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DESCRIPTION

Themelios is an international, evangelical, peer-reviewed theological journal that expounds and defends the historic Christian faith. Its primary audience is theological students and pastors, though scholars read it as well. *Themelios* began in 1975 and was operated by RTSF/UCCF in the UK, and it became a digital journal operated by The Gospel Coalition in 2008. The editorial team draws participants from across the globe as editors, essayists, and reviewers. *Themelios* is published three times a year online at The Gospel Coalition website in PDF and HTML, and may be purchased in digital format with Logos Bible Software and in print with Wipf and Stock. *Themelios* is copyrighted by The Gospel Coalition. Readers are free to use it and circulate it in digital form without further permission, but they must acknowledge the source and may not change the content.

ARTICLES

Themelios typically publishes articles that are 4,000 to 9,000 words (including footnotes). Prospective contributors should submit articles by email to the managing editor in Microsoft Word (.doc or .docx) or Rich Text Format (.rtf). Submissions should not include the author's name or institutional affiliation for blind peer-review. Articles should use clear, concise English and should consistently adopt either UK or USA spelling and punctuation conventions. Special characters (such as Greek and Hebrew) require a Unicode font. Abbreviations and bibliographic references should conform to *The SBL Handbook of Style* (2nd ed.), supplemented by *The Chicago Manual of Style* (16th ed.). For examples of the the journal's style, consult the most recent Themelios issues and the contributor guidelines.

REVIEWS

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

EDITORIAL

The Changing Face of Words

— D. A. Carson —

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Anyone who reads thoughtfully knows that words often change their meaning with time and context. Christians are a "peculiar people," the KJV tells us, only "peculiar" did not mean in 1611 what it means today. Sometimes an older meaning of a word continues in a restricted sector of the culture, even though most people use it in quite a different way: e.g., for most readers today, God's gift is not "unspeakable" but "indescribable" (2 Cor 9:15), even though a conservative fringe of the populace confuse the two words. Sometimes a difference in meaning or overtone is triggered not by the passage of time, but by a different context. "Redemption" in the arcane legal terminology of a mortgage document does not conjure up exactly the same images as the use of the word in the New Testament.

All of this is common knowledge. These examples are innocuous precisely because the change in meaning is widely recognized. Far more inimical to careful conversation are those expressions whose meanings, or whose associations, are frequently unrecognized. Here are a few of them.

1. Guilt

For many decades now, "guilt" has sometimes referred to culpability, but very commonly referred to what might better be thought of as feelings of guilt. Our judicial systems try to establish the guilt or innocence of accused parties, regardless of whether those parties feel guilty; by contrast, our counselors often focus their attention on the guilt feelings of their clients, taking relatively little notice of the extent to which guilt feelings may be grounded in guilt. All of this, as I indicated, has been understood for a long time. When preachers talk about "*penal* substitutionary atonement," they understand that the punishment is merited: before God the party is guilty and deserves the penalty which, in the case of substitutionary atonement, is discharged by another. This does not mean that wise pastors overlook the terrible burden of guilt feelings. Guilt feelings may be the psychological result of real guilt. Sometimes, however, people feel terribly guilty over things that have no valid tie to real guilt (as, for example, when a woman is sexually assaulted as she walks home from work, yet labors for years under guilt feelings [or shame? See further below.]). The careful application of passages about the cross of Christ rightly addresses both our guilt and our feelings of guilt. Efforts to expunge the latter without addressing the former may leave a sinner feeling better about themselves, but still unreconciled to God; and exclusive emphasis on addressing the real guilt before God may generate a cerebral grasp of the nature of penal substitution without providing much comfort.

All of this is common discourse in Evangelical and Reformed circles, and in some others as well. The reason for bringing it up again is that current cultural pressures are making the potential

misunderstandings worse, and harder to clear up. To incur guilt, one must have committed an offense, whether against another individual, against the state (or the law, or the crown, or the like), or against God. Some offenses (e.g., theft) against individuals can be addressed by restitution (perhaps with an additional percentage, as in the OT); some cannot (e.g., rape). Traditionally, to avoid a swamp of subjectivity or, worse, a vendetta, most cultures have established a codification of personal offenses and the corresponding punishments for the guilty. Steal someone's cow, and this is what will happen to you. Today, however, even though much of such codification still prevails, so much emphasis in Western culture is laid on the individual and his or her "rights" that new offenses against the individual are being discovered (or invented) every day. Who decides when an "offense" against an individual has been committed? When the individual feels offended? There is now not only tension between being guilty and feeling guilty, but between being guilty according to some codification of law and feeling the other party is guilty even though no code has been breached (or it has been breached only by the most egregiously creative legal extensions).

More serious is the culture's increasing suspicion of external authority, whether that of God, of the state, or of traditional values. The broad sweep of what that looks like, for good and ill, has been discussed endlessly and need not be canvassed again here. For our purposes it is enough to observe that the traditional understanding of guilt, of culpability, over against guilt feelings, requires the authority of a God or a state or an adopted statute to transgress. If I become my own authority for right and wrong, it is difficult to see how there can be any form of "guilt" that transcends guilt feelings. In that case, there is no need for a sacrifice to deal with that guilt, either.

So in our evangelism, we simply must reserve space for talking about the God who is offended, and thus the nature of guilt, and thus God's solution to this guilt. The gospel provides more than psychological comfort.

2. Shame

For several decades, missionaries and other culture commentators have pointed out that while much of the Western world fastens its attention on guilt, most of the Eastern world fastens its attention on shame. In such a context, if you present Christ as the one who deals with our guilt, the argument will not resonate as much as an argument that asserts Jesus deals with our shame.

Anyone who has spent time in, say, Southeast Asia, knows there is something to this analysis. One may go further and say that our increasing cross-cultural awareness in this global world affords Christians the opportunity to study the Bible afresh, and recognize the place that *both* guilt *and* shame play in its pages. Certainly both guilt and shame surface at the introduction of sin (Gen 3); indeed, they are so entangled that it is sometimes difficult to separate them, except in analytical terms.

Once again, however, just as there is "guilt" and "guilt"—the Bible focuses on guilt before God while we tend to focus on guilt feelings—so also is there "shame" and "shame." As far as I can see, most shame cultures worry about loss of face before family and friends. People worry about doing something that brings shame on the family, lets down the side, makes it difficult to face neighbors. The fear of bringing shame on yourself or your family becomes a powerful motivation to conform to accepted norms. Of course, both guilt and shame operate in both the East and the West, but there is a preponderant emphasis on shame in the East.

Yet the emphasis on shame in the Bible is not first and foremost with reference to peers and to family, but to God. Adam loses face before God, and hides from him in the garden. In other words, our deepest shame is the loss of face we bear before God, not before our parents. Because God himself tells us we are to honor our parents, shaming our parents cannot be entirely separated from shaming God. Yet where a shame culture focuses almost entirely on horizontal relationships, it is still not ready to learn how the gospel addresses our shame. Instead of glorifying God, we have brought shame to his name. In a shame culture, it is necessary to demonstrate that, in the light of what the Bible says about God, our deepest shame humbles us before the living God, who alone can raise us up.

3. Conscience

The best concise recent treatment of conscience is doubtless that of Andrew David Naselli and J. D. Crowley.[1] My interest here is a little more historically focused: How has one's understanding of conscience changed with the changing of the worldview in which it is embedded?

In the second half of the sixteenth century, Richard Hooker (1554–1600) sought a path between the Catholic churchmanship of the past and the Calvinist churchmanship influenced by Geneva. After 1588 and the destruction of the Spanish Armada, the dangers from the Catholic side were substantially dissipated. Doctrinally, Hooker largely disagreed with Trent but was more open to the late medieval theologians than some of his Calvinist peers. This led to complex discussions about the desirability (or otherwise!) of freedom of conscience. At a time when church and state together imposed the standards of churchmanship and worship that the ruling parties thought acceptable throughout the state, to argue that it could be good for the nation to allow some flexibility grounded in the conscience of the individual believer was innovative. But note well that this was not freedom to choose anything; one's conscience was constrained by the given revelation, by the authority of God. The question was how to interpret it. Even a century later, when John Locke (1632–1704) advocated a much broader freedom of conscience, it was in some ways constrained by Deist assumptions.

By contrast, freedom of conscience today is not far from an appeal to let everyone do that which is right in their own eyes. There is no eternal referent to which appeals might be made for a different interpretation; conscience is individualistic and self-referring.

4. Tolerance

It has often been pointed out that in the past every culture displays both tolerance and intolerance. There may be less tolerance where a regime is more dictatorial, or where the plausibility structures are copious and interlocking,[2] but every regime allows a certain amount of dissent, perhaps because it is impossible to control everything, perhaps because of a belief that it is good for the society to permit and perhaps even foment differences of opinion.

