by the promised Spirit. Gibson puts it well:

Some kind of replacement language has to be warranted because baptism itself is a ‘backward-looking’ sign of the thing signified (death-burial-resurrection of Christ and union with him) which ‘replaces’ circumcision as the ‘forward-looking’ sign of the thing signified (death-burial-resurrection of Christ and union with him).²⁶

It is because credobaptists give full weight to the historic, covenantal outworking of the promises made to Abraham that they seek to baptise only those who give evidence of being spiritual sons of Abraham.²⁷ Does this mean that the new covenant is narrower in scope than the old covenant? Herman Ridderbos explains why this is not the case:

Always and again this one thing is reconfirmed: that belonging to the seed of Abraham is not determined by physical descent, but by faith. Essentially, in principle, the seed of Abraham is spiritual seed. If on the one hand this represents a limitation of the concept, on the other it represents a tremendous broadening of it.²⁸

It is this broadening of God’s plan of salvation, the bursting of the banks of the national and genealogical channel in which the promises had previously been contained, that credobaptists believe means that the genealogical principle is now abrogated, having served its purpose.

The second premise of paedobaptist covenant theology is that the relationship between covenant and election works in a parallel way in the Abrahamic covenant as it does in the new.²⁹ Thus, Peter Lillback explains that for Calvin, ‘covenant and election are *not* identical. One can identify covenant and election for Calvin only if “common election” is identified with the covenant.’³⁰ This is because ‘the unity of the covenants demands that the church be arranged in consistency with the covenant.’³¹ Thus, Calvin describes the conflict between Isaac and Ishmael as ‘the perpetual condition of the church.’³² This introduces a tension within paedobaptist theology: the new covenant is clearly a covenant that promises and dispenses the blessings given to the elect, yet paedobaptism requires there to be those

²⁵ See Hebrews 9:14–15 and Galatians 3:13.

²⁶ Gibson, “Sacramental Supersessionism,” 203.

²⁷ One might argue that birth to Christian parents is, or should be, sufficient evidence to count someone a spiritual son of Abraham. However, the difficulty with this is that not even being born to Abraham himself was sufficient to make one a spiritual son of Abraham.

²⁸ Herman N. Ridderbos, *The Epistle of Paul to the Churches of Galatia*, trans. Henry D. Zylstra (London: Marshall, Morgan & Scott, 1976), 150.

²⁹ For a lengthy, but illuminating, discussion of this topic see Greg Nichols, *Covenant Theology: A Reformed and Baptist Perspective on God’s Covenants* (Birmingham, AL: Solid Ground Christian Books, 2014), 5–100.

³⁰ Lillback, *The Binding of God*, 226.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 224.

³² Calvin, *Commentaries on the First Book of Moses Called Genesis*, 546.

who are rightfully members of the new covenant and that nonetheless do not receive its blessings.³³ The difference between credobaptist and paedobaptist theology here is subtle and easily misunderstood. Credobaptists do not disagree with Bavinck that ‘it is self-evident ... that the covenant of grace will temporarily – in its earthly administration and dispensation – also include those who remain inwardly unbelieving and do not share in the covenant’s benefits.’³⁴ The 1689 Baptist Confession, along with the Westminster Confession and Savoy Declaration, asserts, ‘The purest churches under heaven are subject to mixture and error.’³⁵ A mixed visible church is inevitable before the eschaton. The question is this: is the church mixed by divinely ordained constitution, as the Abrahamic church was, or because the application of its new constitution is fallible?

Gibson presents faith as the demand of the new covenant to its mixed covenant members, but he does not reflect, so far as I can see, that a believing heart is also part of the promise of the new covenant, won by Christ’s sanctifying, atoning work.³⁶ The implications of Gibson’s formulation are stark: if the new covenant does not simply demand but also provides a new heart for the covenant people, then is it a covenant that *saves*? However, if a faithful heart is a fruit of Christ’s covenantal priestly work then there cannot be ‘a separation between the provision of atonement and its application to the people.’³⁷ Paul’s use of ὄσοι in Galatians 3:27 shows that baptism constitutes the people of God in a different way to circumcision. Every descendant of Abraham was included in the covenant through circumcision according to divine ordination, whether believing or unbelieving. Yet, now, while there are non-elect unbelievers in the visible church, their inclusion is illegitimate. Since Christ is the head and mediator of the new covenant, only those who have received regeneration, displayed in repentance and faith, are legitimately included in the covenant community since they are the only ones for whom Christ has acted as covenant head.³⁸ Just as the fact that some people enter the country without a valid passport does not nullify the legal requirement to possess one, so the fact that the unregenerate enter the visible church does not nullify the requirement that only the regenerate are legitimately included in the new covenant community. The mixed nature of the church has changed from being by dint of divine constitution to fallible human perception.³⁹ As Salter explains:

³³ Herman Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, ed. John Bolt, trans. John Vriend, 4 vols. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2003), 3:228–35; See also Venema, “Covenant and Election in the Theology of Herman Bavinck” for further discussion.

³⁴ Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 3:231.

³⁵ Lumpkin, *Baptist Confessions of Faith*, 285. The three confessions are the same except that Westminster and Savoy include the word ‘both’ before ‘mixture’.

³⁶ Gibson, “Fathers of Faith,” 32–33.

³⁷ Peter J. Gentry and Stephen J. Wellum, *God’s Kingdom Through God’s Covenants: A Concise Biblical Theology* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2015), 673.

³⁸ Stephen J. Wellum, “The New Covenant Work of Christ,” in *From Heaven He Came and Sought Her: Definite Atonement in Historical, Biblical, Theological, and Pastoral Perspective*, ed. David Gibson and Jonathan Gibson (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2013), 534–5.

³⁹ This does not mean, as Neil Jeffers argues, that since we cannot infallibly know if anyone is regenerate, that we should never baptise anyone. See Neil Jeffers, “‘And Their Children After Them’: A Response to Reformed Baptist Readings of Jeremiah’s New Covenant Promises,” *Ecclesia Reformanda* 1.2 (2009): 147–48. The New Testament is clear that a clear profession of faith is sufficient evidence of regeneration and thus baptism. See 1 Corinthians 12:3.

The paedobaptist appeal to the dual-aspect of the covenant, while clearly present in the Old Covenant, is alien to the New Covenant. The pact is between God and Christ (Abraham's true seed) and Christ's seed (who are also Abraham's seed). The difference between Reformed paedobaptists and Reformed credobaptists lies here. Where the Reformed paedobaptist would affirm the dual-aspect of the covenant across covenants, the Reformed credobaptist would argue that in the New Covenant, there is no dual-aspect any longer.⁴⁰

Do we thus nullify covenant theology? No, rather we uphold it. It is the very structure of the covenant and covenant headship that means that Christ's salvific, covenantal, headship cannot mediate anything but blessing to his covenant people, including the blessing the saving faith.⁴¹ Paedobaptist theology struggles to integrate the fact that in the atonement Christ's covenantal work is on behalf of the elect such that the two categories are indissolubly drawn together. To bruise the nerve between election and covenant is to attenuate the connection between my possession of saving faith and the fact that I possess that faith through my covenant head's atoning work on the cross. It is because Christ has now come in the flesh and has risen visibly from the dead – a new historic, covenantal development – that his visible covenant people should reflect his elect people as closely as possible. Thus, credobaptism, far from being a low view of the covenant and its signs, is a position that seeks to give the fullest weight to the everlasting, salvific, covenant which God has established.

2. Creation

Debate about the nature of the covenant, or covenants, has been rumbling on since, at least, the sixteenth century. Gibson, though, raises another, fresher, objection to credobaptism. Credobaptism not only misunderstands the covenant but has a low view of creation itself. He argues, 'Credobaptists need to account for the fact that God has chosen to use created means to enact his sovereign decrees, and that one of the means he uses is the family. At stake is the proper relationship of nature and grace.'⁴² Since 'Anabaptism displays a theological commitment to discontinuity between God and creaturely reality'⁴³ credobaptism risks being 'sacramentally docetic' because it 'downplays the creaturely situatedness of the subject of baptism, abstracting him or her out of the living organism of generational lines and familial bonds and instead views the baptized as an autonomous agent who engages in an individualized, spiritual, soteriological transaction between themselves and God only.'⁴⁴ Gibson mounts a serious charge; is it correct?

Several lines of response lie open. First, there is the historical issue that the Reformed, Particular Baptist tradition does not, as Gibson suggests, flow primarily from Anabaptists but from the magisterial

⁴⁰ Salter, "Abraham in Reformed Baptist Perspective," 46.

⁴¹ Wellum, "The New Covenant Work of Christ," 534–35.

⁴² Gibson, "Fathers of Faith," 27.

⁴³ *ibid.*, 28. Gibson is quoting Michael S. Horton, *Calvin on the Christian Life* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2014), 41.

⁴⁴ Gibson, "Fathers of Faith," 28–29.

reformation via Reformed Anglicanism.⁴⁵ W. Robert Godfrey summarises the historical evidence from the Belgic Confession – to which he subscribes – as follows:

Some may wonder, however, whether the Confession's explicit rejection of Anabaptist views does not mean that it regards the Baptist churches as false churches. Such a conclusion would be entirely a-historical. The Baptist churches today are not descended from the Anabaptist churches of the sixteenth century. Rather, they are largely churches that developed out of Reformed churches in the seventeenth century from a conviction that believer's baptism was more faithful to the Bible. Baptists are not Anabaptists historically and it is anachronistic to believe that the Confession speaks explicitly about Baptists.⁴⁶

Gibson is using a well-worn Presbyterian trope: the earliest Particular Baptist, the First London Baptist Confession of 1644 is entitled 'The Confession of Faith of those churches which are commonly, though falsely, called Anabaptists...'⁴⁷ Indeed, it is noteworthy that the seventeenth century Baptists held precisely the same Calvinist understanding of the Lord's Supper as their Reformed paedobaptist brethren, something that would be unlikely, to say the least, if all Baptist theology operated with the kind of spirit matter dualism which Gibson claims.⁴⁸

Second, we must ask ourselves whether requiring a profession of faith from the children of believers renders them an 'autonomous agent who engages in an individualized, spiritual, soteriological transaction between themselves and God only', as Gibson asserts.⁴⁹ If this is the necessary corollary of requiring a confession of faith before baptism, is it not strange that when we read of baptism in the New Testament, we read of a profession of faith beforehand? Is not a confession of faith itself a physical act, produced by lungs, mind, and mouth? Likewise, given a Reformed soteriology, why should a profession of faith be understood as affirming someone as autonomous?⁵⁰ Paul tells us that confession

⁴⁵ B. R. White, *The English Baptists of the Seventeenth Century*, A History of the English Baptists v. 1 (London: Baptist Historical Society, 1983), 59; Michael A. G. Haykin, *Kiffin, Knollys and Keach: Rediscovering English Baptist Heritage* (Leeds: Reformation Today, 1996), 26–32. See also James M. Renihan, "'Truly Reformed in a Great Measure': A Brief Defence of the English Separatist Origins of Modern Baptists" *Journal of Baptist Studies* 3 (2009): 24–32.

⁴⁶ W. Robert Godfrey, "The Belgic Confession and the 'True Church,'" in *By Common Confession: Essays in Honor of James M. Renihan*, ed. Ronald S. Baines, Richard C. Barcellos, and James P. Butler (Palmdale, CA: Reformed Baptist Academic Press, 2015), 274.

⁴⁷ Lumpkin, *Baptist Confessions of Faith*, 153.

⁴⁸ See Michael A. G. Haykin, "'His Soul-Refreshing Presence': The Lord's Supper in Calvinistic Baptist Thought and Experience in the 'Long' Eighteenth Century, with Particular Reference to Anne Dutton and John Sutcliff" (paper presented at the Institute for Christian Worship, Louisville, KY, 28 February 2008); Haykin, *Kiffin, Knollys and Keach*, 77–81. For an account of the seventeenth-century Baptist view of baptism, both general and particular, see Stanley K. Fowler, *More Than a Symbol: The British Baptist Recovery of Baptismal Sacramentalism* (Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2002), 10–32.

⁴⁹ Gibson, "Fathers of Faith," 29.

⁵⁰ This is Peter Leithart's particular concern in "The Sociology of Infant Baptism," in *The Baptized Body* (Moscow, ID: Canon Press, 2007), 123–24. His argument that credobaptism means that choice 'takes a much more prominent, even crucial, role' seems to me to be well directed at the vaguely Arminian Baptist practice of much of American evangelicalism but not to touch credobaptism that is embedded in a Reformed, monergistic, soteriology.

of faith in Jesus only comes by the Holy Spirit and therefore a profession of faith should be regarded as autonomous as regeneration is autonomous. Neither does it follow that to reject physical lineage from believing parent as grounds for baptism is to reject the family as a means of grace. Gibson's paean to the importance of fatherhood is thus, in this debate, 'largely an exercise in missing the point.'⁵¹ Baptists agree that people live embedded in familial, national and cultural structures that shape our identity and that can work for or against our reception of the Gospel. The question is whether membership of a Christian household by itself gives someone a right to baptism.

Third, while Gibson suggests that credobaptism risks being 'sacramentally docetic', could it be that paedobaptism risks both overplaying and underplaying the value of creation? It risks overplaying creation because it conflates grace and nature in conflating natural birth and spiritual birth. Gibson asks, 'can the bond between my children and me be only a bond of nature, or can it be a bond of grace as well?'⁵² The answer is that the bond of nature can be a *means* of grace, as he teaches and embodies the Gospel to them, but that paedobaptism risks conflating the means with the grace itself.⁵³ Credobaptist theology distinguishes the means that God uses – the covenant household – with the grace that God bestows through it – the regenerate heart. This is why Reformed paedobaptist churches have always had trouble combining the realistic language of the New Testament with the status of baptised children. Gibson's essay reflects this. At times, he reflects the language of the New Testament about baptism, quoting Marilynne Robinson's novel *Gilead*: 'A touch of water and these children are given the whole of life.'⁵⁴ However, at other times it seems that the word 'given' in this sentence has a very provisional, attenuated sense. He later writes, 'Without faith, with grace spurned, the sign of covenant blessings becomes the promise of covenant curses.'⁵⁵ Yet this is true of all human beings as soon as they hear the gospel. One struggles to explain, on Gibson's account, how the situation of the baptised infant is different to any other individual to whom God promises righteousness if they believe and curses if they reject him. The baptised infant, therefore, is like every other individual under the sound of the Gospel in God's world.

However, paedobaptist ecclesiology also underplays the doctrine of creation since it denies that the covenant of grace with the elect is made fully visible in the life of the church. As we have seen, Reformed paedobaptists, by placing the infants of believers in the new covenant, draw a distinction between covenant and election. This means that gathering of the elect never finds full visible historic expression since the covenant community and the elect are discontinuous. The covenant community is the husk in which the elect seed is to be found, as it was under the old covenant. Credobaptists have a higher view of creation and human history; they believe that since the historic, visible, covenantal death and resurrection of Jesus, his covenant elect can be historic and visible too in a way that they were not before the pouring out of the Spirit at Pentecost.⁵⁶ Contrary to the paedobaptist, the credobaptist believes that the Spirit's work of regeneration can be reliably, if not infallibly perceived, and so it possible

⁵¹ These are Gibson's words to describe Salter's original article. Gibson, "Sacramental Supersessionism," 191.

⁵² Gibson, "Fathers of Faith," 29.

⁵³ See Salter's comments in "Abraham in Reformed Baptist Perspective," 47–48.

⁵⁴ Gibson, "Fathers of Faith," 28.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 33.

⁵⁶ For one exegetical argument for this principle see Daniel I. Block, *Deuteronomy*, NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012), 700–3.

for the visible church to be made up of those that give evidence of regeneration through a profession of faith.

3. Children

What, though, of the credobaptist view of children? Paedobaptists often argue that their view flows inexorably from a biblical doctrine of infants. Gibson explains that ‘paedobaptists work from a theology of *infants* before we develop a theology of infant *baptism*.’⁵⁷ Ferguson writes:

The (paedobaptist) covenantal principle enables parents to teach their children in home, Sunday School and congregational worship to pray *with theological consistency* ‘Our Father in heaven...’ Can a credobaptist do that *with theological consistency*? I doubt it.⁵⁸

Doug Wilson speaks even more robustly to Baptists: ‘Our Lord issued some of his sternest warnings to those who caused the little ones to stumble.... The only way out of such a horrible situation is ... repentance. Rather than a millstone around the neck.’⁵⁹ No Baptist parent will dismiss these claims lightly. Does credobaptism mean that they must view their child as ‘the newly arrived Amalekite sitting sullenly off to the side in his high chair’?⁶⁰

The premise of the argument is that if children are not baptised (and in Wilson’s case admitted to the table) then they must be treated as pagan idolaters, unable to offer prayer or worship acceptably. Offered this dichotomy – Are your children Christian or pagan? Will they worship God the Father or an idol? – it is no wonder that many feel paedobaptism is the only possible position. However, to this paradigm we can offer three lines of response.

First, do the Scriptures suggest that such a binary division of humanity is correct? There are clear examples of those outside the covenant community offering prayer and worship that is received favourably by God. An Old Testament example would be the sailors in Jonah 1 offering sacrifices to God presumably without receiving the covenant sign. One wonders whether Naaman or Nebuchadnezzar ever received the covenant sign, though both are presented as people who are recipients of God’s grace. Perhaps the most telling example is Cornelius, a man undoubtedly outside the covenant community, who is explicitly told in Acts 10:4, ‘Your prayers and gifts to the poor have come up as a memorial offering before God’, *before* he is baptised. God’s dealings with humanity are always focussed on but never limited to those who have received the covenant sign and the visible covenant community.

Second, the New Testament offers clear warrant that unbaptised members of Christian families partake in a kind of holiness. While 1 Corinthians 7:14 is often adduced as a ground for paedobaptism, its implications in fact run the other way. Paul’s concern is to establish the holiness of the spouse, for which the holiness of the children is drawn in as support. Paul is drawing a parallel between the unbelieving spouse and the children and his argument is that what must be true for one, the children,

⁵⁷ Gibson, “Fathers of Faith,” 25. Italics original.

⁵⁸ Ferguson, “Infant Baptism Response,” 60. Italics original.

⁵⁹ Douglas Wilson, “Baptism and Children in the Old and New Testaments,” in *The Case for Covenantal Infant Baptism*, ed. Gregg Strawbridge (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2003), 301. In fairness, Wilson is directing his words not merely at credobaptists and credocommunionists, so Baptists can at least take comfort that they stand in good company!

⁶⁰ *ibid.*, 300.

is true for the other, the unbelieving spouse. Since both the unbelieving spouse and the children are part of the family unit, both are holy. But, for Paul's argument to work, both parties must be in the same relationship with the visible church, otherwise the comparison is invalid.⁶¹ Since no one argues that the unbelieving spouse was baptised, logically the same must be true of the children. Neither are baptised, *yet both are considered holy*. This suggests that the New Testament conceives of a 'holiness' that families with Christian members partake in that does not follow from having been baptised. As David Wright puts it, "This is, I think, the only place in the New Testament where children are in view of whom we know for certain whether they have or have not been baptized. They have not – but are said to be already "holy".⁶² Of course, the we must establish what Paul means by 'holy' (ἅγια).⁶³ Thiselton's conclusions seem to present no problem to credobaptist theology and practice:

The lifestyle of the Christian partner cannot but affect the ethos and to some extent the values and lifestyle of the home, whether this be the husband or the wife. The spouse's example, witness, prayer and living out of the gospel make the spouse (and the children) *in this sense* holy.⁶⁴

Again, the stark binaries offered by much paedobaptist polemic seem foreign to the text and theology of the New Testament. Indeed, the language of 1 Corinthians 7:14 suggests that it is entirely possible for Baptist parents to raise their children in a sanctified, even covenantal, way without baptising them. This idea is further reinforced when we note that many of the households that Robert Rayburn uses as examples of the Presbyterian doctrine of covenant succession were, in fact, Baptist.⁶⁵ Rayburn admits this is the case. Of course, it may be that those Baptist families were inconsistent with their theology of baptism, but perhaps it is more likely that what Rayburn calls 'covenant succession' does not require paedobaptism to hold true. Indeed, Wilson's argument in his essay on baptism and a theology of children is rather weakened by his admission that he learned his theology of children from his Baptist father.⁶⁶ Was Wilson's father inconsistent? Possibly so, or perhaps treating children as Amalekites is not an inevitable corollary of credobaptism.

Finally, all Christian traditions and practices must wrestle with pastoral difficulties presented by the special status of children. There is a danger that in withholding the covenant sign from young children, those children may be discouraged in their faith or feel the need to produce a startling account of how they have been suddenly converted. However, these dangers can be avoided when set, as many Baptist parents have done, within a proper pastoral and theological framework implemented in a loving, Christ-centred home. The adoption of paedobaptism does not eliminate these challenges. Indeed, the liminal nature of childhood poses questions to all churches. Most paedobaptist churches face the question of when child should become communicant members and even in churches that practice paedo-communion, there

⁶¹ Since the reader could simply respond, 'but my child has been baptised and my spouse has not been.'

⁶² David F. Wright, "Baptism at the Westminster Assembly," in *Infant Baptism in Historical Perspective: Collected Studies* (Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2007), 254.

⁶³ For discussion of the interpretation of this term see Anthony C. Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, NIGTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 531–33.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 530. Italics original.

⁶⁵ Robert S. Rayburn, "The Presbyterian Doctrines of Covenant Children, Covenant Nurture, and Covenant Succession," *Presbyterion* 22 (1996).

⁶⁶ Wilson, "Baptism and Children in the Old and New Testaments," 286–302.

will be a moment when the child moves from receiving the elements as a child of the believing family to receiving them as a believer themselves. In paedobaptist and credobaptist churches, pastors must discern the hearts of those under one's pastoral care, mindful of the danger of presumption on the one hand and the danger of introspection and doubt on the other. While a child in a Baptist household may wonder why they have not received the visible sign of the covenant, a child in paedobaptist household may wonder whether their nascent faith really does meet the conditions of the covenant that their baptism placed upon them. Indeed, since the Westminster Confession teaches that, 'the efficacy of baptism is not tied to that moment of time wherein it is administered' (28.6), correlating the application of baptism with the precise moment of saving faith is not the first priority in administering baptism. Rather, baptism should be administered when the church can confidently affirm with Peter in Acts 10:47 that 'surely no one can stand in the way of their being baptised with water. They have received the Holy Spirit just as we have.' Precisely because the Scriptures does not teach a conversionist paradigm where each individual must have a sudden 'conversion experience', the church is at liberty to view conversion as a process, crowned and sealed by its affirmation in baptism.

Perhaps, then, the paradigm of Gentile God-fearers in the book of Acts provides an analogy for how parents should view their unbaptised children. God-fearers were connected to the covenant community, were taught and learned the Scriptures and were clearly able to offer acceptable prayer and worship to God, yet had not received the sign of the covenant. So also, children in Christian homes, while they have not received the covenant sign, can still be taught to pray to the Father, in the name of the Son, by the Spirit, with the expectation that they will be heard without theological inconsistency until such time as the church can publically and visibly affirm their faith and regeneration in the waters of baptism.

4. Conclusion

In view of this discussion, one may ask what, in a credobaptist view, baptism actually does? Steve Holmes has pointed out that 'perhaps bizarrely, Baptists have been remarkably poor at developing a theology of baptism over their history.'⁶⁷ Can credobaptism offer an adequate account of what baptism *means*?

First, baptism is never less but always more than a testimony of faith on behalf of the baptised. While faith is a pre-requisite of baptism, we do 'testify our piety'⁶⁸ before God, angels and men in the sacraments, yet this does not exhaust baptism's significance. Requiring a profession of faith before baptism does not, as Gibson claims, empty the rite of any objective significance; it simply to say that faith-union with Christ is the pre-condition for receiving either of the sacraments. Gibson takes Salter to task for saying, 'Without faith, of course, the subject of baptism is simply getting wet, nothing more.' He writes:

Note what is happening here: the definition of baptism is dependent on the position of its subjects. Without faith, baptism is not baptism. It is just getting wet. In this construction, one form of spirit-matter dualism is overcome by another. For the union

⁶⁷ Stephen R. Holmes, *Baptist Theology, Doing Theology* (London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2012), 90.

⁶⁸ This is Calvin's language in *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, 4.17.1.

of sign and thing signified has become so separate that without the thing signified the sign has actually ceased to exist.⁶⁹

It is hard to see how what Salter is saying about baptism is very different to what Augustine says regarding the Lord's Supper, as cited by Calvin:

A little after, (Augustine) says: 'And hence, he who remains not in Christ, and in whom Christ remains not, without doubt neither spiritually eats his flesh, nor drinks his blood, though with his teeth he may carnally and visibly press the symbol of his body and blood.' Again, we are told that the visible sign is opposed to spiritual eating. This refutes the error that the invisible body of Christ is sacramentally eaten in reality, although not spiritually. We are told, also, that nothing is given to the impure and profane beyond the visible taking of the sign.⁷⁰

This is merely to say that the Reformed view of baptism is consistent with the Reformed view of the Lord's Supper since both see faith-union with Christ as a prerequisite for the partakers of the sacrament. This does not empty either sacrament of their objectivity nor their covenantal context. Though both require faith from the recipients, both the Lord's Supper and baptism, as we shall see, are primarily divine actions towards sinners. Therefore, it is not sufficient to see baptism in ecclesiological terms alone. It is true that baptism is enacted by the visible church, marks our entry into the visible church and therefore carries significant implications for church disciple and church life. However, if this exhausts the meaning of baptism, we risk seeing baptism as merely a sociological ritual empty of any divine activity. Rather, baptism has ecclesiological significance because it has soteriological significance as a divine act directed towards sinners that marks them out as his people.

Therefore, it is important to regard baptism is fundamentally something that *God* does through the church for the one baptised. Brandon Jones summarises this well:

The Spirit graciously uses baptism as a confirming sign and seal of a believer's initiation into the new covenant, thereby strengthening his or her consciousness of salvation.... God, through his Spirit and community, confirms that he has covenanted with the believer in baptism.⁷¹

Baptism, like the Lord's Supper, is a means that the Lord uses to unite the believer to Christ and as such does not merely represent or commemorate an individual's conversion but is part of their conversion itself. Only when a person is baptised is their conversion to Christ fully complete, marked and affirmed by the physical sign of water as administered by the church. This preserves a proper view of baptism's instrumentality, while maintaining that faith-union with Christ is a necessary condition of its application. Baptism, then, operates as God's sealing of his new covenant promise to circumcise our hearts through the death and resurrection of Christ. It is to be a tangible means of assurance of comfort to the believer knowing that God, through his church, has administered the covenant sign as a seal of his promises to them as one who is united to Christ. Stanley Fowler explains, 'Some who are baptized are not in fact

⁶⁹ Gibson, "Fathers of Faith," 32.

⁷⁰ Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, 4.17.34.

⁷¹ Brandon C. Jones, *Waters of Promise: Finding Meaning in Believer Baptism* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2012), 132. See also Stanley K. Fowler, *Rethinking Baptism: Some Baptist Reflections* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2015).

saved, and some are saved apart from baptism, but the normal way in which grace meets faith is in a believer's baptism.⁷²

It is undoubtedly true that many credobaptists have held a low view of the sacrament of baptism. It has been reduced to merely a public profession of a new lifestyle choice, stripped of its covenantal and creational context, cut off from the traditions of the church. No wonder, then, that many have found Reformed paedobaptism to offer a richer, fuller account of baptism than the brittle, merely symbolic account that prevails in many baptistic churches. However, as I hope I have shown, this is by no means inevitable. In fact, credobaptism reflects the covenantal logic of the Scriptures and a high view of created means as channels of God's redemptive purposes. Peter Leithart, drawing on Augustine, suggests that the new covenant sacraments are 'conjugations' of those of the old.⁷³ This seems a fruitful analogy for a credobaptist theology of baptism. What circumcision promised in future tense and imperative mood, baptism now declares in a perfect indicative and with the change in tense and mood is the appropriate change in subject. The Christian can come to the waters of baptism and hear neither an imperative nor a future tense promise, but a perfect indicative: you have been saved.

⁷² Fowler, *More Than a Symbol*, 210. Jones and Fowler's books are both excellent discussions of the theology of baptism from a credobaptist perspective.

⁷³ Peter J. Leithart, *The Priesthood of the Plebs: A Theology of Baptism* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2003), 32–47.

The Helpfulness of the Lesser Known Work: Isaac Watts on the Passions

— Graham Beynon —

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Abstract: Isaac Watts is well known as a hymn writer, but he also wrote significant works on the place of passion in the Christian life. Writing at a time of ‘cool’ religion in England, Watts aimed to breathe warmth into the religion of his day, while still being aware of the dangers of ‘enthusiasm.’ There were significant implications for pastoral ministry along with Watts’s view of praise and preaching. Watts’s context, along with his pastoral insight and practical application, makes his works very helpful today.

Isaac Watts is best known today as a hymn writer and that is certainly where his true genius lay. However he was a pastor/theologian who engaged deeply with the theological and philosophical issues of his day.¹ In particular he wrote on the role of reason and the place of the passions² in the Christian life and it is the second of these this article focuses on.

Whenever the topic of emotion, or the place of the heart, is raised, it is not long before someone refers to Jonathan Edwards’s classic work, *The Religious Affections* (1746).³ Rightly so of course as it is a classic for good reason.

However, one factor makes Watts’s works more immediately relevant and helpful to us today compared to Edwards: that is that we are not in a time of revival. As is well known Edwards’s work was prompted by experiences reported within the Evangelical Awakenings. Edwards believed that some of these experiences stemmed from a true work of the Spirit but many did not and as a result his work is primarily one of discrimination.

There is of course still a great deal to be learnt from Edwards’s work and such discrimination over religious experience is still needed. But in Western evangelicalism revival experiences are not the norm. My two decades of pastoral ministry have involved only a few cases of people reporting extraordinary episodes and wondering if they are truly spiritual. Far more common has been the depressed report of

¹In his collected works Watts’s poetry and hymns occupy one of six volumes the rest of which are theological, pastoral, educational and philosophical pieces.

²See Graham Beynon, *Isaac Watts: Reason, Passion and the Revival of Religion*, Studies in English Theology (London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2016).

³Jonathan Edwards, *A Treatise Concerning Religious Affections* (Boston: Printed for S. Kneeland and T. Green in Queen-street, 1746).

feeling little towards God, and/or the desire to feel more. We can also add the common pastoral concern that people's affections are far more raised towards things other than God. Of course this turns on which branch of evangelicalism one inhabits and the dominant spirituality there, but I believe the point stands.

Some two decades before Edwards's work Isaac Watts wrote two pieces covering similar territory: *The Doctrine of the Passions Explained and Improved* (1729)⁴ and *Discourses of the Love of God and its Influence on all the Passions* (1729).

In the late 1720s the religious landscape was very different from the revivals to come. This was the time of 'reasonable religion' which, in practice, usually meant 'cool religion.' As a result, Watts's aim in writing on the passions was not like Edwards to distinguish between the wheat and the chaff in the heat of revival, but rather to breathe warmth into the dull religion of his day. While no two time periods are exactly alike, Watts was writing at time with far greater similarity to much of evangelicalism today and hence the usefulness of the lesser known work.

1. Background

Isaac Watts (1674–1748) ministered in the first part of the eighteenth century.⁵ This time period saw a significant rise in the role of reason as enlightenment thought, led by John Locke and others, spread widely. In addition, there had been a reaction against what was seen as the previous blind dogmatism and irrational enthusiasm (best thought of as emotional fanaticism) of the Puritans.⁶ By comparison people now looked to the clear, calm light of reason. The result was a great confidence in and reliance on reasoning, and fear of enthusiasm.

We should also note that while rationalism dominated the landscape there was also a change towards a positive view of the passions by some philosophers. Rather than being viewed negatively, which had been the predominant 17th century position, there was a new appreciation of their significance.⁷ This saw the rise of 'sentiment' as a faculty, which could even be looked to for guidance in ethics. For example, feelings of sympathy would lead people to care for each other rightly. If rationalism involved confidence in human reason independent of God, this sentimentalism involved confidence in human passions independent of God.

Into this mixed field came Watts. He was overall very positive about the new rationalism. While his background was that of Puritan theology he is best understood as an 'Enlightenment Puritan.'⁸ He said of Locke's *Essay on Human Understanding*: 'His essay on the human understanding has diffused

⁴ Isaac Watts, "The Doctrine of the Passions Explained and Improved," and "Discourses of the Love of God and its Influence on all the Passions," in *The Works of Isaac Watts*, ed. D. Jennings and P. Doddridge (London: T. and T. Longman, and J. Buckland; J. Oswald; J. Waugh; and J. Ward, 1753), 580–633, 636–716.

⁵ For biographies of Watts see Graham Beynon, *Isaac Watts: His Life and Thought* (Fearn, Ross-shire: Christian Focus, 2013); David G. Fountain, *Isaac Watts Remembered* (Southampton: Mayflower Christian Bookshop, 1974); Arthur Paul Davis, *Isaac Watts: His Life and Works* (London: Independent Press, 1948).

⁶ J. Spurr, "'Rational Religion' in Restoration England," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 49 (1988): 563–85.

⁷ See Susan James, "The Passions and the Good Life," in *The Cambridge Companion to Early Modern Philosophy*, ed. Donald Rutherford (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 198–200.

⁸ Beynon, *Isaac Watts: Reason, Passion and the Revival of Religion*, 192.

fairer light through the world in numerous areas of science and of human life. There are many admirable chapters in that book, and many truths in them, which are worthy of letters of gold.⁹

Watts's strong rational side can be seen in his work on *Logic*, and also *The Improvement of the Mind*. He encouraged a thoughtful and considered faith that knew both what and why it believed. For example: 'God has given us rational faculties and requires the exercise of them in religious concerns, and he has laid down such grounds for faith in all ages as must approve itself unto reason.'¹⁰

However, Watts also had a great concern for the place of the passions in the Christian life and felt that within his own day this was underappreciated. At one point he contrasted this advance in reason and yet lack of heartfelt religion:

It must be acknowledged indeed, to the honour of the present age, that we have some pretenses above our predecessors, to freedom and justness of thought, to strength of reasoning, to clear ideas, to the generous principles of Christian charity... As for the savour of piety, and inward religion ... spiritual mindedness, and zeal for God and for the good of souls; as to the spirit and power of evangelical ministrations, we may all complain, the glory of God is much departed from our Israel.¹¹

At the same time Watts believed that 'enthusiasm' clearly existed. He commented on those who make their experience the foundation of their faith: 'They have made this inward sensation the ground of their hope; they have fed still upon this cordial, and lived upon this support.' He goes on: 'when these extraordinary supplies fail them, they sink, and tremble, and die.'¹²

Watts's aim in writing the two works mentioned was to bring a clear theological understanding of the passions which would lay the basis for a pastoral approach which gave the passions an appropriate role but still kept them in their place. In practice this would mean both vindicating and encouraging passionate religion that had a rational foundation.

The relationship between reason and passion is seen across Watts's works, for example in his sermons. He preached a series of sermons on 'A Rational Defence of the Gospel' because of his concern that people were embarrassed to own the faith in an age of reason.¹³ However he also consistently encouraged passionate religion in an age fearful of enthusiasm. We see this tension within individual sermons. For example, a sermon on Colossians 3:3 entitled the 'Hidden Life of the Christian' emphasises the need for a vital inner life that engages the passions, as opposed to an outward nominal faith. However, within the same sermon Watts is concerned to distance what he is espousing from fanatical enthusiasm. On the contrary he argues that such warm piety has both Scripture and reason on its side.¹⁴

⁹ Isaac Watts, "Philosophical Essays on Various Subjects," in *The Works of Isaac Watts*, ed. D. Jennings and P. Doddridge (London: T. and T. Longman, and J. Buckland; J. Oswald; J. Waugh; and J. Ward, 1753), 503.

¹⁰ Isaac Watts, "Blessedness of Faith without Sight," in *Wattiana: Manuscript Remains of the Rev Isaac Watts, DD, from the Library of Mr Joseph Parker, his Amanuensis* (London: British Library), 209.

¹¹ Isaac Watts, "Sermons on Various Subjects Divine and Moral," in *The Works of Isaac Watts*, ed. D. Jennings and P. Doddridge (London: T. and T. Longman, and J. Buckland; J. Oswald; J. Waugh; and J. Ward, 1753), xxiii.

¹² Isaac Watts, "Evangelical Discourses," in *The Works of Isaac Watts*, ed. D. Jennings and P. Doddridge (London: T. and T. Longman, and J. Buckland; J. Oswald; J. Waugh; and J. Ward, 1753), 77.

¹³ Isaac Watts, "Sermons on Various Subjects Divine and Moral," 164–94.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 95–121.

In what follows we will focus on Watts's understanding of the passions and how he saw that playing out in discipleship and pastoral care.

2. *Watts and the Passions*

Watts's preferred term is that of 'passions', rather than Edwards's use of 'affections'. Historically the two have been distinguished with passions referring to lower level more passive feelings (e.g. fear), and affections referring to higher level, more voluntaristic feelings (e.g. sympathy).¹⁵ Edwards draws a quantitative rather than qualitative difference between the two, saying that passions are more powerful affections. Watts uses the two terms synonymously.

Watts defines the passions as the felt response that comes as we appreciate the characteristics of an object: 'They are those sensible commotions of our whole nature, both soul and body, which are occasioned by the perception of an object, according to some special properties that belong to it.'¹⁶ So if an object is unusual we feel surprise, if it is beautiful we feel desire, if it is dangerous we feel fear.

As passions arise from this process of perception and evaluation the mind and understanding are very much in play. But says Watts there is 'such a near and special union between soul and body'¹⁷ that what we regard in this way with our mind, we feel in our body, at least to some extent. Hence apprehension of an object results in a corresponding feeling towards it."

Watts employs a taxonomy where a few primary passions lead to derivative, secondary passions. The main primary passions are those of love and hate,¹⁸ and all other passions flow from these. So if we love something and we do not have it, we feel longing; if we gain it we feel delight and joy; if we have it but lose it we feel sadness; and so on. The same is true for the things we hate. If we are faced with the possibility of something we hate we feel trepidation; if we avoid something we hate we feel relief, and so on.

As what we hate is simply the opposite of what we love all of the passions can be evaluated by our loves. That analysis is not unique to Watts, but it is very useful in being able to trace the source of our different feelings in different circumstances.

2.1. Purpose of the Passions

The passions for Watts are primarily motivational: 'Consider, my friends, what were the passions made for? Not merely for the sensible pleasure of human nature, but to give it vigour and power for useful actions.'¹⁹ The passions are not to guide our actions as they will mislead us: 'The passions are not fit to be our guides in determining truth and falsehood; they were never given us to search out the true nature of things, or to judge concerning their qualities, or the degree of them.'²⁰

¹⁵ For an overview see Thomas Dixon, *From Passions to Emotions: The Creation of a Secular Psychological Category* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

¹⁶ Isaac Watts, "The Doctrine of the Passions Explained and Improved," 584.

¹⁷ Isaac Watts, "Evangelical Discourses," 105.

¹⁸ He also includes a third – that of 'surprise'. However this is seen as an occasional passion which has few derivatives and so is not discussed any further.

¹⁹ Isaac Watts, "Discourses of the Love of God and Its Influence on All the Passions," 689.

²⁰ Isaac Watts, "The Doctrine of the Passions Explained and Improved," 608.

Guidance rather comes from our reason. However, reason by itself has insufficient motivational power. Our reason may tell us that something is good or bad, right or wrong, but it does not motivate us to act. It is when we feel that something is good that we will actively pursue it, and when we feel that something is evil and fear it that we will try to avoid it. The passions then ‘are those lively, warm and vigorous principles and powers in our nature, which animate us to pursue the good, and avoid the evil; and that with vastly greater speed and diligence than the mere calm and indolent dictates of reason would ever do.’²¹

Thus, Watts refers to the passions as the ‘engine’ which drives us. This is fairly common in 18th century thought that saw the passions as ‘active powers.’ There is overlap here with Edwards here who saw the affections as a facet of the will. Watts spends less time in examination of faculties than Edwards, and he distinguishes the passions and will in a way that Edwards does not, but this motivational view still mean that for Watts the passions and the will are closely tied.

2.2. Passions as Created, Fallen, and Restored

Watts believed that Adam was created with passions which would have always been rightly guided by his reason: ‘Reason gave the lead; affection and will gladly followed. His natural powers had no uneasy contest, there was no civil war nor rebellion amongst them to interrupt his happiness.’²²

Watts’s formulation is that reason understands and perceives, the affections are inclined, such that they desire or withdraw; and the will chooses correspondingly.²³ Watts then locates the primary effect of the fall in the passions: it is because we now have sinful passions rather than being guided by reason that results in our disobedience. We fix our passions on improper objects, we love what we should not; or we fix our passions on the right objects but with excessive degree, we love them too much.

The motivational energy of our passions means that this leads to disaster. The passions are now a ‘most powerful engine of mischief.’ So one of Watts’s poems says:

Our hasty wills rush blindly on
Where rising passion rolls,
And thus we make our fetters strong
To bind our slavish souls.²⁴

Conversion then restores our faculties back into their proper order. Watts writes:

[God acts to] reform our natures, to put all our misplaced and disjointed powers into their proper order again, and to maintain this divine harmony and peace. It is the blessed Spirit that inclines reason to submit to faith, and makes the lower faculties submit to reason, and obey the will of our maker, and then gives us the pleasure of it.²⁵

The ‘lower faculties’ here are those of passion and will. We see this act of re-creation in Watts’s hymns:

²¹ Ibid.

²² Isaac Watts, “Sermons on Various Subjects Divine and Moral,” 9.

²³ It is worth being aware that Watts argued for the freedom of the will. In fact Edwards work on that topic was written both against an Arminian and against Watts as a tentative Calvinist.

²⁴ Isaac Watts, “Horae Lyricae,” in *The Works of Isaac Watts*, ed. D. Jennings and P. Doddridge (London: T. and T. Longman, and J. Buckland; J. Oswald; J. Waugh; and J. Ward, 1753), 370.

²⁵ Isaac Watts, “Sermons on Various Subjects Divine and Moral,” 10.

The Spirit, like some heav'nly wind,
Blows on the sons of flesh,
New-models all the carnal mind,
And forms the man afresh.²⁶

Watts's view of the passions as fallen and then recreated meant he stood apart from the sentimentalists of his day who had a high view of the passions in leading us to live well. Watts believed sin had fatally wounded such 'social passions': "

These things are some ruinous remains of that goodness, virtue or piety which was natural to innocent man, and are partly wrought, perhaps, into his animal nature, as well as in his soul: These instincts are certain relics of a spur to duty, and a bridle to restrain from vice.²⁷

Watts thinks of these 'instincts' as we might speak of conscience today. Under sin conscience can still be a 'spur' and 'bridle' but is relatively ineffective. As a result for Watts we can only have right passions once converted and hence he would have been a strident opponent of the 'do-what-you-feel' philosophy so common today.

2.3. Passions in Christian Living

As the primary motivational power within us, the passions are key for Watts in Christian living. God reforms our passions such that their power is taken out of the hands of Satan and is employed by him instead. While this process requires ongoing sanctification, and the passions can still be sinful and mislead us, they are essential for a healthy Christian life.

Watts again draws a contrast with the role of reason:

Even where reason is bright and the judgment clear, yet it will be ineffectual for any valuable purposes, if religion reach no farther than the head, and proceed not to the heart: it will have but little influence if there are none of the passions engaged.... Cold, unaffecting notions, will have no powerful influence to reform our lives.²⁸

Thus, for Watts the passions must be engaged for God. This leads us to the love of God.

3. The Love of God

Watts says that God is the proper object of our supreme love. He reflects on Deuteronomy 6:5 and Jesus's quotation of that verse and explores what it means to love God" above all else. One of his great concerns is to challenge the cool and outward religion of his day:

It is not enough for the eye to be lifted up to him, or the knee to bow before him; it is not enough for the tongue to speak of him, or the hand to act for his interest in the world; all this may be done by painted hypocrites whose religion is all disguise and vanity. But

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 179.

²⁷ Isaac Watts, "Philosophical Essays on Various Subjects," 551.

²⁸ Isaac Watts, "Discourses of the Love of God and Its Influence on All the Passions," 663.

the heart with all the inward powers and passions must be devoted to him in the first place: This is religion indeed.²⁹

Watts locates the love of God, and so the heart of the Christian, as central in the Christian life; something that every believer should attend to and every minister should be aware of. In the following section, we will outline Watts's main points about what is involved in love for God.