All of this is simply a clumsy way of saying that in the past, whether in the time of Tiglath-Pileser III, the time of Louis XIV, the time of Queen Victoria, or the time of Teddy Roosevelt, tolerance presents itself as a parasitic virtue. By this I mean that it is a virtue that necessarily feeds off larger cultural

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[1] *Conscience: What It Is, How to Train It, and Loving Those Who Differ* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2016).

[2] Cf. the discussion in my *The Intolerance of Tolerance* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2012).

values and virtues: it was always a question of how much deviation from the cultural norms could be considered good for the culture. Tolerance was neither an independent virtue nor an independent vice: it was always perceived as either a good or at least a useful deviation from larger norms, or a wicked and dangerous deviation from those norms—but in any case, it had no meaning apart from those norms which gave it shape.

But in some calls for tolerance today, tolerance seeks to project itself as an independent virtue, perhaps the most important virtue. I have argued elsewhere that this turns out to be intellectually confusing and morally perverse. It is intellectually confusing because it makes little sense to speak of *tolerating* something or other unless one disagrees with it: one cannot meaningfully say that a Christian tolerates an atheist, or vice versa, until one establishes that they disagree. It is not tolerance *unless one first disagrees*; if there is no disagreement, one may speak of moral indifference, or ignorance of the other's position, or carelessness, but not of tolerance. This elevation of tolerance to the level of independent virtue is not only intellectually confusing, however, but morally perverse. It is morally perverse because it proves to be spectacularly intolerant toward those who claim certain other positions are wrong. In the name of tolerance, this new so-called tolerance adopts intolerance.

What should be clear by now from all four of these examples is that the dramatic differences in meaning is a correlative of the loss of God, or at least the loss of an external standard. Guilt becomes guilty feelings with special ease when there is no God or law before whom or which we are objectively guilty; shame becomes loss of face before peers if there is no God before whom to be ashamed. Freedom of conscience becomes sanction to do whatever I want to do, instead of the right to interpret what God has given. And tolerance becomes either an incoherent mess, or, at best, nothing more than a poorly grounded plea to be nice.

The urgency of thinking and speaking worldviewishly presses on us ever harder.

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Outgoing Editor's Note: Since TGC inherited *Themelios* in 2008, I have served as the General Editor, while Dr Brian Tabb has served as the Managing Editor since 2013. Those of us who work on the journal know that Brian has done more of my work than I have of his. This is the last fascicle where that arrangement will prevail. Effective immediately, Brian becomes the Editor. I have the utmost confidence in and respect for his carefulness, good judgment, and theological acumen. With the change, Brian will from now on write two of the three Editorials each year; I'll continue to write the third.

Don Carson
President, TGC

S T R A N G E   T I M E S

Meta-Madness

— Daniel Strange —

Daniel Strange is college director and tutor in culture, religion and public theology at Oak Hill College, London.

> I do not feel at all at ease with these kind of questions. I don't like these kind of problems. I always have the impression, as once Heidegger put it, that we have here people busy sharpening knives when there is nothing left to cut. (Giorgio Agamben)[1]

I've been suffering from a serious bout of 'meta-madness' and I'm blaming Charles Taylor. This debilitating affliction consists of being mired in method and plagued by prolegomena. It's the theological equivalent of never getting off first base, of waggling interminably on the tee, never able to strike the ball. It's when good and necessary methodological hygiene starts to take on unhealthy OCD-like tendencies. As with all these things, no doubt, nature and nurture are involved. Temperamentally, both before and after conversion, I've always been quite inquisitive, asking lots of questions. The bigger they come the better. Twenty-five years ago as a bright-eyed and zealous (read 'rather annoying') evangelical undergraduate studying for a theology and religious studies degree in an extremely liberal department in the UK, every lecture discussion, no matter what the topic, would quickly descend into matters of method and the ultimate authorities from which we were building our theology. My philosophy of religion lecturer Denys Turner[2] was calling me 'his Baptist Fundamentalist' two lectures in. Second row, last seat on the left half of the room (yes, I always sat in the same seat), I just couldn't stop myself asking meta questions. I just couldn't let things lie. It was fun at the beginning but after a while became pretty tiresome for all concerned especially for the bunch of students at the back of the class who has only chosen to study theology because it was 'something to do' and so really didn't want to be there. Oh how they loved me. The result was endless pouring over foundations with very little construction to show. It's probably this experience that led me into student ministry with theological students in similar liberal departments, and then into lecturing within a *confessional* academic community. It's probably how I've ended up lecturing on the theology of religions, worldview and apologetics, and it's probably why I've been so drawn to Reformed theology in the key of Van Til where systems, presuppositions and transcendental 'stuff' is where the *real* theological action is to be found. Looking back I thank God for this trajectory but there have been times when the 'meta-madness' sets in with the result that I seem to end up pawing forlornly at the outside window while inside the theological party is in full swing. Some

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[1] Giorgio Agamben, 'What is a Paradigm?', lecture at European Graduate School, August 2002, transcript available at http://www.maxvanmanen.com/files/2014/03/Agamben-What-is-a-paradigm1.pdf.

[2] Currently Horace Tracy Pitkin professor emeritus of Historical Theology at Yale University.

of my colleagues and students are a little worried about me and have tried to shake me out of it.[3] But I'm still in pain and as I've said, Charles Taylor is responsible for this latest flare-up. I hope a little musing on this meta-madness might be cathartic and constructive.

As someone who lectures on culture, religion and public theology, the Canadian philosopher's *A Secular Age*[4] is unavoidable – 'we can't go over it, we can't go under it, Oh no! we've got to go through it!'[5] I'm not the first to note that it's a breath taking achievement: polymathic, gargantuan and audacious.[6] Moreover, for someone who increasingly reacts against a flat, abstracted, ahistorical, oversimplified and reductionistic biblicism, Taylor's work *both* in substance and style is a heady potion. It's big and bold. It takes historical complexity, connectivity and contingency seriously. 'Ideas have consequences, as Richard Weaver put it. True, but consequences have ideas.… We feel his descriptions in our gut because he's describing *our* world, where we feel and experience the world differently regardless of focal beliefs.'[7] And as James K. A. Smith nicely states, Taylor helps us 'attend to the background of what Jeffrey Stout calls our "dialectical location," the concrete *particulars* that make us "us" that got us where we are. This is a bit like realizing that forging a relationship with a significant other requires getting her or his back story; that there is a family history that is embedded in your partner, and understanding the partner requires understanding that story if the relationship is going to move forward.'[8] Against other rival and unsatisfactory accounts of the 'secular', inhabiting Taylor's story is not only plausible but intoxicating as it marries detailed ethnographic granularity with broad Romantic sweep.

And yet as a theologian I have had a nagging question: from the perspective of Reformed *theology*, what is Taylor actually saying? This comes in a weaker and stronger form.

The weaker form became a question (there we go again!), I asked in public to Jamie Smith when he spoke at an event in London a few years back in the run up to his commentary on Taylor's *A Secular Faith.* I had listened to Smith's lucid and helpful summary of Taylor's thesis delivered to a broadly evangelical audience. The question I asked, second row, last seat on the right half of the room (*only joking!*) may well have sounded impudent and arrogant but certainly wasn't meant to be. It went something like this: 'Yes! And?…'

To re-iterate, I don't think my question was driven by a 'not invented here' attitude, but was rather a genuine enquiry. From the perspective of theological anthropology, and specifically a full-fat robust *Reformed* theological anthropology, what was Taylor saying that is actually new? Were there any anthropological surprises here? Yes, Taylor has his own lexicon that we've all been learning and utilising

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[3] One colleague has pointed me in the direction of the philosopher Giorgio Agamben (quoted above). Agamben writes, 'Anyone familiar with research in the human sciences knows that, contrary to common opinion, a reflection on method usually follows practical application, rather than preceding it. It is a matter, then, of ultimate or penultimate thoughts, to be discussed among friends and colleagues, which can legitimately be articulated only after extensive research,' *The Signature of All Things: On Method* (New York: Zone Books, 2009), 7.

[4] Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2007).

[5] Michael Rosen, *We're Going on a Bear Hunt* (London: Walker, 1989).

[6] See Collin Hansen, ed., *Our Secular Age: Ten Years of Reading and Applying Charles Taylor* (Deerfield, IL: The Gospel Coalition, 2017).

[7] Michael Horton, 'The Enduring Power of the Christian Story: Reformation Theology for a Secular Age', in *Our Secular Age: Ten Years of Reading and Applying Charles Taylor*, ed. Collin Hansen (Deerfield, IL: The Gospel Coalition, 2017), 24.

[8] James K. A. Smith, *How (Not) to be Secular: Reading Charles Taylor* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2014), 25.

in our writing and speaking: 'subtraction story', 'cross-pressured', 'flatness and fullness', 'buffered self', 'social imaginary', 'immanent frame', and 'fragilisation.'[9] But put through a Reformed 'Google-translate' isn't Taylor's simply complementing, confirming and fleshing out older well-worked doctrines, such as the *imago Dei, sensus divinitatis, Incurvatus in se* and the *fabrica idolorum*?