3.1 Knowledge of God

We saw that for Watts passions are raised by the properties of an object. This means that love for God requires knowing truth about God so that we see him rightly:

It is not to be expected that we should love God supremely, or with all our heart, if we have not known him to be more excellent, and more desirable than all other things we are acquainted with. We must have the highest opinion of his transcendent worth, or we cannot love him above all things.³⁰

Hence while Watts emphasises affection in the life of the Christian he equally emphasises knowledge. He criticises those who say they love God but do not know him very well and urges people that their knowledge of God should result in love: 'Knowledge and affection should go hand in hand.'³¹

Watts says there are three key springs of knowledge for love: (1) 'a clear discovery of what God is in himself'; (2) 'a lively sense of what he has done for us'; and (3) 'a well grounded hope of what he will bestow upon us'. So he focuses on God's character, God's actions, and God's promises as they relate to us. Each of these he says are seen most clearly in Jesus.³²

This means that when Watts considers how we excite love for God in our hearts the first thing he says is that we should reflect on these areas; we should consider Jesus.

3.2. Feeling for God

Watts expects we will actually feel love for God. Like Edwards he is aware that many factors will play into how heightened or lowered such feelings may be: physical health, our constitution, different nationalities (he comments on the different temperaments of the Scots, the Welsh and the English), and even the weather.

Thus, Watts is pastorally wise and says that a will resolved to live for God is better proof than any sudden flash of affection. Yet because of the link between our minds and our bodies he says we should feel something for God. There should be desire for him and delight in him:

Hath he formed my soul to delight and love and hath he confined these sweet and pleasurable capacities only to be employed about creatures, when the Creator himself is supreme in loveliness? Will not this most amiable of beings expect that I should love himself, and give me leave to make him my delight.³³

²⁹ Ibid., 640.

³⁰ Ibid., 641.

³¹ Ibid., 693.

³² Ibid., 644.

³³ Ibid., 697.

As an example, Watts speaks about coming to knowledge of forgiveness and says:

Will it not fill the soul with overflowings of gratitude, and make the lips abound in expressions of joy and praise? And will not these be attended with a peaceful and pleasing aspect, and establish a sweet serenity in the heart and eyes? And all concur to maintain religion in the power and joy of it?³⁴

In a day of cool religion Watts said he wanted to vindicate the affectionate Christian, rescue him from the charge of enthusiasm, and encourage heartfelt experience of God.

3.3. Effect on the Rest of Life

If we love God above everything else, then the rest of life is affected. As the passions are the engine of life supreme love for God becomes the motivational engine that drives all that the Christian does. Watts compares this engagement of the passions with simple understanding: he says that understanding is necessary but is not enough for it to change the way we live, because of the motivational force of the passions: 'If the judgment be never so much convinced, yet while the affections remain unmoved, the work of religion will be begun with difficulty, and will drive on but very heavily.'³⁵

Where love for God is absent he sees the Christian life as dry duty that has no vigour or power to it. By contrast:

Where the love of God reigns in the affections ... the eye will often look up to God in a way of faith and humble dependence; the ear will be attentive to his holy word; the hand will be lifted up to heaven in daily requests; the knee will be bended in humble worship; all the outward powers will be busy in doing the will of God and promoting his glory.³⁶

In Watts's understanding of the passions what we love and hate lies behind all other derivative passions. So, he says if we love God it will guide our other passions appropriately:

Now if we had but one sovereign bridle, that could reach and manage them all; one golden reign, that would hold in all their unruly motions, and would also excite and guide them at pleasure; what a valuable instrument this would be to mortals! Such an instrument is the love of God, such an invaluable regulator of all the passionate powers; and it will have this effect, where it is strong and supreme, as it ought to be.³⁷

Watts lists the variety of feelings that will flow from love of God: admiration at God, desire for God, joy and pleasure in God, love of what belongs to God (his word, his people, his Son), zeal for God, hatred of what offends God, and fear of anything that would cut us off from God.³⁸

Love for God will also result in 'deadness' to the world; if we love God more than the world then we will not be drawn by it. Watts then was extremely concerned for orthodox belief and for obedience in the life of the Christian, but he saw love for God as the hinge between such belief and life.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 700.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 676.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 643.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 658.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 648–56.

3.4. Cautions over the Passions

While Watts was keen to vindicate and encourage the affectionate Christian, he also gives a number of cautions about the place of the passions. The subtitle to his work referred to the right use and abuse of the passions in religion. His section on the abuse of the passions contains a variety of warnings. The first is making passions a source of knowledge or living by them, as opposed to living by the truth. He also cautions people against good passions degenerating in some way, such as zeal for truth becoming indignation, hatred of sin becoming hatred of people, and admiration becoming envy.

He especially cautions people against living for particular experiences of God such that they are dependent on them. He says:

There have been many persons who have made their religion to consist too much in the working of their passions, without a due exercise of reason in the things of God. They have contented themselves with some divine raptures without seeking after clear conceptions of divine things, or building their faith and hope, and practice, upon a just and solid foundation of sacred knowledge.³⁹

He says of these Christians that they live by fits and starts of devotion – they're always high as a kite, or low and depressed; they are never simply steady. So, while encouraging heartfelt love of God he also cautions against ways in which such an encouragement could go astray.

Thus, Watts says we must be very watchful over our own hearts:

To guard against these dangers let Christians frequently enter into their own hearts and endeavour as far as possible to examine their own spirit and conscience, to distinguish between their inward workings of piety, and the mere exercises of animal nature, or the workings of corrupt affection and set a constant guard on their hearts in this respect.⁴⁰

In this regard Watts prefigures Edwards's more careful discernment over true religious affections. In pastoral letters, he warns people against reading too much into their experiences. For example, to a lady 'given to strong impulses' he writes:

Our Religion, faith and hope should not be built upon strong impulses and imaginations but upon a plain explication of the Gospel and a Comparison of our hearts and the frame and temper of our wills with the word of God.... The general way of the Spirit of God leading us to Duty or Comfort is by leading us to apply the generall Promises of the Gospell and precepts of his Law to our own particular Case and Circumstance by the exercise of our intellectual faculty, Our Judgement and Reason and Prudence and not by lower powers of sense and fancy.⁴¹

However, such cautions are the lesser note in Watts's work, which is overall encouraging of passionate religion.

³⁹ Ibid., 637–38.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 691.

⁴¹ Isaac Watts, "Letter about Strong Inward Impulses" (London: British Museum, n.d.).

3.5. Exciting the Love of God

Lastly, Watts directs Christians as to how they can excite the love of God in their own hearts. He has said that passions are part of our response to something, which means they do not lie under the command of our will. But that does not mean we are powerless about how we feel. Our passions cannot be commanded:

But it may be done by the consideration of truth: For as the passions are raised by perceptions of the mind, so we may by degrees raise or suppress the passions, by applying our minds to the perception of those objects, or those truths, which are suited to these purposes.⁴²

Watts says we can decide where to fix our attention and so encourage the right passions. So, he urges Christians to fix their attention on God and cultivate love for him. This includes meditation on God, his character, his works, and his promises, especially as these are all seen in Jesus.

This meditation connects to Watts's view of language. He views some language as more emotive and so more helpful in this process. He particularly suggests the use of affecting language within Scripture, especially the Psalms, which he calls an 'altar of sacred fire'

It is an example and a spring of most lively and exalted devotions.... Lift up your souls to God in the words of David, or imitate his language, where his words do not so perfectly express your case. Enter into his spirit, form and model your pious affections by that illustrious pattern.⁴³

As well as private meditation Watts also makes the connection with public worship, which he expects to have an effect on the passions and raise the love of God.

Along with cultivating love of God, Watts also warns against overly loving anything else. He says we should set a holy jealousy around our heart and beware what will draw our affections:

Whensoever you find a tempting creature taking too fast hold of your passions, set a guard of sacred jealousy upon it, keep your heart at a holy distance from that creature, lest it twine about your inward powers, and draw them off from their allegiance and duty to God your creator.⁴⁴

Ultimately, says Watts, we must look to God and pray for his work in us by his Spirit who reformed our passions in the first place and who will rightly energise them:

Seek earnestly the influences of the quickening Spirit. Without him you can do nothing. It is the Spirit of God who raises dead sinners at first into a divine live, and he puts all the languid springs of life into new motion.... It is he who awakens our fear, who excites our hopes, who kindles our love and desire to things holy and heavenly; and it is he who exalts our spiritual joys.⁴⁵

⁴² Isaac Watts, "The Doctrine of the Passions Explained and Improved," 609.

⁴³ Isaac Watts, "Discourses of the Love of God and Its Influence on All the Passions," 708.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 705.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 709–10.

Behind this encouragement to excite the love of God is Watts's pastoral experience. He felt the need to both vindicate the passionate Christian but also, more commonly, to aid people in their feeling for God.

3.6. Connection with Watts's Theology of Praise

Watts is best known for his hymns. What is less appreciated is that Watts's view of the passions is what motivated him to write his hymns. In Watts's day, the majority of churches sang metrical psalms, and Watts was ground-breaking in both writing what we know of as the modern hymn and in paraphrasing the Psalms so that they spoke more clearly of Christ and the Christian life.⁴⁶

The reason for Watts's revision of the praise of the church was his view of the passions. He says of singing metrical psalms that our affections are not raised appropriately, or when they are they are often then checked, because we are singing of Old Testament religion:

When we are just entering into an evangelic frame by some of the glories of the gospel presented in the brightest figures of Judaism, yet the very next line perhaps which the clerk parcels out unto us, hath something in it so extremely Jewish and cloudy, that darkens our sight of God the saviour: Thus by keeping too close to David in the house of God, the vail of Moses is thrown over our hearts.⁴⁷

Watts argues that we must be able to sing of our own experience of Christ and the gospel, forgiveness, adoption, the work of the Spirit, and so on. This is because he does not think praise is simply reciting truth; he believes it is where our passions are expressed and stimulated: 'Let us remember, that the very power of singing was given to human nature chiefly for this purpose, that our own warmest affections of soul might break out into natural or divine melody, and that the tongue of the worshipper might express his own heart.'⁴⁸ Thus, in praise Watts expected our passions to be raised. We see this in some lyrics he writes:

Such wond'rous love awakes the lip
Of saints that were almost asleep,
To speak the praises of thy name,
And makes our cold affections flame.⁴⁹

So, Watts sought to write new hymns that would be a vehicle for, and a spur to, heartfelt expression.

This doesn't mean that reason is absent from Watts's hymns – quite the opposite. He always wanted to tie the expression of passion to its rational basis in Scriptural truth. He wanted feeling because the singer understood the wonders of the gospel. This means his hymns regularly contain a mixture of objective truth and subjective passionate expression. For example, a communion hymn begins with the invitation of Jesus to meet with his people:

Jesus invites his saints
To meet around his board;

⁴⁶ Watts was not the first to write the 'modern hymn' but the first to publish an extensive hymnbook of hymns rather than small supplements. For an overview of Watts's theology of praise see Beynon, *Isaac Watts*, ch. 5.

⁴⁷ Isaac Watts, "Hymns and Spiritual Songs," 147.

⁴⁸ Isaac Watts, "The Psalms of David," xiv.

⁴⁹ Isaac Watts, "Hymns and Spiritual Songs," 174.

Here pardoned rebels sit and hold
Communion with their Lord.

The hymn goes on to describe Jesus's body and blood nourishing believers, and the unity of the body of Christ, but then finishes with the cry:

Let all our power be joined,
His glorious name to raise;
Pleasure and love fill ev'ry mind,
And ev'ry voice be praise.⁵⁰

The desire to express passion also meant that Watts wrote lyrics that put in the mouth of the singer the sorts of expressions of love and affection that he believed they should experience. For example:

Now shall my inward joys rise,
And burst into a song;
Almighty love inspires my heart,
And pleasure tunes my tongue.⁵¹

O! What immortal joys I felt,
And raptures all divine,
When Jesus told me, I was his,
And my Beloved mine!⁵²

Watts is not alone in this view of praise. Similar thoughts had expressed previously by Puritans such as Richard Baxter⁵³ and would also be later echoed by Edwards: 'And the duty of singing praises to God seems to be appointed wholly to excite and express religious affections.'⁵⁴ However it was a relatively unheard voice in an age drawn to reason and wary of enthusiasm.

3.7. Application to Preaching

Watts's view of the passions also affected his view of preaching. For Watts, the preacher must aim to raise the love of God in the hearts of his hearers. As right love comes from right understanding the minister must first bring clear light into the mind or any feeling that comes will be vacuous. But having laid a clear foundation he must also warm the heart which required use of affecting language:

Contrive all lively, forcible and penetrating forms of speech, to make your words powerful and impressive on the hearts of your hearers, when light is first let into the mind. Practice all the awful and solemn ways of address to the conscience, all the soft and tender influences on the heart.⁵⁵

⁵⁰ Ibid., 257–58.

⁵¹ Ibid., 161.

⁵² Ibid., 225.

⁵³ Richard Baxter said of poetry, 'as it expresseth affections, so doth it raise them.' In *Paraphrase on the Psalms of David* (London: Thomas Parkhurst, 1692).

⁵⁴ Edwards, *Religious Affections*, section II.

⁵⁵ Isaac Watts, "An Humble Attempt Towards the Revival of Practical Religion," in *The Works of Isaac Watts*, ed. D. Jennings and P. Doddridge (London: T. and T. Longman, and J. Buckland; J. Oswald; J. Waugh; and J. Ward,

The preacher must first warm his own heart with God's love. Watts was far less concerned with the rules of rhetoric – to which a lot of attention was paid in the 18th century – and far more worried that the preacher appropriately felt what he was saying:

When the words freeze upon his lips, the hearts of his hearers are freezing also: But where we find devout affection mingled with solid argument in the discourse, there the lips of the preacher seem to speak light and life at once, and he helps to communicate the holy passion all around him, by feeling it first himself.⁵⁶

4. Observations on Watts's Usefulness

4.1. The Need for Right Promotion of Love of God

Watts reminds us of the ongoing need to promote 'passionate religion.' He was writing at a time when religion had cooled, and while enthusiasm was a danger to avoid, his main concern was 'reasonable religion.' Hence Watts wished to promote a faith where clear understanding was accompanied by a warm heart.

There has been far more written on this issue within evangelicalism over recent years and a more holistic view is common in many quarters. However the need to promote affective love for God often remains. It is not enough to know about God, we need to feel for God. Such territory requires awareness of the dangers of emotionalism and must be rightly connected to knowledge, but we must continue to say that seeing God clearly must lead to loving God deeply.

4.2. The Need to Aid People in Cultivating the Love of God

However, it is not enough simply to say that we should feel love for God. Where Watts goes further and shows pastoral wisdom is in actually helping people cultivate godly passions. His last discourse in *Of the Love of God* is entitled, 'Means of exciting the devout passions.' His list of means includes the following:

- Ensuring the mind is furnished with knowledge of God and the will is set on obeying God
- Engaging the most powerful passion – love for God
- Guarding against excessive love for anything else
- Being diligent in private religion i.e. prayer, reading and meditation
- Reflecting on doctrines and sections of Scripture which awake your affections
- When feeling a divine passion encouraging it and dwelling on it
- Staying close to God in your thoughts and heart
- Speaking with others of God
- Calling on God to work in you by his Spirit
- Looking to the future⁵⁷

1753), 22.

⁵⁶ Isaac Watts, "Discourses of the Love of God and Its Influence on All the Passions," 679.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 704–11.

Within each of these is further explanation and practical instructions as to how go about each task. For example, in speaking with others Watts says:

Mutual conversation shall raise the divine flame higher, like united torches, which increase each other's blaze.... Borrow a coal from the altar of the sanctuary, from the ordinances of public worship, and warm your hearts, by endeavouring to warm the heart of your neighbour. Speak to one another of the heavenly world, till each of you find your wings stretched set for the flight, and you long for the divine summons. Mix your flames of celestial love, as angels do, and let them spire upward and point towards *Jesus*, your beloved. Man is a social creature, and his passions were made to be raised by converse.⁵⁸

Watts's practical help is seen in another way too. Each discourse concludes with a meditation which reviews and summarises the content of the chapter but does so in the first person singular, and so provides words for the reader to use. For example:

Let my devout passions be ever awake and lively when I hear the things of God spoken, or when I read of the momentous concerns of religion, and a life to come. Then the sacred truths and duties of Christianity shall be impressed deep on my memory, and written there as with a pen of diamond, never to be blotted out. O may the warm passions melt my soul to tenderness, and make me susceptible of every holy impression! May this heart of mine, this table of stone, be softened by devout affection.⁵⁹

We can learn from such practical help in guiding people, rather than simply telling people they should feel more.

4.3. Pastoral Usefulness of the Passions

Earlier we saw Watts's taxonomy of the passions – the primary passions of love or fear which result in all other feelings. This led to seeing the love of God as the supreme passion that will guide others in their place. As pastoral counselling commonly involves people reporting varying emotions Watts's analysis gives us a mental map we can employ. We can ask what primary love or fear is driving the reported feelings for this person in this situation. They may feel happy but for bad reasons – not because they love God. They may feel sad for good reasons – because they do love God. In what is an increasingly emotionally driven world such analysis is very useful.

We also saw Watts's view of the motivational nature of the passions. That too has significant pastoral cash value. We must appreciate that understanding an issue is not usually enough by itself. We need to help people feel differently. The man looking at pornography needs to start to hate it rather than simply know it is wrong; the woman concerned for her appearance needs to feel contentment in the person God has made her, not just know that she should. Stereotypical examples such as these are the tip of the iceberg.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 709.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 672.

4.4. A Contribution to Our Theology of Praise

Watts says that sung praise is a prime place for the raising and expression of our passion. Such passion must be based on clear understanding or it will be mindless, but it must be there or our praise will be heartless. This is an area where the polarised positions of years past have somewhat faded. However, it is still an area of contention, and Watts makes a helpful contribution. For some, this will mean a challenge to feeling more within our praise wanting our passions to be affected. For others, it will be a challenge to think more such that all feeling is driven by understanding rather than by the music or the setting.

Watts's position should not decide the matter by itself but it is very suggestive that one of our greatest hymn writers wrote specifically to help us in raising and expressing passion. It is perhaps then ironic that churches which are more traditional in style – and so which might sing more of Watts's hymns – are the very ones who might be falling foul of what he was seeking to correct.⁶⁰

4.5. Questions for Our Preaching

Watts raises some significant questions for our preaching. Are our own passions raised in preaching? Do we give any time and thought to being in the right 'temper'? Do we pay attention to our language and style for the sake of raising other people's passions (while being true to our personalities)? Is one of our aims in preaching to affect how people feel, as well as what they understand?

4.6. Application to Our Own Hearts

For those involved in pastoral ministry and in theological study and education there is of course a last set of questions. Are we those who love God? Are we those who are growing in a love for God as we grow in our understanding? Are we those whose ministry flows from a love for God? Are we those who attend to our own hearts to cultivate the love of God?

I recommend the helpfulness of the lesser known work.

⁶⁰I am well aware of numerous assumptions made here. For further reading, see Graham Beynon, *Emotions: Living Life in Colour* (Nottingham: Inter-Varsity Press, 2012), ch. 7: "Emotions and God's Praise."

PASTORAL PENSÉES

#Charlottesville: Some Gospel Thinking on White Supremacy

— Eric C. Redmond, Walter J. Redmond, Jr., and Charis A. M. Redmond —

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Abstract: The acts of white supremacy that took place in Charlottesville, VA should encourage the church to act aggressively to deter racist ideals within her ranks. Evangelicals, as a whole, must engage white supremacy as a worthy opponent to the mission and message of the gospel instead of acknowledging race-based hate as a minor threat. Failure to do so directly injures the church’s ability to reach marginalized groups who have become victim to rising attitudes of hate and xenophobia. This responsibility falls on both leadership and members alike, to and both assembly ministers and Christian academics. Evangelical thought and action toward white supremacy cannot be a mere afterthought to the Charlottesville, Virginia incidents August 11, 2017 and like events.

On Friday, August 11, white supremacists descended upon Charlottesville, VA, to protest the removal of a statue of Confederate General Robert E. Lee from Emancipation Park—previously known as Robert E. Lee Park. Neo Nazis, members of the Ku Klux Klan, the Alt-Right, National Socialistic Movement, and other extreme groups marched through the city with torches reminiscent of the Hitler Youth Movement, shouting racial phrases: “Blood and soil,” “You will not replace us,” “*Jews* will not replace us,” “*Deus vult*,” and “White lives matter.” They were met with opposition by students from the University of Virginia as they attempted to approach the statue of Thomas Jefferson, the founder of the University of Virginia.

The next day, Saturday, August 12, the white supremacist protesters were met by scores of counter-protesters, including members of Black Lives Matters, local clergy, many ordinary citizens, and those described as “Antifa.” The meeting of supremacist groups and the counter-demonstrators quickly erupted

into vehement and violent clashes. Many of the supremacist protesters were well-armed, equipped and organized like militia groups (of which some also were members). They wielded long rifles, carried clubs and shields, and marched with Roman phalanx-like maneuvers to fend off counter-attacks as they weaved through the crowds. They were met by some counter-demonstrators armed with makeshift shields and aerosol cans used to ignite flames toward those bearing symbols of racial superiority and hatred.¹ They also were met by many alarmed yet peaceful people who stood their ground for love and decency.

The United States President's initial and subsequent lack of both moral clarity and unequivocal denunciation in his statements about the white supremacists is well documented.² The castigation of wrongdoing on "both sides" of the riots served to normalize and minimize the evil of the efforts of the hate groups.³ Given the President's rhetoric on immigration reform and border security, his executive orders concerning protecting the nation from foreign terrorists, and his appointment of the former executive chair of *Breitbart News* to his administration, one should not have been surprised at his slowness to criticize a display of racial hatred. However, as Jonathan A. Greenblatt, CEO of the Anti-Defamation League, stated, "It is long overdue for the President to develop a plan of action to combat white supremacy and all forms of hate.... Without a clear denunciation and plan of action, these bigots are only emboldened."⁴ The fatal mowing down of a counter-protester with a car may only be the beginning of the bold lengths to which the supremacists will go to silence those who would oppose them.

The church must begin treating racism/white supremacy as the formidable,⁵ seasoned opponent it is, instead of barely acknowledging race-based hate as if it is a newly-emerging, minor threat. This responsibility falls on both leadership and members alike, both shepherds and Christian academics.

¹ Doreen St. Félix, "An Image of Revolutionary Fire at Charlottesville," *The New Yorker* (August 14, 2017), <https://tinyurl.com/ycc5boql>.

² The White House, "Remarks by President Trump at Signing of the VA Choice and Quality Employment Act," news release, August 12, 2017, <https://tinyurl.com/ybqonyo2>; The White House, "Statement by President Trump," news release, August 14, 2017, <https://tinyurl.com/y8oa5g5b>; The White House, "Remarks by President Trump on Infrastructure," news release, August 15, 2017, <https://tinyurl.com/y9ewpwr4>. See also Michael D. Shear and Maggie Haberman, "Trump Again Says Two Sides at Fault in Rally Violence," *The New York Times*, August 16, 2017, A1.

³ Mark Lander, "Trump Resurrects his Claim that Both Sides Share in Blame in Charlottesville Violence," *The New York Times*, September 14, 2017, <https://tinyurl.com/yc4lzzpd>. Later, President Trump placed blame "on many sides" (Ben Jacobs, "Trump Revives Criticism of 'Both Sides' in Charlottesville," *The Guardian*, September 14, 2017, <https://tinyurl.com/y8sjwsbh>).

⁴ Anti-Defamation League, "ADL Calls on White House: Name the Hate, Disavow All Ties and Devise Plan of Action to Confront White Supremacy," news release, August 13, 2017, <https://tinyurl.com/y7nrcbvw>.

⁵ The terms "racism" and "white supremacy" are used interchangeably by some scholars (Kathleen M. Blee and Kimberly A. Creasap, "Conservative and Right-Wing Movements" *Annual Review of Sociology* 36 [2010]: 269–86). We are using the terms synonymously in order that we might manifest the supremacist intent of all racism—for one ethnic or racial group to retain a sense of dominance over another or other ethnic or racial groups. We also use the terms synonymously to indicate that the exclusivity supremacists express should carry the negative connotations and denotations of "racism" rather than any sense of simple preservation of the presence of white persons within the greater American (or other national) population, or any sense of a claim of equal rights for whites. Seeking to honor the Lord with truth and love toward others, we share John McWhorter's expressed concern, "These days, the term 'white supremacy' is being used not as an argument but as a weapon" ("The Dif-

This responsibility cannot be a mere afterthought to Charlottesville and like events. Where the church is presently on the defensive front concerning racism, it must shift to the offensive position and take active steps to deter racist ideals or hate justification within its ranks. Failure to do so directly injures the church's ability to reach marginalized groups who have become victim to rising attitudes of hate and xenophobia.

1. White Supremacy and Christian Identity

The hateful intentions, rhetoric, displays of might, and efforts of the Unite the Right movement, their growing public boldness and increased recruiting campaigns, and the attempts of some of their members to identify as "Christians" should concern Christ's people greatly. We too, especially American evangelicals, are long overdue in developing plans to dismantle white supremacy, racial bigotry and discrimination, and violence against Jews, African Americans, and other ethnic minorities and people of color. It is past time for us to add sustained energies to our thoughtful, well-crafted, sincere, gospel-centered statements on race. As much as we partner with, and call upon the legislatures and courts to support "family values," we should entreat the same to put a wooden stake in the heart of organized white supremacy. As much as we use our pulpits to preach on the sanctity of the lives of those with birth defects and terminal illnesses, we should proclaim all cruciform implications of the dignity of the image of man as relates to race, ethnicity, racial bias, and hatred.

As the corporate identity, "one new man" (Eph 2:15), the church plays a critical role in the war against racism and hate rhetoric. In the work of redemption, Christ reconciled in himself ethnic groups forcefully posed against one another, "killing the hostility" they had toward one another. The complete death of such hostility inherently calls the church to the complete removal of language that would incite racial hatred rather than promote the fellow-citizens work of the gospel. Seemingly, therefore, individual believers and local churches have an active responsibility to condemn the use of evangelical themes as racially coded language.⁶ As Christ followers who prioritize the love of one's neighbor as second only to the love of God, evangelicals must work vehemently to remove conduits of racial hatred from within the church itself.

Historically, hate groups have used religious, Christian-based rhetoric to perpetuate acrimony, xenophobia, bigotry, and segregation in America. The misuse of Christian themes and evangelical theology to preserve slavery is a particularly poignant example of such malevolent magniloquence. Pro-slavery advocates co-opted gospel discourse even to the point of encouraging African-American

ference Between Racial Bias and White Supremacy," *Time* [November 29, 2016], <http://time.com/4584161/white-supremacy/>).

⁶ "Coded speech allows for plausible deniability of the speaker regarding the charge that the speaker is talking about the alleged implicit message" (Justin Khoo, "Code Words in Political Discourse" *Philosophical Topics* 45.2 [2017]: 39). The ambiguity and "multi-dimensionality" of coded words contribute to the problem of proving racism is inherent within the words used (*ibid.*, 40–47). Blee and Creasap recognize some studies have concluded that some movements have "relied on racially coded messages to mobilize white evangelical activists" ("Conservative and Right-Wing Movements," 272). See also Randall Balmer, "Shocked at Evangelicals' Flocking to Trump? Blame it on Reagan," *Los Angeles Times*, October 5, 2015, <https://tinyurl.com/y8qbhygw>; Lydia Bean, *The Politics of Evangelical Identity: Local Churches and Partisan Divides in the United States and Canada* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014): 131–32; Theodore R. Johnson and Leah Wright Rigueur, "Race-Baiting for the Presidency," *The Atlantic* (November 18, 2015), <https://tinyurl.com/ydc94mtm>.

slaves to accept their enslaved status as their rightful, God-ordained place in a white society.⁷ National Christian groups, most notably, the Southern Baptist Convention, also have origins birthed from racism.⁸

In a very similar manner, this misuse of Scripture is evident in an interview that preceded the supremacists' night march in Charlottesville by a few weeks. Colombian American news anchor, Illia Calderón, sat down with a white supremacist who threatened her repeatedly, while quoting Scripture as the justification for his disdain for her and [her] people.⁹

Although this warped, malicious use of Christian beliefs is deeply ingrained within the fabric of American culture, and within contemporary Christian institutions, *racism*, unlike other spiritual wrongs, is not subject to aggressive widespread criticism within the evangelical milieu. Instead, it often seems that it is brushed under the rug as the deep, dark family secret that local assemblies hope they simply can pray away, or address with a timely sermon or statement after a national, race-related tragedy. Rarely does the sin of racism receive corrective church discipline.¹⁰

2. *The Church's Historical Fights against Racial Aggression*

Most relevantly, as a collective, evangelicals have not taken a hard stance against political candidates who tote racism as part of their election platform in the same manner they have opposed candidates who are Pro-Choice or Pro-Same-Sex unions. Arguably, in November 2016, many evangelicals did quite the opposite.¹¹

⁷ Such were the arguments of E. N. Elliott, et. al., *Cotton is King and Pro-Slavery Arguments, Comprising the Writings of Hammond, Harper, Christy, Stringfellow, Hodge, Bledsoe, and Cartwright on This Important Subject* (Augusta, GA: Pritchard, Abbott & Loomis, 1860). This volume includes an article by Charles Hodge in defense of the *Dred Scott v. Sandford* decision and an article by Thornton Stringfellow entitled, "The Bible Argument; or Slavery in Light of Divine Revelation."

⁸ Emma Green, "Southern Baptists and the Sin of Racism," *The Atlantic* (April 7, 2015), <https://tinyurl.com/yaz3aphs>; Matthew J. Hall, "Historical Causes of the Stain of Racism in the Southern Baptist Convention," in *Removing the Stain of Racism from the Southern Baptist Convention: Diverse African American and White Perspectives*, ed. Jarvis J. Williams and Kevin M. Jones (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2017), 7–14; R. Albert Mohler Jr., "Conceived in Sin, Called by the Gospel: The Root Cause of the Stain of Racism in the Southern Baptist Convention," in *Removing the Stain of Racism from the Southern Baptist Convention: Diverse African American and White Perspectives*, eds. Jarvis J. Williams and Kevin M. Jones (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2017), 1–6; The Southern Baptist Convention, "Resolution On Racial Reconciliation on the 150th Anniversary of the Southern Baptist Convention" (Nashville: The Southern Baptist Convention, 1995), <https://tinyurl.com/onsuktff>.

⁹ Samantha Schmidt, "KKK Leader Threatens to 'Burn' Latina Journalist, the First Black Person on his Property," *The Washington Post*, August 21, 2017, <https://tinyurl.com/y73wgr4m>. The article indicates that the interview took place before the incidents in Charlottesville, although the article appears after the Charlottesville events. Only in video linked with the article does one hear the quoting of Scripture to support racism. The scripture quoting does not appear in the printed article.

¹⁰ For brief discussions and two rare examples to the contrary, see Adelle M. Banks, "Church Confronts, Expels Member for Racist Views," *Huffington Post*, May 25, 2011, <https://tinyurl.com/y7ku6pov>; and Sonia Scherr, "Church Denomination Roots Out Racism," *Intelligence Report* (2010), <https://tinyurl.com/yc2qp3oj>.

¹¹ For statistics on the electorate support of President Trump, see Gregory A. Smith, "Among White Evangelicals, Regular Churchgoers are the Most Supportive of Trump," *Pew Research Center*, April 26, 2017, <https://tinyurl.com/lmxxpqy>; Gregory A. Smith and Jessica Martínez, "How the Faithful Voted: A Preliminary 2016 Analy-

Although presently, the church is failing to raise its banners in the war against racism in American society, history portrays the church at the center of successful movements toward racial equality and civil rights. An iconic example of a Christ-inspired endeavor towards racial justice is manifest in the life of William Wilberforce's passionate efforts to end the Transatlantic Slave Trade in England. History similarly remembers the legacy of Corrie ten Boom, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, and other members of the true church in Germany concealing Jews from murderous Nazis and/or speaking against their extermination during the Holocaust. Likewise, the Black Church was a central force in the advancement of the Civil Rights Movement in America.

Wilberforce, ten Boom, and others who championed their faith to drive out racial hatred possessed bold willingness to sacrifice their own lives to rescue others from evil. Wilberforce, ten Boom, and other bold champions were willing to follow God's word without compromise rather than dilute their faith in order to live within the safety of the common and socially accepted, racially oppressive practices of the day. They did not avoid rocking the boat in order to keep the peace, or work to see validity "on both sides." They recognized evil and hatred for what it was and took up arms against it.

In the 1930s, the Confessing Church of Germany stood up to the Aryan Supremacy of the Third Reich and her so-called church of "German Christians." Yet Bonhoeffer was unable to persuade the Confessing Church to make a statement (or stand) against the Nazi treatment of the Jews, for, as Siegele-Wenschkewitz notes, "Only a few were able to put behind them the institutionalized anti-Semitism of the Christian church. Only a few spoke up for the Jews who were deprived of their rights, humiliated, stripped of human dignity, driven out of Germany and eventually killed by the millions in the holocaust of the gas chambers."¹² In the wake of the Charlottesville incidents, the invoking of the memory of the church versus early 20th-century Nazism is appropriate as the philosophical offspring of the German Nazis walking through our streets waving flags bearing swastika flags.

3. *The Great Commission and Deterrence of White Supremacy*

If the Church is lackluster in its fight against racism running rampant in the nation and the world, it will be hindered in the achievement of one of its primary callings: *The Great Commission*. In the wake of Charlottesville, the Christian community received criticism as multiple members fled in mass from Trump's Manufacturing Council and Strategy & Policy Forum while only one member "quietly

sis," *Pew Research Center*, November 9, 2016, <https://tinyurl.com/h5zd2fl>; Alec Tyson and Shiva Maniam, "Behind Trump's Victory: Divisions by Race, Gender, Education" *Pew Research Center*, November 9, 2016, <https://tinyurl.com/q3wtur8>. We do not deny that some evangelicals who voted for Donald Trump did not do so in support of his morality, his full political ideology, or what might be perceived to be racist code words by some. Instead, many "reasoned their political concerns would be more likely vindicated (or at least less damaged) by a President Trump than by a President Clinton" (Hunter Baker, "#NeverTrumpers in the Age of Trump," *The Gospel Coalition*, December 16, 2016, <https://tinyurl.com/ybbdzral>. With evangelical leader, John Piper, we acknowledge, "John Piper and a few million other supposed natives didn't vote for Donald Trump" as a moral decision: "We don't think unrepentant lechers should be president" ("116 Been Real: Lecrae, 'White Evangelicalism,' and Hope," *Desiring God*, October 6, 2017, <https://www.desiringgod.org/articles/116-been-real>). We also understand that for many evangelical voters, a choice between a President Trump or a President Clinton was a choice between the lesser of two evils.

¹² Leonore Siegele-Wenschkewitz, "Christians Against Nazis: The German Confessing Church," *Christian History* 9 (1986), <https://tinyurl.com/hllbbfb>.

stepped away” from the Evangelical Advisory Board.¹³ Although other members of the Evangelical Advisory Board spoke publicly against White Supremacy, the Advisory Board remained largely intact, appearing to some as a reflection of the minor concern the Christian community has for the growing racial animosity in America.

Within the practice of law, judges and legislators use the principle of *deterrence* to discourage undesirable behavior through precise legal schemes.¹⁴ Deterrence is a model based upon punishment and awareness: *Where a population perceives a detrimental outcome of a higher social cost than benefit for a certain behavior, the behavior is prevented by avoidance of the resulting negative outcome.* Unfortunately, despite its long history and familiarity with racism and hate rhetoric, the church has yet to discern an equivalent, Spirit-wrought, sustainable deterrence model for these social disgraces.

Without deterrence, racism will retain its association with evangelicalism, and thus, with the message of the gospel from evangelicals. Evangelicals leave themselves open to the charges of hypocrisy akin to those levied with the colonialism of missionaries to Africa.¹⁵ The church will be hindered in its proclamation of the death and resurrection of Jesus to and for people of “every tribe and language and people and nation” (Rev 5:9) when the recipients of the message perceive that those bearing the message are unconcerned about racial conflicts and injustices.¹⁶ The message of the cross is a message of the integrity of life in its stewards, written on the hearts of the ones we serve, and to be read by all observing our New Covenant ministry (1 Cor 4:1–2; 2 Cor 2:17–3:3; 1 Tim 4:16; 6:11–16). People should read from our *lives*—our motives, intentions, goals, words, and acts of service—a love of neighbor that does not tolerate racial hatred. This reading, notes Paul, is an outworking of the gospel we preach in the lives of others (2 Cor 3:3). Just as a life of holiness is essential to the heralding of the gospel message in one’s local spheres of influence, so also a life of righteousness and love is necessary to preach the gospel among those outside of one’s own ethnic background. Just as we lose credibility of witness if our message appears to be, “The Lord can change your life even though there is no evidence he has changed mine,” so too we equally lose the moral capital of our Christian testimony if our message appears to be, “The Lord loves all people even though I show no evidence of such love or concern for the wellbeing of people of other (or certain) races and ethnicities.”

¹³ Sarah Pulliam Bailey, “Megachurch Pastor Resigns from Trump’s Evangelical Council,” *The Washington Post*, August 18, 2017, <https://tinyurl.com/y868tzll>; Jill Disis, Julia Horowitz and Cristina Alesc, “White House Business Panels Collapse as CEOs Flee Trump,” *CNN Money*, August 16, 2017, <https://tinyurl.com/y868tzll>; Tom Gjelten, “Trump’s Evangelical Advisors Stand by Their Man,” *National Public Radio*, August 18, 2017, <https://tinyurl.com/y7h5cugo>.

¹⁴ John C. Ball, “The Deterrence Concept in Criminology and Law,” *Journal of Criminal Law and Criminology* 46.33 (1955), 347–54.

¹⁵ Mokhele Madise and Lazarus Lebeloane, “The Influence of Calvinism on South Africa’s Education System prior to 1994,” *Studia Historiae Ecclesiasticae* 35.2 (2009): 141–52; see also Jean Comaroff and John Comaroff, “Christianity and Colonialism in South Africa,” *American Ethnologist* 13.1 (1986), 1–22.

¹⁶ See Russell Moore, “Racism and the Great Commission Resurgence,” October 31, 2009, <https://tinyurl.com/ybcgg6a8>; Courtlandt Perkins, “Race and the Great Commission,” *Center for Great Commission Studies*, December 20, 2016, <https://tinyurl.com/y7bjn586>.

4. A Perspective on Social Hatred

Perhaps a socio-religious analysis of what transpired in Charlottesville will broaden one's understanding of the hateful intentions, rhetoric, displays of might and efforts of the Unite the Right Movement aforementioned in this essay. It appears that the KKK, the Alt-Right, Neo-Nazis, and Nationalists abhor social change and relish the present status quo, even at the risk of living anachronistically. Thus, the call to "Make America Great Again" became code words for those who enjoy the perks of *white privilege* and serve to provide reassurance that a certain level of comfort will be maintained at the expense of poor people and people of color.¹⁷ Any attempts to "equalize" or to "level the playing field" represent threats to those perks and are met with cries of "reverse discrimination" and various acts of violence.¹⁸ A recent sociological report documents 900 hate incidents 10 days after the 2016 election, one-fifth of which were committed by supporters of the newly elected President or done in his name.¹⁹

¹⁷ Nell Irvin Painter, "What Whiteness Means in the Trump Era," *The New York Times*, November 12, 2016, <https://tinyurl.com/y7u3m944>. It is possible for evangelicals to dismiss the validity of "white privilege" in American society as a completely secular philosophy that divides believers rather than uniting them, and forces feelings of guilt upon some for being born Caucasian—especially where such individuals do not perceive themselves as practicing any forms of racism. However, "white privilege" is a label representing the social reality of societal privileges afforded to people ethnically and and/or racially white that are not afforded to non-whites in American (and other Western) societies. The term refers to "white" as a class or group identity, and not to the individual experiences of each individual of the ethnic group. The label itself could go by another term, but this is the most frequent identifier for the reality. Therefore, the lack of a "privileged" experience by poorer whites does not negate the term or the social reality. Neither should one's personal practice of loving persons of all cultures negate that such a one might also experience privilege in hiring practices, securing home loans, being accepted into an upscale housing community, being recommended for an honored academic fellowship, or being given the benefit of the doubt by law enforcement officers (of any ethnicity) when there is a suspicion of wrongdoing. Thus, the term should not foster unwarranted guilty in any one individual. Biblically speaking, the mistreatment and injustices fostered by white privilege fall under the sin of respecting persons (Prov 24:23; Jas 2:9; cf. 1 Sam 16:7; Acts 10:34; Rom 2:11). We hope believers are more concerned about both the sins and harm caused by the realities of white privilege than the aversive nature of the term itself. For what D. A. Carson says of "racism" readily applies to "white privilege" as a term: "Nowadays 'racism' carries connotations of evil. If the term can be relegated away from a particular display of the same fundamental evil, there is political advantage since there is no similar term (such as 'ethnicism') that carries the same load of evil" (*Love in Hard Places* [Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2002], 88). Non-white persons in American society, as a class or group, are not able to ignore the problems associated with social reality as easily as whites—those not negatively affected socially, politically, and economically by the reality. See also Marianne Bertrand and Sendhil Mullainathan, "Are Emily and Greg More Employable than Lakisha and Jamal? A Field Experiment on Labor Market Discrimination," *National Bureau of Economic Research*, Working Paper 9873, <http://www.nber.org/papers/w9873>; Laurie Fuller, "Don't Feel White Privilege? It Might Be Political," *Radical Pedagogy* 13.1 (2016): 39–53; Robert Jensen, "White Privilege Shapes the U.S.: Affirmative Action for Whites is a Fact of Life," *The Baltimore Sun*, July 19, 1988, 1C; Mary Sztó, "Real Estate Agents as Agents of Social Change: Redlining, Reverse Redlining, and Greenlining," *Seattle Journal for Social Justice* 12.1 (2013), <http://digitalcommons.law.seattleu.edu/sjsj/vol12/iss1/2>.

¹⁸ The Southern Poverty Law Center reports that after Election Day (2016), "A wave of crimes and lesser hate incidents swept the country, including at least 1,094 bias incidents in the first 34 days (Mark Potok, "The Year in Hate and Extremism," *Southern Poverty Law Center Intelligence Report* 162 [Spring 2017], 38).

¹⁹ Heidi Beirich, "All Forms of Violence Need Condemnation," *Southern Poverty Law Center Intelligence Report* 163 (Fall 2017), 1.

At a deeper level, those acts of violence represent a defense against feelings of fear of loss of status and privilege based on demographics that suggest that there are more people of color in the world than there are white. According to a 2014 U.S. Census Bureau Report, in the United States the racial and ethnic composition is predicted to shift to a majority-minority by 2044.²⁰ Even though a full realization may be three decades or more away, and depending on the strength of one's belief in the accuracy of these data analyses, the thought of such a reality raises fear in the minds of many white citizens who have enjoyed the rewards of being part of the majority.

The late Frances Cress Welsing, a noted African American psychiatrist, argued that racism/white supremacy is a conspiracy to “ensure white genetic survival.”²¹ She based her argument on the theory of Neely Fuller, a native Washingtonian, who theorized that racism, aggression, and hostility stems from white fear of genetic annihilation in an overwhelmingly “non-white world.” Secondly, Welsing argued that while blacks have been labeled an inferior people, and operate on feelings of inferiority, it is actually white people who are experiencing feelings of inferiority based on the biological fact that black people produce melanin that gives a darker pigmentation to the skin. Since white people do not produce melanin, and there are more people of color in the world than white, she argued that white people feel threatened of annihilation, and therefore react in various hostile ways towards people of color.

Whether or not we agree with Welsing's analyses, we certainly agree that racism/white supremacy exists, and has been around for hundreds of years. Yet, we have failed miserably in this country to engage in honest dialogue on race, racism, and racialization in any significant way.

Gregory Carr, professor of Afro-American studies at Howard University, says, “Ending racism has never been a matter of polite discourse or easy solutions. People will not agree, and paths of most resistance will involve fighting with one another.”²² However, violence is not a gospel-centered solution to problems of racism and racial injustice. As Dr. Martin Luther King admonished American society, “Violence multiplies violence.... The ultimate weakness of violence is that it is a descending spiral, begetting the very thing it seeks to destroy. Instead of diminishing evil, it multiplies it.”²³

Writing on the Charlottesville incident, Jarvis Williams notes, “Many African Americans believe that there has been little or no significant change in race relations since the days of Jim Crow, and that the aftermath of recent racial violence in Charlottesville has many Christians and churches asking with more urgency, ‘How should we respond to white supremacy and racial injustice?’”²⁴ The answer to this question may require a paradigm shift in how blood-bought, Spirit-filled followers of Christ view racism/white supremacy. Rather than viewing it primarily as a social issue, we need to view it as a gospel issue. In their *Charlottesville Declaration*, the Reformed African American Network proclaims,

²⁰ Sandra L. Colby and Jennifer M. Ortman, “Projections of the Size and Composition of the U.S. Population: 2014 to 2060: Report Number: P25–1143” *U.S. Census Bureau*, March 3, 2015, <https://tinyurl.com/y7ltrl5>.