One might protest unfairness as Taylor is not attempting to do theology. His purpose is philosophical, phenomenological and historical. He is being descriptive and explanatory. But now comes the stronger form of the question because there is theology going on and it's quite close to the surface:

> Taylor is a practicing Roman Catholic who hasn't shied away from bringing his personal convictions to bear on his scholarship. However, *A Secular Age* reveals a complex and perhaps even contradictory set of theological assumptions. On the one hand he's critical of the processes that have disengaged, disenchanted, disembedded, and buffered the self toward an exclusive humanism in which human flourishing is the only goal and immanence the only frame. On the other hand, it is not clear the extent to which his own ideal is specifically Christian….Taylor hardly avoids doctrine, but many of his most direct normative excurses display an almost visceral reaction against traditional teachings.[10]

Horton proceeds to describe a list of doctrines that Taylor rejects, but which Reformed theology cherishes. Moreover, it is doctrine itself which seems to come under scrutiny in Taylor's account.[11] In a similar vein, Matthew Rose notes in *A Secular Age* an implied and indirect Catholicism, but one of a decidedly 'liberal' and 'Hegelian' bent. The result is that Rose critiques Taylor for being overly dogmatic about contingency:

> By assimilating a secular way of believing with the essential content of Christian faith, *A Secular Age* sanctifies and makes absolute precisely what we should regard as contingent – the age in which he lives…. [H]e makes secularism invincible to the radical criticism it most needs. Like all Hegelians, Taylor is an apologist for the present, a theologian of the status quo.[12]

And thus my meta-madness is triggered. Sirenlike, I'm instinctively *pulled towards* Taylor's analysis and its helpfulness for cultural exegesis and mission. Rose and Horton's alarm bells *pull me back* from an overly uncritical reading of Taylor. This might be enough to get on happily with one's theological life: take and appropriate the good, filter out and reject the less helpful and move on. But not for me. I seem inexorably to be *pulled under* to consider the theological criteria and justification for my appropriation and appreciation (or not) of Taylor. How much and on what basis do I engage with Taylor given the unorthodoxy of his own theological commitments? How much are his *Catholic*, his *liberal* Catholic, his *Hegelian* influenced liberal Catholic commitments detrimental to his project and my assessment of it? What's my theological method for discernment? These become my pressing issues.

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[9] Smith offers a helpful glossary of Taylor terms in *How (Not) to be Secular*, 140–43.

[10] Horton, 'The Enduring Power', 25.

[11] Ibid., 31.

[12] Matthew Rose, 'Tayloring Christianity', *First Things*, December 2014, https://www.firstthings.com/article/2014/12/tayloring-christianity.

Sucked into this vortex, I return to how one might assess the work of a polymath like Taylor by viewing him as *a historian* and so giving me permission to have a brief foray into the world of historiography comparing and contrasting two Reformed scholars and historians Carl Trueman and Garry Williams. I choose these two because I'm familiar with them and respect their work.[13]

Carl Trueman had not written much on method although one notes a comment at the beginning of his study on John Owen, *Claims of Truth:*

> My interest is not to discover whether Owen was right or wrong, but to see what he said, why he said it, whether it was coherent by the standards of his day, and how he fits into the theological context of his own times and of the western tradition as a whole. Of course I do have personal intellectual convictions about the theological value of Owen's writings, but I have tried to be aware of my own theological commitments and to keep them as separate as humanly possible from my analysis.[14]

Although admittedly late to the historiographical party, noting that 'obsession with method is one of the baleful aspects of modern literary theory',[15] Trueman's *Histories and Fallacies* uses the case studies of Holocaust Denial and Marxism to argue that while there can never be neutrality in historical writing, there can be objectivity: 'at the heart of the historian's task is this matter of verifiability and accountability by public criteria.'[16]

Key for Trueman is a distinction made by historian Keith Evans between historical *theory* and historical *method*, which

> goes a long way to explaining why good historians can appreciate and interact with others who operate from different theoretical positions. I can read feminist, Marxist and structuralist works and find them helpful, and indeed where necessary challenge their findings because, by and large, good historians in these fields are committed to the same kinds of methods of verification that I use.[17]

Where historical writing goes awry is when a theory becomes an 'all-encompassing aprioristic view of reality into which the phenomena of history must be made to fit…. It is a form of idealism that will ultimately squeeze the presupposed framework that is derived from abstract philosophical principles, not the result of induction or deductions from historical phenomena.'[18] On this basis one can see how Trueman might approach something like *A Secular Age.* Indeed he has, in the recently published TGC book on Taylor's tome. Appreciative of Taylor's appreciation of the complexity of historical narrative,

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[13] I was *Themelios*'s managing editor while Trueman was the general editor when the journal was still part of UCCF in the early 2000s. Williams was a colleague of mine at Oak Hill College for a number of years. Indeed one of my regrets is not pulling off the organisation of a heavyweight match between Williams and Trueman on the teaching of church history. As I remember, all parties were willing to participate but we never 'got it on'. For a good recent introduction to Christian historiography see Jay D. Green, *Christian Historiography: Five Rival Versions* (Waco: Baylor, 2015).

[14] Carl Trueman, *The Claims of Truth: John Owen's Trinitarian Theology* (Carlisle: Paternoster, 1998), ix.

[15] Carl Trueman, *History and Fallacies: Problems Faced in the Writing of History* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2010), 20.

[16] Trueman, *Histories,* 28. See Richard J. Evans, *In Defence of History* (London: Granta, 1997), 127.

[17] Trueman, *Histories*, 55–56.

[18] Ibid., 101.

Trueman's main critique is that while Taylor's account is cogent, it needs supplementing by factoring in material factors – political, technological and cultural.[19]

Garry William's historiography is explicitly and unashamedly theological.[20] Any study of history will be inevitably selective, subjective and limited in its scope, always being filtered through a particular metanarrative and so requiring us to acknowledge explicitly our criteria for selection. The doctrine of total depravity has affected the telling of history as it has for all intellectual activity, 'the telling of history is Christian telling, or it is hostile telling…. Facts come in the context of stories of the world, and that means that the natural mind will produce history hostile to Christ and his people.'[21] The Christian is to challenge hostile history-telling by telling a counter-history based on the revealed metanarrative and pan-historical reach of Scripture: 'in broad terms, how we view the last 2,000 words is determined by Scripture itself…. [A]ll our history telling must be located explicitly within the broad biblical framework"[22] and under the exhaustive Lordship of Christ. Williams goes on to note that this approach is not to disprove the immediate fact of the quality of non-Christian thought. Rather, it is to question 'its consistency and ultimate viability':

> The upper parts of the edifice may appear secure and well-furnished, but there are deep cracks in the foundations. Non-Christian thought is successful *despite* itself. It can cohere only because of the coherence of all things in Christ, yet it denies the same Christ…. The more a non-Christian teacher teaches and the better the history he writes, the more acute the tension between the fact of his work and its internal impossibility. If a shed is falling we may not worry; when Venice is sinking we do. Brilliant non-Christian historical work desperately needs a firm foundation in Christ.[23]

To my knowledge, Williams has not engaged directly with Taylor's *Secular Faith* but I would like to suggest that his interaction with Taylor would offer a different and more systemic critique given Williams's own historiography and the elaborate nature of Taylor's construction.

What accounts for the difference between these two Reformed historians? For those aware of the Reformed confessional tradition, the theological dynamic by which we can only answer this question boils down to *the definitions of the doctrines of the antithesis*[24] *and common grace*[25] *together with the articulation of the relationship between the two.* These definitions and construals depend upon exegetical,

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[19] Carl Trueman, 'Taylor's Complex, Incomplete Historical Narrative', in *Our Secular Age: Ten Years of Reading and Applying Charles Taylor*, ed. Collin Hansen (Deerfield, IL: The Gospel Coalition, 2017), 13–22.

[20] Garry J. Williams, 'Epilogue: Making the Case for Christian History', in *Silent Witnesses: Lessons on Theology, Life, and the Church from Christians in the Past* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 2013), 221–30.

[21] Williams, *Silent Witnesses*, 223.

[22] Ibid., 225.

[23] Ibid., 228, emphasis original.

[24] The 'antithesis' (lit. 'to set against') states that from Genesis 3:15 onwards, God's sovereign judicial curse is to put enmity between the 'seed of the woman' and the 'seed of the Serpent' – two streams of humanity diametrically opposed to one another. It is captured in a wealth of stark biblical contrasts and described in the NT as the stark difference between death and life; darkness and light; blindness and sight, being in Adam and in Christ; goats and sheep; as covenant breakers and covenant keepers.

[25] Common grace is the non-saving work of the Spirit in the unbeliever whereby sin and its effects are restrained.

biblical-theological and systematic considerations.[26] How one understands this relationship implies ontological, epistemological, ethical and aesthetic implications in terms of the concept of worldview, the interpretative power of *a priori* theological systems, the possibility of objectivity and the nature of factuality.

Williams is much happier playing in methodological mud and is quite open to his indebtedness to the presuppositionalism of Van Til and what this means for his historiography. Trueman needs a little more drawing out on the issue, but that's precisely the point! In his interview about *History and Fallacies* he notes with characteristic humour that he steers away from the 'E' word (epistemology) believing it to be massively overused.[27] He does not believe that his historical method is distinctively Christian, indeed there is no such thing as distinctively Christian historiography. Rather there is good and bad historical work which always needs to be methodologically self-aware, recognising the limits and provisionality of all historical work. When pushed he appears to align himself with Scottish Common-Sense Realism and the British empiricist tradition (and certainly not the Continental philosophical tradition!). That said, if I was to try and articulate the theological presuppositions behind Trueman's method (I'm at it again!), I would note that his argument for objectivity and the commonality of historical method is founded upon a different (and weaker) articulation of the noetic effects of the Fall and the antithesis, and/or an elevation of common grace which mitigates these effects and makes possible commonality between historians of all different ideological persuasions.[28] What is interesting to note though, is Trueman's conclusion to his essay responding to *A Secular Age*:

> In closing, however, I must make one more critical comment on Taylor. He's careful throughout to avoid asking the truth of the ideas he discusses. That is appropriate as his task is descriptive and explanatory. Yet I wonder if a narrative as broad and grand as he offers can ultimately avoid that question. Why do some ideas end up as part of the social imaginary while others do not? We can answer in part by examining the material conditions and process of cultural development…. But even the nagging question of truth comes back in: If we reject a reductive materialism and believe that material conditions do not strictly determine which ideas flourish and which die out, then why does Idea X win and not Idea Y? Is it merely time and chance, or are certain ideas inevitably more attractive, and if so, why? And can this question be answered purely in terms of describing the processes themselves? … Augustine and Pascal would have an answer: The ultimate dynamic driving this secular age is the denial of our creatureliness and the assertion of our autonomy.[29]

Maybe Trueman is a muddier Van Tilian than he would care to admit…

Where does this leave me in my meta-madness, let alone my own relationship to *A Secular Age*? As I hope you'll realise, these reflections aren't really about Taylor but about us. I've already mentioned

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[26] For example, in terms of biblical theology one could mention the nature of the Noahic covenant as it relates to common grace. In terms of systematics one could include debates over what we mean by the 'comprehensiveness' of Scripture to speak to all matters of faith and life.

[27] 'Historical Methodology, *Reformed Forum*, 4 February 2011, https://reformedforum.org/ctc160/.

[28] Cf. Ronald A. Wells, *History Through the Eyes of Faith* (New York: Christian College Coalition, 1989), 10, where Wells links the common-sense school to common grace.

[29] Trueman, 'Taylor's Complex', 21.

my attraction and indebtedness to a Van Tilian understanding in terms of the importance of a biblical transcendental analysis in all academic disciplines and the principle that 'antithesis must precede common grace'.[30] Until I give up these commitments I'm probably always going to be prone to linger on methodological concerns and err on the side of caution in my appropriation of accounts which are not grounded on the Christian worldview as revealed in Scripture. Reminders on methodology might be one way those like me who have meta-madness can serve the constituency.

I conclude with three constructive 'criticisms'.

First, I would like to see some bigger methodological health warning stickers in evangelical commentaries on scholars like Taylor: 'Please use responsibly'. Note: such warnings do not mean we don't engage with a Taylor. Precisely the opposite. We need to engage more deeply with a Taylor and cannot skim off the top in a way that simply 'evangelicalises' his terms. Superficial analyses do not serve us well, or those with whom we are engaging. When we look at both the fruit and root of the Taylor tree, we will have apologetic opportunities to push at his presuppositions, offering the repair work needed for his account to hold. In short, we will be able to subversively fulfil his story.

Second, we need to note that often the most helpful aspect of non- or sub-Christian systems, is when they themselves helpfully critique and deconstruct other non- or sub-Christian systems. One might call this an example of critical co-belligerence. I discovered this was precisely the case in my theology of religions dialogue with the conservative Catholic theologian Gavin D'Costa and his own devastating critique of the 'pluralist' Catholic Paul Knitter with whom we were also in dialogue.[31] I think this is also the case with Taylor and his criticisms of other accounts of the secular and exclusive humanism. Agreement on positive construction is always going to be harder, but I refer you to my first point.

Finally, we need to do some soul-searching. To my mind it is worrying that intellectually hungry and impoverished we rush to raid the creaking cupboards of other traditions and systems because our own cupboard is bare. Why aren't we producing accounts as big, sophisticated and imaginative as Taylor's but which are methodologically and substantively theologically orthodox? Why aren't we doing grown-up Reformed social theory that is interdisciplinary and takes the social sciences seriously? Surely, this is a providential spur for us to look at ourselves, to build on our own more sure foundations, and be strategic in how we are birthing and developing Christian academics and Christian academic institutions.

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[30] See William D. Dennison, 'The Christian Academy: Antithesis, Common Grace, and Plato's View of the Soul', *JETS* 54 (2011), 109–31.

[31] See Gavin D'Costa, Paul Knitter, and Daniel Strange, *Only One Way? Three Christian Responses on the Uniqueness of Christ in a Religiously Plural World* (London: SCM, 2011). The reader might be interested to note that in this book I attempt to use a Van Tilian approach to critique both D'Costa and Knitter.

How Did Job Speak Rightly about God?

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Abstract: Yahweh's stated preference for Job's speech toward him in opposition to the friends in Job 42:7 is difficult to understand in light of the many criticisms Job levels against God in the course of the debate and the many seemingly pious and biblically supportable claims which the friends made. A variety of proposed interpretations of this verse are considered and rejected. It is argued instead that even when Job curses creation in ch. 3, he shows how much he values the friendship with God which he thinks he has now (inexplicably) lost; even when he rails against what seems to be a guilty verdict in chs. 9–10, Job shows how profoundly he understands that human claims of righteousness must be substantiated by God to have any worth. In these ways and others, Job spoke rightly about God even when he criticized.

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One of the great surprises of a difficult and surprising book comes in its final chapter, when YHWH states that Job spoke rightly about him, unlike Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar (42:7). This is, of course, the exact opposite of how one might expect the Lord to evaluate the debate between Job and three friends.[1] Job's friends have repeatedly defended God's perfect justice and given Job counsel which, at least some of the time, appears to be supported elsewhere in Scripture (compare Job 5:17 with Prov 3:11–12). Much in contrast, Job accuses God of attacking him with terrifying violence (16:9–14) for no reason (9:17). Extrapolating outward from his tragedy as narrated in chs. 1–2, Job names God an amoral tyrant who destroys everyone regardless of moral character (9:22), who laughs at good people when they suffer disaster (v. 23), and deliberately frustrates the execution of justice in the world (v. 24; see further 12:13–25). In Job's horrifying new vision of the universe, God is a moral monster, and his creation a kind of inner city ghetto, filled with the unanswered screams of the innocent (21:7–34).

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[1] Elihu is, of course, not mentioned in the Lord's speech in v. 7. Whether this implies that Elihu is spared God's disapproval, or that God thinks so little of Elihu's speeches that he does not condescend to mention him at all, depends on how one evaluates Elihu in the first place. I understand Elihu to disappoint the reader by promising a new angle on the debate (32:14b) and then essentially repeating the doctrines of the friends (34:11; see Bruce Waltke with Charles Yu, *An Old Testament Theology: An Exegetical, Canonical, and Thematic Approach* [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2007], 936–39). The present argument is, however, not much affected if one interprets Elihu's speeches more positively, as done by C. L. Seow, "Elihu's Revelation," *ThTo* 68 (2011): 253–71, and Ragnar Andersen, "The Elihu Speeches: Their Place and Sense in the Book of Job," *TynBul* 66 (2015): 75–94.