²¹ Frances Cress Welsing, “The Cress Theory on Color Confrontation and Racism (White Supremacy),” *The Black Scholar* 5.8 (May 1974): 32–40; idem., *The ISIS Papers: The Keys to the Colors* (Chicago: Third World Press, 1991).

²² Gregory Carr, “Dr. Frances Cress Welsing: Looking Back at Her Call to Uproot Racism,” *Ebony Magazine* January 5, 2016), <https://tinyurl.com/y9qo64hp>.

²³ Martin Luther King, Jr., *Strength to Love*, reprint ed. (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1981), 51.

²⁴ Jarvis J. Williams, “A Gospel That's Big Enough to Heal the Racial Divide,” *Christianity Today* (August 2017), <https://tinyurl.com/yb5ze79f>.

Thus, it is with great concern for the soul of this nation that we, the undersigned, covenant to “cry loud and spare not” (Isaiah 58:1) against America’s national sin, beginning within the body of Christ. White supremacy—often called by many names including racism, white privilege, “alt-right” and the KKK—is an insidious doctrine that in manifold ways steals, kills, and destroys the inviolable dignity of all God’s children (Genesis 1:26–28). It suppresses the truth of God (Romans 1:18), and walks out of step with the true Gospel (Galatians 2:14). All that is left for an unrepentant stance toward sin is God’s justice and judgement. Alas, many of the Lord’s followers remain hard of heart and hearing, making God’s judgement upon this nation seemingly inevitable.... Now is the time for the Church to again be the moral compass for this nation. Now is the time for a prophetic, Spirit-led remnant to bear credible “word and deed” witness to the glorious Gospel of Jesus Christ.²⁵

Christ “gave Himself for our sins to deliver us from this present evil age” (Gal 1:4). On this verse, Williams comments, “Racism is part of that evil age.” Williams continues to explore the application of Christ’s atoning work to overcoming racism within the body of Christ by saying, “Jesus’s blood and resurrection reconciled a diversity of humans into one transformed “ethnically and racially diverse Christian Community (1 Peter 2:9; Revelation 5:9).”²⁶ Williams recommends that if churches desire to offer any help to those enslaved to racist ideologies like those displayed in Charlottesville, or to those who suffer from white supremacy, they must first see the gospel as the basis for our responses. Racism and white supremacy—both personal and systemic—are forces that work against the gospel.²⁷ Justice, in this present society, must not be confused with the justice provided on the cross (cf. Rom 3:25). However, neither should justice in society be divorced from the justice of the cross—justice that establishes rulers to curb sin in the present world (cf. Rom 13:2–5).

Social scientist Gordon Allport advanced a theory called “Intergroup Contact Hypothesis,” or “Contact Hypothesis” for short.²⁸ He proposed that members of different groups can come together and work to reduce prejudice and intergroup conflict, and improve social relations. He suggested four key conditions that must exist for this to occur: *equal status*, *intergroup cooperation*, *common goals*, and *support by social and institutional authorities*. Contact under these conditions is especially effective for reducing prejudice; even if all the conditions are not present, unstructured contact can reduce prejudice.

There are multiracial, multicultural, and predominantly homogenous congregations across the country whose members are putting into practice *equal status* (e.g. mutual dignity), *intergroup cooperation* (humility and fellowship of love), *common goals* (unity of mind and heart), and *support by social and institutional authorities* (congregational care and the body building up itself in love) with respect to embracing people of all races and ethnicities. Such persons also have the habits of being sensitive and sincere toward the pain and trauma people of color endure with every event like Charlottesville or Ferguson. There are many believers who understand that equal status in justification (Gal 3:28) should promote equal status of all persons within a local body (Eph 4:3). There are many who

²⁵ Reformed African American Network, *The Charlottesville Declaration: An Appeal to the Church in America*, August 25, 2017, <https://tinyurl.com/y8keol5j>.

²⁶ Williams, “A Gospel That’s Big Enough to Heal the Racial Divide.”

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Gordon Allport, *The Nature of Prejudice* (Cambridge, MA: Addison-Wesley, 1954), 281.

fight against racism as an outgrowth of the holy conduct of Christ's bride in contemporary societies (cf. 1 Pet 2:12).

5. Pastoral Admonitions for Congregational Dismantling of Racial Hatred

Each congregation, parachurch board, and school administration must give prayerful consideration to practices that will guide their members to the faithful dismantling of racism. However, allow us to suggest a few possible acts that may have come to the imaginations of some. *First, encourage participation in the festivities, remembrances, awareness events, artistic expressions, and historical displays of the various minority ethnicities within your congregation and local community.* Trips to museums of various cultures is one means of growing in empathy toward the needs and struggles of different people groups. For example, the National Museum of African American History and Culture in Washington, DC is poised to initiate such discussion.²⁹

Second, give strong, clear, responses to the issues surrounding local and national incidents of racial conflict, especially in which racially-charged threat, harm, police or judicial action, and/or tragedy has come to fore. In every such event, the love of God, love of neighbor, the image of God in man, and treatment of others as one desires to be treated are pathways from the cross to social issues and back to the cross again (cf. Gen 1:27; Matt 7:12; Mark 12:30–31; Luke 6:31; Jas 3:9). Silence on such issues will be understood as complicity with supremacists by some, apathy by others, and love by none. Again, Dr. King said, “He who passively accepts evil is as much involved in it as he who helps to perpetrate it. He who accepts evil without protesting against it is really cooperating with it.”³⁰ In academic settings, point-in-time responses to issues of racial conflict should complement annual theological curricula that, inherently, should expose and rebuke a litany of sins woven into the fabric of racism and ethnic superiority.

Third, promote regular, active, intentional, personal fellowship of saints across ethnic lines. Such fellowship happenings, often involving the sharing of a favorite ethnic meal by the host family, allows for believers within the same congregation to reveal and understand the private, cultural backgrounds experienced by the marginalized. Unlike the formal and protected settings of public worship and Christian education, the casual and comfortable venue of a home provides an atmosphere for sharing concerns by all parties. In this arena, myths may be dispelled, and misunderstanding may be addressed without humiliating shame. This may be a good place for feelings of fatigue, anger, disillusionment, and unwarranted guilt on issues of racial justice to find weeping sympathy, mutual confession, forgiveness, acts of mercy, and wisdom (Rom 12:8; 15:12; Eph 4:31–32; Col 4:5; Jas 5:15–16).

In addition to the promotion of fellowship, *avoid denying the reality of racial insensitivity within your own fellowship, regardless of the numerical assessment of the ethnic diversity in your congregation.*

²⁹ The museum's director, Lonnie Bunch, notes, “We need to be a place where you can come to Washington to talk about race” (Vandana Shinda, “Lonnie Bunch's 10-year Trek to Showcase African-American History,” *Washington Business Journal*, February 2, 2016, <https://tinyurl.com/y7klcfx4>). Bunch also says, “This museum is explicitly about making America better by confronting its tortured racial past” (Anthony Bogues, “This Museum is about American Identity as Much as It is about African American History: An interview with Anthony Bogues,” *Callaloo* 38.4 [2015]: 703–9).

³⁰ Martin Luther King, Jr., *Stride Toward Freedom: The Montgomery Story*, reprint ed. (Boston: Beacon, 2010), 39.

Within predominantly white structures—even churches and Christian institutions—ethnic minorities often withhold the pains of racially and ethnically-based disappointments in order not to be perceived as disruptive or dis-unifying.³¹

*Fourth, in public gatherings and private moments, we should pray for those who are contending directly with episodes and establishments of racism and white supremacy.*³² Only the work of the Spirit of God can overcome the race-related sin within persons and society. Moreover, what a congregation hears in public prayer will become part of its understanding of what should be pastoral and congregational priorities.

6. Conclusion: The Blockade against White Supremacy

With passion, intentionality, courage, and much prayer, evangelicals should use every spiritual, theological, congregational, denominational, ecclesial, missiological, homiletical, musical, literary, artistic, educational, governmental, diplomatic, domestic, international, organizational, institutional, professional, corporate, economic, judicial, cultural, sociological, electoral, charitable, familial, philosophical, athletic, historical, publishable, moral, ethical, generational, and personal Christ-honoring means at our disposal to rid the earth of all forms of racial supremacy and hatred. If the evangelical church in America does not take the strongest possible stand and draw a blockade line around the events of Charlottesville and the like, and say to white supremacists they will not cross into our lands, that lack of a line will create for us a bridge for the supremacists to cross. We then should expect the spiritual descendants of the Third Reich to follow. Only the gospel message, proclaiming and modeling equality in Christ, has the power to dismantle white supremacy and roots, and to make Charlottesville-like incidents a thing of the past.

³¹ Glenn E. Bracey II and Wendy Leo Moore, “‘Race Tests’: Racial Boundary Maintenance in White Evangelical Churches,” *Sociological Inquiry* 87 (2017): 282–302; Eric Tranby and Douglas Hartmann, “Critical Whiteness Theories and the Evangelical ‘Race Problem’: Extending Emerson and Smith’s ‘Divided by Faith,’” *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 47.3 (2008): 341–59; Gerardo Marti, “Conceptual Pathways to Ethnic Transcendence in Diverse Churches: Theoretical Reflections on the Achievement of Successfully Integrated Congregations,” *Religions* 6.3 (2015): 1048–66; see also Thema Bryant-Davis and Carlota Ocampo, “The Trauma of Racism: Implications for Counseling, Research, and Education,” *The Counseling Psychologist* 33.4 (July 2005): 574–78; Rochaun Meadows-Fernandez, “The Little Understood Mental-Health Effects of Racial Trauma,” *New York* June 23, 2017, <https://tinyurl.com/y8t86m5y>; Monnica T. Williams, “The Link Between Racism and PTSD: A Psychologist Explains Race-based Stress and Trauma in Black Americans,” *Psychology Today* (September 6, 2015), <https://tinyurl.com/y78r4dxk>; Jenna Wortham, “Racism’s Psychological Toll,” *The New York Times Magazine* (June 24, 2015), <https://tinyurl.com/y9altheb>.

³² A prime example of this need for prayer is the Winston Salem, North Carolina pastor, a decedent of Robert E. Lee, who spoke out against such evil and was dismissed from his church because of his stand (Jenna Amatulli, “Robert E. Lee’s Decedent Leaves Church After Denouncing White Supremacy,” *The Huffington Post*, September 5, 2017, <https://tinyurl.com/ydxp3tho3>).

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— OLD TESTAMENT —

Andrew T. Abernethy. *The Book of Isaiah and God's Kingdom: A Thematic-Theological Approach*. New Studies in Biblical Theology 40. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2016. 245 pp. £14.99/\$25.00.

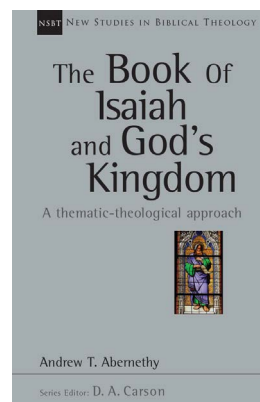
In this recent volume in the New Studies in Biblical Theology series, Andrew Abernethy contends that the concept of “kingdom” should be the “entry point for organizing the book’s major themes” in Isaiah (p. 1). Those familiar with this series will not be surprised that he takes a synchronic approach, interpreting Isaiah as a coherent literary unit without being concerned about the historical formation of the book, as well as a canonical approach, recognizing that both testaments are Christian scripture and inspired by a divine author. Accordingly, Abernethy pauses after each section in each chapter to consider how the salient passage(s) fits within the larger canon and how it bears witness to Jesus Christ.

Chapter 1 begins with Isaiah 6, which Abernethy describes as “the gateway into the rest of the book through a recognition of the present reign of a holy king” (p. 14). Attention is given to words and expressions that have royal connotations, such as the phrase “sitting upon a throne,” “high and lifted up,” the trisagion “Holy, Holy, Holy,” and “LORD of hosts,” to name a few. He then outlines how Isaiah 24–25 portrays this king as one who judges and rules over the nations and will invite people from all nations to his table to celebrate his victory over death. One of the greatest contributions of this chapter is Abernethy’s discussion on kingship themes in Isaiah 33 and its relation to Isaiah 6 and 11. For example, he points out that the faithful will be able to see God, something that is no longer dreadful (cf. Isa 6:2) but desirable and beautiful.

Chapter 2 examines the theme of God in Isaiah 40–55 as the saving king who is yet to come. Abernethy compares Isaiah 40:1–11 and 52:7–10, two pericopes that share many lexical similarities. He concludes that they “provide an arch within the message of Isa 40–55” that “orient our hopes, our desires for comfort, our longings for vindication around the prophetic declarations that God himself is promising to come as king” (p. 65). A significant section is then devoted to exploring two key themes in Isaiah and their relation to kingship. First, Abernethy argues that righteousness, one of the most debated words in Isaianic studies, refers to God’s saving righteousness in Isaiah 40–55, which buttresses his argument that one of the expectations of a kingly figure is his ability to save. Secondly, he examines the theme of the supremacy of YHWH over all of the Babylonian gods by considering four ideas latent in Isaiah 40–55: YHWH as kingly savior, kingly creator, commander of destinies, and temple/city builder.

Chapter 3 explores the theme of God as warrior king in Isaiah 56–66, and though there is a close connection to Isaiah 40–55, this final section of Isaiah highlights the “eschatological judgment as a corollary to salvation” (p. 83) with the aim of motivating the nations to repent. Abernethy follows a chiasmic structure for Isaiah 56–66, but he sets Isaiah 60–62 at the center of the chiasm, a rather large center relative to the other parts (e.g., A = 56:1–8). The D levels of the chiasm (Isa 59:15b–21 and Isa 63:1–6) are discussed at length to highlight the anticipation of the salvation this international king brings, and the day of vengeance, respectively.

Chapter 4 takes a slightly different angle and examines the characters, or “lead agents,” that God uses to save, judge, and establish his kingdom. Abernethy employs the term “lead agents” (instead of “messiah”) to avoid any arguments over which texts are “messianic” and also because “it is better to



allow the uniqueness of each figure to emerge” (p. 120). Of course, this doesn’t mean Jesus does not fulfill the role of these agents. As he says later, this actually “displays the grandeur of Jesus and the surprise of recognizing how one person, Jesus Christ, can take on the role of all three figures, while also being the very God of these agent figures” (p. 169). In other words, Abernethy wants these characters to develop organically, within their own historical contexts, and allow the canonical narrative to tell the story of how Jesus takes on all three roles.

Finally, chapter 5 addresses the subject of place and people in the kingdom of God. Where is God’s kingdom and who are its citizens? With regard to the question of place, Abernethy takes a “bifocal” perspective, as the kingdom of God is both the entire cosmos (Isa 37:16) and particularized as Zion (Isa 65:18–19). Though he points out that Isaiah’s readers would have understood Isaiah’s vision of Zion as a physical place with real, material blessings, Abernethy does not elaborate on what that looks like for the church; he does, however, provide some biblical-theological reflections. On the identity of the people who participate in this kingdom, Abernethy is much clearer: they are the remnant people, purified and redeemed; they are an obedient people, reflecting the justice and righteousness of God; and they are an international community from all ethnic backgrounds.

I cannot think of any glaring weaknesses in this book. My one small criticism is that a few of the “canonical reflections” feel slightly contrived. Perhaps a clearer methodology on how we can read Isaiah Christologically would have clarified the “canonical reflections” sections. This quibble notwithstanding, Abernethy has ably modeled for us how to read Isaiah in its own right within its historical setting, as well as a reading it as part of the biblical canon without compromising either approach.

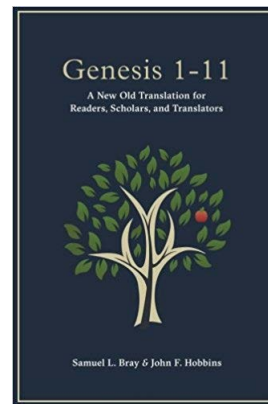
In short, this volume is a stunning achievement. It has given me much to think about. Though I did not agree with some of his finer points, Abernethy has given the academy and the church a wonderful resource that synthesizes the vision of YHWH as king. Not only has he made a compelling case that “kingdom” is a major theme in Isaiah, but that it is indeed the “entry point for *organizing the book’s major themes*” (italics mine). It is the hub, as it were, from which the other major themes can radiate. What is most impressive about this book is the way in which Abernethy has made one of the longest and, arguably, most daunting books in the Bible accessible and meaningful for the lay reader without dumbing it down. It is the perfect resource for the pastor, student, and scholar who wants to preach through or study Isaiah. If you love the book of Isaiah, this book is for you!

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Samuel L. Bray and John F. Hobbins. *Genesis 1–11: A New Old Translation for Readers, Scholars, and Translators*. Wilmore, KY: GlossaHouse, 2017. 313 pp. £14.72/\$14.99.

The release of a new Bible translation in English hardly seems worthy of notice, particularly one that covers just eleven chapters. But this recently published translation is well worth noticing, not just as a translation, but as an apology for a particular kind of translation: one that is close to the Hebrew, traditional in wording, and attentive to the rhythms of English prose.

The book is divided into three sections, aptly named “Before the Translation,” “The Translation,” and “After the Translation.” The first section comprises an essay setting forth and advocating the authors’ guiding principles. Next comes the translation itself, running from Genesis 1:1 to 12:9, from Creation to the Call of Abraham. The text runs in long paragraphs following the divisions of Codex Leningradensis; chapter and verse numbers appear in the outside margins for reference purposes. The third section, by far the longest, contains another essay, “To the Persistent Reader,” discussing additional aspects of the translation, some literary, some technical. This is followed by 136 pages of commentary on the translation with extensive comparison to other major translations, as well as several additional helps and indices.



Key to this translation and its notes are the three qualities set forth in the opening essay: “close translation, traditional renderings, and aural quality” (p. 4), virtues found in the great tradition of English translation exhibited especially by William Tyndale and the King James Version. The rest of this review will examine the translation in light of these features.

The first quality, close translation, means to “reproduce not only the conceptual content of the original, but also its form and structure” (p. 3). Form matters, because “Meaning in biblical stories is typically constructed through a series of deliberate repetitions, sometimes with subtle variations” (p. 7). These repetitions, both of word choice and syntax, are diligently reflected in the translation and commented on in the notes. For example, in Genesis 3:6, “the woman saw that the tree was good for food and that it was a delight to the eyes, and the tree was to be coveted to make one wise, and she took of its fruit, and ate.” Then in 6:2, “the sons of God saw the daughters of man, that they were good. And they took for their wives whomever they chose.” Commenting on the decision to describe the daughters of man as *good* rather than *beautiful* (CSB, NIV) or *attractive* (ESV), the authors say: “these renderings silence an echo. This word was rendered “good” throughout the preceding chapters of Genesis, including in Genesis 3:6, where Eve *saw* something *good* and *took* it. In this verse, that sequence is repeated: the sons of God *saw* (וִירָא) that the daughters of man were *good* (טֹבָה) and *took* (וִיקַחוּ) them. For an attentive reader, the parallel offers a clue that this will not end well” (pp. 146–47). This rendering also highlights a corollary of close translation: if the original has a simple word like *good*, it ought not be replaced by a specific word like *beautiful*; the authors call this corollary “terrible simplicity” (p. 44).

The second quality of this translation is traditional renderings, or as the authors say, “the ties go to tradition” (p. 9). Thus, when two or more options are viable (a tie), the authors choose the one supported by the Tyndale-KJV tradition of translation, also taking account of much older translations such as the Septuagint and Vulgate. Thus, 1:1 is translated, “In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth,” rather than “when God began to create” (NRSV margin). The note on 1:1 observes that strong grammatical arguments can be made for the latter rendering, but “for a translation that

also considers how the text has been understood by more than two millennia of readers, Jewish and Christian, the advantage lies with the traditional rendering” (p. 67). Note that the authors consider not just the tradition of translation, but also the tradition of Jewish and Christian interpretation, which is richly represented throughout the notes. The reader will find many references to interpreters such as Ibn Ezra, Rashi, Augustine, Calvin, and Luther, not to mention numerous NT citations.

The third characteristic of *Genesis 1–11* is aural quality, that is to say, paying “close attention to how it fares when read aloud” (p. 11). Consider the end of 11:3: “And brick was their stone, and tar was their mortar.” Then compare the ESV, another translation that gives conscious attention to literary style: “And they had brick for stone, and bitumen for mortar.” The meaning is the same, but notice how Bray and Hobbins offer two rhythmically balanced lines, whereas the ESV is neither rhythmic nor balanced. *Bitumen*, too, is hard to pronounce, and means nearly the same thing as *tar*. The global effect of these seemingly minor choices is a translation that is a pleasure to read aloud, or hear.

The qualities aimed at in this translation are worthy ones, and they deserve a place alongside the contemporary concern for idiomatic style and easy comprehension. As Bray and Hobbins note in their preface, all translation decisions involve tradeoffs, and they have often been willing to sacrifice contemporary concerns—especially quick comprehension—for other principles.

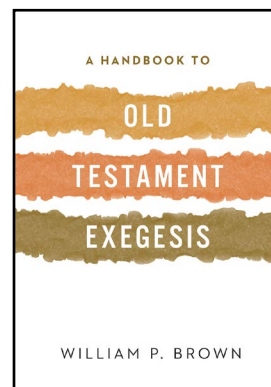
Not every translation choice in Bray and Hobbins commends itself to me. For example, while reading the translation aloud, I found the word *firmament* in 1:6–8 rather difficult to pronounce clearly—those two *m*’s followed by an *n*. In 1:20–21 and subsequently, *animate* in “animate living things” (הַיִּחַ שׁוֹפֵן), is intended “to better capture the word’s (שׁוֹפֵן) connotation of life that is breathing” (p. 175), but it carried no such connotation for me, and it struck me as odd. In 1:21, God creates “the great whales” where I would prefer “sea creatures” (a translation the authors complain is “bland,” p. 77).

Whatever cavils the reader may have, this translation offers a fresh presentation—representation—of the Hebrew text: not fresh because it is contemporary or shocking or chatty, but fresh in its oldness, its transparency to the Hebrew, in all of that ancient text’s splendor and strangeness. And *Genesis 1–11* is far more than a translation: it is a statement of first principles and, in its notes, a window on the interplay of those principles. That is why it is so valuable—for readers, for Bible translators (like myself), and for scholars—for everyone, really, who will slow down and hear the text. “In this translation, *Genesis* is a book that tarries, allowing itself to be caught by a reader willing to make the pursuit” (p. 16).

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William P. Brown. *A Handbook to Old Testament Exegesis*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2017. xvi + 364 pp. \$35.00.

William P. Brown is the William Marcellus McPheeters Professor of Old Testament at Columbia Theological Seminary. He has published widely, most recently in relation to Wisdom Literature, Psalms, creation, science, and ecology. *A Handbook to Old Testament Exegesis* brings this broad-ranging experience to bear on the how-to of interpreting the Hebrew Bible. The prologue clarifies Brown's purpose and rationale. His aim is to "develop a fresh, example-filled introduction to exegesis of the Hebrew Bible that brings together various exegetical perspectives ... in a way that cultivates the reader's curiosity, critical engagement, and empathetic imagination" (p. ix). The larger goal is to develop a "hermeneutic of wonder" with respect to the inexhaustible depth of the Scriptures, thereby opening the potential for personal transformation (p. ix).



The volume is divided into four parts. Part I addresses the reader. This section is driven by Brown's (correct) conviction that interpreters do not approach the biblical texts as blank slates. Rather, they come with a complex raft of pre-existing assumptions, theological traditions, values, and so on. In light of this, Brown suggests a prerequisite necessity for "self-exegesis"—that is, explicitly identifying the tendencies one has to read texts in certain ways (p. 11). As Brown rightly notes, this is an interpretative step that is frequently overlooked. Accordingly, a scheme for developing an "exegetical self-profile" is provided, along with five worked examples (pp. 12–19).

Part II traverses a sweep of analytical approaches. Brown proceeds systematically, starting with translation and lower text criticism (i.e., the weighing of manuscript evidence to determine the most reliable text), before moving on to consider stylistic analysis of narrative and poetic texts (chs. 4–7). Chapters 8–12 then explore, in turn, structural, compositional, comparative, literary, and historical methods. A final chapter looks at canonical analysis which, for Brown, consists not so much in the tracing of themes through the Scriptures, but rather considers how biblical texts interact with each other (e.g., how Psalm 22 is echoed in Mark 15 [pp. 179–81]).

In each of these chapters, Brown's procedure is the same. An introduction to the approach is given first, setting parameters and raising key questions. Core principles are then worked out in relation to several example texts. In the concluding section of each chapter, combined insights are applied to the creation narratives (i.e., Gen 1:1–2:3 and Gen 2:4–3:24). Pedagogically, this is a superb strategy as readers see each methodology applied to the same two texts, layers of additional insight are generated. This has a twofold benefit. Not only does a more rounded picture of the narratives emerge, but readers are implicitly convinced of the need to utilize multiple approaches to avoid reductionistic readings—here, and by implication, for all biblical texts.

Ideological interpretation is the focus of Part III. Chapters 15–22 engage with perspectives derived from science, ecology, gender, empire, minority, disability, and theology. Although any one of these approaches can end up becoming an interpretative grid imposed upon the Bible, obfuscating the text rather than clarifying it, Brown also demonstrates the utility of these methods as a means of uncovering things our own context blinds us to. By way of example, chapter 15 explores the influence of science and scientific thinking on the process of biblical interpretation. The key question concerns how to interpret the Hebrew Bible in light of science without compromising either science or the wisdom of the biblical

text (p. 202). As Brown astutely notes, one frequent obstacle facing this outcome is either ignorance or suspicion regarding the sciences. Instead, he makes a plea for those involved in theological education to increase “cultural competence” in order to facilitate better dialogue (p. 203). Brown demonstrates the kind of dialogue he has in mind by reading Genesis 1 in light of cosmology, and bringing Genesis 2–3 into conversation with human evolutionary biology (pp. 206–22)—revealing both “collisions” and possible “consonances.” While not everyone will find Brown’s conclusions convincing, the model of thoughtful (even playful) engagement is stimulating. Moreover, it underscores another of the book’s central convictions: the need to read biblical texts as part of a (diverse) community of interpreters.

Finally, Part IV turns to consider communication, or what Brown terms “re-telling the text” (p. 329). The question here is how to communicate the text in such a way that will benefit recipients in particular times and contexts—a process that must involve exegesis of one’s audience. Again, to demonstrate, Brown turns to Genesis 1–3, this time providing a sermon on Genesis 2:4b–15 and a three-part lesson plan for teaching Genesis 1. Both lesson plan and sermon draw upon explorations of Genesis 2 conducted throughout the book and serve as reminders of those discussions by way of allusion to phrasing used in earlier chapters.

A Handbook to Old Testament Exegesis is skillfully crafted and its style is engaging. It is comprehensive without being exhaustive (or exhausting). While more could always be added, Brown has surveyed the most important current trends in Old Testament hermeneutics. Moreover, what are often complex fields of study in their own right are made accessible. In saying that, however, I did wonder whether undergraduate students would struggle at times. In places, there seems to be a degree of assumed knowledge (being familiar with the concept of narrative gaps, or subtexts, for instance [p. 22]). Nevertheless, Brown’s liberal use of worked examples—and especially the running example of Genesis 1–3—ground theoretical discussion in concrete case studies. Theory is thus made practical while at the same time displaying the interpretative benefits that stem from careful articulation of theory. An added boon throughout are the chapter bibliographies. This veritable goldmine of secondary literature provides avenues for the keen to continue their exploration of a given method. This book thus does exactly what any good introductory volume ought to do: distill scholarship to an able-to-engage level and excite the imagination regarding the potential. Adapting Brown’s own phrasing: in the end, no method or combination of methods will ever capture the full sense and power of the Old Testament Scriptures. All we can hope for as limited interpreters is to have “mystery deepened by understanding” (p. 66). Brown’s *Handbook to Old Testament Exegesis* aids that end admirably.

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G. Geoffrey Harper and Kit Barker, eds. *Finding Lost Words: The Church's Right to Lament*. Australian College of Theology Monograph. Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2017. xxii + 287 pp. £29.00/\$33.49.

Finding Lost Words, edited by Geoffrey Harper and Kit Barker, draws two conclusions about the Western church: it needs to rediscover lament, and the gap in Psalms studies between biblical scholarship and the church needs to be bridged. Thus, the book's fifteen Australian contributors aim "to make recent developments in Psalms scholarship accessible to pastors and students, and to assuage the loss of lament in the life of the church" (pp. 2–3).

The volume has five parts. Part one surveys the history of the use of lament and grieves the demise of lament in the western church (pp. 9–23). The authors recount that John Calvin, John Wesley, and Charles Spurgeon all embraced laments psalms as prayers to be emulated and even endorsed them for corporate worship (pp. 24–51).

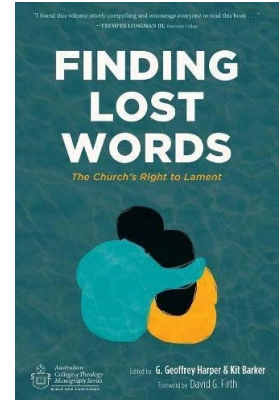
The second section addresses theological questions that often hinder the use of lament psalms. How are the words once directed to God now God's word for his people? Does lament suggest a failing trust in God or an unsound frustration with God? Does the work of Christ and the triumphant theme of the New Testament nullify the need for lament? If not, how do the lament psalms function in light of Christ's work?

Part three contains essays focused on exegetical issues. Two of the essays explain how to interpret Hebrew poetry. One essay discusses the best methods for translating lament psalms (pp. 175–88). Among other helpful guides, the essays demonstrate that interpreters must read lament psalms in the context of the entire Psalter (pp. 133–47), paying attention to their placement in the Psalms.

The essays in part four discuss how lament can be employed in the church: preaching lament (pp. 191–203), singing lament (pp. 204–22), praying lament (pp. 223–36), and lament in pastoral care (pp. 237–48). Part five exemplifies the preaching of lament psalms with four sermons, two on Psalm 88, one on Psalm 13, and one on Psalm 137. The volume concludes with the appeal, "If Jesus Wept, You Can Too" (pp. 283–87).

The authors rightly mourn over our lack of grieving in the Western church. Over time the church in the west has developed the notion that lament is incompatible with faith. Such a notion, the authors reveal, could not be more removed from the way the Bible presents faith in Jesus. The death and resurrection of Jesus has not eliminated the use of lament, rather, it is the basis for which we can come to God with every emotion and pain. Because of Jesus, we can complain with confidence that he will not reject us. "We cannot withhold parts of our lives from our conversation with God lest we withhold part of our life from his sovereignty" (p. 22). The authors correctly argue that lament does not indicate lack of faith. Rather, "Lament is a genuine cry of faith, not faithlessness, for at its core is a recognition that one's own personal situation, or situation in society, is in the hands of a sovereign God; the person of faith brings their complaint to their sovereign Lord, instead of complaining to others about him" (p. 21).

It is not uncommon to hear someone apologize for crying or grieving in a time of severe loss. The fact that people find it necessary to apologize for weeping in suffering reveals our gross need for the revival of lament psalms in our churches. Through the lament psalms the church can find words to express their faith in suffering, as they cry and complain to their sovereign Lord.



While the volume brims with insight after insight, one significant weakness is the lack of gospel preaching in the model sermons. One of the model sermons, on Psalm 137, does not mention Jesus, the cross, or the gospel (pp. 268–75). In addition, the sermons mainly portray Jesus as a model for how to use lament psalms. While it is true that Jesus’s life of suffering and lament is an example for believers (cf. 1 Pet 2:21), to present him only as a model to imitate leaves out a significant component of his work on the cross. Jesus modeled for us how to lament, but he also empowers us to cry “Abba! Father!” by his Spirit, and we lament with greater hope than the psalmists because Jesus’s death offers us the greatest possible assurance of God’s love, nearness, and faithfulness (Rom 8:32). Jesus is more than a model—I do not think these authors would object, but I wish it were clear in their sermons.

In spite of this, the book equipped me to serve the suffering sheep I pastor and the students I teach, and my heart burned at several points as I read it. I encourage you to read it and find the lost words of lament that your soul may be yearning for. Find words in lament psalms to express your faith in times of suffering. Jesus lamented, taking away our deepest pain, and we should also lament, as Jesus comes along as our High Priest to help us in our trials.

Dieudonné Tamfu

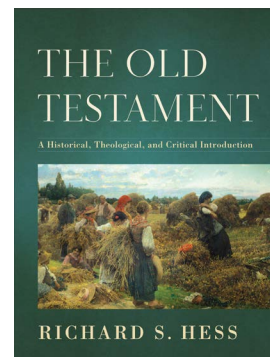
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Richard S. Hess. *The Old Testament: A Historical, Theological, and Critical Introduction*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2016. xiv + 801 pp. £37.31/\$49.99.

The English-speaking world is spoiled with a wealth of Old Testament introductions. Such introductions range from concise volumes aimed at undergraduate students to more comprehensive treatments aimed at graduate students and otherwise serious readers. This volume belongs to the latter category, including more than 800 pages of content, with indices of ancient writings, Scripture, and subjects, as well as a 45-page bibliography. In length, Hess’s volume resembles the introductions by R. K. Harrison and Brevard Childs but brings readers up to speed with the rapid changes in biblical scholarship we have seen in the 40–50 years since those older introductions were published.

While Harrison and Childs addressed many of the concerns of modernity, Hess’s introduction covers both the concerns of modernity and postmodernity. He analyzes each Old Testament book for its place in the canon, theological message, literary characteristics, ancient Near Eastern context, and history of interpretation. All 39 books in the Christian canon are treated in 35 chapters, with 1–2 Samuel, 1–2 Kings, 1–2 Chronicles and Ezra-Nehemiah treated in four chapters. Each chapter includes an outline of the book and a select bibliography of commentaries and key studies with one-sentence annotations. However, unlike Harrison and Childs, Hess has written this book without assuming readers are very familiar with the content of the Old Testament. His occasional pop-culture references but especially his overviews of each biblical book testify to this. This decision about audience is curious because more advanced students, who would appreciate the learned summaries of historical critical views and ancient Near Eastern backgrounds, may find the tone frustrating or the overviews superfluous, while beginners may find the sheer length of the book daunting. Then again, it may simply



reflect the fact that seminary students today come with much less general biblical knowledge than they did half a century ago.

The introductory chapter covers three areas: the definition and structure of the Old Testament, the composition and manuscripts of the Old Testament, and comments on the study of the Old Testament. He proposes a model for understanding the formation of the canon that is neither simplistic about the history of canon formation nor accepting of the idea that the text was in serious flux in the first century AD. The final section includes a link to a bibliography on the Denver Seminary website and a brief orientation to the structure of the book.

Space prohibits a summary of this work. Instead, I will examine a few features we would expect of an introduction and then summarize the unique contributions of this book, followed by a brief evaluation.

As we would expect, Hess covers the traditional areas of historical criticism, literary approaches, and theological themes. Evangelicals often wonder how an author will handle the composition of the Pentateuch, the historicity of the exodus and conquest, or the authorship of Isaiah. For most of these historical issues, Hess provides a few arguments in a gentle way and moves on. For example, on the authorship of the Pentateuch, Hess only notes that the text does not tell us who the author is and that the Pentateuch is associated with Moses in Deut 31:9 and several other texts (p. 24). On a post-exilic dating of Genesis, Hess remains skeptical, suggesting that Genesis 12–36 bears little resemblance to the world of returnees from exile in the sixth century (p. 36). Hess, however, spends considerably more time discussing the formation of Israel. He cautions against absolute conclusions about the nature of the conquest and yet argues for the antiquity of Joshua based on the descriptions from the Jericho story, personal and people group names, and the vassal-treaty structure found in Joshua 24, among other evidence (pp. 181–82). On the conquest and the question of genocide, Hess argues that Joshua and the Israelites were attacking forts rather than large population centers, meaning that few civilians would have been killed (pp. 190–91). More novel is his argument regarding Isaiah, that the name Cyrus was known in the eighth century (p. 525).

Hess's literary and theological treatment is as we would expect. In several cases he provides helpful guides for reading a particular corpus, such as poetry for the Psalms (pp. 432–36), wisdom literature for Proverbs (pp. 460–64), and apocalyptic literature in Daniel (p. 592). For shorter books like Ruth he is able to do more complete literary analysis. Between his Canonical Context and Theological Perspectives sections, he handles the relationship between each book not only with the New Testament but also with the rest of the Old Testament.

What sets this volume apart is the variety of perspectives with which he approaches each biblical book. Hess consistently summarizes premodern readings. Often this involves describing allegorical readings in the early church and the turn to more literal readings in the Reformation. However, Hess also mentions Rabbinic perspectives, such as the Mishnah's explanation of the Feast of Purim in connection with Esther (pp. 375–76). For all but a handful of books, Hess comments on some issue related to the portrayal of women or feminist interpretation. He rightly notes the significance of Hannah in 1 Samuel (p. 254) and helpfully responds to misogynistic interpretations of Ecclesiastes (pp. 486–87). However, at times this emphasis seems pedantic, as in Obadiah where Hess gives three lines to state that the book is focused on men (p. 634). This emphasis is consistent with his egalitarian perspective on women in ministry (p. 711). Hess also briefly summarizes various readings from China, Indonesia, India, Africa, and Brazil. At times he questions these readings, but they provide a refreshing look at how Christians around the world encounter the Old Testament. Finally, Hess summarizes ancient Near

Eastern connections in history and archaeology. His section on the kingdom of David is helpful in light of recent debate about the 10th century (pp. 260–68). Maps and photographs throughout the book help readers get their historical bearings. In addition, Hess includes English translations of numerous ancient texts, including a small excerpt from the Mesha of Moab Stele (p. 309) and the Instruction of Amenemope (p. 467).

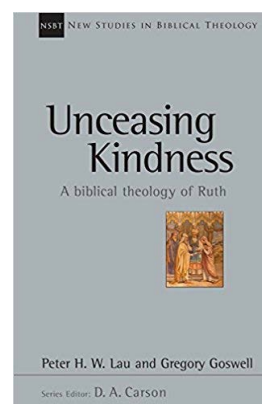
Hess is to be commended for this learned introduction. He attempts to cover a massive and diverse scope of material. This strength also leads to its greatest weakness, namely, that the book is rather fragmented, perhaps reflecting the complex and often mutually exclusive streams of Old Testament studies today. Readers could pick up one section and read it without needing to read the others. Although each chapter begins with a sentence or two drawing attention to a key issue in the book being covered or point of connection with modern audiences, these rarely provide an orientation to the whole. Jonah is the best example, in which he poses the question, “Is God’s love only for me and my friends?” (p. 637). The least helpful introduction is his question at the start of the Leviticus chapter about whether sacrifices show God hates animals (p. 79). After raising this question, he never returns to it, though he could have emphasized God’s sacrifice of his own son. In most chapters, the diverse sections stand alone without an attempt to relate them to each other. This weakness is not fatal as long as the book is used as a textbook for a class in which the professor guides students in a holistic reading, which ties together various approaches into a coherent interpretation. For that reason I recommend this book as a textbook for Old Testament survey courses in graduate schools and seminaries.

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Peter H. W. Lau and Gregory Goswell. *Unceasing Kindness. A Biblical Theology of Ruth*. New Studies in Biblical Theology 41. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2016. xvi + 212 pp. £14.99/\$24.00.

Greg Goswell is Academic Dean and Lecturer in Biblical Studies at Christ College, Sydney, Australia and Peter Lau is Lecturer in Old Testament Studies at Seminari Theoloji Malaysia and an honorary research associate at the University of Sydney. They are both published authors in their own right, but this is the first work they have written together. As the subtitle indicates, this is a biblical theological study, but a multifaceted one. I found this very refreshing after many biblical-theological studies I have read that concentrate too narrowly on storyline, for example, or a single theme or biblical corpus. This study is narrow, too, in focusing on a Old Testament single book, but it studies its contribution to the message of the whole Bible from many different, complementary angles.

Ruth is first brought into conversation with Ezra-Nehemiah to illustrate its relevance to the issues of the early restoration period. (The authors remain agnostic on the question of whether—as many recent historical-critical studies argue—this was the period in which the book of Ruth was written, focusing instead on how it would have been *read* within that period.) It is then read after Judges (as it is in the Greek canon) to illustrate its contribution to the royal, messianic theology associated with the figure of David. Next it is read within a wisdom frame, with special reference to its connection with the portrait of an “excellent wife” in Proverbs 31 (which it follows immediately after



in most Hebrew canonical orders). Chapter 5 examines the enjambment of Ruth and the Psalter in the listing of Old Testament books in the Talmud, showing the complementarity of story and psalm in the canon.

The remaining chapters look at Ruth in the broad sweep of some biblical themes, beginning with famine in chapter 6 (with special reference to the patriarchal narratives). It then discusses the theme of God's sovereignty and human agency in chapter 7 (with special reference to Esther and Judges) and redemption in chapter 8 (covering a wide range of scriptures and drawing some conclusions about whether Boaz is a type of Christ), and reads Ruth in missional perspective in chapter 9 (with special reference to the subthemes of love and the law, outsiders, and the risk involved in the missional life). Chapter 10 helpfully summarizes the ground that has been covered, and the ways in which the study as a whole contributes to the ongoing project of exploring both the content and the method of biblical theology. This and the similar summaries at the end of each chapter greatly enhance the clarity and value of the work for the busy student and pastor.

While this is not a commentary in the normal sense, it does contain much high-quality exegesis of both Ruth itself and the other books with which it is brought into dialogue. The constructive and critical interaction with the relevant secondary literature is also of a high standard, and quite extensive (as shown, among other things, by the footnotes, 25-page bibliography, and the judicious argumentation in the text itself where appropriate). While diversity and tensions within the canon are acknowledged, the findings generally favor complementarity and integration rather than contradiction.

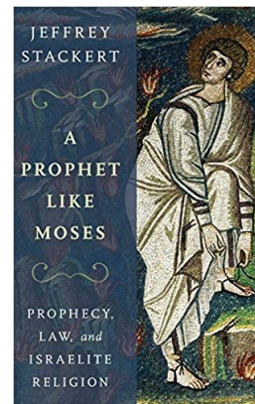
One of the weaknesses I found in this book is also its strength. It was good to see a chapter on Ruth and the mission of God. Ruth certainly contributes to a biblical *theology* of mission. I couldn't help feeling, though, that to try to extract lessons about how to *do* mission is forced, or at least needs more demonstration of its validity, since that is not what the book of Ruth is *about*. Similar weaknesses appear elsewhere. While focus is generally maintained on *function* within the canon rather than authorial *intention*, the distinction between the two is sometimes blurred, and inferences about the latter drawn without sufficient warrant. In the chapter on God's hiddenness and human agency, for example, a sharp contrast is drawn between Ruth and Esther on the grounds that "*the author [of Esther] has made a concerted effort to keep God out of the story*" (p. 100, my italics) while the author of Ruth has not. This may be true, but could not be sufficiently demonstrated in the space available, and in any case the salient point could have been better made without speculation about authorial intention at all. Both books witness to God's sovereignty in preserving his people, even though he is more hidden in Esther than in Ruth.

But these are subjective judgments, and I do not want to make too much of them. Vulnerability to criticism of this kind is a price authors have to pay for keeping the broad sweep of a complex discipline like this before us. Depth and rigor are luxuries specialists enjoy and something we can fairly demand of them. The cost of specialization, though, is that the big picture is often lost sight of and fragmentation rather than integration is the result. We need readable studies of modest length like this one to serve as a counterbalance to this tendency, especially in a still expanding and maturing field of study like biblical theology. I am grateful for this book and hope there will be many others like it on other books from both the Old and New Testaments. We will all owe a great debt to those who have the courage to write them.

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Jeffrey Stackert. *A Prophet Like Moses: Prophecy, Law, and Israelite Religion*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014. viii + 243 pp. £59.00/\$82.00.