In what possible sense could Job have spoken rightly about God? In considering this question, it should be admitted from the outset that the Lord's vindication of Job's speech over against that of the friends cannot imply total approval of everything Job has said—after all, although God never accuses Job of any sin, he does begin both of his speeches by issuing a clear challenge to Job (38:2–3, 40:7–8). Job responds in kind by admitting he spoke about wonders too great for him (42:3) and repenting in dust and ashes (42:6).[2] Surely it is no accident that God vindicates Job before his three accusers only after Job makes this confession: as Rick Moore says, "Job says, 'I have been wrong,' whereupon God says, 'You have been right.'"[3] But since Job speaks more about himself than God in 42:1–6, God's approval of Job's speech cannot be referring only to Job's final response in 42:1–6. The comparison with the friends implies that the Lord is referring to the debate in chs. 3–31—which only exacerbates the problem of his seeming approval of Job's speech.[4]

1. Previous Interpretations of Job 42:7

Commentators struggle to explain how Job's speeches in the debate with the friends could be considered "right." At least one scholar has pronounced the problem insoluble: Carol Newsom writes that it is impossible to reconcile 42:7 with chs. 3–31, and so the statement must refer to Job's statements in chs. 1–2.[5] But this leaves unexplained why Job's speech is contrasted with that of the friends in 42:7, for the friends say nothing in chs. 1–2. On the other hand, some understand this statement as an admission from God that Job's protests against God are correct. C. L. Seow connects this verse to the lament tradition in the OT; according to Seow, Job has spoken to the truth about God's absence from innocent suffering.[6] David Clines takes this interpretation to an extreme: because he understands the Lord's speeches in chs. 38–42 to "refuse … the categories of the dialogues" by denying the truth of the

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[2] Many have commented how this verse can be interpreted in more than one way. Although it again does not greatly affect the present argument, the most natural reading is that Job is despising himself for criticizing God (even though no object is given for מאס, who else would Job be referring to?) and, as a result, he repents (Niphal נחם). For a fuller exploration of different possibilities and how the ancient translations took this verse, see Thomas Krüger, "Did Job Repent?" available online, but first published in *Das Buch Hiob und seine Interpretationen: Beiträge zum Hiob-Symposium auf dem Monte Verità vom 14.–19. August 2005*, ed. Thomas Krüger, et. al., ATANT 88 (Zürich: TVZ, 2007), 217–29.

[3] Rick Moore, "The Integrity of Job," *CBQ* 45 (1983): 21.

[4] *Pace* Stanley Porter, "The Message of the Book of Job: Job 42:7b as Key to Interpretation?" *EvQ* 63 (1991): 291–304, and Daniel Timmer, "God's Speeches, Job's Responses, and the Problem of Coherence in the Book of Job: Sapiential Pedagogy Revisited," *CBQ* 71 (2009): 286–305, who argue that God's approval of Job's speech refers to what Job said in 42:1–6. Porter and Timmer understand Job to have spoken rightly where the friends did not because Job responded rightly to the revelation of chs. 38–41, while the friends said nothing. But this means that when the Lord addresses Job in 38:1 and 40:6, the friends were supposed to infer that they were being addressed as well, and that God expected a response from them. Although doubtless God's speeches are a rebuke to the theology of the friends, this seems to go beyond what the text says.

[5] Carol Newsom, "Job," in *Introduction to Hebrew Poetry, Job, Psalms, 1 and 2 Maccabees*, NIB 4 (Nashville: Abingdon, 1996), 472.

[6] C. L. Seow, *Job 1–21: Interpretation and Commentary*, Illuminations (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2013), 92. Gerald Wilson similarly writes that Job's speeches show an "accurate portrayal of divine reality" without further explaining in what ways they are accurate (*Job*, NIBC [Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2007], 472).

retribution principle, when Job criticizes divine injustice, Job is, in fact, speaking the truth.[7] Although Job did not quite mean it this way, since God admits he does not administer creation according to the justice implied by the retribution principle, Job is right when he criticizes God and the friends are wrong when they defend him. But aside from the fact that God's speeches do explicitly state his concern for justice (see, e.g., 38:12–15 and 40:9–14), Clines's reading does not explain why Job would repent and worship in response to YHWH's speeches in 42:1–6, nor why (if God's administration of the world has nothing to do with justice) Job is restored to blessing in 42:10.

Perhaps most frequently, commentators speak in a more general way of how Job's agonized search for God—half critical, half hopeful of some kind of reconciliation (13:20–23)—is relatively better than the friends' reductive certainties.[8] In a similar vein, others emphasize that Job's motives in speaking are good, even if not everything he said was strictly correct.[9] It has also been suggested that Job's right speech has to do with his denial that suffering always and only comes about because of sin, and that the friends' mistake lies in their insistence on this very point.[10] None of these interpretations of 42:7 is obviously wrong within the context of the book as a whole. Especially with regard to Job's search for God, it is amazing to see Job long to meet with the person (23:3) who has given Job so much reason to hate him. But none of these interpretations entirely convinces, for the Lord says in 42:7 that, unlike Job, the friends spoke wrongly about *himself.* It looks as if Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar made specific claims about God which were incorrect, while (at least some of) the content of Job's speech about God was correct. Interpretations which focus on Job's desire to meet with God, his motives in speaking, or the debate about the retribution principle may not fit very well with the Lord's specification that Job is vindicated for the content of his speech about God, and the friends are under God's anger for the same reason. But this is only to re-state the question: what is there in Job's speeches of which the Lord might approve?

Other commentators have, however, argued that we need not set ourselves the difficult task of searching Job's agonized accusations of God for good theology. Perhaps, it is argued, the verse can be translated in a way which obviates the problem. Two aspects of Job 42:7 present possibilities in this regard. First, the Lord uses the preposition אֶל, "to, toward," in the phrase in question. As a result, perhaps the verse should be translated, "You have not spoken *to* me rightly" (see the same phrase earlier in the verse), the point being that Job has continued to speak to God in his pain, while the friends only spoke about him.[11] If this is correct, however, it is not clear why YHWH would add "rightly" at all; according to this reading, all that matters is that Job spoke to God, regardless of what he said.[12]

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[7] David Clines, *Job 38–42*, WBC 18B (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2011), 1231.

[8] Norman Habel, *The Book of Job: A Commentary*, OTL (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1985), 583; Tremper Longman, *Job*, Baker Commentary on the Old Testament Wisdom and Psalms (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2012), 459; John Hartley, *The Book of Job*, NICOT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989), 593.

[9] Robert Alden, *Job*, NAC 11 (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1993), 412; Daniel Estes, *Job*, Teach the Text (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2013), 256.

[10] H. H. Rowley, *Job*, NCB (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1976), 344; Marvin Pope, *Job*, AB 15 (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1965), 350.

[11] Gerald Janzen, *At the Scent of Water: The Ground of Hope in the Book of Job* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009), 106–7, and Elaine Phillips, "Speaking Truthfully: Job's Friends and God," *BBR* 18 (2008): 31–43.

[12] Phillips counters this by noting that a participle after a verb can denote the manner of an action (*IBHS* 10.2.2e): "Speaking correctly meant speaking *to* him" ("Speaking Truthfully," 41). But since Job makes claims about

Furthermore, Piel דבר with אֶל at least sometimes includes the content of what is said and not only the person addressed (e.g., Gen 12:4; Exod 1:17; Jer. 35:14, 40:16). The two prepositions אֶל, "to, toward," and עַל, "about," overlap somewhat in any case (see Jere 33:14, or compare Job 1:11 with 2:5, where they are used interchangeably).[13]

Or perhaps the Niphal participle usually translated "rightly" (נְכוֹנָה) should be rendered differently. Duck-Woo Nam claims that Job is commended in this verse not for speaking "rightly" but "constructively" about God. Nam leans heavily on the root of this word (כון, "to be established" [*HALOT* 464]) to argue that Job's speeches open up new possibilities for theological discourse as he "champions the unconventional aspects of the divine nature," in contrast to the friends' rigid theorizing.[14] But it is not clear how claims that God is an amoral tyrant in passages like 9:22–24 count as "constructive" speech about God. Furthermore, its use elsewhere suggests that the Niphal participle of כון is best translated "true" or "right," not "constructively" (see Gen 41:32; Exod 8:22; Deut 13:15; 1 Sam 23:23, 26:4; Ps 5:10, 51:12). John Walton gives a variation of this reading, defining the word in question as referring to what "is sensible, logical or able to be confirmed or verified."[15] According to Walton, Job is commended for speaking about God on the basis of what could be derived from his experience—specifically, the tragedy of chs. 1–2. In contrast, the friends theorized about God in a way which went beyond the available evidence and produced specious accusations against Job.[16] It is correct, of course, that Job has spoken about God on the basis of his own experience. But when Job's conclusions about God on that basis are so ugly, one wonders why God approves of his speech and is so angry with the friends. This is in addition to the fact that Job's portrayal of God on the basis of his tragedy in chs. 1–2 as a moral monster is, in fact, false, as Job himself recognizes.

Finally, one can simply revise the text. After an extensive discussion of previous inadequate attempts to explain this verse, David Frankel emends the כְּ prefix in 42.7 to בְּ: "You did not speak rightly to me *about* my servant Job."[17] On this reading, the verse is only a divine vindication of Job against the accusations of the friends. Frankel cites in support of this emendation the seemingly intractable nature of the MT as it stands and the other textual witnesses which show this reading (some Hebrew manuscripts, the LXX to v. 8, Testament of Job 42:4, and Saadiah Gaon). But aside from this being an obviously easier reading, such emendation may be premature. It may be possible to find specific claims which Job has made about God within the debate of chs. 3–31 which were true. In order to explore this possibility, I will focus specifically (but not exclusively) on chs. 3 and 9–10 to show that Job's theology is admirably robust: even as he protests, Job repeatedly shows how much he values God, his friendship, and God's evaluation of him. In fact, Job would not protest so intensely if God did not mean so much to him. In this sense, Job spoke rightly about God.