This is a valuable book whether one accepts the “neo-documentary” approach to the composition of the Torah promoted in it or not. In chapter 1, the author formulates a substantial critique of the classic so-called “new documentary hypothesis” popularized by Julius Wellhausen in the latter part of the nineteenth century. The problem, according to Jeffrey Stackert and other neo-documentarians, is not with the documentary approach itself, but with “the manner in which Wellhausen pursued his argument and his specific claims” (p. 2). As Wellhausen saw it, along with the ongoing development of the exilic and post-exilic priestly system came the rejection of the free, lively, and dynamic prophetic religion of the pre-exilic period, which was relatively free of the stifling effects of Jewish law (pp. 2–14). The shift between the two began with the centralization of worship in Deuteronomy (seventh century, based on the earlier work of de Wette and others), and reached its final form in the priestly cult of the early second temple period.



According to Stackert, one of the main faults in Wellhausen’s method was his inadequate separation of E (the Elohist) into a separate source from J (the Jahwist), D (the Deuteronomist), and P (the Priestly writer), which led to his lack of appreciation for the prophetic focus E brought to the composition of the Torah. As is well known, Wellhausen most often referred to JE, not J and E, because he viewed E as more of a supplement to J than as a separate source document that could be isolated and reconstructed. Stackert notes that many others have levied strong criticisms against Wellhausen’s theory. The “neo-documentarians” are joining in with them. Stackert draws upon Joel Baden, another neo-documentarian, for a convenient summary of their approach to the composition of the Pentateuch (pp. 20–22).

A well-defined E source is “a centerpiece” of Stackert’s approach to the composition of the Pentateuch (p. 22). As far as the dating of the sources is concerned, Stackert begins with D, as Wellhausen did, but he determines the date of D more from what he takes to be its dependence on the Succession Treaty of Esarhaddon than from any identification of it with a supposedly Josianic law book. He does not consider the Josianic law book to be historical. Thus, he dates D to ca. 670 BCE. J and E are earlier because D depends upon them, so they do not date later than early in the seventh century, and could have originated in the eighth century. H (the “Holiness Code,” which is a stratum of the P source, Lev 17–27) depends on P, D, and E, so it is the latest of them all. It is close to Ezekiel, so H should probably have an early exilic date. Since H is a supplement to P, the date of P must be earlier, probably in the later part of the seventh century (pp. 31–34).

Stackert argues that the E plotline “expresses a larger religio-political argument that has at its heart the relationship between law and prophecy” (p. 26). Overall, as is commonly argued, when the sources differ they reflect the time and context of their composition rather than the time about which they speak. Moreover, they constitute religiously pluralistic minority reports, not a linear movement from prophetic to legal religion, as Wellhausen would have it. Instead, legal priestly religion was not a late development but a continual force present from early in ancient Israelite religious history. As minority perspectives, each of the four Pentateuchal sources are literary fictions that present the conflict between

prophetic and legal religion as a historical development, according to their own peculiar view of the supposed historical conflict (pp. 28–29).

Chapter 2 rightly argues for the status of Moses as a prophet in all four of the supposed sources, and reviews the data for the nature and importance of prophetic divination in the surrounding ANE world. According to Stackert, the E source is pro-legal but anti-prophetic. It sees Moses as the lawgiver and the last legitimate prophet in ancient Israel (ch. 3). This is the core of the book. E considered ongoing prophetic activity after Moses to be a threat against the record of prophetic revelation found in the Mosaic Law. Prophecy always had a subordinate position to other forms of divination in the ANE, as shown by the need to confirm prophecies through extispicy and other observable methods of authentication in the Mari archives and Neo-Assyrian prophecy. D moderates the claims of E and, therefore, does not eliminate prophecy after Moses (ch. 4). The same ANE suspicion toward prophetic messages, however, is manifest in D through tests of prophecy. D rejects all the other forms of divination in favor of properly tested prophetic divination (Deut 18:9–22; cf. Jer 28:8–9). P takes an even stronger stance against prophecy in favor of law. It imagines Israelite religion with no prophetic activity, even assigning oracular activity to the priests and the cult as over against the prophets (ch. 5). According to Stackert, therefore, all the Torah sources presume that Moses is a prophet, including J, but J is not concerned with establishing legal religion over against prophetic religion, as are E, D, and P. J does not even have a collection of laws.

Unfortunately, in a good number of instances Stackert can maintain his view of the respective minority arguments of the sources only by making arguments for peculiar interpretations of certain passages of scripture. This is detectable in his extended treatments of Exodus 3:1–4:23; 33:7–11; Numbers 12:6; and Deuteronomy 34:10–12 (pp. 56–57, 82–92, 108–17, and 117–23, respectively). We cannot go into all the details and problems with his textual analysis in this brief review of his book, so we will focus on two examples, one from the beginning of Exodus and the other from the end of Deuteronomy.

First, according to Stackert, a redactor spliced the E and J Mosaic call narratives together in Exodus 3:1–4:23 (pp. 56–62). He separates them into E (3:1, 4b, 6a, 9b–15 [minus “now”], 21–22; 4:17–18, 20b) and J (3:2–4a, 5, 6b–9a [“now”], 16–20; 4:1–16, 19–20a, 21–23 [minus “but I will make him obstinate”]). According to his reading of Exodus 3, therefore, the E narrative does not include vv. 2–4a, which refers to the burning bush because, in the view of E, God spoke to Moses there face to face with no mediating bush. He still has the problem, of course, with v. 4b, “God called to him from the midst of the bush and said, ‘Moses, Moses,’ and he said, ‘Here I am,’” which should be E because of the divine name, but should be J because of the bush. Stackert attempts to resolve the problem by arguing that “from the midst of the bush” in v. 4b “most likely originates from the compiler, who inserted it in the place of either “from the mountain” or “from the heavens” because he wanted to “harmonize the locations of the deity in the J and E sources” (p. 56 n. 77). One naturally wonders if it is the ancient compiler or the modern scholar who is doing the harmonizing here.

Second, the normal rendering of Deuteronomy 34:10 is, “Never since has there arisen a prophet in Israel like Moses, whom the LORD knew face to face” (NRSV). Stackert takes Deuteronomy 34:10–12 to be E’s “summary reflection on Moses after the prophet’s death” (p. 117). He therefore renders the verse, “Never again did a prophet arise in Israel like Moses (did), the one whom YHWH selected directly,” and suggests that it refers specifically to his selection in Exodus 3 (pp. 117–20). Of course, among other things, this rendering requires the ellipsis of a verb “(did).” He argues for it because it is the only way to

maintain his documentary distinction between E and D, since Deuteronomy 18:15–22, which belongs to the D source, allows for multiple prophets after Moses, whereas E resists it. Here again, Stackert has the theoretical “tail wagging the dog,” putting his theory before the most natural way of reading the text. In my view, the neo-documentary approach simply turns themes into sources by separating out thematic patterns. This is essential to their method (p. 20 point #1), and reflects a massive misunderstanding of how literature works both ancient and modern.

Even with these serious defects in method, theory, and textual analysis, Stackert’s book provides us with some helpful resources for dealing with other theoretical developments in the field. For example, he provides a very good summary of the evidence for prophetic divination in the ANE. With this he offers strong evidence for the fact that Moses was not only a lawgiver but also a prophet in ancient Israel, and the natural relationship between the two from a historical cultural perspective. Furthermore, in his book *Genesis and the Moses Story*, trans. James D. Nogalski (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2010), Konrad Schmid analyzes the cross references in Genesis to Exodus and, conversely, those in Exodus to Genesis (see my extensive review of Schmid’s volume in *RBL*, 05/2011). He argues that the two sets of traditions are heterogeneous, and that they existed independently until a Priestly (P, late sixth century BCE) or post-Priestly redaction linked them together. Stackert argues contrary to Schmid, that the earlier sources (Stackert’s E and J) show a narrative continuity from the patriarchal and Joseph narratives on into the Exodus narratives (p. 26 n. 84). There is no waiting for P or a post-priestly redactor to link the patriarchal with the exodus traditions. Of course, Stackert’s approach is documentary, more specifically, neo-documentary, while Schmid’s is documentary regarding P, but redactional for the earlier traditions J, E, and D.

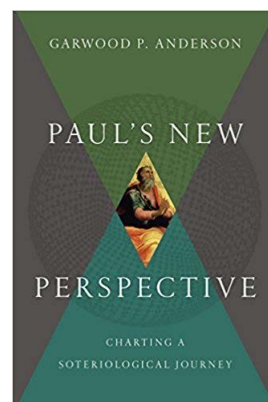
The book concludes with a review of Pentateuchal theory that returns to the critique of Wellhausen (ch. 6). Stackert takes the sources to be “prospective expressions of religious imagination, not implemented religious programs” (p. 197). Since E, D, and P all portray Moses as a prophetic mediator of the law, the Wellhausenist proposal of a linear progression from prophecy to law in the history of Israelite religion cannot be maintained. Finally, he argues that we need to harbor biblical studies as a discipline within religious studies rather than theology. This would help avoid imposing modern theological concerns on the ancient text, which he sees as a serious problem in the academy today. On the one hand, I agree that it is important for all of us to distinguish between the history of Israelite religion as we find it in the Hebrew Bible and archaeology, as opposed to Biblical Theology. They are not the same thing. On the other hand, the Bible has three overlapping dimensions: literary, historical, and theological. To ignore and set aside any of the three is to deny the academy one of the voices it should have in the serious study of the Bible.

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— NEW TESTAMENT —

Garwood P. Anderson. *Paul's New Perspective: Charting a Soteriological Journey*. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2016. xvi + 441 pp. £34.93/\$45.00.

While the debate concerning the New Perspective on Paul (hereafter NPP) is no longer new, it has not yet retired. Indeed, within the last couple of years there has been a fresh flurry of books defending, developing, or critiquing that movement. See, for example, *The Apostle Paul and the Christian Life: Ethical and Missional Implications of the New Perspective*, ed. Scot McKnight and Joseph B. Modica (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2016) or *Cracking the Foundation of the New Perspective on Paul: Covenantal Nomism Versus Reformed Covenantal Theology* by Robert J. Cara (Ross-shire: Christian Focus, 2017). Generally speaking, the debate has also mellowed from a hard *either/or* to a softer *both/and* in many respects. Witness for example a recent collection of articles honouring Doug Moo (*Studies in the Pauline Epistles* [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2014], which contains both “What’s Right about the Old Perspective on Paul,” by James D. G. Dunn and “What’s Right about the New Perspective on Paul,” by Stephen Westerholm. The wolf and the lamb (however we assign those respective roles) are at least talking to one another.



Where then does Garwood Anderson’s *Paul’s New Perspective* fit in? Essentially it is an attempt to progress the case for a both/and approach; it is a “study in peace-making” (p. 3) and it is an enormously effective one for two reasons.

First, Anderson introduces and surveys the debate with admirable clarity and charity. The opening chapter—“Breakthrough, Impasses and Stalemates, Assessing the New Perspective”—outlines the contributions of Stendahl, Sanders, Dunn, and Wright, and then offers a critique of each that accounts for why Anderson describes himself as a NPP “God-fearer, not a proselyte” (p. 37). The second chapter addresses “The Uncooperative Paul” and is probably the best chapter of the book. Here Anderson shows that Philippians 3:1–11, Romans 3:21–4:8 and Ephesians 2:1–22 deny the boast of anyone who would claim that old or new perspectives are “*exclusive* paradigms” (p. 91, emphasis original). The chapter exudes Anderson’s desire to resist tired characterisations (e.g. that Eph 2:1–10 builds a mighty fortress for the old perspective while Eph 2:11–22 is more interested in tearing down walls of human division, as per the NPP). Exegetical insights abound here.

Second, Anderson moves the debate forward by reintroducing the disputed letters of Paul. This is important both because of their neglect and because of their use. As to their neglect, it is a common feature of the NPP debate that both sides have largely observed the customary scholarly silence on the disputed letters of Paul. This desperately needed addressing. As to their use, Anderson is concerned that the evidence they provide has entrenched rather than enriched the debate. It is simply too easy for traditional readers of Paul to take later references to “works” and to read that back into the more specific “works of the law” in Romans and Galatians. It is less easy, but still possible, for NPP readers to assume that every reference to “works” in Paul has “works of the law” in view.

So how might this evidence enrich our reading of Paul? Anderson suggests it can by tracing a development in Paul’s thinking on the matter of works and justification. On the matter of works, Anderson argues that the divine grace/human effort contrast only clearly emerges in Romans and

flowers most fully later in Ephesians 2:1–10, Titus 3:5–7, and so on. Instead of reading that contrast back into Galatians, therefore, we should note that at that stage and in that setting, Paul’s primary complaint with “works of the law” in Galatians is not with “works” but with “law.” Primarily, he is not targeting autosoterism, but nomism. Thus, Anderson argues that a modified and nuanced version of the New Perspective better reflects Paul’s earlier writing (specifically, Galatians), whereas the Old Perspective emphasis on any human works has a stronger foundation in later writings (Ephesians, the Pastoral Epistles, with Romans reflecting a transitional phase). In his own, playful summary, the thesis is that “the new perspective on Paul is Paul’s oldest perspective and that the ‘old perspective describes what would become (more or less) Paul’s settled ‘new perspective’” (p. 379).

Some reflections are in order:

1. That playful thesis statement ought not to put readers off—the overview of the debate has already made it clear that neither the Old Perspective nor the New can be read into any of these letters in an unreconstructed way.
2. Development in Paul is hard to prove when dates are debated, and texts are both relatively few and highly occasional. Does Galatians have the flavour it does because of its chronology or its crisis? I find it hard to be sure, even though I agree with the dating he suggests.
3. Anderson has also argued that Paul’s older perspective is only really in evidence in one letter, Galatians (the letters between Galatians and Romans being silent on the matter of justification by works). With a transition underway as early as Romans it is striking that Anderson’s argument adds real weight to the Old Perspective side of the scales.
4. Happily, Anderson does not fall into the trap of supposing that development implies departure from early positions. Rather, he argues that later formulations are contained in seed form already in the earlier letters. This is suggestive, and I find myself pondering whether there might not be a bit more to be said for the presence of Old Perspective themes in Galatians. As Anderson rightly says, Paul’s critique of the Galatian nomism is not simply its restrictiveness but the inability of anyone to be justified by its works. That Paul speaks of no flesh being justified in 2:16, thereby amending the allusion to Psalm 143, suggests there is an anthropological issue in view. Likewise, the way in which the receipt of blessings comes through the passive act of hearing rather than works of the law (Gal 3:2, 5) suggests some emphasis on the contrast between divine and human activity, especially when the only one in that passage who has worked is God (Gal 3:5). If these are seeds of a later view, we would have to say that they are already sprouting.

That question aside, this really is a very fine book, and we have not even had space to describe many of its qualities. (The discussion of reconciliation and its deployment in Paul and in N. T. Wright’s *Paul and the Faithfulness of God* [London: SPCK, 2013] would be worth the cover price, even if that were all the book contained.) Anderson offers one of the most even-handed overviews of the NPP debate I have ever read, and is certainly the most up to date. It consistently holds the feet of every perspective to the

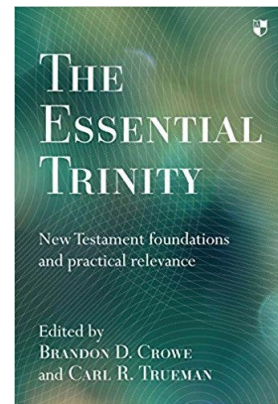
fire of Paul's letters, and offers a stimulating argument backed up by plentiful data to help every reader reflect on Paul's true perspective on the gospel of God's grace.

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Brandon D. Crowe and Carl R. Trueman, eds. *The Essential Trinity: New Testament Foundations and Practical Relevance*. Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2017. 318 pp. \$17.81/£17.99.

The Essential Trinity: New Testament Foundations and Practical Relevance is a collection of essays divided into two sections: Part 1: New Testament Foundations, and Part 2: Practical Relevance. Brandon D. Crowe and Carl R. Trueman, both experts in their respective fields of New Testament and Church History, serve as the editors to this clear and insightful work. Contributors include notable figures such as Richard Bauckham, Benjamin L. Gladd, Michael Reeves, and Scott R. Swain.

As the title suggests, the aim of the book is to provide New Testament (NT) exegetical foundations for the doctrine of the Trinity and to suggest some practical applications of the doctrine. Anyone familiar with a typical NT seminary curriculum will not be surprised by the arrangement of Part 1. The first eight chapters deal with the Trinity and Matthew (ch. 1), Mark (ch. 2), Luke-Acts (ch. 3), John (ch. 4), Paul (ch. 5), Hebrews (ch. 6), General Epistles (ch. 7), and the Book of Revelation (ch. 8). The last chapter in Part 1 explores the OT roots of the doctrine (ch. 9). Part 2 addresses the topics of the Trinity and Mystery (ch. 10), Prayer (ch. 11), Revelation (ch. 12), Worship (ch. 13), and Preaching (ch. 14). As the editors note in the Introduction, the book purposefully "eschews overly technical discussion and focuses attention on the importance of the doctrine for every Christian" (p. 19). The book succeeds in achieving its aim, whilst maintaining the accessibility that it promises. Especially noteworthy is the overall consistency in depth and clarity, despite the diversity of topics and theological commitments of the various contributors. For brevity, I make several comments, all of which express my general endorsement of the book.



One common objection to the Trinity is that the term itself never occurs in the Bible. Along these lines, many sincere believers say that they do not want to superimpose any theology on the Bible. As many have demonstrated, this approach is naïve because it fails to take seriously that no one interprets the Bible in a vacuum. One way or another, a person will superimpose his or her theology into the Bible. Therefore, it is best to adopt a hermeneutic with theological truths (like the Trinity) that originate from the Bible itself. Such an approach is less of a superimposition on and more of a reflection of the NT.

Part 1 does an excellent job of showing how the Trinity flows from a careful reading of the NT. Each contributor succeeds in demonstrating how the Trinity is at least assumed by the authors of the NT. Moreover, in their effort to show the Biblical underpinnings of the Trinity, the contributors implicitly prove how trinitarian readings result in rich(er) interpretations of the NT. For instance, Alan J. Thompson's treatment of Luke-Acts invites NT students to interpret Luke-Acts not only as a presentation and continuation of the person and work of Christ, but also of the triune-God working in

history, especially through the church, to receive all glory and praise. Key verses like Acts 2:33 (“Being therefore exalted at the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, [Jesus] has poured out this that you yourselves are seeing and hearing”) support such a trinitarian reading. From Part 1 alone, one can hardly ignore the editors’ assertion that the Trinity is “a robustly biblical doctrine” (p. 19) with rich hermeneutical implications.

Regarding Part 2, some readers might feel that this section is not as practical as they would hope. Generally, when my seminary students use the term “practical,” they are referring to a concrete “how to” approach to setting up an annual budget, leading a church meeting, or conducting a marriage counseling session. In this sense, perhaps the subtitle for this book might have been something more along the lines of “Foundations for Doctrine and Practice.” Nevertheless, Part 2 is helpful for pastors who are seeking to develop a more trinitarian framework for their ministries. For instance, Carl Trueman’s chapter on Prayer (which I found very “practical”) reads: “A correct doctrine of God as Trinity does not guarantee a healthy prayer life, but a defective doctrine of the Trinity guarantees a prayer life that will be much less than it should be” (p. 228). This statement represents the sort of charitable but insightful and nuanced approach we should adopt while trying to build a more robustly trinitarian ministry. Readers might also want to take special note of Scott R. Swain’s chapter entitled “The Mystery of the Trinity.” Swain opens his essay with the assertion, “The doctrine of the Trinity is the most sublime truth of the Christian faith and its supreme treasure” (p. 213). Such sublimity, he argues, elicits rejoicing and praise from believers. One might wonder why this chapter is included in the “Practical Relevance” section of the book, especially as the opening chapter. I surmise that the editors rightly discerned that there are fewer things more important for human beings than an abiding sense of wonder, which the Trinity uniquely accomplishes. What other doctrine best illustrates the Creator-creature distinction?

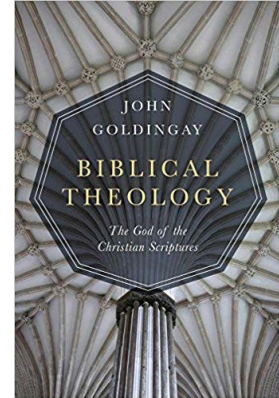
I was surprised that the work did not include a chapter on tri-perspectivalism, especially as it relates to epistemology and theology. I recognize that it is unfair to say that this ought to be included in the practical section: each person has his or her unique interest and preference. Moreover, there are many who are unfamiliar with or wary of tri-perspectivalism, especially as it is expressed in the works of John Frame and Vern Poythress. Still, given the posited trinitarian foundations underlying tri-perspectivalism and its rich applications to hermeneutics, theological method, and epistemology, some discussion of the topic seems warranted. This last suggestion, however, should not detract from my endorsement of the book. Any pastor, preacher, or layman who wishes to be more intentional in understanding the biblical roots behind the Trinity or is interested in appreciating the relevance of the Trinity to “real” life and ministry ought to include this book in their reference library.

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John Goldingay. *Biblical Theology: The God of the Christian Scriptures*. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2016. 608 pp. £46.73/\$60.00.

This substantial volume from John Goldingay, David Alan Hubbard Professor of Old Testament at Fuller Theological Seminary, is a welcome contribution from a creative scholar. I enjoyed reading this book. It is an engaging and stimulating presentation of significant themes in the Christian Scriptures.

Many authors have written books with the words “Biblical Theology” in the title, but the common vocabulary disguises many different approaches. Goldingay recognises this (p. 13) and explains his own approach. Having already written a three-volume *Old Testament Theology* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2003–2010), Goldingay decided to change his approach to the Scriptures, frequently beginning with the New Testament. For matters of method, Goldingay points to his previous book, *Do We Need the New Testament?* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2015; see the review in *Themelios* 41 [2016]: <http://themelios.thegospelcoalition.org/review/do-we-need-the-new-testament-letting-the-old-testament-speak-for-itself>). He comments concerning his new book, “It does pay proportionately more attention to the New Testament than that other title might suggest or than you or I might have expected” (p. 10).



One of the notable features of Goldingay’s work is his distinctive use of terminology. He explains a number of his choices in his Preface. For example, he describes the first part of the Christian canon as the “First Testament,” yet the second part is described as the “New Testament” (compare his earlier book, *Models for Scripture* [Carlisle: Paternoster, 1994], in which he used “First Testament” and “Second Testament”).

Following the brief Preface and Introduction, the book is composed of eight chapters, with titles that reflect the emphasis of the book’s sub-title: “God’s Person,” “God’s Insight,” “God’s Creation,” “God’s Reign,” “God’s Anointed,” “God’s Children,” “God’s Expectations,” “God’s Triumph.” Goldingay’s stated aim is to allow Scripture to determine the shape of his work (p. 9). While most of the categories chosen are uncontroversial, Goldingay’s choice of “insight” to translate *logos* is typical of his striking use of language.

The very nature of “biblical theology” demands consideration of a vast range of texts and this inevitably means that many passages are frequently dealt with fairly briefly. The prose has something of proclamation about it.

Goldingay’s writing is frequently a little quirky, but also fresh and thought-provoking. Here is an example (p. 211):

The first human beings were warned not to eat of the good-and-bad-knowledge tree because they would then die, but they chose to do so anyway. They did not die that day, but they eventually died, and so did everyone who followed (cf. Rom 5:12). Adam lived to be 930, Seth to be 912, Enosh to be 905, Kenan to be 910, Methuselah to be 969 (Gen 5). You hold your breath through the account of each man: maybe someone will reach a millennium. But no one does. Each of their little paragraphs ends with the solemn epitaph “then he died.” The exception is Enoch (and later Elijah), who simply disappears (Gen 5:24), which maybe hints at some other possibility, but that exception deepens the refrain’s poignancy. The wages of sin is death (Rom 6:23).

Some of his translations did not work so well, to my mind. For example (p. 346), “Through the Anointed One we have redemption, by means of his blood, the remission of errors’ (Eph 1:7).” “Errors” seems a weak rendering of a Greek term that indicates moral transgression.

At times it is somewhat unclear to which genre of writing the book belongs. Goldingay frequently uses colloquial expressions and rhetorical flourishes that would be more typical of popular Christian writings, or even of preaching, than of an academic work. Some readers might find this strange, but I generally found it endearing and an indication of an author seeking to communicate effectively with his readers. For example, with reference to John the Baptizer’s view of Jesus, Goldingay writes (p. 282), “It may not be what the Anointed One was expected to do, but it’s pretty impressive, isn’t it? John has to reframe his way of thinking about what the Anointed One might do.”

Goldingay also draws on numerous illustrations to support his points (e.g., on pp. 337–38). Preachers may find these features helpful. They certainly make the book more accessible to a non-specialist.

The book is not heavily referenced. There are footnotes on most pages, but rarely are there more than three or four brief references. Goldingay draws on a wide range of authors, ancient and modern, including Augustine, Barth, Bavinck, Bonhoeffer, Bultmann, Dunn, Fee, Moltmann, Pannenberg, C. J. Wright, and N. T. Wright.

I found several statements either theologically problematic or, at least, needlessly provocative. Most notably, I found Goldingay’s language regarding the atonement difficult. For example, he interprets Jesus’ cry on the cross as a plea for God to “come back and rescue me!” He then comments, “In due course God does, but for the moment God sits in the heavens resolutely watching his Son suffer and resolutely declining to terminate his suffering when he could do so” (p. 295).

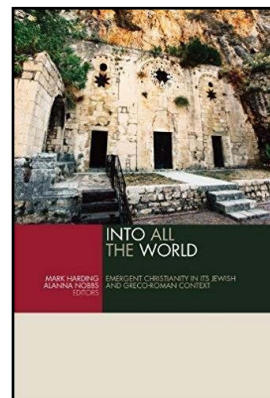
The final phrase, “when he could do so,” seems to me to require significant clarification. A little further, I sensed a determination to avoid the notion of penalty in the cross, to the extent that Goldingay uses rather undefined language (following L. Gregory Jones) of God “absorbing” human hostility.

Goldingay has written a book that will encourage Bible readers to consider key themes in a new light. There is much to learn here for the discerning reader. This reader is grateful for Goldingay’s work, even while differing at points.

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Mark Harding and Alanna Nobbs, eds. *Into All the World: Emergent Christianity in its Jewish and Greco-Roman Context*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2017. xxii + 403 pp. £45.99/\$55.00

Into All the World: Emergent Christianity in its Jewish and Greco-Roman Context is the third and final volume in a series edited by Mark Harding and Alanna Nobbs which has “brought together numerous scholars ... in Ancient History at Macquarie University working on the Jewish and Greco-Roman background of Early Christianity with those working on similar topics within the Australian College of Theology” (p. 1). The two former volumes dealt with Jesus and the Gospels (*The Content and Setting of the Gospel Tradition* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010]) and Paul and his letters (*All Things to All Cultures: Paul Among Jews, Greeks, and Romans* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2013]). The focus of *Into All the World* is Christianity from Paul through to AD 100. The distinct emphasis of this series has been to consciously bring together the disciplines of ancient history and New Testament studies. This has resulted in an effort by all authors to engage with the full range of sources available to them to consider Christianity in its Jewish and Greco-Roman context.



The book is divided into three sections: “The Spread of Christianity to AD 100”; “Christians Among Jews”; and “Christians Among Romans.” The first section contains four chapters. Chris Forbes considers Acts as an historical source for studying Early Christianity. While identifying some of the difficulties with Acts, he also highlights its sometimes surprising historical precision, and concludes that we must be charitable and yet careful readers of Acts in order to gain everything we can from it. Johan Ferreira demonstrates the missiological character of John’s Gospel and the way it was shaped in order to communicate the story of Jesus to a Greco-Roman audience. Bradley J. Bitner engages with the question of unity and diversity in the Early Church through the lens of the “discourse of discernment” in the General Epistles. In the final chapter of this section, David Starling considers the ethics of the Early Christians through a study of Matthew, Luke-Acts, 1 Corinthians, 1 Peter, and Revelation. He shows their points of contact with Jewish and Greco-Roman ethics, but also the distinct emphases that arise from their foundation in the message of the crucified Lord Jesus.

The second section of *Into All the World* focuses on the relationship between Christianity and Judaism in the second half of the first century. Paul McKechnie focuses his analysis of Jewish Christianity on Jerusalem, Israel, and Syria, with a particular interest in the first Bishops of Jerusalem and the ministry of Jesus’ relatives. Lydia Gore-Jones and Stephen Llewelyn explore the complexity of the “parting of the ways” between Judaism and Christianity, and how ethnic factors contribute to the churches’ self-identity in relation to the Jewish and Roman communities. Ian K. Smith contends that Hebrews was written to Jewish Christians, who were feeling the pressure of the increasing tensions leading up to the Neronian persecutions in the mid-sixties. His assertions include an interesting contribution to the question regarding the perseverance of the saints in Hebrews. Edward Bridge, explores Christian-Jewish relations in Antioch, and finds that in that city the two communities were more amicable than the Acts record shows of other cities (p. 235).

The final section turns to consider Early Christianity’s relationship with the Roman Empire. Bruce Winter discusses at the imperial cult and demonstrates the inevitable conflict between church and empire due to competing claims of who truly was “Son of God,” “Lord,” and “Saviour.” James Harrison discusses

the persecution of Christians in this period, posing some surprising suggestions regarding the reality of persecution under Nero and Domitian; he also highlights the Christians' non-participation in Roman *religio* as a key cause of tension (p. 299). Tim MacBride explores the value of analysing certain New Testament texts through the lens of "minority group rhetoric" and shows how these texts functioned to help form Christian identity and continuity in the face of societal pressure. Murray J. Smith discusses Revelation in light of the violence in Roman society, and particularly that which Christians were victim to. He finds that Revelation calls Christians to "worship," "witness," and "wait" in the hope of God's divine vindication. Finally, L. L. Welborn explores the way that the author of 1 Clement consciously adopted Roman political ideology in the letter exhorting the Corinthian church to "peace and concord." It is a chapter that offers a sober reminder of the opportunities and dangers of adopting societal ideologies in Christian ministry.

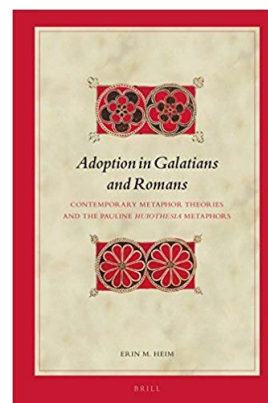
The editors of this volume were deliberate in not seeking to harmonise the various chapters (p. 1), which has resulted in a diversity of opinions on numerous matters discussed across the various essays. For example, Gore-Jones and Llewelyn take the common view (admittedly not without some caution) from Tacitus that Nero used Christians as scapegoats to deflect suspicion from him (p. 173). Harrison, on the other hand, questions the veracity of Tacitus's report and suggests that Nero could have been operating in his role as Imperator and Pontifex Maximus, punishing them for their non-participation in Greco-Roman religious practices and the perceived threat their "*superstitio*" presented to the status quo (pp. 287–89). The diversity found within this volume is not disorientating to the reader. Rather, it is a helpful introduction to the challenges of scholarship in this area, and invites the reader to join the fun of research in the New Testament and its context.

Into All the World is a testimony to the quality of scholarship that is being conducted in the two represented institutions: Macquarie University and Australian College of Theology. Each contributor has thoroughly engaged with the scholarship as well as the primary sources, including (where relevant) the literary, epigraphic, and archaeological evidence. This is a valuable volume that is worth engaging with, whether you are new to the discipline or a well-established contributor to it.

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Erin M. Heim. *Adoption in Galatians and Romans: Contemporary Metaphor Theories and the Pauline Huiiothesia Metaphors*. Biblical Interpretation 153. Leiden: Brill, 2017. xiv + 378 pp. €154,00/\$168.00.

Erin Heim, Assistant Professor of New Testament at Denver Seminary, and herself a recipient of adoption, takes aim at Paul's adoption metaphors in this revision of her doctoral dissertation. The first part of her study (chs. 1–3) marks a distinct contribution to metaphor studies in constructing an exegetical method that integrates philosophical approaches to metaphor with practical approaches (e.g., cognitive linguistics and anthropology). In chapter 2, Heim eschews comparison theories of metaphor (e.g., X is a metaphor for Y, or "justification is a metaphor for salvation," which problematically assume that metaphors can be readily substituted by a literal paraphrase or a univocal referent). Relying on Janet Soskice's interanimation theory, she preserves space



for a plurality of models (and backgrounds) to inform the metaphor in question, based on the textual features of the whole metaphorical utterance and the receptive potential of the author's historical and cultural context.

In chapter 3, Heim draws attention to the extra-textual features of metaphorical imagery, emphasizing the insights of cognitive linguistics and sociolinguistics (drawing largely from the work of Kövecses, and to a lesser extent, Lakoff/Johnson and Fauconnier/Turner. Here Heim explores the ways in which metaphors evoke emotion, deepen relational "intimacy" between author and audience, and foster group solidarity and identity. It should be observed in passing that while Heim lays considerable store in her method upon the relationship between metaphor and intertextuality, the necessary relationship between the two subjects has not been sufficiently established from the standpoint of metaphor theory (and I grant that I may have misread her on this point).

Having laid out her theoretical method, the second part of her study (chs. 4–8) applies this apparatus to the occurrences of *υιοθεσία* [adoption] in Galatians and Romans respectively (the occurrences in Ephesians 1 are not considered). Heim demonstrates how careful attention to metaphor can clarify previous debates about *υιοθεσία*, which have tended to stall at the battle of backgrounds. Heim avoids overdetermining any one background behind the metaphor (whether dominantly Jewish, Greek, or Roman) proposing instead that attending to the manner in which each particular metaphor is presented can push one background closer to the surface and push others further under submersion, while preserving the ability of the deeper layers to reach different hearers (p. 323).

Heim finds that Paul's *υιοθεσία* imagery shares in common a characterization of the reception of the Spirit (particularly Gal 4 and Rom 8), but resists an overbroad synthesis of "what the metaphor *means*," focusing instead on the way each occurrence emphasizes its own distinct features. So in chapter 5, Heim (among other findings) deems the Galatians 4 adoption imagery to be informed largely by its Greco-Roman background and regards the metaphor as emphasizing the vertical dimension of the believer's standing in Trinitarian terms (initiated by the Father, carried out by the mission of the Son, and attested to by the Spirit). In chapter 6, Heim views the two *υιοθεσία* metaphors of Romans 8 (vv. 15, 23) primarily as a "diptych" that dramatizes the temporal, eschatological tension of the churches in Rome as both children of God and co-sufferers in Christ. Unlike Galatians, Romans emphasizes the more horizontal dimension of adoption as something shared among believers, but like Galatians, Paul's use of key terms (*πατήρ* and *κληρονόμοι*) suggests Roman adoption as the dominant background shaping cognition of the metaphor. In chapter 7, Heim finds the brief *υιοθεσία* allusion in Romans 9 to resonate intertextually in its Jewish frame not only with Romans 8, but also with other sonship passages in Jewish Scripture (a difficult task given the lack of any parallel designation of Israel as "adopted" in the relevant Jewish literature).

Heim's study is richly researched, fairly conservative in its theological conclusions, and generously informative (if, at times, repetitive). As a point of minor critique, Heim's adroitness as an exegete and the breadth of her task in applying both theory and practice make it difficult at times to isolate whether her conclusions are driven by her specific, theoretical method on metaphors or by mere historical exegesis. The point is important because Heim at times appears to over-credit metaphor theory as that which can bypass some of the troubles of prior exegetical quandaries (p. 209) even when some of her conclusions are themselves historically determined. Others may be disappointed at the lack of historical engagement with metaphors in ancient texts more contemporary to Paul (i.e., Aristotle, Quintilian, et al). Such minor reservations aside, future studies of biblical metaphors will undoubtedly benefit from the

sophistication of Heim’s analysis and her main points remain persuasive: metaphors in scripture are not mere literary embroidery, subordinate to literal statements of theological truth, but are themselves non-substitutable forms of communication for diverse audiences, uniquely capable of conveying theological truth in ways that evoke emotion, relational identity, and solidarity (p. 2). She goes far in correcting unreflective evaluation of Pauline metaphors in prior scholarship and her working method lays the groundwork for future studies that can benefit from the insights of rigorous metaphorical analysis (e.g., justification, redemption, slavery—assuming such concepts can be demonstrated to be “live” metaphors at the time of their use).

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David Hellholm and Dieter Sänger, eds. *The Eucharist – Its Origins and Contexts: Sacred Meal, Communal Meal, Table Fellowship in Late Antiquity, Early Judaism, and Early Christianity*. 3 vols. WUNT 376. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2017. xxxv + 2199 pp. €289.00/\$435.00.

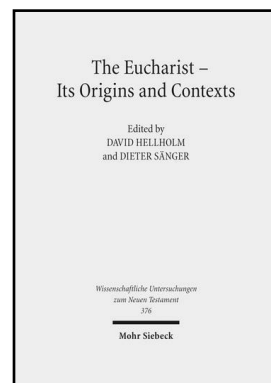
The number of books written on the Eucharist runs into the tens of thousands. This is as it should be. The Eucharist is, after all, essential to the life of the church. Nevertheless, as vast as the literature is, there is always, it seems, room for more books that deal with particular aspects of the Eucharist.

Enter this new three-volume work, worth the time of anyone interested in the origins and contexts of the Eucharist. It is the product of two conferences, one held at the University of Kiel, Germany (August 6–10, 2012) and the other one on the island of Lesbos, Greece (September 14–21, 2013). The essays (75 to be exact), by an international, interdisciplinary, and interdenominational team of scholars, are wide-ranging in their scope. In fact, the range extends from the Old Testament, through the New Testament and patristic traditions, to some photographic images from the 17th century AD. Some entries are brief (e.g., Moss’s 9-page essay, “Christian Funerary Banquets and Martyr Cults” and Popkes’s 9-page essay, “Die verborgene Gegenwartigkeit Jesu” [The Hidden Presence of Jesus]), but most are 20–30 pages.

Each volume focuses on a set of broad categories. Volume 1 covers the Old Testament, Early Judaism, and the New Testament. Volume 2 deals with patristic traditions and iconography. Volume 3 contains Near Eastern and Greco-Roman traditions, as well as archaeology, with over 100 pages of images and illustrations. All essays are written in either German or English, with an introductory abstract being in the opposite language for additional accessibility.

Limited by space considerations, this review will only provide a few summary highlights geared toward readers of this journal.

In Volume 1, Samuel Byrskog notes that if it was the normal practice for participants to use individual cups during a Passover meal (which seems to me the best explanation of the evidence), then Matthew “might have had additional motive for pointing out the unusual practice of all drinking from the same cup” in Matt 26:27 (p. 441). This potentially innovative, intentional change in the Passover



tradition by Jesus is certainly worth considering further. Perhaps Jesus had his disciples drink from the same cup in order to stress the radical unity that was present and must continue in this new community.

Speaking of unity and the Eucharist, Paul Duff challenges several earlier, influential studies such as those of Gerd Theissen (*The Social Setting of Pauline Christianity* [Philadelphia: Fortress, 1982], ch. 4) and Jerome Murphy-O'Connor (*St. Paul's Corinth: Texts and Archaeology*, 2nd ed. [Wilmington, DE: Michael Glazier, 2002], 178–85), who argued that the “divisions” (σχίσματα) mentioned by Paul in 1 Corinthians 11:18 were caused by wealthy members eating an earlier private meal, with more and better food, in a separate room. Instead, Duff suggests that the divisions most likely refer to selfish behavior on the part of some individuals in the community. In turn, part of Paul’s response in 11:17–34 is to insist that Jesus’s sacrificial death brought about the creation of the community as the body of Christ—a community free of divisions based on origin, gender, or status. “The effects of that sacrificial death,” Duff writes, “were intended to have a propagandistic effect: the creation of the diverse but unified community was proclaimed to all outsiders whenever the community gathered for its meal (11:26)” (p. 576).

Moving on to volume 2, Øyvind Norderval helpfully concludes his essay on the Eucharistic rite and its development through the texts of Tertullian and Cyprian by highlighting the socio-religious context of their time. He writes, “The Church had to deal with martyrs as well as with lapsed members. In this way, the sacrifice of Christ in the Eucharist became an important mark of identity and a boundary for the fellowship within the Church. The Eucharist made Christ present to the persecuted church and thus constituted her unity. The bishop thus became the representative leader in Christ’s place, in order to guarantee the oneness of the Church, and he was the administrator of the unifying sacrament and of excommunication and penance” (p. 953).

In his essay on the Eucharist in Clement and Origen of Alexandria, Gunnar af Hällström notes some of the benefits of participating in the Eucharist according to Clement. For example, Clement appears to think there is a certain moral power in the Eucharist since our bodies are affected, able even to reduce carnal passions. Origen, on the other hand, seems to prefer dealing with the preconditions of rightly participating in the Eucharist more than elucidating its benefits. Nevertheless, along with other points of agreement between the two theologians, they both believed “that the spiritual eating is more important than the physical” (p. 1008).

Allan Fitzgerald’s excellent essay, “Eucharist and Culture in Ambrose and Augustine,” contains many salient points. Among them is the fact that during the time of Ambrose and Augustine, the Eucharist was not the focus of disagreement or heresy. Thus, it would be more appropriate today for us to study the impact that their experience of the Eucharist had on the way they spoke about other problems than to try to determine if they believed what we believe. Fitzgerald writes, “Since the Donatists were so focused on their own holiness, isolating themselves from anyone they found unworthy, the emphasis on the benefit of Eucharist for the many was a natural emphasis for Augustine. It was also the most significant dimension of the experience to which he points: Eucharist was—quite precisely—the sacrament that could bring the many into unity” (p. 1224).

Overall, unravelling the origins and contexts of the Eucharist is an ambitious task, even at 2200 pages. Nevertheless, this work gives us an insightful view of the past and provides a helpful guide for future discussions.

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Paul M. Hoskins. *The Book of Revelation: A Theological and Exegetical Commentary*. North Charleston, SC: CreateSpace, 2017. 491 pp. \$24.99.

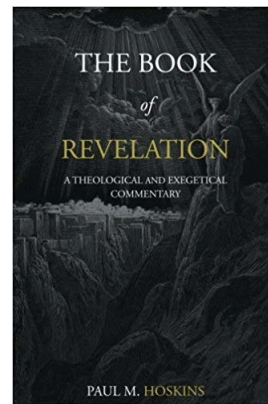
In this new commentary, Paul Hoskins seeks to make the book of Revelation accessible to a broad audience and also to demonstrate the depth of its connection to the rest of the biblical canon. Hoskins teaches New Testament studies at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary and has an ongoing interest in hermeneutics and the use of the Old Testament in the New Testament. His prior works include *Jesus as the Fulfillment of the Temple in the Gospel of John* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2007), and *That Scripture Might Be Fulfilled: Typology and the Death of Christ* (Xulon Press, 2009), both of which inform his analysis of Revelation.

Throughout his study, Hoskins takes care to focus on the flow of the discourse. Some commentaries on Revelation maximize any possible connection to historical background information or details that might correspond to contemporary events. Hoskins does treat several issues surrounding the historical setting of the book. For example, he makes a plausible case for John the apostle as the author (pp. 13–21) and he surveys the social and historical context of the seven churches in Revelation 2–3 (pp. 68–119). However, he is quick to shift to a focus on the text of revelation itself as the surest guide to its interpretive context. As he argues, “in spite of gaps in our historical knowledge, the book of Revelation is able to communicate a powerful message that resonates across the centuries” (p. 9). For Hoskins, John depicts a great conflict that stretches from the Genesis narratives through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. Consequently, “the biblical account of this conflict is more important background for most of the book of Revelation than the historical particularities of John’s day” (p. 9).

Instead of fully reconstructing the *Sitz im Leben* of the seven churches, for instance, Hoskins begins his treatment of Revelation 2–3 with a discussion of the common structure of the seven letters (pp. 69–71) and ends it with an analysis of the layered interrelationship of these letters (pp. 119–23). At the end of each major section, Hoskins also provides a “synthesis” that summarizes the preceding textual block and relates it to the immediate discourse context and the message of the book as a whole. In this vein, as the commentary unfolds, Hoskins keeps an eye on the structural function of the twenty-one judgments (7 seals, 7 trumpets, 7 bowls) that dominate the bulk of the book (see pp. 24–26, 305–6). These features will be particularly helpful for readers seeking to get a handle on Revelation’s sprawling shape.

Two of the primary contexts that Hoskins brings into dialogue with Revelation are the Gospel of John and the Old Testament. Throughout the commentary, Hoskins notes literary and thematic connections to John’s Gospel (see p. 17n23). He also emphasizes how important the Hebrew Scriptures are for John as he composes his book. Though Revelation does not include direct quotations of the Old Testament, there are constant allusions to texts, themes, and theological foundations of the Hebrew Bible. Recognizing the elusiveness of allusions, Hoskins uses the criteria of verbal and thematic connections in order to identify legitimate instances of allusions. Important examples include the allusions to Daniel’s concept of the son of man, the exodus event and the plagues on Egypt, the Passover ceremony, the fall of Jerusalem, and the Day of the Lord.