God which are false, it is difficult to see how this could be the case.

[13] See Edouard Dhorme, *A Commentary on the Book of Job*, trans. Harold Knight, repr. ed. (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1984), 648.

[14] Duck-Woo Nam, *Talking about God: Job 42.7–9 and the Nature of God in the Book of Job*, StBibLit 49 (New York: Peter Lang, 2003), 188, 191.

[15] John Walton, *Job*, NIVAC (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012), 173.

[16] Ibid., 173–73.

[17] David Frankel, "The Speech about God in Job 42:7–8: A Contribution to the Coherence of the Book of Job," *HUCA* 82–83 (2011–2012): 1–36.

2. God's Friendship with Job and Job's Curse on Creation (3:1–26)

Many commentators have noted how Job's curse on the day of his birth contains a number of cosmic adumbrations which imply that Job is cursing not only his own life, but all of creation. The creation-wide context for this poem is seen both in the sustained echoes in these verses to the account of creation in Genesis 1[18] and the reference to Leviathan in v. 8. After all, if Leviathan were roused, as Job wishes, the chaos monster would not content itself with swallowing only Job's existence: the order of all creation would be threatened. It is, in other words, a more-than-natural darkness which Job calls down on creation in this chapter. Job undoes God's blessing on all creation and curses light and order into darkness and non-existence. He would rather the world had never been made, if only that would prevent his being born and seeing such misery (3:10).

From one perspective, this appears a little selfish. Why is Job taking away every other human life, just because his own is so miserable? It would make sense for Job to wish his life was over, as he does elsewhere (e.g., 6:8–9). But Job says more here: he wishes he had never been born at all, and even implies that he wishes no-one had ever been born in the first place. Why does Job wish his former life of privilege and blessing out of existence—a life which is, from the OT's perspective, ideal in every respect (1:1–4)—simply because he has lost it? For Job to look back fondly on what he once had while wishing for death would make more sense.

In considering this question, it will be helpful to remember that Job would have interpreted his suffering in chs. 1–2 not simply as misfortune, but as punishment for sin. Job's loss of God's blessings of children and livestock looks very similar to the covenant curses for unfaithfulness in Deuteronomy 28. It is also significant that word for the sores he suffers in 2:7 (שְׁחִין) is the same word used in the list of covenant curses in Deuteronomy 28:27, 35.[19] This explains why Job laments not only his pain and loss, but what looks like God's inexplicable anger (16:9, 19:11). It also explains his fierce protest against God's injustice, because Job knows he has committed no sin worthy of such extreme punishment. It looks to Job as if he has inexplicably lost God's favor and blessing—and he reacts by cursing creation out of existence. Although Job's curse in ch. 3 is horrifying, we can see that it is precisely at this point that Job shows how highly he values friendship with God (29:4). If Job cannot live under God's favor, he implies that does not see any point to his existence at all, blessed or otherwise. Job shows no interest in his prior life of blessing with his family and his sterling reputation unless it exists under God's smile (cf. 10:13). In fact, without God's favor and friendship, Job implies that there is no reason for anything in creation to exist at all.

Job will expound on the theme of the intolerable quality of life without God's favor in a number of other places in his speeches. For instance, ch. 13 ends with Job wanting to know what possible sin he could have committed (v. 23) to make God treat him like an enemy (v. 24) and terrify him like a leaf (v. 25). Under this unbearable weight of divine anger, human life becomes dreary, dry, and hopeless (14:1–2). The best Job can ask for in such a bleak existence is for God to ignore him so that Job can enjoy life the best he can on his own (v. 6) or for God to hide him in Sheol until God's inexplicable anger passes

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[18] See Hartley, *The Book of Job*, 102, for a list.

[19] It is possible that since Job is a non-Israelite and apparently lived before Moses, the reader is not meant to connect Job's suffering with that threatened the Israelites if they break covenant with YHWH. There is evidence, however, for quasi-Deuteronomistic theology existing more broadly in the ancient Middle East, such that deities were thought to punish disobedience with the loss of family, livestock, and security, while contrition led to restoration to favor (see K. A. Kitchen, *On the Reliability of the Old Testament* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003], 301–2).

by (v. 13). Even though God will challenge Job's account of created existence in ch. 38, it is only because Job values God and intimacy with him so much that he laments in this way.

Job does, of course, retract his curse on creation by the end of the book (40:4). God directly challenges Job's curse of supernatural darkness on creation by speaking of the morning stars singing for joy as God founded creation (38:7). But even as he curses, Job's theology is good in the sense that Job rightly values God and God's favor more highly than any earthly blessing. From this perspective, Job's curse in chapter 3 is a kind of mirror image of his worship in 1:21. The same high view of God from that earlier verse is expressed in a negative way. Even when Job curses, he shows that even an ideal life loses its appeal without the friendship of God. Although not everything Job says in this curse stands up to the Lord's challenge, Job is speaking rightly about God when he places God above all the privileges Job used to enjoy.

3. Job's Vulnerability before God's Judicial Verdict (9:1–10:22)

Job's third speech is extremely difficult exegetically. As John Hartley writes, in these two chapters, Job "tends to state a position boldly, then abandon it when he sees its difficulty and jump to another idea, which is also quickly abandoned…. His jumping about reflects his frustration at the lack of any insight into the reasons for his plight."[20] The speech is difficult for another reason: Job hits a low point in his protest against God. Although Job will express more hope in later chapters, here he portrays God as positively vicious (9:22–24). Job's reasons for speaking about God this way are understandable, even if frightening: for no sin Job can think of, God crushes Job in the storm and multiplies his wounds (9:17). Job cannot think of an explanation for why God would treat him this way (10:2) and so thinks he has no alternative but to draw some terrifying new conclusions about God.

The reason for Job's twisting, difficult argument in these two chapters is perhaps more difficult to see but still important. In this chapter, Job pursues the question of how a man can be right with God (9:2). As he will make clear in 9:14–16, 19, 32–33, 10:2, Job is using legal language to talk about forensic righteousness in this verse: he is searching after how a man might be recognized as being in the right by the constituted (divine) legal authority. Doubtless it was frustrating for Job's friends to hear this question, since Bildad had just finished answering this question for Job: repent and seek God (8:5–6). For Job, of course, the question is much more troubling, because Job knows with utter certainty that, although he is not perfectly sinless (31:33–34), there is no fault in his life which would explain God's punishment of him (as he swears in ch. 31). As a result, Job is right and God is wrong (9:15a). But Job has such an exalted view of God that it is inconceivable to him that anyone could win an argument with the Almighty, least of all himself (v. 15b, 19–20). On the other hand, Job is certain that the punishment he is receiving from God is not just—God is treating him as a sinner when Job is blameless (1:1). At the same time, Job knows he is asking for an encounter with the Almighty, whom no–one resists (v. 12), who tramples powers far greater than Job (v. 13). Little wonder Job has no idea what he would say to God in a legal encounter, even though Job has right on his side (vv. 14–15)! Job spends chs. 9–10 twisting in this contradiction, bouncing back and forth between his certainty about his own blamelessness and the irresistible nature of God's judgment of him.

But it is not God's power alone which terrifies Job as he imagines a day in court with the Almighty. Somewhat strangely, it is also God's moral authority as judge which makes Job tremble. This is strange

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[20] Hartley, *The Book of Job,* 165.

because Job insists God is a completely amoral judge: "It is all one; therefore I say, he destroys both blameless and wicked" (v. 22). In light of this, one would assume that Job regards this arbitrary despot as having no moral authority to judge him. But Job makes other claims which, in contradictory fashion, put God in the right. The first is found in 9:29, which is usually translated to show Job imagining being condemned in his hypothetical court date with God: "I shall be condemned" (ESV), "Since I am already found guilty" (NIV), "If I must be accounted guilty" (NAB). However, Job uses the Qal and not the Hiphil form of רשׁע; the Hiphil of this verb normally expresses condemnation or finding someone guilty.[21] As a result, it is probably best to translate his statement אָנֹכִי אֶרְשָׁע as "I am guilty" or "I am wicked," instead of expressing Job's expectation that God will find Job guilty even though Job is innocent.[22] This, of course, does not make much sense, because the very first thing we are told about Job is that he is a blameless man (1:1). And Job himself will shortly reverse this by claiming that God knows Job is not guilty in 10:7, using exactly the same form (לֹא אֶרְשָׁע). It is difficult to understand why Job would contradict himself in this way unless we assume that Job's sense of moral rightness is so deeply rooted in God that, should God contradict the plain evidence of Job's senses that he is innocent of any sin by treating him as a sinner, then Job cannot resist God's judgment. He must be guilty. Even though Job's case is easy—even though he is clearly innocent of any secret crime which could explain his suffering—Job's sense of God is so profound that he finds himself incapable of resisting what looks like a guilty verdict from on high. Job finds himself contradicting the plain evidence of his senses before the judgment of God—"judgment" in the sense of moral and legal evaluation. "Though I am blameless, he would prove me perverse" (v. 20).