Alongside an examination of Old Testament allusions in the book, Hoskins is also keen to uncover the interpretive strategy of the author. In other words, *why* is John utilizing these particular texts in



these particular ways. Sometimes, an Old Testament text predicts an event or situation that a later event or person fulfills in a direct manner. Other times, however, a New Testament author will point to the fulfillment of an Old Testament text that is not directly predictive. For Hoskins, the concept of typology helps explain this textual phenomenon (see pp. 39–43). Hoskins defines typology as “the aspect of biblical interpretation that treats the significance of Old Testament types for prefiguring corresponding New Testament antitypes or fulfillments” (p. 40). So, for instance, the ten plagues of the Exodus narrative prefigure the plagues mentioned in Revelation. The relationship between the fall of Babylon in the preaching of the prophets and the fall of the Great Harlot, Babylon in Revelation is another place where a typological interpretation can assist interpreters trying to make sense of the comparison. This careful attention to subtle allusions and the nature of typological connections are two features that Hoskins uses to forefront John’s frequent and varied use of the Old Testament.

Many readers of a Revelation commentary will be interested in theological conclusions. Hoskins takes a Historic Premillennial position on the nature and timing of the millennium mentioned in Revelation 20 (see pp. 32–35, 393–423). For Hoskins, this position allows him to understand some aspects of the book symbolically (an emphasis of amillennialism) and also maintain a future-looking orientation to much of John’s vision (an emphasis of dispensational premillennialism). Proponents of alternative approaches will certainly have disagreements on this point of the commentary. However, a central strength of Hoskins’s approach is his attention to John’s wording and the internal development of the book’s argument. In other words, he shows what a non-dispensational premillennial reading of the book would look like. Likewise, Hoskins addresses theological implications in his synthesis sections, although he usually prioritizes textual analysis over theological formulation. Thus, while Hoskins certainly engages in “theological interpretation” and addresses several topics of eschatology, his commentary does not trade in the categories of systematic theology (see his brief survey of theological approaches to Revelation in the introduction, pp. 29–35).

G. K. Chesterton once wrote, “Though St John the Evangelist saw many strange monsters in his vision he saw no creature so wild as one of his own commentators” (*Orthodoxy* [New York: John Lang, 1908], 19). Hoskins’s study would be a breath of fresh air for someone only familiar with sensational or speculative treatments of Revelation. In the end, Hoskins’s commentary allows the reader to grapple with what is actually there in the text and thus hear what the Spirit is saying to the churches through this challenging and rewarding biblical book.

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Darian R. Lockett. *Letters from the Pillar Apostles: The Formation of the Catholic Epistles as a Canonical Collection*. Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2017. xviii + 255 pp. \$33.00

Darian Lockett offers this monograph to promote a canon-conscious approach to reading the Catholic Epistles. He argues that these epistles can be read as an intentional collection within the New Testament.

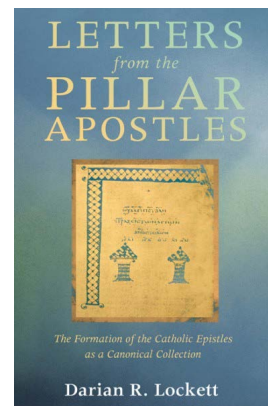
In chapter 1, Lockett presents a survey of the approaches made to view the seven Catholic Epistles as a collection. In describing the contributions made by past approaches, the author highlights various issues that emerge. Lockett raises the question of the definition of canon: Is it a final *list* of books, or is it defined by how the texts were *used* in community?

In chapter 2, Lockett clarifies two foundational elements critical to his study. First, puts forth a balanced approach, affirming the understanding canon as both a *standard* of authority and an accepted *list* of books. Second, the author advocates for a close connection between canon and scripture, which allows for consideration of the entire canonical process, from composition to finalization.

In chapter 3, Lockett examines patristic and manuscript evidence that the Catholic Epistles were considered a sub-collection. Early manuscripts grouped the Catholic Epistles with Acts as the *Praxapostolos*, and Eusebius (fourth century) referred to them as a collection. Lockett then cites suggestive indications of a collection from patristic figures prior to Eusebius. In examining early manuscripts like P⁷² and P¹⁰⁰, Lockett demonstrates associations between the Catholic Epistles before the major codices. The major majuscule codices are witnesses to the understanding of Acts and the Catholic Epistles as a collection.

In chapter 4, Lockett considers the paratextual evidence of the view of Catholic Epistles as a distinct collection. First, he shows evidence of the consistent *collection* and *arrangement* of the documents in the early manuscripts. The typical internal ordering suggests a particular logic behind them, especially the possibility that they are arranged as the “pillar apostles” in Galatians 2:9. Second, Lockett demonstrates that the *titles* of the Catholic Epistles in manuscripts shows basic consistency, indicating that they were viewed as a collection. Third, the author shows that the consistent usage of *nomina sacra* and *chapter divisions* suggests the intention of the scribe or editor to associate the epistles together. Fourth, Lockett examines the views on the association between Acts and the Catholic Epistles, which were grouped together in the fourth century codices. He recommends that Acts likely serves as a preview and narrative guide for reading the Catholic and Pauline Epistles.

In chapters 5 and 6, Lockett presents compositional evidence for the Catholic Epistles being a distinct collection. First, he examines the intertextual connections of the Catholic Epistles, analyzing their use of the Old Testament. Through a survey of the concentrated usage of Proverbs 3:34, Isaiah 40:6–8, Proverbs 10:12, Leviticus 19, Ezekiel 33–34, Genesis 6–7, and Genesis 4, Lockett demonstrates that the Catholic Epistles depend on shared traditional material from the OT. Next, surveying the shared catchwords such as *diaspora*, and *the truth*, Lockett reinforces the interrelation of these authors as presented in Acts. He then examines framing devices and themes within the Catholic Epistles in chapter 6. He particularly looks at the commonalities between James and Jude, supporting the idea that the compiler(s) purposely placed James and Jude as bookends of the collection. In the final section of chapter 6, Lockett surveys the central place of the love command from Leviticus 19 in the Catholic



Epistles and its direct connection with the word/law/commandment theme. After this, he traces several sub-themes: enduring trial, God and the world as incompatible allegiances, and the relationship between faith and works. Lockett presents all of this study to support the “collection consciousness” of the Catholic Epistles.

In chapter 7, Lockett summarizes each of the preceding chapters and then offers some reflections on his view of canon. He holds a holistic view that includes the process of composition, redaction, collection, and arrangement. He ends by urging the reader to consider the context of the Catholic Epistles as a collection in order to appropriately interpret each one.

Acting like a detective, Lockett follows a systematic approach and explains his method and conclusions in a manner that is clear and accessible for his intended readers. While he assumes some familiarity with the issues raised, he skillfully explains difficult terms to situate the reader. His multi-pronged methodology is well-communicated and thorough. While all of his book demonstrates quality and depth of research, it is in chapters 5 and 6 where Lockett’s work shines the most. His masterful grasp on the exegetical and context issues surrounding the text makes his arguments strong and compelling.

Lockett’s study does display some small weaknesses. In a few places, especially in chapter 4, the evidence falls short of being convincing. His suggestions of the intent of the editor/compiler could use more substantiation. Also, his exposition of the common themes in chapter 6 leaves out a number of other themes that could have been studied, such as the rich and poor, wisdom, suffering, and false teaching. Lockett’s admirable desire for clarity make his previewing and recapitulating of each section a bit repetitive.

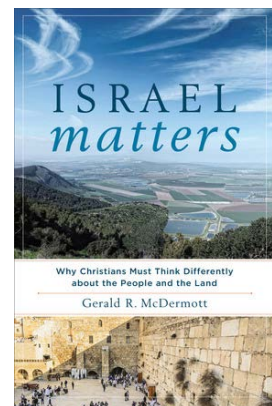
In the end, Darian Lockett soundly accomplishes what he aimed to do: build a strong case for viewing the Catholic Epistles as a canonical collection. His thoroughly researched monograph serves as an excellent resource of the early and modern reception of these seven epistles as a corpus. I recommend it for anyone seeking to interpret these letters, either in academia or in the church.

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Gerald R. McDermott. *Israel Matters: Why Christians Must Think Differently about the People and the Land*. Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2017. xvii + 158 pp. £12.99/\$17.99.

Few topics are guaranteed to divide evangelicals as quickly as discussions about modern Israel. Not only do theologians and laity debate this but the U.S. Congress does as well. In March legislation was introduced (Israel Anti-Boycott Act, S. 720, <https://tinyurl.com/y7nbumvj>) that would make it a federal crime to join an international boycott of Israel. And this, of course, shocked free-speech advocates. Congressional evangelicals were, in many instances, behind it.

Why this preferential treatment for Israel? Among evangelicals the reason is generally theological. Privileges given to Biblical Israel in the scriptures are inherited by modern secular Israel. The covenant benefits promised to the descendants of Abraham in the Old Testament now are taken up by modern Israelis regardless of whether they are practicing their faith or completely secular.



The most recent attempt to promote these views is Gerald McDermott's *Israel Matters*. This is not a scholarly engagement of deeply complex exegetical or theological matters. Nor is it a thoroughgoing treatment of the tortuous historical puzzle in Israel. The major scholars who might disagree with this thesis are not represented. Most scholars will find themselves etching question marks in the margin of almost every page. Volatile issues such as Israel/Palestine require delicate treatment that at least makes us aware that competing views exist. *Israel Matters* does not.

The question at the heart of the matter is the ongoing importance of Judaism in history since the coming of Christ. On the one hand, there are scholars (like McDermott) who believe that God's election of Israel is unaffected by Christ and therefore Judaism-without-Christ enjoys covenant privileges denied to other people. This of course means that the Holy Land (the most contentious issue) belongs to modern Israel since Israel is a Jewish state.

On the other hand, there are many scholars who would disagree. In this view, the coming of Christ within the Jewish covenantal framework is like new wine in old wineskins. The wineskins break. In other words, Christ has rearranged everything and so the new community, the kingdom of God, has now been forged from Christ-followers who are both Jewish and Gentile. These scholars worry that the first view has demoted Christology for the sake of elevating Judaism. But, they argue, if we take in the full weight of what the incarnation means *for Judaism and the world*, then all traditional categories must change. This has been the historic view of the church and today it is the majority view of leading NT scholarship.

Israel Matters explains the church's historic rejection of Jewish exceptionalism (ch. 1) and then argues that the NT never rejects Israel's covenant privileges (ch. 2). We then meet Christian writers who continued to promote Israel chiefly in the last 200 years (ch. 3) and we learn that the OT likewise holds to an unyielding commitment to Israel's future (ch. 4). Chapter 5 returns to the NT again and revisits the material of chapter 2 in more detail. Political questions are summarized in a mere 12 pages in chapter 6 while anticipated challenges are answered in chapter 7. The book ends with a call to the readers to rearrange the church's theology and recommit themselves to the modern state of Israel.

Throughout the book's argument a misunderstanding becomes evident quickly. It provides no help to outline how fully the NT embraces its Jewish context (for Jesus or Paul). That is not the point. The NT does not reject Israel or Jewish identity. The question is whether the NT explicitly teaches the covenantal permanence of Israel apart from the gospel.

Most scholars argue that in the NT Israel-without-Jesus is in jeopardy. And this is the theologically critical point that strains interfaith relations with Judaism. Indeed, McDermott emphasizes rightly that in Romans 11 Gentiles are grafted into the Jewish olive tree of Israel. But he fails to mention that natural branches are broken off as well. This is the source of Paul's grief in Romans 9. Failing to mention this crisis is like underscoring the promises to Abraham without mentioning the warnings of the prophets. The end result is a sorely imbalanced presentation of what scripture teaches.

The first question here is about Judaism without Christ. But this book goes further. It also asks whether Jews who embrace Jesus have an independent significance within the church. Of course, any ethnicity must be celebrated in the church and this includes Jewish-Christian believers. But here is the crux: Paul says in Galatians 3:28 that in Christ there is neither Jew nor Gentile, what does he mean? Is the church an entirely new entity bringing together Jews and Gentiles (Eph 2)? Or do the distinctions remain (just as the distinction between male and female remain)? Some exegetes would say that McDermott has missed the primary question in Galatians 3. It is not whether Messianic Jews have an independent and recognizable life, but whether within the church one group has privileges the other

may not. This is how we understand gender in these verses; it is about privileges and exceptionalism. This may be how we need to understand Israel and the gentile.

The book provides an unfortunate summary of political history in chapter 6. This is hotly debated territory and any treatment must be done with care. But here there are so many omissions and mischaracterizations, the informed reader will be left astonished. Example: we now know that the source of the 700,000-person Palestinian internal exile was not Arab pressure to run. It was about Israeli terror militias who forced them out. But here the book just isn't current. Ari Shavit's *My Promised Land* (New York: Spiegel & Grau, 2015) is a Jewish account of this terrible story and an Israeli confession.

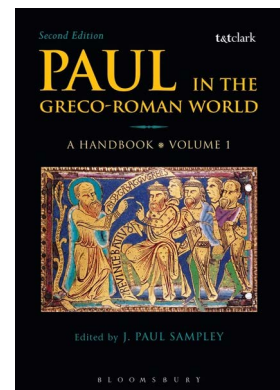
Israel Matters is essentially a popular theology book and that is where its merits should be weighed. It is passionate and persuasive. But a reader who is looking for a thorough treatment of the theological issues should consult Oren Martin's well-written *Bound for the Promised Land: The Land Promise in God's Redemptive Plan* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2015). *Israel Matters* is a book promoting Zionism that wants to avoid any links to Dispensationalism. It does this nicely but the end result is the same: it is a plea for Israeli exceptionalism and an argument for the independent validity of Jewish covenants without Christ. As the book's endorsements show, those who are Dispensational or Messianic will celebrate it. Others will find it problematic.

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J. Paul Sampley, ed. *Paul in the Greco-Roman World: A Handbook*, 2nd ed. 2 vols. London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2016. 426 + 475 pp. £175.00/\$264.00.

This double volume is a revised and expanded second edition of a single volume from 2003. There are seven additional chapters, one of which is a reprint from a chapter published elsewhere, two chapters are revised by different authors from the contributors of the corresponding chapters in the original volume, and one chapter has narrowed its focus (Cadwaller's "Games and Military" to "Games"). Each essay is divided into a uniform structure of four or five sections. An introduction into each subject is followed by the topic within the Greco-Roman world. Once the context of the Greco-Roman world has been presented by analysing primary sources, the following section then looks at the issues highlighted from the former sections within Paul's letters. Some essays contain a fourth section which provides key texts and ideas for further studies in Paul and Pauline texts.

Paul Sampley, Emeritus Professor in New Testament and Christian Origins at Boston University, has compiled twenty-eight essays that place the works of Paul in light of Greco-Roman culture and literature. Sampley explains his desire to explore Paul's familiarity with Greco-Roman culture and his astute knowledge and ability to employ these conventions to propagate the gospel in his mission to the Gentiles (1: ix). The premise remains interesting as little is known regarding Paul's education in Greco-Roman culture. We do not know if Paul attended school nor do we know whether Paul read Greek classics. However, it appears evident that Paul exhibits an understanding when comparing his writings



to studies in Greco-Roman society on issues such as politics, law, religion, and customs. These essays demonstrate insight to Paul's social awareness and his mastery of rhetoric.

The pursuit of understanding Paul in the Greco-Roman context is a shift from Paul in his Jewish context. However, there is still a respect of Paul's Jewish identity within these essays. Sampley also notes the impact of Hellenism on Judaism during the Second Temple Period (1:ix). The various authors are careful not to default to the Jewish/Hellenism divide and that the issue of worldviews is more complex than is often thought. The first essay, Paul and Adaptability (Clarence E. Gladd), sets the tone in demonstrating Paul's adaptability between settings and cultures as well as its appropriate use in Greco-Roman culture. The following chapters continue in respect of the nuances between Paul's thought and the pervading worldviews of antiquity. The various authors note continuity and discontinuity between Paul, Hellenistic, and Jewish thought. Duane Watson's chapter on "Paul and Boasting" in particular is able to mark the continuities and discontinuities between Paul, Greco-Roman views on boasting, and boasting in Scripture. This raises an interesting question on the impact of the Greek Scriptures within the subjects of each essay. Of course, these essays are meant to focus on Paul's thinking within the Greco-Roman world; however, to dismiss the Greek Scriptures' influence on Paul's thoughts regarding subjects like family and suffering gives the impression that the essays are overstressing Paul's reliance upon Greco-Roman culture to communicate with the recipients of his letters. For example, would Paul's understanding of suffering and hardship derive from reading Job or the Psalms rather than Plutarch or Lucian? The aim of the project is to investigate how Paul is engaging in presenting the gospel in his mission to the Gentiles in his epistles; however, perhaps, when looking at the recipients of Paul's letters, the focus should include the fact that Paul's readers are Christians, a mixture of Jews and Gentiles, who have been exposed to the Scriptures.

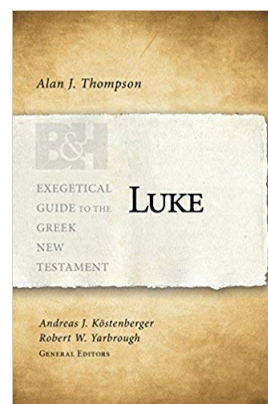
The strength of the essays in this two volume handbook is that they provide a Greco-Roman context for reading Paul and then applying this to interdisciplinary studies. This revised edition, in particular, benefits from recent studies borrowed from social disciplines such as anthropology and sociology (2:391). Rafael Rodriguez's chapter on Paul and Social Memory in particular demonstrates recent studies on how social memory was used in communities of antiquity and presents a fresh perspective of Paul's reading of the Abrahamic narratives in Romans 4 (2:355–63). The use of recent scholarship in social studies and the addition of several new chapters to this volume highlights the possibility to a wealth of future studies between Pauline biblical studies and social sciences. Some of these subjects intertwine and overlap. One obvious example is the two chapters on "Paul and Memory" (Peter-Ben Smit) and "Paul and Social Memory" (Rafael Rodriguez). There is also a close relationship between the chapters on "Paul and Family Life" (Margaret Y. MacDonald) and "Paul and *Pater Familias*" (L. Michael White). Both chapters each have a section reflecting on Paul's appeal to Philemon on behalf of Onesimus (1:277–80; 2:187–89). Some chapters seem to cover material already addressed elsewhere in the book; yet this demonstrates how connected these aspects are to the broader picture of Greco-Roman society. David deSilva's chapter on "Paul, Honor and Shame" resonates through many of the other essays. It is interesting to see when different essays use the same texts from antiquity and relate the text to their subject. For example, both Clarence E. Glad ("Paul and Adaptability") and Duane F. Watson ("Paul and Boasting") cite the same text from Plutarch's, "How to tell a friend from a flatterer." Glad cites Plutarch in connection with the point that no one can trust someone who adapts from one person to the next (1:5), whereas Watson uses the same text to explain the Corinthian reaction to Paul's apparent contradiction of boasting in letter but meek in person (1:96). The two interpretations are not exclusive

of each other, but this example does highlight the danger of making too much of the parallels between texts of antiquity and the subject at hand. Sampley and others impeccably avoid making such pitfalls.

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Alan J. Thompson. *Luke*. Exegetical Guide to the Greek New Testament. Nashville: B&H Academic, 2017. xlv + 414 pp. £22.28/\$29.99.

Alan Thompson's latest contribution to Luke–Acts scholarship is this fine volume on the Gospel of Luke in the Exegetical Guide to the Greek New Testament (EGGNT) series. The EGGNT series was launched by Murray Harris with Eerdmans back in 1991 when his volume on Colossians and Philemon first came out. Two decades later the series has been relaunched by B&H Academic, under the editorial guidance of Andreas J. Köstenberger and Robert W. Yarbrough. So far the series has republished Harris's *Colossians and Philemon*, added the volumes *John* (also by Harris), *Philippians* (by Joseph H. Hellerman), *James* (by Chris A. Vlachos), *1 Peter* (by Greg W. Forbes), *Ephesians* (by Benjamin L. Merkle), and *Romans* (by John D. Harvey), and has lined up authors to cover the rest of the New Testament.



The *Luke* volume by Thompson has the usual benefits of the EGGNT series. It is not a commentary per se; it is a guide to understanding the vocabulary, grammar, and syntax of the Greek, utilizing the UBS⁵ *Greek New Testament*. In a brief opening chapter, Thompson addresses some of the typical introductory matters found in commentaries. Regarding the Gospel's authorship, he sides with the bulk of church history on the physician and sometimes companion of Paul; regarding the date of writing, he prefers the late 50s or early 60s; regarding the intended audience, he suggests a mixture of Jewish and Gentile Christians; and regarding purposes, he sees assurance concerning God's saving work as Luke's primary intent. The technical commentaries serving as Thompson's chief conversation partners on exegetical matters include those by Darrell Bock, François Bovon, Joseph Fitzmyer, I.H. Marshall, and John Nolland. Thompson also makes frequent reference to the Luke volume in the *Baylor Handbook on the Greek New Testament* by Culy, Parsons, and Stigall (Waco: Baylor University Press, 2010) and occasional reference to the classic ICC volume on Luke by Plummer (London: T&T Clark, 1909) as well as to several other less technical commentaries. His highest recommendations for pastors are the commentaries by Bock and Edwards (PNTC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2015).

Thompson provides an unsurprising six-part outline of the Gospel of Luke, but offers headings designed to be more thematically oriented (see p. 7):

1. Prologue: The Context and Purpose of Luke's Writing Project (1:1–4)
2. The Arrival of the Royal Lord of Salvation (1:5–2:52)
3. The Inauguration of Jesus' Public Ministry (3:1–4:13)
4. Actions that Demonstrate Who Jesus Is and the Salvation He Brings (4:14–9:50)
5. Teaching that Explains the Saving Rule of the Lord (9:51–19:44)
6. The Lord Accomplishes the Salvation of the Kingdom (19:45–24:53)

As is typical with the EGGNT series, an extended exegetical outline for the whole book is provided (see the Table of Contents on pp. xi –xxiii and again pp. 383–88).

The bulk of the volume is, of course, the phrase-by-phrase analysis of the Greek grammar and syntax. This includes parsings, definitions, usage statistics, syntactical components, structural considerations, and treatments of important textual variants. Arguments are sometimes presented for debated issues. Thus, the volume is for those who are familiar with grammatical and syntactical labels and who are prepared to interact with the Greek text. In addition to expected engagement of technical commentaries and with the typical Greek grammar and reference works, comparisons of English translations occur regularly. Properly avoiding the plethora of footnotes that could be present, this work has an abundance of parenthetical references to the scholarly works using the common and sensible abbreviations. Among the valuable contributions of the EGGNT series are the homiletical suggestions offered in accordance with the detailed outline of the book and the bibliographical recommendations for further study organized by numbered topical categories.

There are three potential disappointments with this volume. First, while almost all of the text of Luke is incorporated into at least one homiletical suggestion (with the exception of Luke 19:45–46), these are not as evenly spaced across the Gospel as a pastor might wish. Some homiletical suggestions cover brief sections (e.g., 1:1–4; 3:21–22; 5:12–16; 6:12–16; 8:22–25; 10:38–42; 18:15–17; 18:31–34; 20:41–44), and others are rather large sections (e.g., 6:17–49; 8:1–21; 10:1–24; 15:1–32; 21:5–38; 23:1–49; and 23:50–24:53). This imbalance might be disappointing to preachers using the volume.

Similarly, a second potential disappointment is that this volume lacks bibliographical recommendations for further study for many sections of the Gospel of Luke. To his credit, Thompson offers bibliographical lists on 43 different themes. These range from literary features (e.g., Luke’s prologue, the hymns in the infancy narratives, parables), to historical events (e.g., Jesus’s birth, Jesus’s temptation, the transfiguration, the triumphal entry), to theological themes (e.g., Christology, Satan/demons, the Kingdom of God in Luke, repentance, heaven and hell), to institutions (e.g., the temple, Sabbath and Law, baptism, Rome and Caesar), to people (e.g., John the Baptist, Pharisees, Disciples/discipleship, men and women in Luke, children, Samaritans). Nevertheless, there are sections in the Gospel of Luke that have a homiletical suggestion but no bibliographical recommendations, and conversely there are sections with bibliographical recommendations but no specific homiletical suggestions (and there are some sections with both). Even if the bibliographies are deemed sufficient in variety (but notice that the EGGNT volumes on the brief epistles of Ephesians and Philippians each has 61 bibliographic lists), it would be helpful for the volume to have an index of these bibliographies rather than requiring the reader to simply page through the table of contents (NB: like most of the EGGNT volumes, this one does contain a helpful Grammar Index—something not commonly seen outside of grammar textbooks).

A third potential disappointment has to do with the sparseness of structural analyses, which are more regular in the EGGNT volumes on the NT epistles. All passages have a structure of some kind, of course, and Thompson’s exegetical outline for the whole Gospel of Luke is rather extensive. But Luke–Acts is well known for various other kinds of structural displays (e.g., parallels, chiasms, and word play). Thompson does note around a dozen or so structure issues (e.g., 1:1–4, 49, 51; 2:32; 4:18; 6:27–28; 7:1–8:56; 10:25–37; 13:10–14:35; 13:25; 14:8, 12; 20:28), but readers might be expecting more (and perhaps especially more sentence diagrams like those offered for 1:68 and 20:28).

Despite these potential perceived shortcomings, students and scholars working on exegesis in the Third Gospel will welcome Alan Thompson's *Luke* volume in the EGGNT series. I am glad to see this installment.

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Wim J. C. Weren. *Studies in Matthew's Gospel: Literary Design, Intertextuality, and Social Setting*. Biblical Interpretation 130. Leiden: Brill, 2014, xi + 345 pp. €139.00/\$166.00.

This attractive volume is collection of essays related to the Gospel of Matthew, written by Wim Weren over the course of 20 years. Weren, Professor Emeritus of Biblical Studies at Tilburg University (Netherlands), is not particularly well-known in the anglophone world of Matthean studies, probably because apart from several essays in this volume and one book, *Windows on Jesus: Methods in Gospel Exegesis* (London: T&T Clark, 1999), his monographs have been in Dutch. This collection of his essays, all in English here, will help rectify this regrettable lacuna.

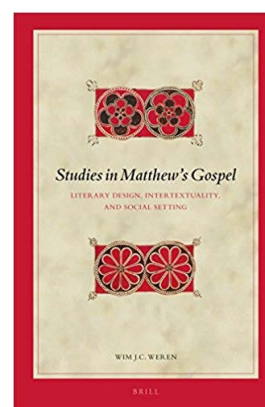
More than a mere reprinted collection, this volume coheres in a logical way, driven by a clear theoretical and methodological understanding and subsequent theses. The book contains fifteen essays and a brief introduction and conclusion, organized into three sections. Each section has a governing idea—intratextuality, intertextuality, and extratextuality, respectively—and the three sections relate to each other in a logical and organic way.

The first section, entitled, "Literary Design," consists of four chapters that study various aspects of Matthew as a literary text within itself ("intratextuality"). These essays are held together by the thesis that Matthew is a complex and dynamic whole that invites multiple layers of reading that go beyond individual pericopae. In these essays Weren explores the macrostructure of Matthew, the theme of children, revelatory knowledge, and the body and life after death.

The second part, which is under the heading, "Intertextuality," is the longest. It contains a clear introductory chapter to this complex issue, followed by seven essays that explore how a number of texts in Matthew relate to earlier texts and ideas in the Jewish scriptures. Driving these essays is the argument that our reading of Matthew will be enhanced through understanding the ways in which Matthew has both adopted and adapted, built upon and transformed, texts and ideas in his literary and socio-cultural context. Several Matthean texts are given added depth of understanding through Weren's exegesis of Old Testament texts in relation to Matthew.

Part three, the shortest section of the book, contains three essays under the general category of "History and Social Setting." These are "extratextual" studies, speculating about behind the text issues related to the origin and shape of certain ideas in Matthew. Chapters here discuss the stages of development in the Matthean community, the report about the disciples stealing Jesus' body, and the Q-source of the parable of the wedding guests.

The short introduction and conclusion provide a helpful framing for the whole book, describing the organization of the chapters as well as the relationship of the three sections. Weren explains that



Matthew can be studied from these three different perspectives and that these are best understood as successive steps that complement each other. Studying Matthew's literary design and internal coherence is the starting point, to be followed by explorations of Matthew's literary and social setting, with a final piece being the admittedly more speculative work of examining what was going on behind the scenes in the redactional work of the Evangelist.

I was first drawn to this volume by stumbling upon Weren's essay, "The Macrostructure of Matthew's Gospel: A New Proposal." Having read extensively on this complex topic within Matthean studies, I immediately recognized Weren's erudition, clarity, and original contribution to the topic. The rest of the wide-ranging essays in this book manifest the same characteristics.

Every one of the essays is written in a clear and organized fashion, evincing knowledge of the scholarly discussion but without getting bogged down or following too many rabbit trails. The writing style shows a pedagogical sensitivity, with clear theses and organizational statements, the hallmarks of someone who is likely a very good teacher. Throughout, the arguments are balanced and insightful at multiple points; I learned something new in every essay.

Most of the real estate in the volume is given to intertextuality, the biggest and most methodologically-debated topic in biblical studies in recent years. Weren provides a clear-headed, sensible, and balanced approach that is sensitive to the complexities of language and culture, but not a free-for-all play that is sometimes found. Indeed, his intertextual work is quite conservative within this field.

Even though twelve of the fifteen essays are previously published articles in English, the volume is a worthy production. In addition to the two new essays, this book provides easy access to Weren's work, now revised and taking on a depth of meaning in its organization in the overall vision of the book. Especially helpful, Weren is engaged in the world of German scholarship on Matthew, culling insights from a body of literature that most English readers will not have read. The portion of the volume that I found least helpful (though not without insight) was the extratextual section, whose speculative nature is less engaging to me as reader. Weren himself apparently sees this kind of work as tertiary as well. Overall, this is a fine collection of essays worthy of consultation on all of the topics it addresses.

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— HISTORY AND HISTORICAL THEOLOGY —

Gregory Bassham, ed. *C. S. Lewis's Christian Apologetics: Pro and Con*. Value Inquiry Book Series: Philosophy and Religion 286. Leiden: Brill, 2015. xv + 272 pp. €69.00/\$89.00.

C. S. Lewis is the Mount Everest of Christian apologists (at least over the past century). For decades, laypeople, specialists, defenders, and critics have launched themselves at the summit, striving to capture the tantalizing blend of clarity and logic that made Lewis such a towering figure. “Yet, curiously,” the editor of this volume writes, “Lewis is not generally considered a major figure by academic theologians.... There are very few books that discuss his religious writings with the scholarly depth and rigor they deserve” (p. 1).

With that in mind, the stated aim of this new offering, a collection of 20 pro/con essays by 10 scholars, is “to produce a book that examines Lewis’s main arguments for Christianity with depth and rigor but is also accessible to general readers” (xv). By “main arguments,” the authors are referring to what they consider to be Lewis’s five most important apologetic arguments: (1) the argument from desire, (2) the argument from reason, (3) the moral argument, (4) the trilemma argument, and (5) the argument concerning the problem of evil.

The book is divided into five parts, with each section devoted to one of these five key arguments. The pro/con debate format, as indicated by the subtitle, allows the defenders or critics of Lewis’s apologetics the opportunity to state their case and then provide one rebuttal.

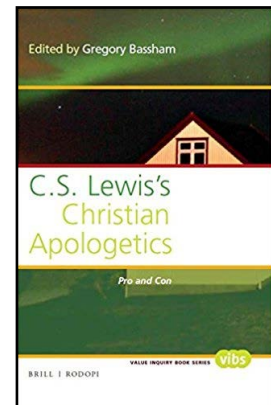
Limited by space considerations, only a few summary remarks will be made here, followed by just one prime example of a weakness that appears throughout the essays.

Overall, this volume should be required reading for a number of university or seminary courses, especially one on apologetics. Almost every author shows how to cordially interact with people they disagree with so that the debate can be fruitful—not to mention helpful in clarifying, nuancing, or even abandoning closely held arguments for better ones. Like Lewis, they collectively exemplify the ability to argue without being argumentative; to disagree without being disagreeable; to have authority without being an authoritarian; even to have dogma without being dogmatic.

Also as a whole, the authors write briskly and accessibly. They are good on representing Lewis’s views, reflecting their backgrounds in Lewis studies. They reliably convey the conflicts’ broad outlines for those who know nothing about the arguments, while adding enough fresh material to interest those more familiar with them.

Happily, this volume does not linger on matters that would make most general readers’ eyes glaze over. There are also, to be sure, many things that both sides of any given argument have in common. For the most part, they both express their level of respect for Lewis’s apologetics. They also share an intense desire to know the truth, “as scholars seeking an honest and focused appraisal of the true strengths and weaknesses of his arguments” (p. 26).

Since the editor, however, repeatedly highlights (e.g., four times in the introduction) that their examinations of Lewis’s arguments are academically rigorous, one might be left wondering why their “Works Cited” exhibits more popular-level works than scholarly ones, even to the exclusion of many standard or classic academic treatments on their respective topics. Take the argument Donald Williams



refers to as Lewis's best known and most famous: the Trilemma argument (Jesus as Liar, Lunatic, or Lord). Both sides of the debate agree on "the crux of the matter: the question of whether Jesus did or did not claim to be God" (p. 201). However, the contributors are less reliable when they move beyond Lewis studies to examine the NT textual evidence for Jesus's deity (see my essay on the topic, "Jesus as ΘΕΟΣ [God]: A Textual Examination," in *Revisiting the Corruption of the New Testament: Manuscript, Patristic, and Apocryphal Evidence*, ed. Daniel B. Wallace [Grand Rapids: Kregel Academic, 2011], 229–66). They also too quickly fast-forward a few centuries to the Councils of Nicaea and Chalcedon, without even dealing with a host of other academic discussions that should chronologically precede them, such as early Christian worship practices.

The point here is not merely to highlight some glaring omissions or troubling blindness. No work is exhaustive. But researching and utilizing the key academic works on such topics, and not merely popular-level works or those written by well-known theologians who have only written broadly on such topics, might have prevented several outdated arguments, uninformed representations, and at times inaccurate conclusions.

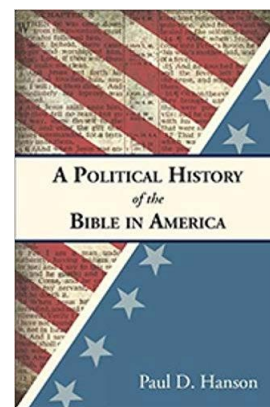
Nevertheless, this is a delightful volume, with a minimum amount of minutiae. This team of scholars has produced a page-turner on C. S. Lewis's apologetics, and every university library should own a copy. Both sides of the debate should thank them.

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Paul D. Hanson. *A Political History of the Bible in America*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2015. xii + 681 pp. £34.99/\$50.00.

Since the dawn of the new millennium there has been a noticeable surge of works surveying the Bible's influence on the development of Western societies. Paul Hanson's *A Political History of the Bible in America* joins the works of James P. Byrd, Daniel Dreisbach, John Fea, Vishal Mangalwadi, Mark Noll, Stephen Prothero, Eran Shalev and others that in recent years have examined how the Bible has shaped politics and government in the West. More specifically, this is a monumental attempt by a senior Old Testament scholar at the Harvard Divinity School not only to provide the final word on how the Bible has shaped American politics, but also to identify what the Bible teaches about politics. Hanson therefore ultimately seeks to provide Christians with a definitive, biblically-based guide for how to formulate political opinions and to function in the political sphere. While Hanson's effort is to be commended, and his massive volume of nearly 700 pages acknowledged as a valuable resource, it must regrettably be stated that he fails to accomplish his primary objectives.

After correctly observing in the Prologue that religion and politics have been intertwined in America since the establishment of the Jamestown colony, Hanson quickly chronicles American history in Part 1 of his book, showing how religion has shaped American politics for good and bad from colonial times to the advent of the 21st century. Unfortunately, Hanson's historical overview is marred by outright errors,



partisan (liberal) rhetoric, and simplistic assertions regarding complicated and disputed developments in American history. Examples of the former include Hanson's assertions that Jim Crow legislation eviscerated the Sixteenth Amendment (which empowered Congress to impose income taxes) (p. 10), that there was a realistic prospect of clergy being given the authority to interpret the Constitution (p. 55), and that America helped to make Diem the leader of the South Vietnam government merely because he was Catholic (p. 99). Hanson's partisanship is on display in his assertion that the Occupy Wall Street movement epitomized constructive, peaceful protest (p. 11), while the Tea Party is characterized by its "shrillness" and "radical ideology" (p. 114). Likewise, according to Hanson, the most theologically sophisticated occupants of the White House in recent decades have been Jimmy Carter and Barack Obama. Finally, some examples of Hanson's unfamiliarity with American historiography are found in his assertion that virtually all theologically conservative Protestants believed America to be the New Israel (p. 59), that the Constitution was the product of "the English Enlightenment and its theological offspring, Deism" (p. 55), that the Fundamentalist movement of the early 20th century "clung ... to an increasingly ossified set of dogmas, often devoid of ... the spirit of love" (p. 84), and that "skillful diplomacy may have defused the crisis" between America and Japan after the attack on Pearl Harbor (p. 95).

Hanson is much more adept when he turns his attention to the Bible in Part 2, which constitutes about three-fifths of the entire book. Here Hanson methodically surveys the Bible, from Genesis to Revelation, to identify what it says about government and political philosophy. Overall, this section of the book is well-written and enlightening. Those who find fault with it will likely do so based on Hanson's analysis and conclusions. After reviewing all that the Bible says about politics and government, Hanson concludes there is no such thing as a "political philosophy of the Bible" (p. 634). Or, as he put it in his preface: "no single authoritative biblical model of government can be found" in the Scriptures (p. xi). At best, the Bible provides stories of how God's people have formulated and advocated different forms of government over time. On one hand, this leads Hanson to assert that the Scriptures should not be viewed as containing "timeless, inerrant laws" (p. 632). But on the other hand, he concludes that the only principle found in the biblical stories of God's people striving to create godly governments is the truth that God is sovereign and the only true ruler of the universe. This leads Hanson to assert that "since all human institutions are subject to the ultimate authority of the sovereign of all nations, it is the responsibility ... of all nations to implement the normative standards of divine governance within the particularities of their time and setting" (p. 634).

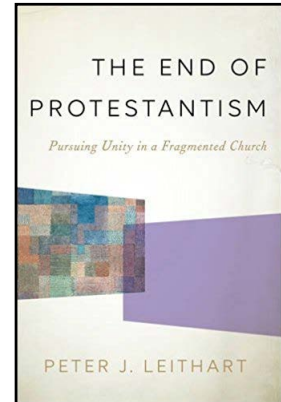
Unfortunately, Hanson does not identify or explain the normative standards of divine governance. Instead, he concludes the book with a frustratingly vague, brief, and untenable five-step program for attaining "the ultimate goal: healing the world" (p. 640). The gist of this program is pluralism, as Hanson argues that the biblical approach to politics is for all groups in society to have a place at the table—for no one group to think its ideas are any better than those of other groups. If this is correct, then Hanson is essentially arguing that the Christian approach to politics is not to look inside the Bible for guidance, but rather outside of it, to groups of people. It is ultimately through the collective wisdom of all people, Hanson asserts, that the "universal reign of peace and justice" will, if ever, be achieved.

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Peter J. Leithart. *The End of Protestantism: Pursuing Unity in a Fragmented Church*. Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2016. x+225 pp. £13.99/\$21.99.

Peter Leithart is President of Theopolis Institute and adjunct Senior Fellow of Theology at New St. Andrews College, Moscow, Idaho. This book is an appeal to Protestants to “abandon their tribalism,” their denominationalism, and “to strive in the Spirit toward a new way of being church” (p. 5). He briefly summarizes the problem:

We have found a way of being church that lets us be at peace with division. Denominationalism allows us to be friendly with one another while refusing to join one another. It allows us to be cordial while refusing to commune together at the Lord’s table. It permits us to be civil while refusing to acknowledge that another’s baptism is truly baptism, or another’s ordination truly ordination. It makes us forgetful of our divisions and our defiance of Jesus. (p. 3)



He calls his agenda “Reformational Catholicism,” which will be “the end of Protestantism” (p. 6). Leithart concedes that denominationalism has served a purpose in extending God’s kingdom, but he argues that it hinders Christians from exhibiting the unity that Jesus calls for (p. 6).

The book unfolds this agenda in four movements. “Church United” presents the biblical case for unity, a unity that is not merely spiritual but actually present on the earth. He argues that this “is essentially what the church *was* for the first several centuries, what the Western church was before the Reformation” (p. 27). Although this view of church history might be a bit simplistic, it is true that denominational proliferation is one the consequences of the Reformation. He looks forward to this “future reformed Catholic church” and asserts that among its characteristics is that it “will be sacramental and liturgical. By ‘liturgy’ I mean a formalized pattern of worship with a double focus on the Word and the sacrament of Communion, the Eucharist” (p. 30). He says nothing about the sacrament of baptism in this section; it would be helpful to hear how the multiple Christian views of baptism could be brought together in this future united church.

The second movement, “Church Divided,” defines denominationalism and describes its strengths. But the bulk of this section, not surprisingly, is devoted to criticism. Leithart writes, “Denominational boundary-marking has two damaging effects on the church. On the one hand, denomination churches are homogeneous and unflavored and therefore immature. They are not bodies but collections of eyes, hands, brains, and other disembodied parts. On the other hand, they are set off from each other by a host of symbolic barriers. Symbolically divided, they have few obstacles to further division” (p. 73). He demonstrates how schismatic movements tend to continue to divide.

In the third movement, “Divided Church Dissolving,” the author argues, “Cracks have appeared in the walls separating denominationalism. Just as importantly, the hold of the American way of life on the churches has weakened” (p. 160). The examples he cites, from the international and American church, do support specific cases of unity over denominational loyalty. Whether or not these are sufficient to indicate significant cracks remains to be seen. Surely this is an overstatement: “What we are looking at is not only the collapse of the Protestant establishment, not only the erosion of the American civil religion that depended on the Protestant establishment. We are witnessing the hollowing out of the Protestant establishment” (p. 161).

Finally, in “United Church Reborn,” Leithart gives some specific ways forward toward Reformational Catholicism. Among them is a paragraph addressing baptism: “On the baptism issue, those who resist notions of ‘baptismal regeneration’ should be willing to admit that there are passages in the New Testament that sound suspiciously like baptismal regeneration. Whether Paul was talking about baptism when he referred to ‘the washing of regeneration’ (Titus 3:5) is disputed, but it is not obvious that the statement is *not* about baptism” (p. 177). It is hard to imagine how such a simplistic claim advances the conversation and encourages those who do not think the Bible teaches baptismal regeneration to accept the position. More helpful is a call for a “renewed appreciation for pre-Reformation modes of reading and interpreting Scripture” (p. 179). He argues what is needed is a reading of Scripture that sees Scripture as the story of Christ which makes demands of his followers “precisely *because* it is the story of Christ” (ibid.).

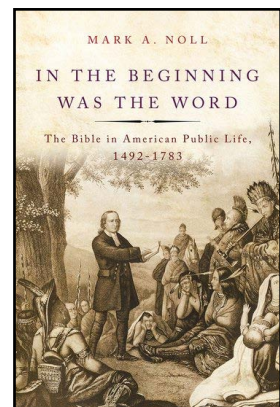
Christians of every denomination could agree with the basic thesis of this book. Jesus prayed for the unity of the church and that she would exhibit this unity in the world. Leithart writes, “This is what Jesus *wants* for his church. It is *not* what his church is” (p. 1). The author makes some provocative suggestions and some stimulating proposals. That seems to be the point, to encourage Christians to consider how to move outside of denominationalism toward unity. This work is recommended for church leaders, pastors, parachurch ministers, theology students, and educated laypeople. It would be a great book to read and discuss together, integrating into the conversation people of a variety of denominational convictions.

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Mark A. Noll. *In the Beginning Was the Word: The Bible in American Public Life, 1492–1783*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016. xii + 431 pp. £19.99/\$29.95.

In 1982, a young scholar named Mark Noll edited a volume of essays entitled *The Bible in America: Essays in Cultural History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982). Noll’s interest in this study of the Bible in American life has persevered throughout decades of teaching and scholarship as he became one of the most celebrated historians of American Christianity. Noll once again demonstrates this passion with his publication of *In the Beginning Was the Word*, his final book in his role as the Francis A. McAnaney Professor of History at the University of Notre Dame.

More than viewing the Bible as Scripture, literature, or text, Noll’s work considers the Bible as a book that has had enormous influence in the intellectual and cultural history of the United States. This work is not simply an argument that the Bible *was* used by people in colonial America; rather, Noll dives deep into *how* it was used. He answers three interrelated questions: 1) What does it mean “for Protestants to claim that they followed the Scripture above all other human authorities?” 2) If Scripture was the guide, was it a primary guide, an essential guide, a crucial guide, or the only guide? 3) How did this understanding of scripture (which Noll refers to as “Biblicism”) differentiate the colonies



from the Christendom so prominent in Europe and ultimately allow for a rejection of church-state establishments (pp. 2–4)?

In short, Noll describes how the Bible was used (and abused) in the public life of colonial America. A prelude and the first three chapters provide context from Catholicism in New Spain and New France as well as the origins of Protestantism, its particular evolution in England, and the development of the English Bible from William Tyndale to the King James Version. The balance of the book focuses on the Bible's influence in Protestant Christianity in the British colonies. Understandably, chapter 4 begins with the Puritans' fixation on the Bible. The following chapters show how, in contrast to a Puritan Biblicism and an intertwining of church and state, an attachment to scripture by colonists developed so that the War of Independence "dealt a death blow to establishmentarian Christendom while at the same time freeing up a vigorous Biblicism to exert far-ranging effects in the new United States" (p. 127). This counterintuitive argument that an embrace of Scripture damaged the colonies' relationship with British (and European) Christendom animates Noll's overall argument. Along the way, Noll explains that at times the relationship with the Bible is "deepened" (ch. 8), "thinned," "absorbed" (ch. 9), and even how the Bible provided both rhetoric and an argument for revolution (chs. 10 and 11).

Noll's study joins other recent works considering the role of the Bible in late colonial America, including James P. Byrd's *Sacred Scripture, Sacred War: The Bible and the American Revolution* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013) and Daniel L. Dreisbach's *Reading the Bible with the Founding Fathers* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017). Noll's distinct contribution is in its scope, both in the eras it covers and in the very range of subjects.

The breadth of the work, while providing a helpful picture of the role of the Bible in America, proves to be a weakness. Because the nature of the work requires a deep reading into the cultural productions to determine how the Bible was utilized by historical actors, Noll settles for fewer examples to establish broader trends. To be sure, Noll's source material is extensive, even "overexuberant quotation to the point of tedium" in a desire to reflect the "atmospheric ubiquity of Scripture" in colonial America (p. 19). A deep reading of this work, while attending to the myriad articles and books cited in the notes, would provide the student with a well-developed understanding of Christianity in the colonies (and not just in how the Bible was used). But Noll's arguments concerning the use of the Bible over 300 years feel necessarily generalized from the sources used to support them.

In the end, this is mere quibbling over a work that is meant to provoke further scholarship. While not an easy read, a careful reading of this work will pay great dividends and leave the reader hoping for more. Noll says as much in the conclusion: "After independence came heroic efforts to build a Bible civilization. The extent to which those efforts partially succeeded and eventually failed is a subject that requires its own exploration" (p. 339). Such a study has been done before (see, for example, Paul C. Gutjahr's *An American Bible: A History of the Good Book in the United States, 1777–1880* [Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1999]), but Noll's experience is bound to allow for new and richer insights on the subject.

Indeed, Oxford University Press's website refers to Noll's work as "the first part of a multi-volume set that will trace the history of the Bible in America up to the present day." With a more relaxed schedule in his post-faculty years, we can all hope that this plan comes to fruition.

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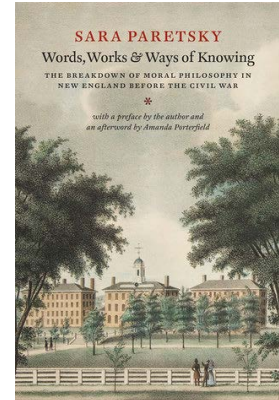
Sara Paretsky. *Words, Works, and Ways of Knowing: The Breakdown of Moral Philosophy in New England Before the Civil War*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2016. xv + 165 pp. £26.50/\$35.00.

Sara Paretsky is known for her fictional crime novels featuring the character V. I. Warshawski. But few are aware that she received a Ph.D in 1977 from the University of Chicago in history. This book is an edited version of her dissertation that considers the changing ideals of the New England Calvinists throughout the nineteenth century.

Paretsky argues that the orthodox Calvinists lost their hold on the major New England seminaries when biblical studies began to appropriate other disciplines to interpret the Bible. Focusing particularly on the faculty of Andover Theological Seminary, she cites the linguist, Moses Stuart (1780–1852), as a prime example. Stuart employed the historical critical method in his study of philology, believing that the study of language within its context would authenticate the message of the Bible and prove its truth statements. But Stuart's students would take their studies to another level. They began their study of language and science to the exclusion of the scriptures. In doing so, Paretsky notes, men like Edwards Amasa Parks (1808–1900) unwittingly divided theology from science, and B. B. Edwards (1802–1852) divided philology from hermeneutics. Hence, the tail began wagging the dog; the Bible could no longer self-authenticate. It needed other measures to explain it. One notable example could be found in the re-interpretation of Genesis to accommodate an old age of the earth as promoted by secular geologists. Prior to that point, Biblicists took a six-day creation at face value. As scientific study interpreted the Bible rather than allowing scripture to speak for itself, theology lost its place as the queen of the sciences in New England seminaries and universities.

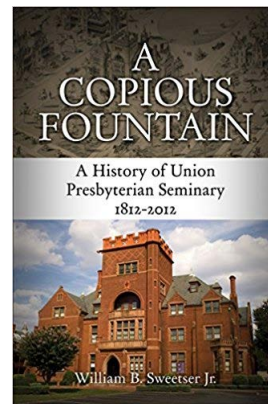
Paretsky is not an evangelical, but she is sympathetic to the New England Calvinists. She offers a fair and balanced assessment of the participants involved. The author is well acquainted with the sources as well as the historical figures and arguments of the period. Forty years ago, she had access to the private papers of E. A. Parks through his descendants (now presumed lost). Through her synthesis of that research, she portrays a reasonable explanation of how science and philology shifted to interpret data over and above the truth claims of scripture. This may not be the usual fare for most pastors and even history buffs in the pews, but it certainly provides a helpful voice for anyone seeking a robust understanding of shifts in American theological education and, hence, the thinking of the church.

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William B. Sweetser. *A Copious Fountain: A History of Union Presbyterian Seminary 1812–2012*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2016. x + 612 pp. £38.81/\$50.00.

William Sweetser has added a volume to the growing number on the institutional history of Presbyterian seminaries. Sweetser, a visiting professor at Union Seminary in Charlotte, was asked to write the history of the institution by Union president Brian Blount for the seminary's bicentennial anniversary. In the six hundred plus pages of the volume, he weaves the history of the institution around five structural themes: 1) the change seen in its two hundred years of existence; 2) Union as a regional and national institution; 3) Union's engagement with both the world and its relatively small denomination; 4) the tension felt by students and graduates between preserving the status quo and advocating for reform; 5) Union's influence in its denomination and theological education (p. xvi).



Union Seminary traces its origins back to Hampden Sydney College in rural southeastern Virginia in 1812. The original curriculum was based upon John Knox's *Book of Discipline*, which outlined theological education as covering Greek and Hebrew exegesis, theology, church history, and church polity. According to Sweetser, that curriculum remains the basis of Union's program after two hundred years. The first professor, Moses Hoge, led the seminary through financial hardships, overwork, rivalry with the college, and indifference by the presbyteries. Yet, Hoge wanted an ecumenical seminary that would educate not only Presbyterian ministerial students but also those of other denominations and students outside of the South. Even though Southern Presbyterians made up the bulk of the students, part of Hoge's dream was fulfilled during his tenure and that of his successor, John Holt Rice.

The issue of slavery and the Civil War provides a major turning point in the book. The ecumenical spirit that marked the early days of Union disappeared as Union became a Southern seminary. The two professors who were partially responsible for narrowing the culture of Union, George A. Baxter and R. L. Dabney, were defenders of slavery who wanted to retain the old order of the South. The war also divided the Presbyterian Church—a division which lasted until 1983. Ironically, Union found itself needing Northern financial support in order to survive.

A second major turning point in the history of the seminary was the move from rural Farmville, Virginia to the state capital of Richmond. Walter Moore, professor of Old Testament and eventual president of the seminary, argued that Union needed to make the move so that students would have more opportunity for field experience. He also wanted better enrollment at Union, improved fund raising, and a better physical plant. But the move, which eventually took place in 1898, was more than physical. It brought a new ethos in the seminary culture. The era of professionalization in seminary education had begun, and Moore wanted Union to be an integral part of the movement. According to the author, in the early decades of the twentieth century, Union remained theologically conservative but pedagogically progressive. The move to professionalization, though, brought a shift by requiring professors to be credentialed by the academy instead of the church. Union would take its academic advice not from the church but from the accreditors as she pined for national recognition. The days of pastors becoming seminary professors was drawing to a close. Union would resemble a theological university.

During this time, Union began to challenge not only the theological status quo but the status quo of the entire South as well. In the 1800s, Union, influenced by Dabney, upheld the spirituality of the church in which the church did not challenge the social order. Further changes came in the twentieth century, when Walter Lingle, himself influenced by the social gospel movement, began teaching a class on Christian sociology which applied Scripture to the social problems of the day. While Lingle remained theologically conservative, Ernest Trice Thompson was not. Thompson wanted to rid the denomination of the doctrine of the spirituality of the church, but a watershed moment in Union's history occurred in 1929 when Thompson published a series of Sunday school lessons which proved to be controversial. William McPheeters, a retired Old Testament professor from Columbia Seminary, challenged Thompson, eventually complaining to the press and to Union's president, Benjamin Lacy Rose, over Thompson's departure from inerrancy. But Rose defended Thompson and refused to fire him. As Sweetser notes, "Lacy's defense of Thompson was a stand for academic freedom in a general sense, but also a statement that Union would be a genuine professional school unafraid to conduct research wherever it led and move beyond regional considerations" (p. 287). At this point Union's ties with the confessional orthodoxy of the past were broken.

With Thompson on the faculty and the emergence of the biblical theology movement through the pages of the Seminary's scholarly journal, *Interpretation*, Union became a promoter of social action in the South. Union allowed African-American students to enroll, and students and faculty marched in protest against the racial policies of the South in the 1960s.

As the twentieth century came to a close, Union faced myriad problems as declining numbers and inflation left negative effects on the seminary. Union continues to exist at two locations (Richmond and Charlotte), but since the reunion of the Northern and Southern Presbyterian churches, it is no longer the flagship seminary of the denomination. Programs have been reduced, yet Union continues.

A Copious Fountain is a well-researched volume. Sweetser has interacted with board minutes, sermons, catalogues of the seminary as well as impressions of the institution by the students. While institutional history could devolve into a recitation of board minutes, Sweetser gives the reader a picture of Union's interaction with American culture as well as what it was like to be a student at the seminary. He includes slices of student life as well as their complaints about the more mundane aspects of the institution such as grading policies and workloads.

However, there are areas of confusion. When biblical theology is mentioned, Sweetser seems not to refer to the historical development of biblical revelation that one finds in Vos. Instead, biblical theology at Union seems to refer to the application of Scripture to societal problems. Likewise, in his understanding of fundamentalism, Sweetser follows the line of Ernest Sandeen who believed that fundamentalism was a combination of inerrancy and dispensationalism. At one point in the book he states that Union challenged inerrancy because they did not believe in Bishop Ussher's chronology of earth's history. But the rejection of Ussher's chronology was not necessarily a challenge to inerrancy since many proponents of inerrancy did not believe in Ussher's chronology. Fundamentalism, as Marsden points out, was a mindset of radical anti-modernism. Some of the professors, such as Thomas Cary Johnson, certainly fit that bill.

Sweetser also does not mention the split that occurred in the Southern church in the 1970s, resulting in the formation of the PCA. An examination of the effect this had on the seminary would have been interesting since several of the churches that joined the fledgling PCA were in the same geographical area.

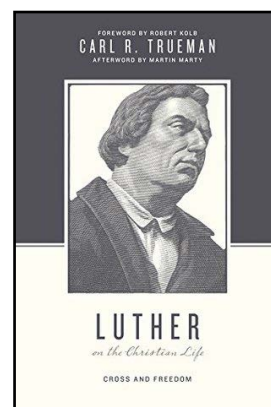
What really makes this book interesting for conservative readers is the developments that took place which led Union away from the orthodoxy of the nineteenth century to the liberalism of the twentieth century. One reason for the movement was academic credibility. Trying to gain academic respectability, Union moved towards professionalism and the university academic model. Presbyteries no longer determined the curriculum; the academy did. Thus, the seminary lost its mooring as a church based institution. A second factor was the social gospel. Rightfully, Union leaders wanted to apply the gospel to social issues. Eventually, however, that desire, combined with the loss of an inerrant Bible, allowed social issue to become predominate.

As a whole, the book helpfully reminds the reader that the movement from confessional orthodoxy was a convoluted path. The journey was a mixture of the good with the bad. This institutional history, then, warns all who believe in orthodoxy of the necessity of holding on to the inerrancy of Scripture even if doing so brings undesirable labels.

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Carl R. Trueman. *Luther on the Christian Life: Cross and Freedom*. Theologians on the Christian Life. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2015. 214 pp. £11.99/\$17.99.

The “Theologians on the Christian Life” series is based on the belief that the communion of saints from the past still speaks a much-needed message for Christians today. Spotlighted figures provide “wisdom for living the Christian life” that may not necessarily be discerned if believers only look and listen to the unprecedented abundance of contemporary resources available (p. 11). If any volume in this series demonstrates this claim, it is Carl Trueman’s, *Luther on the Christian Life*. This work is the only one in the series (thus far) that includes both a foreword (Robert Kolb) and an afterword (Martin Marty), allowing the Reformed author to be bookended by two prominent Lutheran “Luther” scholars who lend endorsement to Trueman’s presentation. These bookends serve Trueman well, but he himself is no stranger to this sixteenth-century German Reformer. Aside from teaching courses on Martin Luther, he has contributed to Luther scholarship with *Luther’s Legacy: Salvation and English Reformers, 1525–1556* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1994), based upon his doctoral dissertation.



The book begins with an introduction aptly titled, “What Has Geneva to Do with Wittenberg?,” which exhibits Trueman’s self-awareness of his Reformed vantage point as he undertakes a commendation of Luther to a broader evangelical audience. Many beneficial contextual points fill this introduction to prepare the reader for what follows, but most of all, Trueman contends, “we cannot understand Luther’s view of the Christian life in general without understanding his own Christian life in particular” (p. 24). Luther’s biography is crucial to understanding the Reformer’s vision of the Christian’s life, and too often is neglected, as can be the case generally, when past theologians are treated as simply an “abstract collection of ideas” (p. 26). With this aim established, chapter 1, “Martin Luther’s Christian Life,” briefly overviews Luther’s tumultuous life in order to set the backdrop for a critical analysis of Luther’s teaching in subsequent chapters. More precisely, Trueman wishes to manifest not only the connections between

the Reformer's biography and theology, but also "the human contradictions and failings that were part of who he was and what he did" (p. 54). Although Luther is a "giant" in the history of Christianity, Trueman desires to portray him equally as a "human," which brings an added value to this contribution.

With the biography in place, Trueman delves into significant moments of Luther's life where he espoused many of his distinctive insights into the Christian life. In the first place, Trueman presents Luther's understanding of what it means to be a "theologian of the cross" in chapter 2, "Theologians, Priests, and Kings." Here, Luther believes, is where Christians define true humanity, learning to measure all of reality by the cross (pp. 65, 76). Next, chapter 3, "The Theology of the Word Preached," explicates that, for Luther, God may be found nowhere other than in the incarnate Christ through the preached Word of God (p. 79). For Luther, the Word creates and sustains life by bringing people into direct encounter with God through the preaching of the law and gospel (p. 89).

In chapter 4, "The Liturgy of the Christian life," Trueman strives to illuminate the essential, ecclesial character of Christian living for Luther including gathered worship, sacraments, penance, and catechism. Chapter 5 considers how one engages in "Living by the Word" with an introduction to Luther's threefold approach to studying the Word for the sake of doing theology in everyday life: *oratio* (prayer), *meditatio* (meditation), and *tentatio/Anfechtungen* (internal struggle) (pp. 118–23). In chapter 6, "Freed from Babylon: Baptism and the Mass," Trueman returns to Luther's vision of the sacraments and the central role they play for continuing to confront the believer with the objective Word from regeneration to the ongoing dying and rising of the believer's daily life.

Readers will find chapter 7, "Luther and Christian Righteousness," an especially pertinent resource for navigating the question of sanctification and personal holiness in Luther's theology of Christian living. This chapter, in particular, demonstrates the value of Trueman's biographical approach to Luther's theology as he shows the necessity of gleaning not only from "the evangelical canon" of the "early" Luther, but also the oft-neglected wisdom of the "later" Luther, whose initial apocalyptic and Reformation expectations had not come to total fruition. The final chapter, "Life and Death in This Earthly Realm," quickly covers other major facets of Luther's comprehensive vision of the believer's life in Christ including temporal government, vocation, marriage, sex, and children. Trueman's conclusion entitled, "Life as Tragedy, Life as Comedy," brings a compelling retrospect to the prospect of Luther for the present time.

This book rewards the careful reader on many levels. Yet, for a series that aims to be accessible for a broader audience of pastors and interested laypeople, Trueman's introduction to Luther's theology interwoven in faithful church history may prove challenging, even if that audience has read other entries from the "Theologians on the Christian Life" series. Even so, Trueman mines much wisdom and provides excellent clarification for evangelical readers of Luther.

One possible drawback of the book could be Trueman's persistent reminder that Luther was neither a "modern American evangelical" nor would he have approved of most evangelicals, specifically referencing disagreements over the nature of baptism and the Lord's Supper (pp. 22–23). Trueman's adamant stance on this point gives some healthy shock-value for the newcomer to Luther studies, but if not carefully understood within the historical and theological context that Trueman provides, that shock-value could have the unfortunate effect of distancing the reader from Luther. This warning rings especially loudly for the significant amount of the readership situated within the Reformed tradition who are attempting to understand "why Geneva should have anything to do with Wittenberg" after all.

Nonetheless, Trueman delivers a powerful portrait of “Luther for today” with insights that evangelicals should not miss. One counter-(evangelical) cultural point that Trueman foregrounds throughout the course of the study is Luther’s doctrine of the external, objective Word, emphasizing “Luther’s great stress upon the priority and objectivity of God’s revelation” (p. 196). This particular approach to the Word, the gospel, and the Triune God of the gospel radically overturns “the priority and subjectivity” of the idolatrous “self” of so much contemporary evangelical spirituality. As Trueman effectively shows in the book, “This objectivity of God,” for Luther, “undergirds those basic elements of the Christian life” (p. 196). The ongoing relevance of Luther’s vision of “the priority and objectivity” of God’s active presence in his Word manifests itself with force as it pertains to a whole range of subjects related to the Christian life whether in regeneration, preaching, the sacraments, sanctification, and assurance. Moreover, Trueman reflects upon the immediate implications this commitment has for pastoral ministry both in how it performs its own functions and how it counsels Christ’s sheep (pp. 197–98). On why Luther will never cease to be relevant, Trueman comments, “[Luther’s writings] offer a breath of fresh air amid a forced and stale piety. And his emphasis on the objectivity of the action of God in Christ puts all things in perspective and exposes our lives outside of Christ for what they are, acts in a silly farce played out in the shadow of the beckoning grave” (pp. 199–200).

Another front where Trueman’s presentation of Luther runs against the common evangelical stream is the place of church in the Christian’s life. If Luther’s conviction concerning the objectivity of the Word overcomes the supremacy of evangelical subjectivity, then the ecclesial character of the Reformer’s thought overturns the pride of individual autonomy often associated with evangelicals. Although some critics may identify the latter as an unintended result of Luther’s doctrine of the priesthood of all believers, Trueman provides evangelical theology a much-needed reminder of this doctrine’s context within the grander sphere of the local church in Luther’s theology.

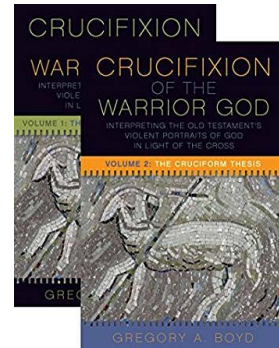
In sum, *Luther on the Christian Life* deserves a wide readership for important reasons beyond what has been captured in this short review. As a guide, Trueman’s “Concluding Reflections” in each chapter as well as his formal “Conclusion” provide significant points of critical evaluation and paths for immediate application of Luther’s approach to the life of a believer in today’s evangelical world. Obviously, this book will benefit individual readers but would also be edifying for reading groups, small groups in churches, and as an undergraduate textbook for courses that cover systematic, historical, and applied theology. Trueman’s treatment of Luther will most certainly encourage all believers who engage it to live a truly Word-centered, cross-centered life in Christ Jesus, our Lord.

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— SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY AND BIOETHICS —

Gregory A. Boyd. *The Crucifixion of the Warrior God: Interpreting the Old Testament's Violent Portraits of God in Light of the Cross*. 2 vols. Minneapolis: Fortress, 2017. xlii + 1445 pp. £43.99/\$59.00.

In an age when religious violence abounds and when postmodern Western sensibilities regard with deep suspicion any suggestion that God might exercise violent, coercive, retributive judgment in his pursuit of justice, one of the pressing pastoral, scholarly, and indeed apologetic questions for the church is this: What are the people of the crucified Lord—the community who follows in faith the God who died for his enemies—to do with those biblical texts, particularly in the Old Testament, that depict God slaughtering, smiting, and exacting vengeance in gratuitous detail?



This is the animating question behind Gregory A. Boyd’s *The Crucifixion of the Warrior God*. For Boyd, the Old Testament’s violent portraits of God introduce a fundamental tension, leaving the interpreter “caught between the Scylla of Jesus’ affirmation of the OT as divinely inspired and the Charybdis of his nonviolent revelation of God” (p. xxix). Over two volumes, Boyd argues that the solution is to interpret Old Testament ascriptions of violence to God as “literary crucifixes” (p. 548). That is, just as in the cross God stooped in non-coercive and nonviolent love to take on the appearance of a guilty criminal as he bore the sin of his people, so those Old Testament texts that depict God in violent terms—and thus do not align with Boyd’s understanding of the nonviolent revelation of God in the cross—are in fact instances where God stoops to bear the sin of his people by allowing them to portray him in a sinful, culturally conditioned, and violent manner. In this way, Boyd contends, even the Old Testament’s violent divine portraits bear witness to the nonviolent character of God exhibited on the cross.

Volume one, *The Cruciform Hermeneutic*, develops and defends Boyd’s method for cross-centered biblical interpretation. Boyd begins by arguing that Jesus is the supreme, definitive revelation of God’s character and the goal of the entire Bible (ch. 2). Jesus is therefore the “hermeneutical key” to all of Scripture through whom every Old Testament text must be interpreted (p. 42). After surveying early church exemplars of a Christocentric hermeneutic (ch. 3), Boyd further maintains that the cross is the “interpretive key” that unlocks the ultimate meaning and unity of every aspect of the person and work of Jesus Christ” (p. 142). The cross is the key to Jesus, who is the key to the Bible. Boyd thus advocates not merely a Christocentric hermeneutic, but a *crucicentric* hermeneutic, wherein the cross is understood as the revelation of God’s *agape*-centered, other-oriented, self-sacrificial, enemy-embracing, nonviolent love and every interpretation of Scripture is subsequently evaluated on the basis of its conformity to cruciformity, so defined (chaps. 4–6).

With chapters 7–9, Boyd turns his attention to Old Testament accounts of divinely sanctioned violence—the “texts of terror” (p. 279). Boyd surveys in chapter 7 a variety of these most troubling episodes in an attempt to “appreciate the enormous gulf that exists between the violent warrior deity depicted within the ‘dark side’ of the OT and the crucified God who is at the center of the NT” (pp. 332–3), going so far as to argue that the combined force of the *hērem* command, Jephthah’s vow, and texts such as Exod 22:29–30 and Ezek 20:25–26 demand the conclusion that the Old Testament presents God as approving of child sacrifice (pp. 305–10). Boyd critically evaluates and deems unsatisfactory two

methods for addressing the challenges of divine violence in the Old Testament—the dismissal solution (ch. 8), which in Marcionite fashion explicitly rejects these portrayals, and the synthesis solution (ch. 9), which seeks to receive these portrayals as faithful testimonies to God’s work and character that may be harmonized with the New Testament’s revelation of Christ.

Boyd proposes a third alternative—the reinterpretation solution—positing that, because every text must be understood in light of the nonviolent love of the cross, Old Testament portraits of divine violence which appear to contradict this nonviolent revelation should not be read at face value, but must instead be interpreted as instances where God humbly takes on the appearance of sin, just as Boyd maintains Jesus did at the cross (ch. 11). The “terror texts” are not accurate representations of God, but are rather expressions of God’s willingness to non-coercively permit fallen and culturally conditioned sinners to act upon him as they acted upon Christ. Scriptural ascriptions of violence to God “become literary crucifixes that anticipate, and indeed participate in, the historical crucifixion. For with the eyes of our cross-informed faith, we can discern in these literary crucifixes the same humble, stooping, self-sacrificial, sin-bearing God that we find in the historical crucifixion” (pp. 510–1). Boyd sees historical precedent for his reinterpretation strategy in the allegorical method of Origen (ch. 10) and presents his hermeneutic as an expression of the Theological Interpretation of Scripture movement (ch. 12) before closing volume one with four appendices addressing various objections to his proposal. For those concerned that Boyd’s cruciform approach to Scripture—dependent as it is on a nonviolent conception of God—cannot be reconciled with the New Testament witness, Boyd’s interaction with the teachings of Jesus, Paul, and Revelation in Appendices II–IV will be of particular interest.

Volume two, *The Cruciform Thesis*, applies Boyd’s cruciform hermeneutic to the Old Testament text, presenting four principles for discerning “what else is going on’ in narratives that depict Yahweh in violent terms” (p. 634). “The Principle of Cruciform Accommodation” (chs. 13–14) states that, just as Jesus lowered himself to the point of appearing guilty and reflecting the ugliness of sin on the cross, God at times accommodated his self-revelation to Israel’s sinful, culturally conditioned capacities and expectations. Boyd’s version of accommodation does not involve truthful communication in contextualized and understandable terms, but rather false communication that conceals God’s true nonviolent character while simultaneously pointing to God’s willingness to bear human sin. On Boyd’s reading, “God’s very decision to further his purposes through a particular nation that would be established in a particular land, that would be governed by violently enforced laws and defended with violence, was itself a huge accommodation on God’s part” (p. 727), as God donned the mask of a typical ANE tribal deity. This conception of accommodation permits Boyd to read the Old Testament as the faulty, culturally bound human record of encounters with and perspectives of God while simultaneously affirming God’s non-coercive involvement in permitting his character to be tarnished by his people. The Old Testament is thoroughly human without being *purely* human. “The Principle of Cruciform Accommodation” thus allows Boyd to functionally approach Scripture with many of the interpretive methods of classic Protestant liberalism while nevertheless significantly diverging from that tradition in unequivocally affirming God’s participation in the breathing of the text.

“The Principle of Redemptive Withdrawal” (chs. 15–20) posits that God’s judgment always and only consists of the passive withdrawal of his protective presence as God seeks to redeem his creation by permitting sin to self-destruct. Boyd contends that Scripture supports this conception of divine wrath, arguing that all biblical ascriptions of active agency in violent judgment to God are cruciform

accommodations, while all accounts of divine withdrawal and evil's self-destructive consequences are direct and accurate revelations of God (p. 849).

Building on the previous two principles, "The Principle of Cosmic Conflict" (chaps. 21–24) maintains that, when God withdraws his protecting presence, he permits hostile cosmic forces to act as the active agents of violence. Boyd interprets Old Testament references to ANE deities not as polemical subversions of paganism, but as reflections of an ANE cosmology wherein gods and spiritual beings furiously act upon creation whenever uninhibited by God's restraining power. Boyd argues that "every narrative in which God is depicted as using 'natural' catastrophes as tools of judgment can and should be reframed in this cruciform fashion" as God's passive unleashing of fallen powers bent on the undoing of creation. He applies this reframing to the Noahic flood, the judgment of Korah's rebellion, the drowning of the Egyptians in the Red Sea, and the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah (pp. 1121–92). All attributions of violence to God in these accounts are read as the culturally conditioned misrepresentations by the authors, and the opening of the earth, deluge of waters, and raining of fire are credited to evil cosmic forces in a manner that does not directly implicate God in the violence.

Finally, "The Principle of Semiautonomous Power" (ch. 25) proposes that when God grants power to people or objects, God allows for the possibility that the power will be misused. This principle permits Boyd to assess as sinful abuses of power the acts of Elisha in 2 Kings 2:23–24 (pp. 1218–24) and Elijah in 2 Kings 1:10–12 (pp. 1224–7), in addition to maintaining that the violence associated with the ark of the covenant is a result of demonic influence in the misuse of the ark's power (pp. 1231–47). Boyd concludes the work with six appendices addressing sundry issues, including his defense against the charge of supersessionism (Appendix X).

With *The Crucifixion of the Warrior God*, Boyd offers a massive piece of scholarship that undoubtedly will both inspire lay-level popularizations and generate further academic work on divine nonviolence and the Bible. Boyd's writing is clear and engaging; his footnotes are extensive; and his desire to read the Scriptures through the lens of the cross is one that can be affirmed even by those who vehemently disagree with his conclusions. The shortcomings of Boyd's long book are, however, significant.

Disciplined interaction with the voluminous exegetical and theological questions raised by Boyd's two volumes would require a scholarly tome in its own right, so I will instead focus on the two issues that together compose the fundamental tension Boyd seeks to resolve and that form the foundation from which his entire thesis emerges: the inspiration of the Old Testament and the nonviolent revelation of God in Christ.

Boyd affirms that he believes in the inspiration of the Old Testament, chiefly because that is the way Jesus regarded the Scriptures (p. xxvii). Yet, Boyd's definition of the "God-breathed" character of Scripture disavows the truthfulness of Scripture's claims about the acts and character of God. Does this align with Jesus' view of the Old Testament? Jesus explicitly asserts that God's word is truth (John 17:17), that Scripture cannot be broken (John 10:35), that even the smallest part of the Law cannot be voided (Luke 16:17), and that in him the Law and the Prophets are not abolished but fulfilled (Matt 5:17–18). Jesus uniformly conceives of the Old Testament not as a concealing mask but as a revealing testimony—not as false words that mischaracterize God, but as God's words that reflect the truthfulness of the God who cannot lie (Titus 1:2; Heb 6:18).

This confidence in the veracity of Old Testament depictions of God's character and work undergirds Jesus's and the New Testament authors' use of the Old Testament text. Christ's Scripture-saturated teaching, the Evangelists' thickly allusive presentations of Jesus and his significance, the

apostles' redemptive-historical preaching in the book of Acts, the epistles' regular incorporation of Old Testament images, echoes, and citations—all of these are predicated upon the assumption that the Old Testament accurately portrays God's purposes and activity in history (cf. G. K. Beale and D. A. Carson, eds., *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament* [Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007]). Boyd maintains that passages such as the antitheses of the Sermon on the Mount (Matt 5:21–48) and Jesus's rebuke of James and John's desire to call down fire like Elijah (Luke 9:51–55) demonstrate Jesus's willingness to repudiate and renounce the Old Testament (pp. 67–84). However, such a reading is as unwarranted as it is extreme, for there is nothing in Jesus's teachings here or elsewhere that gives the impression that he understood the Old Testament as flawed in its theology or ethics, even as he corrected contemporary interpretations and signaled redemptive-historical shifts in the character of his kingdom (cf. John Wenham, *Christ and the Bible*, 3rd ed. [Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2009]). Though Boyd claims that his approach to the Old Testament is “at least analogous” to the approach of the New Testament authors (p. 509), even this modest assessment is too charitable. Boyd laments that no one has interpreted the Old Testament in the manner he proposes (pp. 137–38), but perhaps the reason why Boyd's reading of the Old Testament has not emerged in the church is simply because neither Jesus nor the New Testament authors read the Old Testament that way.

The permissibility of Boyd's reinterpretation of the Old Testament's violent portraits of God depends upon the theological conviction that Scripture may err in its overt claims about God. But the criteria Boyd uses to evaluate whether Scripture errs in particular claims depends upon a specific conception of Jesus as the revelation of God's nonviolent love. Is the Jesus of the New Testament the Jesus Boyd describes?

Jesus's own words suggest that the answer is no. Boyd addresses the parable of the unforgiving servant (Matt 18:21–35) as representative of Jesus's violent parabolic teaching and argues that recognition of the generic tendencies of parables—that they have one specific point, utilize familiar categories, and employ shocking elements—is sufficient to avoid the conclusion that Jesus's parables teach God will exact violent eschatological judgment. Of course, immediately following the unforgiving servant's deliverance to jailors/torturers, Jesus says, “So [οὕτως] also my heavenly Father will do to every one of you, if you do not forgive your brother from your heart” (Matt 10:35 ESV). Boyd's survey of widely acknowledged parabolic conventions does little to alter Jesus's direct connection between the servant's punishment and God's eschatological judgment. Nor does it address Jesus's reference to violent judgment in his *explanations* of parables (e.g., Matt 13:40–43, 49–50). Jesus' explicit, non-parabolic teachings that liken the *parousia* of the Son of Man to the days of Noah (Matt 24:36–39) and Lot (Luke 17:28–37) are given no treatment.

The rest of the New Testament follows Jesus in affirming God's active judgment. In an appendix devoted to the book of Revelation, Boyd argues that references throughout the book to Old Testament divine violence are entirely subversive and thus present a nonviolent Jesus. Boyd gives considerable attention to Revelation 19 (pp. 622–27), but his interpretation of the passage is dependent upon his summary and reconstruction of its inner logic. If one approaches the text of Revelation 19 in its canonical context and form, it quickly becomes apparent that Boyd's nonviolent reading is incapable of accounting for the structure and literary coherence of the passage.

Paul in 2 Thessalonians 1:6–9 describes the Lord Jesus as inflicting vengeance upon the wicked at his second coming, but Boyd suggests that this and other texts that speak of God violently punishing and bringing destruction upon enemies (e.g., 1 Thess 2:14–16; Phil 1:28) are merely instances where Paul

seeks to satisfy a sinful desire for revenge (p. 589). Boyd goes on to claim that “there is nothing in [Paul’s] writings ... that qualifies the altogether nonviolent portrait of God revealed in the crucified Christ” (p. 591). When one considers the full number of texts in which Paul affirms God’s active vengeance against sin, stretching across the Pauline corpus, such a claim rings hollow. Paul met the risen Lord and affirmed his vengeance; Luke gathered eyewitness testimony and attributed judgment to the Holy Spirit (Acts 5:1–11); Jude, the Lord’s brother, taught that Jesus destroyed unbelieving Israelites after the exodus (Jude 5); Peter was taught for forty days by the resurrected, not-yet-ascended Lord and declared that God’s active judgments in the Old Testament confirm his ability to judge in the future (2 Pet 2:4–10). Boyd’s confident claims to the contrary result in a nonviolent portrait of Jesus that fails to do justice to the full Christ of the New Testament.

Boyd warns against hermeneutic approaches that “cannot avoid the problem of reducing texts down to a proverbial ‘wax nose’ that one can use to fit whatever face they want” (pp. 522–23). But this is precisely what *The Crucifixion of the Warrior God* provides. Every text that seems to confirm Boyd’s thesis is “the Spirit breaking through the hardness of God’s people” (p. 494), while every text—in both testaments—that incontrovertibly contradicts Boyd’s understanding of Jesus is explained as a sinful misrepresentation of God’s character. With such a neatly unfalsifiable system, how could the text of Scripture ever conceivably break through as a corrective?

More remains to be said about Boyd’s work—his inattention to important redemptive-historical considerations, his epistemological prioritization of the historical-critical method, his presentation of the atonement, his open theistic doctrine of God, his conclusion that Jesus would not have regarded Moses, Joshua, or David as children of the Father (p. 82)—but we may conclude by acknowledging that *The Crucifixion of the Warrior God* is both a gift to and an opportunity for the church. It is a gift insofar as it exposes the hermeneutical lengths to which one must resort in order to defend the nonviolent God thesis. And it is an opportunity for scholars and theologians who affirm the truthfulness of the Bible to rigorously engage the most troubling Old Testament texts in a manner that accounts for their redemptive-historical location in the canonical narrative of God’s work and that compellingly demonstrates not only the coherence of the inspired Scriptures, but also the soul-satisfying beauty of the God about whom they testify.

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J. V. Fesko. *Death in Adam, Life in Christ: The Doctrine of Imputation*. Reformed, Exegetical and Doctrinal Studies. Fearn, Ross-shire: Mentor, 2016. 332 pp. £12.99/\$19.99.

John Fesko is Professor of Systematic and Historical Theology at Westminster Seminary in California. He is both the author of this volume and also joint editor (with Matthew Barrett) of the Reformed, Exegetical and Doctrinal Studies series.

Fesko indicates that his primary academic concern is to study the doctrine of justification and its component parts. He has already published other works on this theme and sees this volume as a further step. At the same time, Fesko has a serious interest in stating and defending those doctrines which relate to the overall theme of 'covenant theology'. This volume on imputation assists in both projects, in that he sees imputation both as a key element in the doctrine of justification and as central to covenant theology.

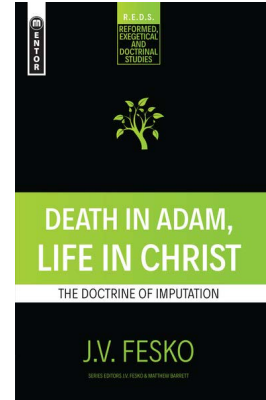
The book is in three parts. First, Fesko deals with the history of the doctrine of imputation. Second, he deals with the exegetical issues on which the doctrine is founded. Then third, he addresses the dogmatic construction of the doctrine. This is a helpful approach and enables the reader to view the doctrine from a range of perspectives.

The first part of the book on history begins by looking in chapter 1 at the early church (Augustine) and the middle ages (Lombard, Anselm and Aquinas). What Fesko has written here is helpful but one wonders if the choice is too limited. Why no Eastern theologian from the early church period? Chapter 2 deals with the Reformation and chapter 3 with the post-Reformation period. The balance of material here is on the post-Reformation period and this is clearly where the author is most comfortable and well read. In chapter 4, Fesko turns his attention to the American Modern period before finishing the historical section in chapter 5 by looking at the 'Present Day'. The selection of scholars mentioned in this last historical chapter seems somewhat arbitrary: Schleiermacher, Barth, Bultmann, N.T. Wright and Peter Enns.

Part two of the book has two chapters. The first is on imputation in the Old Testament and the second, imputation in the New Testament. Then finally we come to Part Three of the book: Dogmatic Formulation.

Given the range of views on imputation which have been discussed in the earlier chapters, one might expect a degree of hesitancy in reaching final conclusions. Instead Fesko lays down a very clear and precise doctrine of imputation. He writes, 'The Scriptures clearly teach the threefold immediate imputation of Adam's guilt and Christ's righteousness within the context of the covenants of works and grace' (p. 276). There is no leeway given to those who might hold to the headship of Adam and the imputation of his sin, while rejecting the idea of a covenant of works. The many other views on imputation are dismissed.

In other words, although in the early part of the book Fesko lays out the variety of opinions regarding imputation in the history of Reformed theology, as well as in wider Christian theology, he appears to believe that only one view is truly Reformed and acceptable. For example, he recognises that John Murray of Westminster Seminary in Philadelphia held to 'a non-covenantal but nevertheless federal imputation' (p. 22). He says that this is 'odd' but at no point does he seriously engage with Murray's arguments. The present reviewer, having written on Murray and covenant theology, would argue that Murray cannot be dismissed so easily.

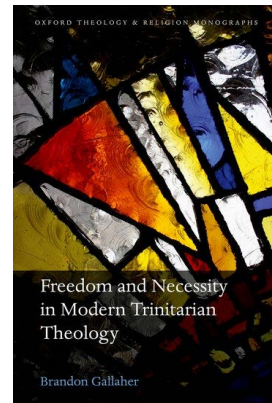


This book, while containing much that is helpful, perhaps represents the increasing tendency to regard Reformed Theology as a single strand of thought, rather than as a ‘school of thought’ where a range of views is acceptable within the ‘camp’. For example, Fesko argues that what is imputed to the elect is the active and passive obedience of Christ. Many of our best Reformed theologians argue that it was the ‘righteousness’ of Christ which was imputed, while not denying the importance of both his active and passive obedience. We are impoverished whenever an attempt is made to say that only one strand of Reformed thought is acceptable.

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Brandon Gallaher. *Freedom and Necessity in Modern Trinitarian Theology*. Oxford Theology and Religion Monographs. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016. xx + 298 pp. £75.00/\$120.00.

“But in God relation to the creature is not a real relation, but only a relation of reason; whereas the relation of the creature to God is a real relation” (Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae* Ia.45.3 ad 1.). So Aquinas comments on the relationship between God and creatures. It can be argued, quite appropriately I think, that Aquinas’s theological position is the cause of much consternation in modern theology. The question for the modern is this: Can God be *God* without, as the Nicene Creed puts it, being *God for us*? And it is this exact relationship—the relationship between God’s internal, triune being and Christology—which Brandon Gallaher seeks to explicate in his recent monograph. Gallaher, who situates himself squarely in the project of contemporary theology, analyzes this relationship through the interconnected lenses of freedom and necessity. Succinctly put: Does a free act of love bind one to another in such a way as to compel a necessity upon one’s own being?



To begin, Gallaher sets up the relationship between God’s internal love and freedom (God’s eternal tri-hypostatic love) and God’s economic movement (God’s being for us in Christ) in terms of a “problematic”: “an intellectual mystery to which we can respond conceptually but which, in contrast to a problem, defies application of technique, for any mystery makes a personal and spiritual claim upon us” (p. 5). Gallaher sketches the extent of the problematic, as well as various conceptual approaches to it, in the opening three chapters. After putting forth several options, Gallaher settles on a synthetic account of freedom and necessity. Heuristically, this is put in terms of “dependent freedom” and “free dependence,” wherein Gallaher defines “dependent freedom” as “the free will to love, ecstatically desire another, to be in need ... [which] *could have been otherwise*” and “free dependence” as the action following the choice to be in need, which *could not have been otherwise* (p. 41). Following these conceptual prolegomena, Gallaher critically and constructively engages the problematic vis-à-vis God’s life *ad intra* and *ad extra* in dialogue with three modern theologians: Sergii Bulgakov (chs. 4–6), Karl Barth (chs. 7–8), and Hans Urs von Balthasar (chs. 9–11). For Gallaher, each of these theologians proves helpful in thinking through the relationship between God and the world and freedom and necessity insofar as this relationship contains both dialectical (à la Bulgakov and Barth) and analogical elements (à la Balthasar).

Although Gallaher offers detailed interpretations for each thinker, I believe the central tenets of his dialogue with Bulgakov, Barth, and Balthasar are best articulated as follows. Bulgakov provides the initial constructive impetus for Gallaher because in “the Absolute there already always exists all the eternal images of God in reference to the world that subsequently are expressed in His life as Absolute-Relative” (p. 113). These images, which are always Christologically ordered (e.g., Godmanhood, sacrifice), are pre-accomplished in God’s life of love-desire because “they are themes of God’s own divine world of loving self-giving as Trinity as both a dependent freedom and free dependence” (p. 113). According to Gallaher, this is all worked out in terms of the Son’s kenotic self-giving (immanently and economically), though it ultimately collapses into “one monistic divine reality that subsumes creation in a form of love determinism” (p. 229) as a result of Bulgakov’s sophiology. Karl Barth provides a corrective to Bulgakov’s understanding of God and creation with his Christological re-working of the doctrine of election: God “enowns” (a term from Heidegger) creation through “God in Christ eternally electing Himself as a man and man in Christ electing God as His God, which divine-human election ... is then retrospectively identified with the primordial election proper to God” (p. 160). In Jesus Christ, to put it in terms of Gallaher’s problematic, God has freely and eternally determined to be God *for us*, which involves a self-emptying and self-binding to creation. However, dialectically considered, this need not have been because God is God without the world; yet, at the same time, one cannot imagine God without creation in Christ. This simply begs the question for Gallaher, never sufficiently and coherently moving beyond mere assertion. According to Gallaher, Bulgakov and Barth cannot maintain their Christological orientation as well as God’s independence from and commitment to creation without collapsing them all in the end (i.e., Bulgakov’s sophiological panentheism and Barth’s neo-Hegelian actualism). At this point, Christologically structured dialectics needs analogy, and, just so, Bulgakov and Barth need Balthasar. Gallaher therefore draws upon Balthasar’s “concrete analogy of being” in Jesus Christ in order to properly take account of God’s freedom *from* and freedom *for* creation. Here, the intra-trinitarian self-giving has both a similarity and ever-greater dissimilarity to the divine-human self-giving of the Son made flesh in particular and creaturely self-giving in general.