This is probably why Job makes another paradoxical statement in v. 21 that is difficult to communicate in translation: לֹא־אֵדַע נַפְשִׁי, which is usually suitably rendered along the lines of Job not having any regard or concern for his own life (see NIV and RSV). This translation fits well with the next clause, where Job despises his life. Furthermore, the verb ידע, "know," can refer to acknowledging someone or something or having regard for it (Prov 12:10, Ps 31:8, Exod 23:9).[23] But it may be that Job is also saying he literally does not know who he is anymore.[24] If this is so, it is highly significant, for it implies that no matter how strong Job's sense of his own integrity is (תָּם, v. 21, and in 1:1), it cannot make a claim on God. As a result, Job in turn cannot know for sure what he knows about himself unless God agrees.[25] Job's sense of God is such that he needs God to vindicate him and show him to be in the right. Despite the obvious evidence in Job's favor, Job cannot make that claim on his own with any validity without the Judge vindicating him. Job cannot autonomously assert his own righteousness. If God does not vindicate him, Job simply doesn't know who he is or what category to put himself in.

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[21] See Exod 22:8; Deut 25:1; 1 Ki 8:32, Ps 37:33; for the Qal of רשׁע, see 2 Sam 22:22/Ps 18:22, 1 Kings 8:47/2 Chr 6:37, Ecc 7:17, Dan 9:19.

[22] Most commentators translate according to God finding or declaring Job guilty (Hartley, *The Book of Job*, 180; Habel, *The Book of Job*, 180; David Clines, *Job 1–20*, WBC 17 [Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1989], 214). Seow notes that the phrase literally should be translated, "I am to be guilty," but interprets the verse according to Job's expectation of God putting Job in the wrong (*Job 1–21*, 551, 69).

[23] See further Hartley, *The Book of Job*, 177.

[24] Habel (*The Book of Job,* 194) and Seow (*Job 1–21*, 548) read the phrase this way, as does Dhrome (*Job*, 139).

[25] Cf. Gal 4:9: "Now that you know God, or rather, are known by him" (see also 2 Cor 8:2–3). God's knowledge of the Christian is a deeper reality than the Christian's knowledge of God.

As with ch. 3, Job makes some terrifying claims in chs. 9–10 which he will later retract when God directly challenges Job's claim of injustice in God's administration of the cosmos. This seems to be the entire point of the Lord's second speech: "Will you break my justice? Will you condemn me, so that you can be right?" (40:8). The descriptions of the chaos monsters Behemoth and Leviathan[26] and their coming defeat (40:19, 41:8) shows the Lord's concern for evil at loose in the world and his plan to defeat it one day. But even as he protests in a way he will later painfully regret, Job shows his profound sense of God's greatness and moral authority, as well as Job's utter dependence on God for his very sense of himself and his own rightness. This surely is "right" theology (42:7)! Indeed, it is precisely this profound sense of God that drives Job's agony and wild claims: from his perspective, God is bringing down on him the punishment of a guilty sentence. How could someone in that position speak moderately (6:2–3, 10:1)?

The Lord's vindication of Job's speeches clearly contrasts them with the friends' (42:7). In light of the above discussion, it is easier to see why. The friends show no sense of valuing God beyond what secondary blessings favor with God brings, nor do they evince any sense of the dependence of human righteousness on God for validation and vindication. Bildad, for instance, speaks in 8:6 of God restoring Job's "rightful habitation" if Job repents—literally, "the habitation of your righteousness" (נְוַת צִדְקֶךָ). It is Job's righteousness which is in focus here, the righteousness he works in getting rid of whatever sin it is which Bildad is certain has started Job's tragedy ("if you are pure and upright," 6a). If Job fulfills these conditions, Bildad says, showing his own changed righteous behavior, God will respond in kind by restoring Job's "habitation of righteousness." The difference between Bildad's soteriology and Job's sense of his rightness or wrongness before God is striking—a righteousness and moral standing which a human being works for themselves and is secondarily recognized by God, in contrast to a righteousness entirely anchored in God's evaluation. Consider also Eliphaz's implication in 15:4 that, if Job is right and there is no benefit to serving God, then no-one will ("you are doing away with the fear of God!"). The unstated assumption is that human beings serve and obey God for no other reason than that they personally benefit from the relationship. In fact, it is very doubtful whether the friends would have passed the Accuser's test of loyalty to God, regardless of what losses one incurred because of it (1:9, 2:10).

The friends' long speeches about the justice of God's retribution also make God distant. In 15:17–35, for instance, Eliphaz mentions God only once in a description of judgment lasting 18 verses. Bildad receives almost the same score in ch. 18, where God is mentioned once at the tail end of 16 verses (vv. 5–21). Zophar's description of Job's future blessings, if only he repents, does not mention God at all (11:13–19). Although they doubtless do not intend it, the friends' portrayal of retribution set God at some remove from the working of it. He seems to exist as a kind of midwife to the retribution principle—but the friends do not show much interest in God beyond his role as the provider of blessings for good behavior. In great contrast, Job loves God for his own sake, and has no sense of a righteousness which could be established independently of God. His whole sense of self is entirely rooted in God and God's

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[26] Most commentators understand the Lord to describe purely natural animals in these speeches (a hippopotamus and crocodile), but doing so does not fit with other biblical and ANE references to these monsters (with regard to Leviathan, see Job 3:8, Ps 74:14, Isa 27:1). It also does not explain the difference between Job's two responses to YHWH's two speeches. Since YHWH describes ordinary animals in the first speech in chs. 38–39, if the subjects of chs. 40–41 are also two entirely natural creatures, it is more difficult to understand why Job moves from an admission of wrong in 40:4–5 to awestruck worship in 42:1–6. I have argued this more fully in "The Identity of Leviathan and the Meaning of the Book of Job," *TrinJ* 34 (2013): 17–30.

evaluation of him. The book of Job as a whole leaves no doubt as to which kind of orientation toward God is accepted and which is rejected.

4. Conclusion

This article has argued that Job's curse of creation (ch. 3) and his accusation of divine injustice (chs. 9–10) arise from an admirably profound sense of the value and worth of God's friendship and approval of a human life. Without God's friendship, Job sees no point for creation to exist; without God's favor and vindication, all of Job's certainties about himself and his innocence are undone. This is what sparks Job's protests. In this sense, Job spoke rightly about God and the friends did not.

Further exploration could be made into Job's speeches regarding what is "right" (נְכֹנָה) in them. But finding certain ways in which Job spoke rightly about God should not blunt surprise of the Lord's statement in 42:7. Even in light of the way Job shows how much he values God while he protests, and even in light of Job's repentance in 42:6, it is shocking to see the Lord vindicate Job and his speech over against the friends. In fact, God's two speeches to Job are surprisingly gentle, given the accusations Job has made against God: far from crushing Job in the storm (9:17), the Lord appears in the storm and reasons with him. As a result, although the Lord's commendation of Job at the end of the book is not groundless, it should surprise us. The Lord is being entirely gracious with his servant who, in the midst of genuine and enduring faith, said many foolish things (42:3).

Miserable but Not Monochrome: The Distinctive Characteristics and Perspectives of Job's Three Comforters

— **Susanna Baldwin** —

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Abstract: Eliphaz the Temanite, Bildad the Shuhite, and Zophar the Naamathite are often perceived as delivering an essentially uniform message that (erroneously) upholds the rigid, retributive justice of God as the answer to Job's devastating plight. This paper presents a more nuanced and individualised examination of Job's three comforters. Through a textual and thematic exploration of each friend's corpus of speeches, the case is put that Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar embody three subtly differentiated worldviews and epistemic frameworks. Consequently, each is shown to develop his own unique line of argument with regard to the origins and mechanisms of human suffering and the means by which Job may attain deliverance and restoration.

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Famed as the anti-heroes of the Book of Job, Eliphaz the Temanite, Bildad the Shuhite and Zophar the Naamathite deliver some of the longest uninterrupted monologues of the whole Bible, speaking expansively on issues pertaining to the character of God, the nature of morality and justice, the essence and attainment of wisdom, the dynamics of the divine–human relationship, and the experience of prosperity and suffering. The sheer extent of coverage afforded to these three much-maligned 'comforters' warrants our interest and attention as readers of inspired Scripture. Nevertheless, across the vast body of scholarship devoted to the Joban speech cycles, it remains comparatively rare to find treatises that specifically read the contributions of Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar alongside each other for the purpose of articulating and evaluating their similarities and differences. There can be a tendency, especially in some shorter works, toward viewing the friends as a collective rather than weighing their distinct contributions to the dialogue.