The monograph reaches its conclusion with Gallaher’s “unsystematic, systematic” proposal, which constructively builds upon his interlocutors. To the point, there are two divine elections: (1) the primordial intra-hypostatic election, which is a perfect union of freedom and necessity in God; and (2) the divine-human world oriented election “in which God eternally and freely gives Himself to man by electing Himself as man in Christ, wherein Christ, in turn, elects Himself in eternal response to the Father and this whole Triune self-sacrifice cannot be undone” (p. 238). The problematic of freedom and necessity is thus clarified by the fact that, after taking into account dialectical and analogical differences, “the choice made by Christ in history is identifiable with the choice made by the Son in the eternal life of the Trinity” (p. 239). The primordial act of election corresponds to a logical movement from necessity to freedom: God *simply is* God as a kenotic movement of necessary tri-hypostatic self-giving and free reciprocity. And divine-human election logically moves from freedom to necessity: God freely (and eternally) “binds Himself to creation in Christ through His own self-blinding—the self-binding is a *self-blinding*” (p. 241). This divine kenosis of knowledge is necessary, according to Gallaher, in order to create the space of divine-*human* freedom, namely the free election of man in Christ of God as His God. Such freedom is risky insofar as God (the Father?) does not know the outcome of this divine-human election in Christ. However, the Spirit, in resting on Christ, secures the outcome of this election by inspiring Christ to continue to the cross, and eventually draws creation up to the Father in the resurrection and ascension. Gallaher, following Balthasar, puts the matter somewhat cryptically: “In the

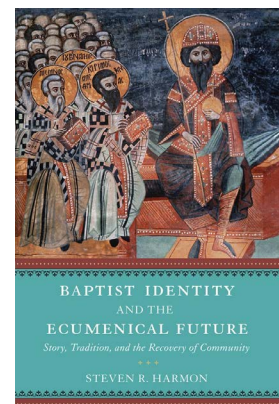
Ascension of Christ through His Spirit in His return to the Father God, we can speak, retrospectively as well as retroactively, as a gift, of the surprising election of God by man in Christ as being His very own self-election as God” (p. 249). The ascension as to election has, it seems, *surprising* ontological consequences for God.

There is much to admire in Gallaher’s work, particularly in that it probes perceptively the depths of one of modern theology’s most vexing questions through detailed analysis of three of its most prolific thinkers. And Gallaher does so in an attempt to explore a central affirmation of the Christian confession: God in Christ is truly *for us*. Not only that, but he also directs us toward an altogether correct point: the Christological ordering of creation needs to be taken seriously and fleshed out with much cogency in our theological milieu. This is certainly commendable. But, nevertheless, I have reservations as to his clarification of the “problematic.” With Aquinas, I would argue it is theologically pertinent to construe God’s relationship to creatures as mixed. The movement from God *in se* and *a se* to God’s economic work is the proper ontological order, which if contorted, yields a hypertrophy of the *for us*. This, in turn, collapses the ground of God’s meaningful relationship with creatures, as well as the corresponding integrity of creatures. God can be *for us* only insofar as *God* is for us. Moreover, the *for us* is not meant to function as a control for the doctrine of God. Such thinking is strangely akin to Arianism. Only in Arianism the *for us* was located outside of creation to safeguard God, whereas much of modern theology locates the *for us* outside of creation to historicize God. This, to be sure, is a main concern for Gallaher, although in the end he does not seem to be able overcome the material problem. The problem is of course exacerbated by the fact that a synthesis of freedom and necessity is defined in the beginning and then used as the litmus test for later theological claims. Gallaher’s solution to the material problem is to employ a retroactive ontology of the ascension in order to consistently map the pre-determined synthesis of freedom and necessity onto a kenotic account of divine-human election as an expression of God’s triune kenosis. This clarification of the “problematic” is, for this reader, more problematic.

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Steven R. Harmon. *Baptist Identity and the Ecumenical Future: Story, Tradition, and the Recovery of Community*. Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2016. 359 pp. £57.50/\$59.95.

Steven Harmon’s latest book seeks to address head on a lingering reputation of Baptists, namely that they are the intractable “problem children” of the ecumenical movement. He wonders out loud: is the Baptist refusal to come to the ecumenical table merely an outworking of an inherently schismatic nature, or does it owe more to the pitfalls of the ecumenical movement that Baptists (by and large) rightly protest? Is there anything that can be done to enable the lion of the Baptist movement to lay down with the lamb of contemporary ecumenism “in the hope that ... those who long for visible unity of Christ’s church might increase among Baptists, and that other Christians might recognize them, so that together we can make our pilgrim journey toward the ecumenical future” (p. 19)? It is to these questions that Harmon turns, building on his earlier work which insisted that “Baptist catholicity” is not a contradiction in terms.



Harmon identifies as a Baptist insider (particularly of the “progressive/moderate” variety); he writes as a postliberal who at times is sympathetic to evangelical concerns.

Harmon argues that, appearances to the contrary, the Baptist and ecumenical movements need each other and, more specifically, that “catholic renewal of Baptist life [is] necessary to the movement of the whole church toward the ecumenical future” (p. 9). In *Part I: The Baptist Vision and the Ecumenical Movement*, he launches his argument by recounting his previous work on Baptist catholicity while describing the potential and pitfalls of contemporary ecumenism, making the significant claim that “the ecumenical quest for the full visible unity of the church ... [can’t] be fulfilled apart from a mutually receptive ecumenical engagement between Baptist communities and the churches from which they are separated” (p. 18). In *Part II: Baptists, Biblicism, and Catholicity*, Harmon takes a closer look at some of the defining marks of the Baptist tradition and seeks to diagnose where it is insufficiently catholic (in the *qualitative* rather than *quantitative* sense). He goes on in *Part III: Baptist Identity and Receptive Ecumenism* to examine how the tradition is not *necessarily* schismatic but rather has great potential for embracing and contributing to the catholic unity of the church. Finally, *Part IV: Baptist Theology and the Ecumenical Future* explores in more detail the distinctive Baptist theological and ecclesiastical contribution to the larger church, especially its penchant for guarding conscience against coercion, its insistence on God’s freedom amidst the church’s life together, its emphasis on the pilgrim nature of the church, its promotion of the necessity of personal faith adjoined with communal responsibility, its healthy aversion to over-realized eschatologies, and its radical commitment to delineating and living under the rule of Christ as found in the Scriptures.

The strengths of the book are many, not least of which is the breadth of sources which Harmon has engaged in making his proposal; this work is in many ways the culmination of his lifelong personal journey, scholarship and churchmanship. The meat of the book is much more concise and accessible than the extensive footnotes and total page count make it appear, and readers will certainly benefit from sustained reflection on Harmon’s proposed pathway for the Baptist tradition and his dynamic vision of the ecumenical future (even if they disagree with it). Thankfully, another strength of the book is that Harmon realizes the *radical* nature of his proposal and the significant amount of work that would need to be done for it to be embraced by Baptists and enacted by ecumenists. There’s no naïve idealism here; Harmon rightly recognizes that the blood of too many martyrs and the invective of too many anathemas has washed away that particular trail.

The book’s weaknesses stem mostly from a lack of evident cohesion between the chapters; at times, it’s unclear how each one contributes to the whole and relates to the others. Another weakness is the fact that after reading we are still left with a crucial question: can the skepticism which Baptists (and, by extension, many evangelicals) have toward the ecumenical movement be overcome? Harmon recognizes the reality of the mutual suspicion and even animosity that exists between the movements, but he fails to convince us there is a road to reunion that is agreeable to both the Baptist and the ecumenist. Harmon’s proposal leans heavily on ecumenical priorities, and this leaves me wondering whether the Baptists I labor with would resonate with his proposed telos (particularly the emphasis on full visible unity among all Christian communions) and recognize themselves in his portrait of their potential future. Harmon’s project ends up betraying the Baptist distinctive (which he commends) of contesting over-realized eschatologies, envisioning a visible unity that most Baptists believe will only manifest fully in glory.

However, it is clear that the vision Harmon offers of “ecumenical denominationalism” is badly needed amidst Reformation 500 assessments calling for the end of Protestantism and the end of denominations (e.g., Peter J. Leithart, *The End of Protestantism: Pursuing Unity in a Fragmented Church* [Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2016]). Indeed, Harmon provides compelling reasons to view each denomination as providing unique love gifts to the rest of the church, and thus to see that “Baptists have their own distinctive ecclesial gifts to offer the church catholic, without which ... [other churches] are something less than fully catholic themselves” (pp. 15–16). Harmon is right on target here, and thus we concur that the project of cultivating Baptist catholicity by God’s grace must go on; the future flourishing of the catholic church depends on it, whether or not it’s done under the auspices of ecumenism.

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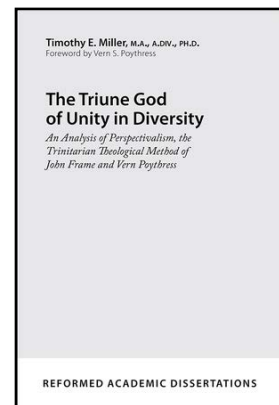
Timothy E. Miller. *The Triune God of Unity in Diversity: An Analysis of Perspectivalism, the Trinitarian Theological Method of John Frame and Vern Poythress*. Reformed Academic Dissertations. Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2017. xiv + 360 pp. £37.32/\$49.99.

When teaching children to read, a basic rule of thumb is to have them read books on three levels—books they can breeze through with little exertion, books at their current aptitude, and one or two books that challenge them through vocabulary and content. For both laymen and seminary-trained individuals, Miller’s book *The Triune God of Unity in Diversity* falls into the last category. Suffice it to say, this book is not bedtime reading. Yet any person willing to put in focused time will reap tremendous theological reward.

In the introduction (ch. 1), Miller states that his book represents, in part, an attempt to fulfill Meredith Kline’s summons as “guardians of Reformed orthodoxy” to engage in “a scrutiny of multiperspectivalism” (p. 2). In this chapter, Miller also gives four justifications for the book, noting especially—and this cannot be overstated—the influence of Frame and Poythress (pp. 3–9).

His thesis is “to confirm, as John Frame and Vern Poythress have argued, that perspectivalism is a distinctively Trinitarian, creatively Reformed, and therefore eminently useful theological paradigm” (p. 3). Readers should note, however, that the book devotes more attention to Frame than Poythress. In the final section of the introduction, Miller provides summaries of each chapter, outlining how he plans to substantiate his thesis. Given the density of the topic *and* the different components of his argument, the reader will find these summaries especially helpful.

One of Miller’s main objectives is to prove the Trinitarian backbone to what is commonly known as *triperspectivalism* (which I believe he largely succeeds in doing; see esp. chs. 4 and 6). He defines triperspectivalism “as a method where distinct elements cohere in perfect harmony.... Triperspectivalism is more specific than general perspectivalism in that it argues for *three distinct* focal points ... the *normative* perspective ... the *situational* perspective ... the *existential* perspective” (p. 106). In other words, the method is concerned with three necessary and complementary perspectives that derive from who God is. Miller’s goal is lofty, given that it requires some working knowledge of each respective topic—the Trinity and the method itself. But the ambitious nature of Miller’s goal is precisely what



makes the arduous task of perusing the book worthwhile—and relevant. That is, not dissimilar to a young student who feels comfortable with his or her initial exposure to the Pythagorean Theorem, a person might suppose that he or she has a basic grasp of the Trinity; however, the attempt to apply theory to actual “problems”—in this case, to the methodology under discussion—is where the “real” learning takes places. Whether readers agree with Miller’s conclusions, they will undoubtedly walk away with a clearer understanding of the Bible’s teaching on the Trinity through Miller’s exercise of seeking to substantiate the Trinitarian foundation for this method. In addition, through Miller’s analysis of Frame’s views on the Trinity, readers will see the important distinction between building an understanding of the Trinity based on biblical revelation versus theoretical speculation, as particularly seen in Miller’s comparison of Cornelius Van Til’s theology with that of Thomas Aquinas.

As Miller notes in the introduction, this book seeks not only to show the Trinitarian foundation of triperspectivalism but also to show how the method itself “is not yet sufficiently Trinitarian” (p. 264). Miller asserts:

A model that reflects the Trinitarian persons into creation should reflect not only the interrelation of the three persons but also their priority and order.... In the original triad, the Father begets the Son, and the Son submits to the Father. The procession is not reversible. These facts indicate that the perichoretic relationship includes both *order* and *priority*. (pp. 264–65)

After addressing the possible concern over this nuance (of order and priority), Miller proceeds to apply this more fully refined Trinitarian methodology to the subjects of knowledge (pp. 271–83) and apologetics (pp. 283–312). In doing so, he provides the basis both for prioritizing Scripture as the normative aspect in Christian epistemology and “for maintaining the unique elements of Van Til’s apologetic” (p. 313). This contribution serves as a helpful challenge for proponents of Poythress and Frame’s unique method to distinguish “triadic thinking” and a “sufficiently Trinitarian” process. As Miller observes, this approach, which he dubs as “processional triperspectivalism,” can be applied to other areas, including those of practical theology. For example, many pastors, consciously or not, have adopted the methodology using the normative, situational, and existential categories—commonly under headings akin to Worship, Mercy-Missions, and Ministry (internal discipleship, etc.), respectively. To be sure, pastors should commit to all three aspects, but often, as more than a few can attest, pastors and churches will be less than successful when trying to accomplish all three at once. In this most practical situation, the question of which they should prioritize—and in what order—could be helpfully answered through the lenses of Miller’s “processional triperspectivalism.”

The book concludes in a way expected of dissertations, suggesting areas for further exploration. Specifically, Miller indicates that “more work needs to be done on the origins of perspectivalism” (pp. 314–15). Fitting with the topic, he suggests a series of questions for such an exploration from the normative, situational, and existential perspectives. These further studies would be interesting but, in my opinion, highly speculative. For instance, I’m not sure how one would begin to address the question, “Situationally, how do Frame’s semi-liberal youthful inclinations, his time at Princeton with the fundamentalist Evangelical Fellowship, his time under Murray and Van Til, and his time with the Yale School of Postliberal Theology factor into the development of perspectivalism?” (pp. 315–16). In addition to Miller’s second suggested exploration—the “developmental role perspectivalism has played in the theology of Frame and Poythress” (p. 317)—I believe it might be more fruitful to explore in further detail two related matters: 1) the Biblical-theological-exegetical underpinnings of the triperspectival

methodology; and 2) the practical applications of the refined model that Miller offers—“processional triperspectivalism”—for church life, especially pastoral ministry and Biblical counseling.

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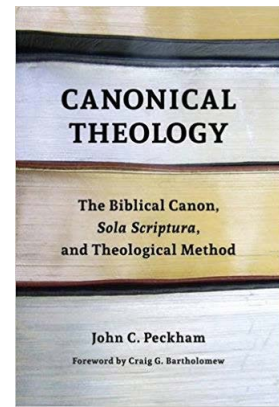
John C. Peckham. *Canonical Theology: The Biblical Canon, Sola Scriptura, and Theological Method*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2016. 295 pp. £24.99/\$35.00.

In *Canonical Theology*, John Peckham brings together a discussion of the biblical canon, the authority of Scripture, and the nature of theological method. The prevailing question that guides Peckham’s study relates to the locus of authority. Does it reside with the canon or with the community? This guiding question allows Peckham to navigate the variegated waters of scholarship on the nature of the biblical canon and the relevant debates about theological method.

After establishing this framework (chapter one), Peckham defines an “intrinsic canon” model (chapter two), and then seeks to demonstrate its superiority to a “community approach” to the nature of the biblical canon (chapter three). The intrinsic canon approach argues that the books of Scripture are authoritative by virtue of “the intrinsic nature of the books as divinely commissioned” (p. 5). In other words, “divinely appointed books are intrinsically canonical independent of extrinsic recognition” (p. 5). Conversely, the community canon model “defines the canon as a set of writings that are determined by the community as a standard” (p. 3). The biblical books, in other words, are chosen based on some sort of external standard. For Peckham, the issue that plagues the community model is its inability to answer with clarity the question, “Which community (at which time) is adequate to determine the canon?” (pp. 48, 72).

Moving from biblical/historical studies to theological method, Peckham next surveys communitarian approaches to theology (chapter four), and then discusses the way various groups appropriate the rule of faith (chapter five). Using the categories of the previous canon discussion, Peckham states that a canonical approach to theology “views the biblical canon as the uniquely authoritative, sufficient source of theological doctrine, adopts the biblical canon as the rule of faith, and denies the positing of any normative extracanonical interpretive authority” (p. 73). Conversely, various communitarian approaches “posit the primacy of the biblical canon while emphasizing the theological authority of the community and adopting a community-determined extracanonical rule of faith or other normative interpreter for theological doctrine” (p. 74).

Having established the community versus canon framework in both canon studies and theological method, Peckham homes in on the authority of Scripture (chapter six). Is an affirmation of the Scriptures as the final authority (*sola scriptura*) absurd or self-referentially incoherent? Peckham maintains that critiques coming from communitarian approaches to the canon and theology are not capable of overturning the coherence of this position. Further, for Peckham, an “intrinsic canon” model adequately meets the most significant criteria for coherence. To illustrate his approach, Peckham addresses recent



debates about the nature of the Trinity (chapter seven), the issue of theopathic language in Scripture (chapters eight and nine), and the nature of divine love (chapter ten).

A question that lingers around studies of canon involves the movement from theory to practice. What does a canonical approach look like? In his final chapters, Peckham outlines some parameters to a “canonical systematic” approach to the theological task. As he explains, a canonical systematic approach “looks for the patterns and inner logic of the *texts* in relation to the whole canonical *text*, rejecting any dichotomy between limited pericope and broad overarching reading, embracing both in mutual reciprocity such that ‘system’ is not sought at the expense of the particular complexity and variety of individual texts” (p. 206). A canonical theological method would seek “the maximum achievable correspondence to the text” (p. 210). Significantly, as well, this approach also “accepts hermeneutical diversity as an unavoidable result of the universal hermeneutical circle” (p. 258). Possible “steps” that a reader would take in this approach include identifying the prevailing issues or questions on a certain topic, engaging an inductive reading of the entire canon, and then analyzing the canonical data with an eye towards any emerging patterns. Next, a theologian would seek to construct a “minimal model” from this data, systematize the “minimal theo-ontological implications,” and then maintain an openness to further investigation (see pp. 246–57). This type of methodological procedure is designed to prioritize the idiom of biblical texts and produce modest theological formulations.

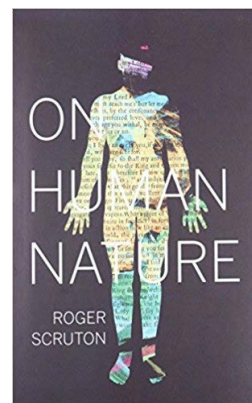
One particularly instructive feature of Peckham’s study is the way he draws together canon studies and theological method discussions of the nature and application of *sola scriptura*. By highlighting the role of canon and community within a spectrum of approaches he yields significant insight into the nature of debates about the canon and also the authority of Scripture. Peckham engages theoretical discussions but also tests his methodological conclusions on several case studies. Moving from the beginning to the end of Peckham’s volume forces you to traverse the terrain of these disciplines. Someone drawn to the “canonical” aspect of Peckham’s study might be surprised to encounter a series of distinctions more at home in systematic theology (e.g., the nature of microhermeneutical and macrophenomenological exegesis, p. 212; or, transcendent-voluntarist and immanent-experientialist models of divine love, p. 247). Conversely, someone interested primarily in theological method and systematic theology will likely be surprised by the lengthy initial historical and textual discussion of the canon debate.

However, this initial disjunctive actually represents one of the deeper strengths of the book. Peckham takes these broad disciplinary issues and renders them dialogue partners. In this regard, he not only juxtaposes these concerns but demonstrates the depth of their connection. For instance, the way Peckham navigates the canon debate in broad categories of “communitarian” and “intrinsic” models provides a natural transition to communitarian or “*sola scriptura*” brands of theological method. Readers who have only dug deeply into one of these areas will benefit from Peckham’s articulation of their organic interconnection. Moreover, the methodological clarity Peckham provides in each of the areas he covers makes this volume a top-notch resource for careful thinking about both the canon and theological method.

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Roger Scruton. *On Human Nature*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2017. 151 pp. £18.95/\$22.95.

Several recent and insightful visions of human nature have recently been published, to which we can now add Roger Scruton's *On Human Nature*. Anthropology is an exciting area of reflection that has been an area of significant interest in philosophical, theological, scientific and psychological explorations. Scruton's present contribution is similar to Charles Taylor's *Sources of the Self* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1992), albeit, closer in length to Thomas Nagel's *The View from Nowhere* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989). Specifically, Scruton offers the reader a philosophical anthropology that touches on theological and scientific portraits of the human. Through a blend of Kant and Husserl, Scruton contributes a unique portrait of human nature, which deserves a place in contemporary discussions.



Similar to his natural theology work in *The Soul of the World* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014), Roger Scruton applies his Kantian mixed Husserlian phenomenology specifically to human nature. For Scruton, the world is understood in two ways, naturally and phenomenally. So it is with humans: humans are bodily and mental, natural beings as well as transcendental beings. Physical life has two aspects to it: that which can be explained according to the natural sciences as mere physical stuff and that which is phenomenologically experienced as with art, sex, and religion. This could be called “cognitive dualism” (i.e., the view that the world has two distinct and irreducible features or sets of properties), which avoids the various extremes in personal ontology. Scruton is quite clear that metaphysical naturalism as a framework is out of bounds for a proper understanding of the human. Humans cannot be reduced to their physical component parts (i.e., reductive physicalism). Something fundamental to human nature is lost in the study of human nature from a merely biological or neuroscientific standpoint (e.g., Richard Dawkins, Daniel Dennett, the Churchlands; see ch. 1).

On the other hand, while humans are biological kinds in that they are embodied beings, they are not purely biological kinds. Rather, humans are embodied beings and beings of a transcendental sort, having features or properties non-reducible to the physical world. This does not amount to any version of substantive dualism or substance dualism. Scruton is clear that any sort of Cartesian substance that is actually distinguishable from concrete bodied existence is inconsistent with one's origins (see pp. 38–41). Instead, humans are emergent products, and humans include both physical elements and mental elements. Humans are irreducible to a biological kind because they are of a different kind—they are of a personal kind.

The personal nature of human nature establishes the foundation for Scruton's overarching vision of humanity. In this way, phenomenology, common-sense experience, interpersonal relations, and consciousness provide the way forward for an accurate understanding of the human. The rest of the book is an exposition of this vision, starting in chapter 2.

Personhood, consciousness, and perceptual experience actually contribute something new to the world. Consistent with Kant's transcendental subject, the person is an autonomous agent that is not so much in the world, but adds a point of view onto the world (p. 57). Scruton's view is unusual in that the subject is neither an immaterial substance (with Descartes) nor a composite of the immaterial substance in a material substance (with Thomas Aquinas), but a Kantian I know not what. Two features are necessary to paint an adequate picture of Scruton's human nature. First, the first-person perspective

(construed, once again, not as a substance but as a capacity or faculty) as that distinct consciousness that can experience the world as meaningful is an essential property of humans. However, the first-person perspective is not a “pure” immaterial subject, as with Descartes (p. 56), but a subject that emerges necessarily in the context of an I-thou relation (made popular by Martin Buber). This leads to the second point. For Scruton, following Kant, the subject is only known in a second-person context interpersonally with other subjects. The *I* is inaccessible apart from my relationship to the other. Saying this, his arguments remain unclear as to why this is true. For it seems, that the first-person perspective, rather than an emergent property within an already existing interpersonal environment, logically precedes a second-person encounter. Furthermore, I could conceive of my existing, as a person, on an island with no other humans present. Would I still be me? It seems so. Could I still know that I am me? It seems so. Could I carry on living secluded on the island without others? Surely yes. If so, then it seems that we have reasons for thinking that the *I*, as a pure mental/immaterial subject, exists. Arguably, I can pick out one unique property or feature in my own conscious states of awareness, which makes me distinct from other persons. If *I* co-exist with all of my thoughts as *I* persist through time as the self-same *I*, then I am a substance that instantiates thoughts, volitions, emotions, and memories about myself. Causally necessary conditions may precede my *coming* into existence, but these are not essential properties of me; for I could have come into existence in another way. In the end, it seems that Scruton’s I-know-not-what view of human nature lacks an explanatory ground for making sense of the first-person perspective. What he needs is a substance, and a substance similar to that which is found in Descartes’s writings. This does not take away from the transcendental features of the subject, but, in fact, grounds them in a *something*.

In typical Scruton fashion, the present book is insightful and engagingly written for a varied audience of both scholars and advanced laity. Those interested in the modern and contemporary literature on philosophical anthropology will find the present volume worthy of careful reflection. Along with the pushback given above there are other areas deserving some criticism. For example, one could argue that his moral theory (which is a mixture of natural rights and transcendental contractarian theory) requires some theistic grounding (either in theistic moral particularism or divine command theory). One might also desire additional clarification on various ideas advanced (e.g., his rather abrupt conclusion on the apophatic self toward the end of the book). There are several ideas that remain ambiguous (e.g., the self, the sacred, faith). These thoughts in mind, those interested in philosophical and theological anthropology will find that the present meditation is a worthy contribution to the contemporary literature.

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— ETHICS AND PASTORALIA —

Tom Breeden and Mark L. Ward, Jr., *Can I Smoke Pot? Marijuana in Light of Scripture*. Minneapolis: Cruciform, 2016. 106 pp. £7.69/\$9.99.

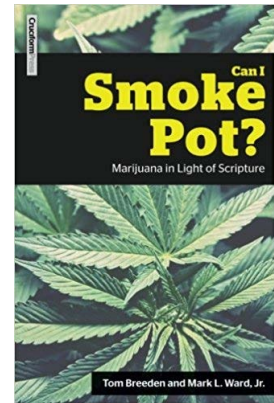
In this helpful little volume, Breeden and Ward provide a biblical and theological framework for considering the ethics of marijuana use. Along the way, they also provide a mini-seminar in hermeneutics, the role of government, the place of medical research in ethical deliberation, and comparing marijuana use to other drug use. This book is an excellent tool not only for helping laypeople think carefully about an increasingly controversial and relevant question but also for aiding them in developing a biblical sensibility for decision making.

Chapter one provides a creation-fall-redemption context for considering marijuana. Breeden and Ward argue that the goodness of creation means that marijuana must be good, but that fact leaves unanswered the question, *Good for what?* They take three chapters to answer this question. In chapter two, they provide an overview of the Christian's relationship to government in order to argue that any recreational use of marijuana is sinful in America because, "at this point in history, not even a state law permitting recreational use of marijuana may be seen by Christians as decisive—because at the federal level, it is still illegal!" (p. 31).

Addressing the question of the medicinal use of marijuana in chapter three, the authors argue that marijuana could possibly be considered palliative medicine, a painkiller of sorts. But even if that were the case, side effects and unintended consequences must be kept in mind. In short, they're open to the possibility of medicinal use in well-regulated situations *if* unbiased medical studies can establish that it is the best option.

In the last chapter, Breeden and Ward explore how the parallel between alcohol and marijuana is best understood. They note that "every Christian who favors recreational marijuana use will base his or her argument in large part on what the Bible says about drinking alcohol" (p. 55). If the Bible allows for moderate alcohol consumption, then moderate pot consumption must also be fine. The authors concede that alcohol is viewed as a permissible but potentially dangerous thing in the Old and New Testaments. However, they agree that the place where the Bible draws the line with alcohol is with drunkenness. Once intoxication occurs, sin occurs. From there, they argue that the one thing that turns alcohol into sin (drunkenness) is the only purpose of recreational pot use (getting high). Since research shows that one hit is often enough to produce the effects, there is no possibility of smoking pot "in moderation." The parallel with alcohol ends there. In the end, Breeden and Ward focus on the spiritual issues at play. Even if all of the contextual factors that might impact the decision are removed (family authority, government authority, etc.), the intoxication question should prevent any Christian from using pot recreationally.

Breeden and Ward provide a "closing word" in which they bring their message to bear clearly by analyzing motivations. For those resistant to their arguments, they ask, "Where does this drive to justify getting high come from? What are you really craving, and why are you pushing this point so hard? Are you effectively seeking a kind of palliative care to soothe some emotional or spiritual pain in your life? A pain that God will gladly soothe if you only draw near to him through his Word and prayer?" (p. 83).



For a short book, this one is incredibly wise and helpful. It even includes a brief “How to Use the Bible to Answer Your Questions” essay as an appendix. While the authors are certain that a longer, more detailed book would reach the exact same conclusions as long as it is faithful to Scripture like theirs is (p. 81), I’m left wondering if more nuance wouldn’t help at least a little bit. To be clear, this is a book aimed at laypeople, not scholars. Yet sometimes the arguments are oversimplified. For instance, Breeden and Ward are very careful not to make medical claims, but at the same time they are very quick to say that inhaling one puff of marijuana is morally equivalent to drunkenness (both are intoxication). This statement seems to require a level of scientific certainty that they’re hesitant to make in the medical chapter—it is difficult enough to establish a line for drunkenness, let alone to apply that to another substance that works in different ways and varies so greatly from strain to strain and person to person. I was also disappointed that they did not explore the medical side of the question more thoroughly. They essentially said, “The jury is out,” but then continually argued against “recreational use” in particular in a way that implied medical use is permissible. Perhaps a longer book would have allowed space to spell these differences out more clearly. Both of my minor quibbles are issues of detail and consistency, and I want to be careful not to level the typical critique of, “I wish they had written a different book!” I’m glad they wrote this one, and these are the sorts of questions it raises.

In the end, this is a book you can confidently recommend to any Christian ministry leaders, parents, and teenagers who are curious about how to think through this controversial issue. They will not only get a solid, biblically saturated answer, they will also learn a lot about how to interpret the Bible as they go.

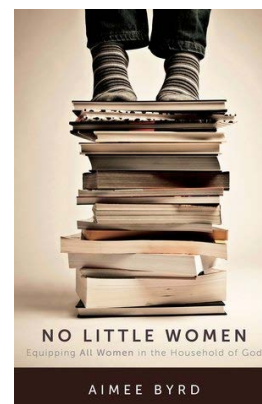
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Aimee Byrd. *No Little Women: Equipping All Women in the Household of God*. Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2016. 278 pp. £11.79/\$14.99.

In Aimee Byrd’s latest book, *No Little Women: Equipping All Women in the Household of God*, she shines a light on bad theology that is creeping into households through church initiatives aimed at women. Previous to this work, she has authored *Housewife Theologian: How the Gospel Interrupts the Ordinary* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2013) and *Theological Fitness: Why We Need a Fighting Faith* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2015). She both cohosts a podcast and blogs at *The Mortification of Spin* (www.alliancenet.org/mos).

Byrd is writing to all of those in the household of God, but throughout there is attention given to women as she encourages them to avoid becoming the little women of 2 Timothy 3:6. As a contrast, Byrd challenges women to increase their competency in all areas of the Christian life (pp. 14, 195–96). Additionally, there is special attention given to church officers who are in a position to equip women with theological training. Throughout her writing she has created subsections specifically addressed to them.

In the first of four sections, Byrd starts out presenting the problem she observes in both churches and Christian publishing, namely, a lack of discernment among women and a need for pastors who



critically engage what women in their churches are reading (pp. 23, 47). She makes a case for both the value of women and the value of women knowing good theology. This is a vital part of their function as *ezer*. She borrows John McKinley's definition of *ezer* calling women a "necessary ally." Women are a necessary ally to men in their God-given mission as vice-regents on earth (p. 26). She also makes a case for the value of women learning about theology in broader categories than just issues related to womanhood (p. 52).

Next, Byrd examines the context in which women live and minister, specifically in both personal households and in the household of God, the church. Men are household managers and guard over household members' understanding and practice of faith (p. 79). Women, as allies, are not simply supporting the manager, but are given gifts and skills that are a necessary part of the mission of the household (pp. 80, 87). Byrd then contemplates where women and women's ministries fits in the structure. Out of this discussion, Byrd suggests women's "initiatives" to be a more appropriate title than women's "ministry" in order to protect the uniqueness of the "ministry" of the Word as dispensed by elders (p. 104). She describes a cascade effect that if elders are faithful to dispense good teaching to women then a natural outflow will be women teaching what is good to other women (p. 97).

Byrd also does a brief survey of current movements in women's ministry. She critiques the propensity of women's resources to filter theological studies through an unnecessary lens of biblical womanhood (pp. 122–23). She encourages women to read more broadly than women's issues (p. 131). She also wants women to be held to the same high theological standards as men (p. 129).

In her third section, Byrd discusses some positive directions for women in the church. She says that while women are not called to teach as ordained officers of the church, still, "men ought to learn from women" (p. 139). As necessary allies, women offer valuable theological contributions to the church that ought to be taken seriously.

Finally, Byrd offers practical advice on how to be a discerning reader. She then offers a series of excerpts from popular Christian books for women and challenges the reader to utilize the principles of discernment she has presented (p. 237). She ends this section with advice for pastors as they preach to women, namely, that they would have high expectations concerning their maturity and that they would listen to them (p. 257). She then gives a challenge to women to listen well to pastors as they teach the Word (p. 273).

Byrd's work exhibits two major strengths: her critique of Christian women's publishing coupled with her advice on using discernment in reading. In Christian women's publishing, she points out a ubiquitous error found in both recent best sellers and with women of American church history: "these women have all claimed to have received special revelation from God," (p. 145). She gives examples of this error in various forms from popular authors: Beth Moore, Priscilla Shirer, and Sarah Young (pp. 147–48, 246–47). Other popular errors include "mysticism, New Age spirituality, the prosperity gospel, or just plain bad exposition" (p. 116). Byrd points out that the likability of the authors' personalities have guarded them against necessary critiques, as well as a fear of hurting feelings (pp. 19, 115, 149). This has led to bad theology seeping in the back door of the household of God right through the front door of women's ministries. She offers no safe haven away from critical evaluation even for those who may share similar theological convictions as her as seen in her critique of *True Womanhood* (pp. 124–26). This equal opportunity evaluation as well as the numerous examples of errors serves to show the considerable need for greater accountability and more dialogue concerning Christian women's publishing.

Due to the wide variety of issues Byrd attempted to cover, not all received adequate attention. For example, her ideas on the usefulness and practical outworking of women’s “initiatives” in the household of God along with a thematic study of households in Scripture could each make separate books.

Overall, *No Little Women* is a thought-provoking book that challenges the household of God to be competent in their handling of Scripture.

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J. Paul Nyquist. *Is Justice Possible? The Elusive Pursuit of What Is Right*. Chicago: Moody, 2017. 176 pp. £12.05/\$9.98.

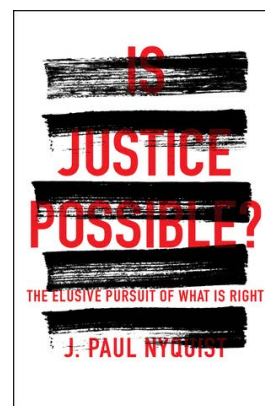
It isn’t often that a book about justice surprises me. I get a sense of the author’s basic political frame—collectivist, individualist, liberal, conservative, etc.—and generally know what to expect. But I read a recent book that disrupted my assumptions. Perhaps that is why it is important to read beyond the usual suspects. In this case, the author is a theologian and president of Moody Global Ministries. I’m not sure what I thought he’d have to say, but he managed to catch me here and there in ways I didn’t anticipate.

Part of what is so interesting about Paul Nyquist’s book is how earnest and unassuming it is. If I were writing such a volume, I think I would constantly be apologizing for myself or otherwise letting the reader know that I know that they will disagree with me about various things. Having read *Is Justice Possible?*

I can say that I appreciated Nyquist’s method. He simply tries to discern what the Bible says and then straightforwardly offers conclusions where he thinks he can make them. The results don’t fit anyone’s pre-set agenda.

As an example of what I liked so much about *Is Justice Possible?*, let me point to Nyquist’s analysis of sin as a factor in justice. The obvious thing would be to discuss the sinful nature of human beings and how our sinful nature translates into disobedience, which may take the form of crime. But Nyquist takes his camera and swings it panoramically in a wide arc over human hearts. We see accusers and accused. We see judges and juries. We see reporters and audiences. And what does the camera discern with its lens? The camera records the democratic existence of sin. It is everywhere. Sometimes sin compels a man to commit a crime. But other times it operates so as to prevent careful discernment on the part of a police officer, a judge, or a witness. We may assert blame too quickly or associate guilt with a racial identity even if we are certain that we abhor racism. When I read such things, I sometimes have a scoffer’s attitude, but Nyquist helped me see it.

I think that part of what makes the book penetrating is the consistency of how it analyzes injustice. Injustice comes from our refusal to follow God, who is the ultimate source of justice, and his word, which speaks to his great concern that justice be done. Justice means that we have to carefully examine our own biases, which may be racial, sexual, ethnic, nationalistic, or otherwise tied to identities people have. In reviewing the laws and decisions which cut against biblical justice, Nyquist identifies Jim Crow laws, fugitive slave laws, *Roe v. Wade*, *Obergefell v. Hodges*, euthanasia laws, and immigrant deportation



acts. For each, the author gives biblical reasons for his views. I get a little dizzy looking at the way Nyquist gathers his choices because I know there is more than enough to make heads explode all over the political spectrum. That is part of what is impressive about the book. Nyquist's view is biblically informed and fresh. There are no sacred cows preventing him from applying his theological approach to justice.

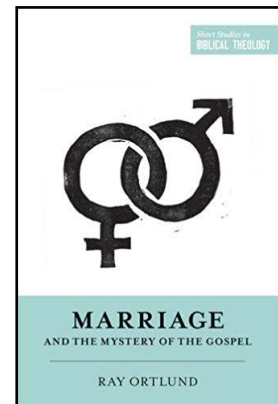
Along similar lines, the author encourages voters to try and do justice "in the political arena." His emphases fall on individual liberty (inclusive of religious liberty), the sanctity of life, incarceration rates, and the social safety net. Nyquist appeals to no typical political coalition. As I thought about it, I recalled the phrase "The Lamb's Agenda," which is invoked by Samuel Rodriguez. Nyquist offers something we might think of in that way.

In an age of social media, news and commentary that never stop, and a cacophony of conflict, we might be tempted to give up and check out. Possibly the best thing about *Is Justice Possible?* is that it inspires the reader to engage fundamental questions anew. The questions are too important to tune out. Christians who serve a just God should make the pursuit of justice part of the stewardship of their lives, and thus Nyquist's book is worthy of a careful read.

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Ray Ortlund. *Marriage and the Mystery of the Gospel*. Short Studies in Biblical Theology. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2016. 127 pp. £12.07/\$14.99.

Ray Ortlund, pastor of Immanuel Church in Nashville, contributed this welcomed little volume on marriage to the growing number of texts in the Short Studies in Biblical Theology series published by Crossway. *Marriage and the Mystery of the Gospel* is a good foundational text on the theology of marriage as taught in Scripture. It is foundational in that Ortlund begins in Genesis, with Adam, Eve, and God. It is important to note "and God" from the previous sentence, for what is enjoyed about biblical marriage comes from God himself. Ortlund states in the preface that he wrote this book with two yearnings: "for a recovery of joyful confidence in marriage" as well as "for more men and women to experience enduring marital romance" (p. 13). This aim is a fresh pastoral perspective this subject deserves.



Ortlund does not interact with other marriage books or therapy studies in any detail as he is keen to present what the whole Bible teaches about marriage. He does this in three chapters that present marriage across the canon. He then presents a final chapter summarizing what is at stake in marriage, offering a final apologetic for sexual ethics and the ultimate reality of the believer's union with God that biblical marriage represents.

The first three chapters of this study work through the process of God's revelation as it pertains to marriage in its good state in the garden with Adam and Eve. It quickly moves to the fall of the race through sin and its effects on the relationship between man, woman, and God. Ortlund's first and most substantial chapter on Genesis sets the backdrop and foundation of his work. He primarily explores

the issues in Genesis 2 and 3. While there are many illustrations of marriage gone wrong in Genesis, Ortlund used the relationship between Adam and Eve and the glory of marriage to speak God's truth into the brokenness of the marriage relationship after the fall. He highlighted the gift of gender and human complementarity in contrast to the desire of the wider culture for all to be functionally the same in marriage and gender. He continued to explore the biblical defense of the definition of marriage from the Bible against the sexual revolution today. In addition, Ortlund encouraged his readers in their struggle for a godly and peaceful marriage saying, "Nothing is more natural in our world today than trying to build a marriage on a foundation of God avoidance. But it cannot work. Without peace with God, we inevitably shatter, the peace we desire with one another" (p. 42).

The second chapter explores marriage in the Law, Wisdom books, and Prophets. In an apologetic tone, Ortlund also reminds readers of all the marriages gone wrong in Genesis and not to take these as examples that God is pleased with: "What the Bible records, it does not always condone" (p. 57). The section on the law gave a keen and penetrating insight to the law of God as it pertains, not just to the letter of the law, but the "humanitarian ethos" behind the law. The main take away from this section is the holiness of marriage, both as ordained by God and its effects on a husband and wife. In the next section, the Wisdom books give much real-life teaching on the marriage relationship. Ortlund views Proverbs and the Song of Songs as primary texts to teach the glories of the marriage relationship as it plays out in daily life. Ortlund draws his readers toward the balanced view of sexual wisdom taught in Proverbs, rejecting the false conservative view "Restraint and control" as well as the progressive view of "freedom, openness and choice" in favor of a "form and freedom" view that allows us to "focus our romantic joy and to unleash our romantic joy" (p. 65). The book's shortest section covers the Prophets and deals mostly with God's marriage to his people. This section offers insight into the union God desired to have with his people, as well as Israel's idolatrous rejection of that relationship with God.

In the third chapter on the New Testament, Ortlund began by pointing out the multiple reaffirmations of the realities of marriage as a one-flesh union God ordained in Genesis 2:24 in the teachings of Jesus in the Gospels. Moreover, Paul reaffirms the Genesis 2:24 reality in connection with the husband and wife relationship, but moved it further, incorporating the "entire drama of the redemption of Christ," keeping this relationship between man and wife from being just "a merely human cultural construct" (p. 91). Ortlund rightly points out the interaction of both Jesus and Paul with God's original plan in Genesis for the marriage relationship in contrast to the divorce allowances made for the people in the law of Moses. This chapter on the New Testament is the most clarifying on the husband and wife relationship in a Christian marriage. Ortlund concludes this section connecting the analogy of marriage in the New Testament to the true reality it represents, namely, the union of Christ and his church.

The last chapter served as a final summation of the core aims in this book as a call to the glories of biblical marriage, as well as an apologetic for biblical marriage against the other forms of so called "marriage" in our culture. The strength of this chapter is its connection of the gospel, particularly marriage as a picture of the gospel, to people in contemporary times. Ortlund points out that if the biblical story is true then the truth about marriage cannot be ignored.

This book is essential reading for any Christian to understanding the theological defense of biblical marriage. It makes great strides in few pages. Ortlund keeps to his central aims and defends his position for biblical marriage well. His contrasts with the wider culture show clearly what is at stake for marriage in the world. The pastoral tone of the book allows the reader to feel the care Ortlund has for his readers

as he warns of the dangers of departing from God's view of marriage, desiring for them instead to experience the joy of gospel-centered marital romance.

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John Piper. *The Collected Works of John Piper*. Edited by Justin Taylor and David Mathis. 14 vols. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2017. 8464 pp. £546.90/\$699.99.

Recognizing the deeply theological role embodied by pastors throughout history, a resurgence has taken place within local churches in recent years. This resurgence refers to the leadership of the church, men called by God, who serve specifically as pastor-theologians (for evidence of this resurgence see recent publications such as *The Pastor Theologian*, by Gerald Hiestand and Todd Wilson [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2015], and *The Pastor as Public Theologian*, by Kevin Vanhoozer and Owen Strachan [Grand Rapids: Baker, 2015]). When one thinks of pastor-theologians *par excellence* in this generation, several names come to mind, and one that will always rightfully rise to the top is John Piper.



While now serving as Chancellor of Bethlehem College and Seminary, Piper served for over three decades as Pastor for Preaching and Vision at Bethlehem Baptist Church in Minneapolis. Piper has served his local church faithfully, and beyond that, he has blessed the church throughout the world by means of his many publications. Through his preaching and publications, Piper has proclaimed the message of the glory of God in all things for the joy of all the nations. While one could go to a book distributor and buy each of Piper's works, Crossway has now bundled these works together in a 14-volume set (with more volumes on the way in the future, depending on the pace of the author's publications in coming years).

This set brings together all of Piper's published writings from 1970 to 2015, featuring the latest editions of his books, along with hundreds of articles and chapters, compiled into one resource. New introductions are written by Piper himself for each volume, and a detailed index volume is included for topical reference across the whole set, allowing readers to reference Piper's use of Scripture, subjects, and persons. The editors explain their motivation in assembling these works into one set: "To read all of Piper's published writings individually would require the acquisition of more than one hundred volumes, along with tracking down dozens of older articles and reviews in obscure publications" (1:8). In terms of material quality, Crossway explains, "These high-quality volumes are printed in Italy on specialty book paper designed for maximum readability. Each volume features a durable, Smyth-sewn binding" (<https://www.crossway.org/books/the-collected-works-of-john-piper-hconly/>).

Beyond the beautiful design, these volumes contain theological treatises that deal with a number of topics essential to the health of the church. This set seeks to include everything John Piper ever wrote, resulting in forty-five books, sixty articles and reviews, twenty-three forewords, and forty-two chapters (this does not include his sermons and articles found online at desiringgod.org; 1:8). The basic ordering of these works is chronological, but some of the volumes have been arranged

thematically (1:9). The first eight volumes comprise his major books. The Swans Are Not Silent series (brief biographical sketches of various pastoral leaders) makes up volume 9. Volumes 10 and 11 contain all of Piper’s devotional writings, followed by all of his published poetry. Volumes 12 and 13 include all of Piper’s chapters and forewords, as well as reviews and articles for various journals (1:9–10). The final volume includes a year-by-year bibliography of Piper’s published work. This includes every edition of every book ever published, as well as Piper’s Sunday sermons preached at Bethlehem Baptist Church (1980–2013).

Obviously, a review of all of these works by John Piper cannot be written here; the amount of content is enormous. One can, however, note the impact Piper’s preaching and writing ministry has had on a generation. Piper’s message has reverberated with young and old alike, as his preaching and writing constantly calls his audience to get their minds and hearts around the text of Scripture. After nearly four decades of ministry we are even now seeing Piper’s reflections on the power behind his ministry, namely, the Spirit of God working in the people of God by means of the Word of God. His most recent publications, not yet included in this set (*A Peculiar Glory* [Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2016] and *Reading the Bible Supernaturally* [Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2016]), both focus on the validity of Scripture, as well as the way in which we should study it. This focus will remind people that power is not found merely in a person, but in the enduring Word of God ministered to a people by the Spirit. Any substantial and lasting change that comes from Piper’s ministry will be rooted in the way in which he relentlessly exegeted Scripture and applied it to the lives of people.

While certainly not an inexpensive set to purchase, this puts the entire writing ministry of one of the most influential voices of our era on our bookshelves. The message that “God is most glorified in you when you are most satisfied in him” (a proclamation included in virtually every one of his works) is a needed word as we behold the glories of God and recognize in his presence “there is fullness of joy” and at his “right hand there are pleasures forevermore” (Ps. 16:11). Because Piper’s message is not novel, it is needed for future generations, and this is a wonderful means of preserving his message and legacy.

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Tony Reinke. *12 Ways Your Phone Is Changing You*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2017. 224 pp. £11.67/\$14.99.

I see it at stoplights. I see it during timeouts at my daughter’s basketball games. And I even see it when I stand in the back of the sanctuary during church services. When there’s a lull in the action, however brief, smartphones appear, and eyes are toward them.

But why must we check them so often? Is it because smartphones are such great tools for human flourishing or because they are evil taskmasters that make us less human with each use?

This is the dilemma with which Tony Reinke opens his book, and if you are like most people, the dilemma isn’t theoretical. Your phone *is* changing you. It’s



certainly changing me. How could it be otherwise when we apparently check our smartphones every 4.3 minutes of our waking lives (p. 16)?

Reinke is the author of several books, as well as the host of the popular Ask Pastor John podcast and a senior staff writer for *Desiring God*. He is well suited to write this book for at least two reasons. First, Reinke feels the tension between the blessings and curses of technology more acutely than most. As a professional producer of online content, he must navigate reaching readers without succumbing to the click-bait, BuzzFeed-type posts that dominate web culture (to which, by the way, DG doesn't capitulate).

Second, Reinke is the perfect person to shine the glare from our screens back into our eyes, not only because he is a competent researcher and a nimble wordsmith, but because he is also a God-centered theologian. And this trait is necessary because, as he points out, "conversations about our smartphones often do not raise new questions; they return us to perennial questions every generation has been forced to ask" (p. 24). And it's this point about how new technology always brings us back to the perennial questions—questions about what it means to be creature not Creator; about beauty vs. efficiency; about loving God and neighbor—which makes this book so insightful.

Consider for just a moment our longing for approval (covered especially in chapters 3 and 6). Each generation must wrestle with this. The lore of Narcissus in Greek mythology, who fell in love with his own reflection, certainly predates the 2004 birth of Facebook. Today, perhaps, there are just more metrics to measure our beauty (likes, retweets, followers, pins, subscribers, and so on). And if you let it, your smartphone will send you push notifications for each of these so that when you wake up in the morning, you can glance at your phone to find out how many others love your face too. "When we talk about 'smartphone addiction,'" writes Reinke, "often what we are talking about is the addiction of looking at ourselves" (p. 110).

The chapters of the book include topics such as the way we become addicted to distractions, how we ignore people, crave immediate approval, get lonely, become comfortable in secret vices, fear missing out, and half a dozen other changes our phones are doing to us. Additionally, readers will find the foreword by John Piper something that not only recommends the book to us, but also begins to engage with the topics at hand, including several of the ways technology has changed in his lifetime. For example, Piper bought his first computer in 1984. It was an IBM PC with 256K of RAM, which he bought for \$1,995. A quick internet search (and yes, I did it on my phone) tells me this would be nearly \$5,000 in today's dollars!

If there were something to critique about the book, maybe it would be the structure. The title and layout of the book (*12 Ways ...*) could make the book seem like one giant list-article, or *listicle* as they're called. Listicles tend to be the lowest common denominator of online content. I say this, by the way, as the author of several listicles. But this criticism, in my opinion, doesn't hold. The depth of Reinke's insights and his biblical fidelity resist formulaic chapters.

One final comment. I found the book disturbing. But not because the problems created by smartphones are merely "out there" in culture or even in the church. Rather, I'm disturbed because the problems are "in here." Despite all the blessings of smartphones (connection to others, wealth of information, and Bible apps galore), I still see the negative impact in my heart and habits. Too often my children compete with a screen for their dad's attention. Being confronted with this change was

disturbing, but it's the good kind of confrontation, the kind that when paired with repentance of sin and faith in the gospel, leads to the good kind of change.

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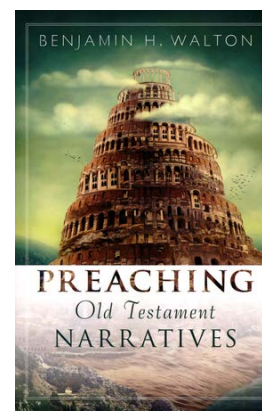
Benjamin H. Walton. *Preaching Old Testament Narratives*. Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2016. 254 pp. £13.99/\$18.99.

Many believers have had the unfortunate experience of listening to a sermon that butchers an OT narrative and reduces it to a few principles derived from the speaker's precarious use of the analogy of faith. Likewise, evangelical preachers acknowledge the challenge in crafting sermons from OT stories, and others have great difficulty in making them relevant to a congregation of saints. Therefore, when publications claim to aid pulpits in the task of proclaiming the meaning and application of OT stories, I approach these works with excitement and hope.

Such was my outlook when I came to Benjamin Walton's *Preaching Old Testament Narratives*. Immediately I was grateful to see that the author gives good attention to the hermeneutics of OT narrative prior to explaining the homiletics of OT narrative. Largely following the theory and method of Don Sunukjian's, *Invitation to Biblical Preaching* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2007), and Fee and Stuart's now classic *How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2014), Walton's work does not offer many novel instructions for discerning meaning from OT narratives. Instead, he fashions fresh terminology for concepts germane to evangelical homiletics since the time of Robinson's *Biblical Preaching* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2014). Significantly, Walton's "historical context" for OT narratives is "an Old Covenant context," which requires reading all OT narrative in light of ancient Israel's view of the retribution principle and afterlife, their latest Old Covenant expansion, and their original audience in order to preach the narratives well (p. 52).

The strength of *Preaching Old Testament Narratives* is Walton's stylistic admonitions. He invites preachers of God's Word to respect the hearers (almost to a fault). His pastoral adages are rich, such as, "We must not use the pulpit to satisfy our need to feel important, influential, powerful, or worthwhile," and "the willingness to admire the congregation is an act of humility" (p. 107). Moreover, I found it to be encouraging to read from the former pastor, "Preaching that's winsome is emotionally and intellectually respectful" (p. 208). Walton's axiom is true for preaching all genres of Scripture.

Three items of concern are of note for those looking to be faithful to the exposition of the OT stories. First, after determining that OT narratives differ from NT epistles in mode of communication, length of "complete units of thought (CUTs)," and their tendency to be descriptive rather than prescriptive, Walton concludes, "OT narratives convey a small number of theological principles." Further he states, "The number of theological principles in one or two chapters of OT narrative pale in comparison to one or two chapters of NT epistle.... For preaching, this means that OT narratives contain very few legitimate application principles" (p. 35).



With this, the author limits the significance of OT narrative for the life of the contemporary believer. He establishes a false dichotomy between the wealth of applicable material in the two genres. Yet the premise is worth challenging on the basis of the sheer volume of narrative—and narrative CUTs—within the OT. I find it difficult to conclude that so-called “principles” are “small” when I see the NT writers applying OT narratives for ethical exhortations to holiness (1 Cor 10:1–13), to argue for fairness in relief giving (2 Cor 8:15), to offer support for properly understanding justification (Jas 2:21–25), to build a case for the Jewish rejection of Christ as Messiah (Acts 7:9–41, 44–47), and for many other issues in the lives of the early churches.

Second, Walton’s approach rests in a reductionist view of “genre,” “words,” and “message” that begins early in his text. Rightly, Walton suggests that a recognition of the genre of a text is necessary to make sense of the words of the message of a text. However, he also proposes, “In some genres, the words are similar to the message” (p. 31). This is the equivalent of saying that in some genres words mean what they say, which is to conclude that in some types of literature the terms themselves are the same as the message communicated by the terms. Walton gives an example in which one attempts to communicate “[one’s] kids are great.” He writes,

If we want to be crystal clear but dry, we could use a declarative sentence. If we want to “wow” our listeners, we could use an anecdote. If we want to rouse the emotions, we could write a poem. Notice that even when our message is the same, the genre we couch it in affects our word choice:

Genre:	Declarative sentence
Words:	My kids are great.
Message:	Believe my kids are great.

His oversimplification of movements through the text skews his conclusion about the message. A declarative statement of this sort does not invite a listener to “believe,” for that is a response of a hearer, not a declaration of a speaker. Instead, the “message” of Walton’s example is, “I personally assess the value of my children to be great.”

Turning then to an example in the OT, Walton provides the following analysis of Genesis 11:1–9:

Genre:	OT Narrative (Gen. 11:1–9)
Words:	After the flood, people don’t disperse, endangering and defying God’s redemptive plans, so God disperses them.
Message:	It is futile to defy God’s redemptive plans, because God’s redemptive plans will prevail.

The “words” are the writer’s summation, and are not necessarily derived from the words of Gen. 11:1–9. This is evident in the terms, “after the flood,” and “God’s redemptive plans,” for neither set of words reflect terms in Genesis 11:1–9. Instead, the terms reflect the Biblical story line of Genesis 6–11, and traces the theological trajectory of Genesis 3:15. The “message” is not the meaning of pericope, but of a greater narrative context and theology extrinsic to the terms of the selected passage.

Closer attention to the terms (Walton’s “words”) would allow a reader to discern that the subject of Genesis 11:1–9 is *the Lord’s visitation to address the children of man’s attempt at total*

autonomy. “Visitation” is the *message* communicated by, “And the LORD came down to see the city and the tower” (11:5) and “Come, let us go down and there” (11:7). The *intent* of the visitation according to 11:7 is to “confuse their language,” and its *result* is repeated three times in 11:8–9: “dispersed ... confused ... dispersed.” Reductionism and atomizing characterize Walton’s approach to OT narratives, although he warns his readers against these practices.

Third, Walton does not place much confidence in the preacher’s ability to ascertain the meaning of narrative through faithful reading of the biblical text. He emphasizes reliance on the work of scholarly resources. The writer would do well to promote contemplative reading of OT stories.

Preaching Old Testament Narratives manifests other concerns with respect to hermeneutics. Like several other evangelicals who have attempted to provide a method of discerning meaning from OT narrative, Walton does not offer a theory that demonstrates that the central idea *in the text* is God’s voice. Only when we recover this idea are we preaching God’s words from OT narrative. To this end, David Helm’s *Expositional Preaching* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2014) is a valuable complement to Walton’s writing.

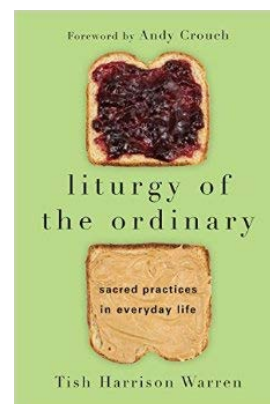
Equally so, we must say that other attempts at interpreting and preaching OT narrative that do not get to God’s voice are not *evangelical* preaching. They are good, well-crafted methods, but short of making God’s voice known. The failure to say this leaves readers accepting something short of preaching the *textual* idea as God’s word.

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Tish Harrison Warren. *Liturgy of the Ordinary: Sacred Practices in Everyday Life*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2016. 182 pp. £12.27/\$16.00.

Evangelicalism is replete with calls for a “radical” or “extraordinary” or even “revolutionary” approach to the Christian life that turns the world upside down. These sorts of exhortations are never as groundbreaking as their titles and press releases imply, but they can still leave the impression that your spiritual walk is going nowhere if you are not changing the world. Tish Harrison Warren is far more concerned with everyday faithfulness than heroic spirituality. And everyday faithfulness does change your world, moment-by-moment, day-by-day, over the long haul of the Christian life.

Warren is an ordained priest who is part of the Anglican Church of North America. She has past experience in parish work and campus ministry with InterVarsity at Vanderbilt University and University of Texas at Austin. At present, she works for InterVarsity’s Women in the Academy & Professions initiative and has a growing wider ministry as an author and speaker. *Liturgy of the Ordinary* is her first book. And it is a good one. Rather than focusing on the place of mountaintop experiences and dramatic consecrations (and re-consecrations) in the Christian life, Warren draws upon her liturgical sensibilities and real-life experiences as a wife and mother to alert readers to ways we can experience God in the everyday



rhythms of our life. In so doing, she is a modern-day Brother Lawrence who wants to help believers to “practice the presence of God” and thus sanctify their ordinary experiences.

Over the course of eleven chapters, Warren highlights everyday practices that can function as means of sanctifying grace when we approach them from the posture of faith in Christ and a desire to love God and neighbor. Waking up well becomes a reminder that, “How I spend this ordinary day in Christ is how I will spend my Christian life” (p. 24). Warming up leftovers is a call to “eat such things as are set before me, to receive the nourishment available in this day as a gift, whether it looks like extravagant abundance, painful suffering, or simply a boring bowl of leftovers” (p. 65). Even the mundane, oft-frustrating task of checking email reminds us that “vocational holiness in and through our work” helps us to “resist the idolatry of work and accomplishment,” helping transform work into a form of prayer (pp. 100–1). Other ordinary practices Warren encourages readers to sanctify include making the bed, tooth-brushing, responding well to losing one’s keys, reconciling well after spousal disagreements, idling in crowded traffic, talking with friends on the phone, drinking tea, and sleeping. Each offer windows into similar habits or responses to everyday situations that can help us mature in our faith.

It is not surprising that Warren uses liturgy as her metaphor for capturing acts of everyday devotion; she is, after all, an Anglican priest. But careful readers will not miss the influence of James K. A. Smith’s approach to liturgy as “formative practices” in the background. Smith has focused his scholarly treatises *Desiring the Kingdom: Worship, Worldview, and Cultural Formation* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2009), *Imagining the Kingdom: How Worship Works* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2014), and *Awaiting the King: Reforming Public Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2017) on applying liturgical insights to larger cultural institutions. But even his excellent condensed work, *You Are What You Love: The Spiritual Power of Habit* (Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2016), is still written at a semi-academic level. In many ways, Warren takes Smith’s more technical treatment of a liturgical approach to culture, popularizes it, and applies it to the “micro-culture” that is every individual’s or family’s particular experiences. The results are rich, striking the perfect balance between being lyrically pithy, yet spiritually profound.

Some potential readers who are part of less overtly liturgical churches might be turned off because of the book’s title. That would be a mistake, since Warren’s insights do not necessitate that one embrace the sort of liturgical approach to public worship found in Anglicanism and other “High Church” traditions. Others, including many readers of this journal, might be hesitant to read *Liturgy of the Ordinary* because Warren is an ordained clergywoman who holds to an egalitarian view of gender roles. That would also be a mistake, since each of us can learn much that is true and helpful from those we disagree with on this and other secondary issues. Furthermore, other than simply mentioning at points that she is a priest, Warren keeps her view of women in ordained ministry in the background, since it is not relevant to the point of her book. Still others who do read the book might wish for a more robust discussion of the ordinary means of grace of preaching, public prayer, and the Lord’s Supper, and/or classical spiritual disciplines such as personal prayer, fasting, Scripture meditation and memorization, etc. But these topics are not the point of Warren’s book. *Liturgy of the Ordinary* is meant to supplement what readers already believe (and presumably practice) when it comes to spiritual disciplines.

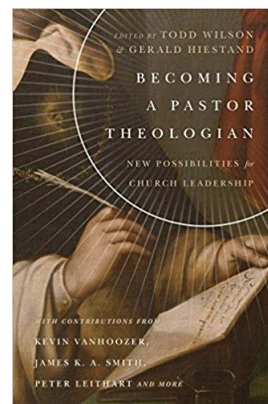
Liturgy of the Ordinary is a delightful book that should find a receptive audience among evangelicals of all stripes and types. Pastors and teachers will gain a wealth of insight about ways to help those whom they lead to pursue Christ in their everyday experiences. The book is perfect for church reading

groups, supplemental devotional reading, or a secondary text in spiritual formation courses. Highly recommended.

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Todd Wilson and Gerald Hiestand, eds. *Becoming a Pastor Theologian: New Possibilities for Church Leadership*. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2016. x + 217 pp. £20.02/\$25.00

This book was written in response to the startling crisis that the ancient vision of pastor as theologian has been “obscured by the separation of the roles of pastor and theologian” (p. 2). This book contains contributions from fifteen diverse authors, organized into three parts: 1) The Identities of the Pastor Theologian; 2) The Pastor Theologian in Historical Perspective; 3) The Pastor Theologian and the Bible. The first part of the book consists of five chapters that were plenary addresses at the first Center for Pastor Theologians (CPT) conference (<http://www.pastortheologians.com>). The CPT began in order to “resurrect the ancient vision of the pastor as a theologian—not as an end in itself, but for the renewal of theology and thus the renewal of the church in its ministry and mission to the world” (p. 2).



In the opening chapter, Peter Leithart approaches the identity of “The Pastor as Biblical Theologian,” calling for “a biblical theology produced by pastors who serve local congregations for the edification of fellow believers in their own and other churches” (p. 7). The current literary landscape is filled with either popular devotional works or technical highly specialized studies. The in-between gap must be filled with ecclesial biblical theology by pastor theologians who study the Bible as a whole (p. 15), delivering the text as gospel to God’s people (p. 16).

James K. A. Smith identifies the pastor theologian as “political theologian,” one who leads a repertoire of formative rites (p. 24); the focus shifts from policing boundaries to securing a platform for expressing beliefs, which forms habits and desires that shape us (p. 24). Thus, the role of pastor as political theologian involves at least two things: 1) as ethnographer, he exegetes the cultural rites of the empire, reading culture through a biblical lens and thus exposing idolatry; 2) as liturgical catechist, he explicates the vision of the Good that is carried in the practices of Christian worship (p. 26).

Kevin Vanhoozer defines the identity of public theologian: “Pastor theologians are organic intellectuals, neither a scholar nor a genius but someone who is able to articulate the needs, convictions and aspirations of the community to which he or she belongs, the evangelical mind of the body of Christ” (p. 42). He is a social activist of sorts, organizing and preserving the church by leading them in transformative practices that increase cultural and biblical literacy, forming them into the image of Christ (p. 42).

In the last chapter of this introductory section, Gerald Hiestand briefly reviews the main lines of his earlier collaborative work with Wilson (*The Pastor Theologian: Resurrecting an Ancient Vision* [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2015]). The ecclesial theologian operates within “four overlapping spheres of theological scholarship”: research, systemization, ecclesial significance articulation, and ecclesial

implementation (p. 57). Whereas academic scholarship is best suited for research and systematization, the ecclesial theologian takes systematized data and makes explicit its significance for the Christian community, and also “clarifies and prescribes how an idea of concept should be implemented in the Christian ministry or within the Christian community” (p. 60).

Part two of the book examined *The Pastor Theologian in Historical Perspective*, introducing the reader to John Calvin’s Geneva, Thomas Boston, John Henry Newman, and Dietrich Bonhoeffer.

Calvin led pastors of Geneva to embrace the vision that every pastor was to be a pastor theologian (p. 82). Scott M. Manetsch summarizes Calvin’s legacy as threefold: 1) “creating religious institutions to ensure clerical accountability and promote theological awareness”; 2) promoting “faithful theological reflection ... in the context of Christian community”; 3) illustrating that “the strategic task of Christian theology belongs ... to pastor theologians in local churches who are well-equipped to formulate, translate and apply God’s truth to the particular concerns and needs of the people in their congregations” (pp. 90–91).

Phillip Graham Ryken introduces readers to Thomas Boston, who exemplified the ideals of the pastor theologian by having reverence for the triune God, confidence in the Bible, theological simplicity, respect for the sacraments, and love for the church, with equal passion for its peace and purity (p. 94).

Chris Castaldo looks to the legacy of John Henry Newman to overcome contemporary obstacles to the pastor theologian. Castaldo specifically identifies three obstacles: 1) the degradation of persons, 2) the sterility of individualism, and 3) utilitarianism. He mines from Newman detailed principles for engaging in the mentoring ministry of the pastor theologian that counter each of these contemporary challenges.

Joel D. Lawrence focuses on Dietrich Boenhoeffer, identifying Bonhoeffer’s identity as an “ecclesial theologian whose theology was deeply rooted in the church and whose theology was written in the service of the church” (p. 125). Christology must be normed by the faith of the church rather than scientific or academic criteria (p. 129).

Edward W. Klink III begins part three by addressing “*The Pastor Theologian and the Interpretation of Scripture*.” He asserts that because one of the pastor theologian’s primary tasks is to correctly handle the Word of truth, he must embrace a correct doctrine of Scripture (p. 137). This grounds the exegetical task by giving *insight* to the interpretive rules and gives *oversight* to Scripture’s constituent parts and unifies their functions (p. 139).

Jason A. Nicholls outlines “*The Pastor Theologian in the Pastoral Epistles*.” He argues that Timothy and Titus may be nearest “scriptural approximation to the pastor theologian” (p. 152). In the Pastoral Epistles, Paul gives five overarching mandates that shape the role of the pastor theologian (p. 152). Timothy and Titus were given both theological and pastoral mandates, though they functioned primarily as pastors (p. 161).

Laurie L. Norris argues for the role of “*The Female Ecclesial Theologian*.” Roles aside, men and women need to “be doing the work of theology and sharing the ministry load ... alongside one another, without competition or suspicion” (p. 167). Norris’s main concern for churches that may not permit women to fill a role of theological *proclamation* is that they would not stifle the role of women in biblical-theological *reflection* (p. 169).

Josh Chatraw situates the pastor theologian as “apologist.” Despite the challenges to this role, its resurrection requires that pastor theologians bear the burden of responding to the consistent cries of “help my unbelief” (p. 182).

Eric C. Redmond identifies the pastor theologian as a “giver of wisdom” in three arenas. “The local theologian should encourage members to develop the habits of seeking wisdom” (p. 190). The popular theologian constructs for the church works that demonstrate the importance of wisdom for living *coram Deo* ... and fulfilling the Great Commission” (p. 191). “The ecclesial theologian ... is in position to engage the foolishness of the world and equip the church and its academies to do the same” (p. 191).

Douglas Estes sets forth the Apostle John as a model pastor theologian, calling for modern pastor theologians to model his practice of writing. Estes focuses on the writing of 2 John, using this text to illustrate the practice of “creative theological *écriture*” (p. 196), which he defines and applies helpfully.

As a follow-up to *The Pastor Theologian*, this book embodies a terrific next step of continuing to engage a broader and more diverse community in the pastor theologian conversation. Part two of the book contributed greatly to the excellent foundation established by part one, tangibly framing the pastor theologian movement in the context of church history. Academics and seminary students would benefit by reading this book and then lending their support and engagement to this church-strengthening movement.

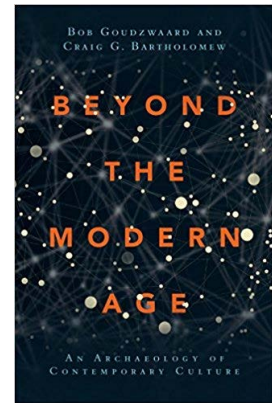
Though this book would greatly benefit those who are already academically oriented, the academic tone of this work increases its challenge to influence the majority of pastors. This is reflected not only in the academic tone of the book, but also in the selection of the elite authors (each of whom has a PhD or is a PhD candidate). Further, the book’s list of contributors mentions current or former pastoral ministry experience for only ten of the fifteen authors. If indeed the pastoral office retains the burden of the church’s theological leadership, then actively serving pastors should be with Wilson and Hiestand at the front lines of engagement to revive this tradition, aiming to inspire the partnership of their comrades, the common pastor. This critique that the book is inaccessible to the majority of pastors does not undermine its contribution to the strength and vitality of the pastor theologian movement as a whole. Perhaps the CPT already has in mind further work that engages common pastors without academic training who aspire to become pastor theologians.

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— MISSION AND CULTURE —

Craig G. Bartholomew and Bob Goudzwaard. *Beyond the Modern Age: An Archaeology of Contemporary Culture*. Downers Gove, IL: IVP Academic. 2017. ix + 313 pp. £22.41/\$30.00.

How should we think about modernity? What are its defining features and assumptions? Is there a relationship between the considerable problems that have come with modernization (e.g., poverty, global consumerism, crushing labor conditions, environmental issues, etc.) and the mental and spiritual forces driving modernity? Furthermore, how can Christians lead the way in light of the challenges (post)modernity brings? In this insightful, critical, and constructive volume, theologian Craig Bartholomew and economist Bob Goudzwaard draw on a bounty of resources to offer an invaluable assessment and compelling vision for navigating beyond the problems and pitfalls of modernity.



To achieve this, the volume unfolds in three sections. The initial section, “The Archaeology of Modernity,” is composed of four chapters that identify and evaluate modernity’s four dominant worldviews. The first chapter contrasts the medieval period with the factors and thinkers that gave rise to “the classical modern worldview”—a perspective that privatized religion while asserting great faith in progress and rationality.

This is followed by chapter two, which sketches two alternative formulations to the classical modern worldview. The first of these, “the structural-critical modern worldview,” includes thinkers (Hegel, Marx) and schools of thought (especially the Frankfurt school) that credit modernity’s social and economic problems to the structures and systems of society. The second, “the cultural-critical modern worldview,” includes those (Buber, Arendt, Benjamin, Levinas, etc.) who credit these modern problems to culturally embedded “beliefs, attitudes, morality, political will, lifestyles, and sense of human responsibility” (p. 48).

In turn, chapter three contrasts the rise of ideologies in classical modernity with the postmodern worldview—a worldview that replaced certitude with malaise, truth with display, meta-narratives with “wild pluralism,” and commitment with deferral. The section concludes with a chapter (ch. 4) displaying the inadequacy of modernity’s four worldviews when it comes to pressing “paradoxes of modernity” (p. 91).

The second section of the volume, “Transcendence and Modernity: Resources for Moving Beyond Modernity” is composed of five chapters. The initial chapter in this section (ch. 5) raises the following question: given modernity’s besetting problems and the failure of secularism in light of the resurgence of religion, how might (a healthy, Christian) religion move us beyond the challenges dogging modernity? This question is answered in four probes: the import of the sociological work of Philip Rieff for illuminating the role of (Christian) religion in healthy cultures (ch. 6); the import of the anthropological work of Renee Girard for illuminating the role of (Christian) religion in human flourishing (ch. 7); the import of the philosophical work of Lenn Goodman for illuminating the role of (Christian) religion in spawning a thick, principled pluralism (ch. 8); and the import of Abraham Kuyper’s theological work for illuminating the role of (Christian) religion in addressing poverty (ch. 9).

The final section, “Finding Ways Beyond Modernity,” is composed of two chapters that redress the paradoxes plaguing the modern age by drawing on the resources of the Christian faith. The first of

these (ch. 10) reassess the four modern worldviews in light of the “call from outside” (p. 217) heard in the (Christian) religion. Given that modern worldviews are found wanting and the (Christian) religion offers a way beyond modernity’s impasses and paradoxes, the remainder of the chapter turns squarely to setting up the interconnected, seemingly insoluble economic and environmental issues the modern age faces.

The next chapter (ch. 11) picks up these economic and environmental issues. Using examples of refreshingly different approaches to economics and in light of an unfolding global environmental crisis, this final chapter details how the re-entry of faith offers a critical resource to counter these forces. The volume concludes with an epilogue that situates the discussion in light of Bob Goudzwaard’s larger scholarly and political life.

This volume is an outstanding primer for Christians seeking an intelligent, nuanced, and informed assessment of and engagement with (Western) modernity. Not only does it provide accessible inroads to a host of important thinkers (e.g., Arendt, Baudrillard, Benjamin, Casanova, Foucault, Girard, Habermas, Hegel, Kant, Kuyper, Levinas, Lyotard, Marx, Nietzsche, Rief, Sloterdijk, C. Taylor, etc.), it recognizes the relationship of these thinkers to the concrete problems of the modern age. What’s more, it brings the Christian tradition front and center into the conversation. Rather than being a mere “dialogue partner,” it is a critical source, even *the* key for addressing the paradoxes that haunt modernity.

Such strengths noted, this reviewer is left with a number of unanswered questions. Is not the concept of “worldview” itself somewhat complicit with the modern project? Does modernism reject the sacred or merely displace it into secular versions of cherished rituals and beliefs? If addressing modern problems entails a plurality of voices meeting around a shared moral vision of civility, how can a robust pluralism claim such a moral consensus? Such questions are not meant to be defeaters. This reviewer has no doubt that Bartholomew and Goudzwaard have thought about such questions. Rather, they serve to illustrate the volume has limits (as the authors acknowledge in the introduction).

Nonetheless, for those looking for a thoughtful and compelling primer on a Christian engagement with (Western) modernity, *Beyond the Modern Age* serves as an outstanding resource.

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Stefan Paas. *Church Planting in the Secular West: Learning from the European Experience*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2016. 316 pp. £22.99/\$34.00.

Stefan Paas is a church planting practitioner within a post-Christian context that no longer supports faith through organic, cultural adoption. He also holds the J. H. Bavinck Chair for Missiology and Intercultural Theology at the Free University of Amsterdam and serves as Professor of Missiology at Theological University in Kampen, the Netherlands. This makes him uniquely positioned to apply the disciplines of theology and missiology in and through the ministry of church planting.

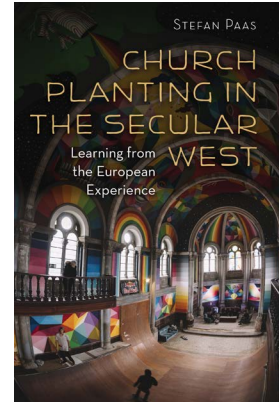
Paas provides readers with an excellent primer concerning the history of church growth in Europe. He reviews various forms of “church growth” and the motivations for planting new churches that have been evident over the course of some 2,000 years. He exposes the secular impact of Church Growth Theory and helps the reader discern the difference between church growth and church migration. And of particular interest, he demonstrates how this secularization has led to an inordinate focus on *technique* and the production of numbers.

Paas also exposes readers to both the pragmatic application of Religious Market Theory in church planting *and* its inevitable consequences. In the economy of the Religious Market, informed buyers and competing providers encounter one another in a religious marketplace. In this marketplace, older providers (churches), can often lose market share to newer, nimble, more market-savvy providers (church plants), thereby creating church growth at one end of the market, while cannibalizing the other end.

He notes a more recent challenge in many places in the West. This market has become saturated. As new consumers migrate in, they establish their own Religious Marketplace (e.g., Buddhist, Muslim, Hindu, etc.), leaving the original marketplace to compete for the same declining market share. This, Paas believes, has led to an urgent need for church renewal in the secular West. Accordingly, he suggests that church plants not only embrace growth by re-franchising in a community with more favorable demographics; they can also serve as missional laboratories that incubate fresh growth where planters ask the fundamental question, “*What kind of church must be planted in this soil?*” Without this latter approach, church planting, he argues, is little more than denominational expansion.

One of the greatest challenges for church planters who serve beyond the epicenter of evangelical strength is perspective. Since most church planting is occurring within contexts that already have the greatest number of churches, most church planting dogma is necessarily developed in that context, and from there it is pushed out into the world of missions. Consequently, church planting perspectives and prescriptions unavoidably assume conditions that favor evangelical expressions of church, making many “proven” church planting formulas unproductive in those fields that are unseeded (most gospel-destitute).

The great irony of this missiological tension is uncovered in Paas’s primary theological premise: church planting is not actually the “biblical mandate for all times and places.” He gently dismantles the Wagnerian premise that church planting is the greatest method of evangelism known to man. He seems to echo John Piper in his insistence that it is the penultimate (not ultimate) goal of missions. In fact, Paas proposes, that even in the book of Acts, it is “the Word,” “the Kingdom,” or the gospel that was



being planted, *not the church!* This, in my view, exposes one of the greatest errors in the modern Church Growth movement and stands as one of the greatest contributions of this book. Paas's premise is quite clear. If we want our church growth methods to stand firmly on the foundation of Scripture, we will focus on sowing the seed of the gospel.

In *Church Planting in the Secular West*, Stefan Paas offers a refreshing counterbalance to the hyperbolic champions of church planting movements. But because he is also a practitioner, Paas manages to write without the incumbent condescension that can unintentionally leak out of academia.

This book comes at a defining moment for, in the field of church planting, each of us has developed strong allegiance to methods that have worked historically. In this regard, whether one is a church planter or a pastor, Paas's hedgehog illustration (p. 199) is worth the price of the book. In the rapid, seismic shifts of contextual change, he issues a stark warning: *our best practices can become our worst overnight.*

As a student of missions, this is a book I recommend for inclusion in every missions curriculum. As a missiologist, it is the book I wish I had used to train and orient all new missionaries who hoped to grow the gospel among unreached people groups. *Church Planting in the Secular West* shifts the conversation beyond current evangelical cultural assumptions, and for this reason, whether one is serving in Europe, Asia or Africa, missions practitioners will be informed, convicted, strengthened and encouraged by reading it.

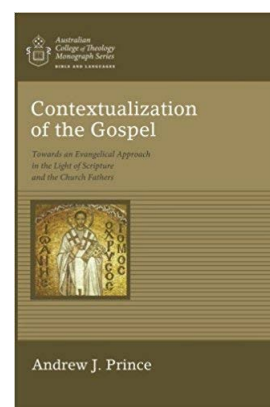
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Andrew J. Prince. *Contextualization of the Gospel: Towards an Evangelical Approach in the Light of Scripture and the Church Fathers*. Australian College of Theology Monograph Series. Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2017. xiii + 255 pp. £24.00/\$30.00.

Some evangelicals upon hearing the word “contextualization” immediately think “compromise” or “syncretism.” Andrew J. Prince, lecturer in missiology and practical theology at Brisbane School of Theology, addresses such concerns in this published version of his doctoral dissertation. He defends the thesis “that a missiological methodology that is governed by Scripture, while also drawing from the church fathers, the social sciences and practical theology, is not only consistent with the nature of evangelicalism but also consistent with the nature of missiology itself” (p. vii).

Prince believes that evangelical treatments of contextualization thus far have suffered from two weaknesses: first, an emphasis upon anthropology to the neglect of serious theological reflection, and second, too little attention given to lessons we can learn from the church fathers. Although he perhaps overstates the first weakness, he commendably seeks to fill these two gaps in the contextualization discussion based upon a clear conviction of biblical authority.

The first two chapters concisely define terms and outline some of the key debates regarding contextualization. These serve as a helpful primer for readers unfamiliar with the issues. Chapter three



takes up his desire to provide a more theologically robust reflection on the task of contextualization. He does this by carefully examining the sermons in the book of Acts, concluding with helpful principles for contextualization. Unlike other similar works that focus on Paul's sermons, Prince also discusses Peter's Pentecost sermon and Stephen's martyrdom sermon. Space does not allow him to take up other examples of contextualization in the Old and New Testaments.

Chapters four and five examine contextualization by the early church fathers, in particular John Chrysostom. Prince's premise is that, "The large quantity of surviving homiletical material and commentary by early Christian preachers provides the observant reader with significant insights into how preachers pastored their congregations and sought to contextualize the unchangeable word of God to their respective audiences. This is never more the case than for John Chrysostom" (p. 143).

Prince discusses Chrysostom's sermons preached to various audiences as a case studies of such contextualization, once again identifying principles for today. Chrysostom's example becomes almost authoritative for Prince. It serves as the basis for his passing critique of the approaches of Phil Parshall and Rick Brown who minister in Muslim contexts (p. 197; this is one of the few points where Prince's work lacks necessary nuancing). His chapters on Chrysostom provide more detail than most readers will want or need. But despite these caveats, they admirably fulfill the second purpose of his work by highlighting the value of studying the church fathers for an evangelical understanding of contextualization. His final chapter concisely recaps his key findings.

As a published dissertation with 230 pages of text, one cannot expect this volume to deliver a comprehensive discussion of contextualization. But it does provide, in exemplary manner, an in-depth and insightful treatment of the sermons in Acts and of Chrysostom, including how they should inform a broader evangelical understanding of contextualization. His fifteen principles for contextualization are well argued. Not only missionaries, but also pastors would do well to consider them. More, of course, could and should be said about contextualization, but that would go beyond the purview of this volume.

The lessons from Acts are not particularly novel to readers already familiar with the literature. But his study of Chrysostom does provide fresh insight informing the evangelical discussion of contextualization. Those chapters will be of particular interest to preachers wishing to be relevant to their audience while remaining faithful to the biblical text. Readers skeptical about the very concept of contextualization will appreciate Prince's appeal to scriptural authority and perhaps become persuaded that the answer to bad contextualization is not *no* contextualization (which is impossible), but rather *more biblically guided* contextualization. We can be grateful that Prince has provided us with just such a volume.

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Ronald M. Rothenberg. *Solving the Immigrant Church Crisis: The Biblical Solution of Parallel Ministry*. Charleston, SC: CreateSpace, 2017. 159 pp. £12.12/\$14.99.

Immigrant churches in America have faced a difficult problem: effectively reaching the locally-born generation. Drawing on his ministry experience and exegesis of Acts 6:1–7, Ronald Rothenberg’s *Solving the Immigrant Church Crisis* offers a solution for church leaders in immigrant churches.

According to Rothenberg, immigrant churches often led by OBCs (overseas-born church-people) engage in culturally irrelevant ministry towards LBCs (local-born church-people) and have high attrition rates among LBC pastors. As a result, LBCs have begun an exodus from the church and even from the faith altogether. Building on the premise that the Bible, not sociology, must be the basis of the solution, Rothenberg proposes a parallel ministry model of church leadership based on Acts 6:1–7.

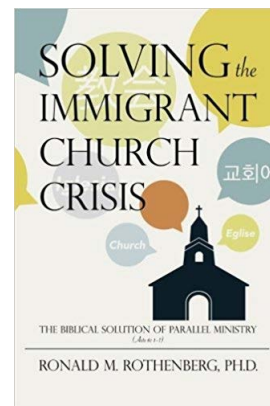
In Chapter 1, Rothenberg argues the immigrant church crisis is a universal experience among immigrant groups. Focusing on evangelical Christianity in the United States, the author claims that cultural differences in values “results in the reticence of OBCs to transfer financial and decision-making authority to LBCs” (p. 20). He then presents a series of excerpts from correspondence with both OBCs and LBCs in a variety of immigrant churches. After each quotation, the book provides questions for reflection and discussion. Topics addressed include joint services, frustrations between OBCs and LBCs, and differences in ministry approach.

Chapter 2 presents an exposition of Acts 6:1–7 and a parallel ministry structure based on this passage. According to Rothenberg, this ministry model has two aspects, the spiritual-relational and the ecclesiastical. Focusing on the latter, the author argues that the structure of immigrant churches should have separate, interdependent, and parallel ecclesiastical elements (p. 38). Rothenberg maintains the Jerusalem church is a valid analogy to the immigrant church. He likens the Hebraic Jews to OBCs and Hellenistic Jews to LBCs. Rothenberg points out that OBCs fail to meet the needs of the LBCs, much like the Hebraic Jews did not meet the needs of Hellenistic Jews.

The author argues from Acts 6:2–3 that the solution lies in transferring financial and decision-making authority. However, the church still functions as one church and is able to reach unbelievers from both groups (Acts 6:7). Rothenberg continues with some supplementary points about this church model, from parallel meetings to equal authority. He insists that this model can be achieved if there are favorable spiritual-relational conditions (e.g., attitudes towards one another). Ministry effectiveness is promoted by churches having co-pastors and separate leadership boards for the parallel ministries; yet, joint boards for special issues would affect the whole church.

In Chapter 3, Rothenberg suggests vital principles from Acts 6:1–7, arguing for the normative nature of this ministry model. He then responds to its perceived objections. He clarifies the distinctive elements of the ministry model presented in Chapter 2. He addresses issues such as the distinction between independent churches and interdependent congregations, clarifying the existence of two leadership boards, and the value of financial autonomy for the LBC congregation.

In Chapter 4, the author surveys three prominent solutions for immigrant churches that have previously been proposed. He places each within the context of the typical development of an immigrant church. These proposals represent stages of church growth. Suggested solutions include: (1) bilingual



worship with translation, (2) separate worship services without transferring financial and decision-making authority, and (3) planting an independent church.

Chapter 5 shows the deficiency of these three solutions. Rothenberg contends the bilingual worship model relies on a false analogy from Scripture and is counterproductive for solving the crisis of the immigrant church. Next, he argues the separate worship model misses key elements of Acts 6 and only promotes *partial* parallel ministry. Finally, Rothenberg identifies the church planting model as driven by sociological not biblical reasons. He points out that similar benefits can be found in the parallel ministry model yet without hurting the immigrant church in the long run.

Given the dearth of published resources addressing immigrant churches, Rothenberg's book provides helpful content for discussion. He helpfully presents perspectives from both OBCs and LBCs, providing cultural insights alongside them. The quotations from the OBCs in Chapter 1 are especially poignant, such as the words of older OBC parents about their children. His charts and figures are clearly presented. His anecdotes are relevant. Rothenberg clearly explains his exegetical methodology and provides adequate Scriptural evidence for his conclusions.

Rothenberg's book does have some weaknesses. His exegesis begs for more depth and justification, especially in countering the widely-held application of Acts 6 towards a pastor-deacon leadership structure. It also raises a larger question: to what degree are each of the individual church situations described in Acts prescriptive in nature? The author's content is often repetitive. At times, he makes broad generalizations about the dynamics in immigrant churches without substantiation. Finally, Rothenberg's thesis would be much more compelling if he provided anecdotal accounts of success utilizing the ministry model he espouses.

Despite its weaknesses, *Solving the Immigrant Church Crisis* is a helpful addition to a limited conversation regarding the church in America. Pastors and church leaders in immigrant churches can use its content to catalyze fruitful discussions about effective ministry.

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