Following David Clines, who opines that '[o]nly genuinely distinctive argumentation would fully justify the introduction of three interlocutors into the body of the book',[1] this article explores in turn the speeches of Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar, applying thematic and linguistic analysis to elucidate (1)

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[1] David J. A. Clines, 'The Arguments of Job's Three Friends', in *Sitting with Job: Selected Studies in the Book of Job*, ed. Roy B. Zuck (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1992), 275.

their respective presentations of the character and workings of God in the context of Job's predicament, (2) the sources of authority they defer to, (3) the terms in which they frame Job's apparent transgression, and (4) their views on how Job may achieve reconciliation to God. The case is put that each of the friends brings subtly unique perspectives to bear on the discussion. Eliphaz, it will be argued, presents as a 'legalist' with a covenantal understanding of God, who exhorts Job to accept his suffering as divine discipline pending his restoration. Bildad is identified as a 'deist' with a deterministic view of the world, who advises Job to reclaim his place among the righteous by humbly returning to God. Zophar is conceptualised as a 'mystic', upholding the inscrutable wisdom of God as the answer to all things and pressing Job to seek personal communion with God as his means of restoration.

1. The Dialogue with Eliphaz

1.1. His Stance: Authoritarian, Yet Not Unsympathetic

From the outset, Eliphaz presents as a domineering and no-nonsense figure, seeking to correct Job's erroneous complaints by reference to various sources of superior wisdom, and apparently claiming that his consolations are divinely inspired.[2] His first speech in particular is punctuated with authoritarian imperatives: 'remember' (Job 4:7),[3] 'call' (5:1), 'despise not' (5:17), 'hear' (5:27). As the dialogue plays out, his overarching approach is to shut down the conversation, warning Job that he is only indicting himself by his continued protestations.[4]

Nevertheless, Eliphaz's manner need not be construed as simply belligerent or patronising. Rather, it is in keeping with a recognised technique of sapiential counselling, in which the sufferer is moved from a past understanding of reality to a new knowledge by virtue of the wisdom being shared (cf. Prov 3:1, 5, 11; 4:1).[5] Indeed, on two occasions Eliphaz substitutes his usual mode of appeal with more deferential approaches. In 4:2, he employs an indirect third-person conditional: 'If one ventures a word with you, will you be impatient?', and, in 5:8, an empathetic hypothetical: 'As for me, I would seek God'.

There are further plausible arguments to be made that both the language and content of Eliphaz's speeches evidence a considerable degree of magnanimity, and certainly to an extent that neither Bildad nor Zophar comes close to emulating. If his opening exhortations can legitimately be construed as tending towards consolation and gentle chastisement rather than outright rebuke, then the tone is set for a series of addresses in which Eliphaz seeks to extend genuine help to his friend, albeit in an insensitive and badgering manner.

> Behold, you have instructed many,
>   and you have strengthened the weak hands.
> Your words have upheld him who was stumbling,
>   and you have made firm the feeble knees.

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[2] H. H. Rowley, ed., *Job*, The Century Bible (London: Nelson, 1970), 135.

[3] From here on, unless otherwise indicated, all biblical chapter and verse citations refer to the Book of Job. English renderings are taken from the ESV.

[4] Rowley, *Job*, 134.

[5] Norman C. Habel, *The Book of Job: A Commentary*, OTL (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1985), 118.

> But now it has come to you, and you are impatient;
>> it touches you, and you are dismayed.
> Is not your fear of God your confidence,
>> and the integrity of your ways your hope? (4:3–6)

Of particular significance is the likely translation of the verb יסר in 4:3 as 'instruct', contra its more common biblical sense of 'chasten' or 'admonish'.[6] From this, it may be inferred that Eliphaz is not accusing Job of hypocrisy—being unable to deal with his own chastisement in spite of having meted it out to others—but praising and encouraging him for his prior efforts to minister to the suffering, as is reiterated in the following verse (4:4). In turn, this casts his observation on Job's response to his trouble (4:5) as no more than mildly reproachful, and allows the following exhortation (4:6) to be heard in a tone of sincerity, not sarcasm.[7]

In addition, Eliphaz's discourse is distinctive for retaining a thread of compassion and encouragement right to the end. In the second cycle of speeches, by which time Bildad and Zophar have turned their focus almost entirely to accusation and threat, Eliphaz is the only friend to include another exhortation to wisdom (15:7–16). Likewise, his third speech climaxes in a last call to repentance, accompanied by assurances of prosperity and bliss (22:21–30). Bildad, by contrast, ends his final address on a note of lofty disdain (25:2–6), while Zophar has already retreated to silence.

Eliphaz's specific encouragements to Job may be grouped under three central points, which will be elaborated in more detail in the following sections: first, that Job is to be counted among the 'foolish' rather than the truly 'wicked'; second, that suffering may have a disciplinary as well as a punitive function; third, and relatedly, that restoration is assuredly available for those who amend their lives in accordance with God's demands.

1.2. His Argument: The Rigid Moral Justice of God

As the first of the friends to speak, Eliphaz sets out the fundamental presupposition that will go on to underpin all three sets of speeches: namely that God blesses those who walk righteously, but brings cursing and destruction upon sinners (4:7–9). These principles of divine justice are made manifest in the processes of nature and of human society, and in particular through the remarkable reversals of fortune that come upon the weak and the strong respectively.[8] In reasserting the moral order of the world, the friends seek to help Job redress the existential turmoil expressed in his opening soliloquy (3:1–26).[9]

To justify his assertion that there is a self-evidential distinction between the righteous and the wicked, Eliphaz rhetorically challenges Job to offer a single example of an innocent person who has 'perished' (אבד) or been 'cut off' (כחד), then uses the same vocabulary to spell out the contrasting fate

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[6] The majority of English translations render the יסר in 4:3 as 'instruct', most likely because it preserves the parallelism with the subsequent verb חזק ('strengthen' or 'encourage'), and in turn the pattern of parallel constructions throughout the succeeding verses.

[7] Clines, 'The Arguments of Job's Three Friends', 266.

[8] George Savran, 'Seeing is Believing: On the Relative Priority of Visual and Verbal Perception of the Divine', *BibInt* 17 (2009): 339.

[9] Carol A. Newsom, *The Book of Job: A Contest of Moral Imaginations* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 96.

of the ungodly (4:7, 9).[10] Of course, Eliphaz knows that everyone, including the righteous, will eventually die. Yet the type of death in view here is an untimely and disgraced one, a summary act of judgement by God, which contrasts to the righteous who end their days without the burden of sickness and having lived a satisfying and prosperous life (5:24–26).[11] Prior to this final and just reckoning, Eliphaz concedes that the wicked may enjoy at least the appearance of good fortunes (22:15–16, 18), and conversely that the righteous may experience hardship for a season, not least if they fall victim to the schemes of the corrupt men around them (5:11–16).[12]

Although the entirety of the Book of Job has been described as 'markedly Jehovistic',[13] it is Eliphaz who speaks in the most explicit terms of what might be called a Deuteronomic-covenantal relationship between God and man. Such an understanding of the divine–human interaction begins with the gracious character of God, who instructs people in his ways and binds them to keep his commands for the purpose that he may bless them (Deut 8:6–9). In this vein, it is noteworthy that Eliphaz begins his 'retributive-justice' discourse by highlighting the reward of the righteous rather than the destruction of evildoers (4:7). As he continues, Eliphaz paints a portrait of a God who tends his creation (5:10), cares for its most vulnerable members (5:11), and ensures the poor are not exploited by those of foul intent (5:15). Thus, while even-handed justice prevails in God's dealings with men, it is fundamentally underpinned by a benevolence and generosity towards those he favours. As he intervenes to thwart the plans of the wicked and throw their self-styled wisdom into confusion, the victims of their violence are not only delivered from pitiful circumstances but also healed emotionally with the gift of תִּקְוָה— expectant hope (5:12–16).[14] In this way, it might be argued that Eliphaz is as much a proponent of 'restorative' justice as he is 'retributive'.

In spite of this, it would be an overstatement to suggest that Eliphaz speaks of God in expressly loving or familial terms. It remains that God is too far removed from man to derive any pleasure or profit from his righteous conduct (22:2–3), and logically it stands to reason that neither does human wickedness intrinsically harm or grieve him.[15] Since there can be no personal advantage to God in deviating from the principles of strict justice, Eliphaz can argue confidently that God's treatment of man will always be objective and impartial.[16]

Within this covenantal framework, man carries a solemn responsibility for his conduct before God, on the basis of which he can expect either commendation or condemnation. Thus Eliphaz begins his first speech by invoking Job's 'fear of God' and 'integrity' (4:6)—that is, his compliance with religious

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[10] John E. Hartley, *The Book of Job*, NICOT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988), 108.

[11] Kemper Fullerton, 'Double Entendre in the First Speech of Eliphaz', *JBL* 49 (1930): 328.

[12] Joel S. Kaminsky, 'Would You Impugn My Justice? A Nuanced Approach to the Hebrew Bible's Theology of Divine Recompense', *Int* 69 (2015): 303–4.

[13] M. C. Hazard, 'The Book of Job', *BW* 53 (1919): 61, 62. Hazard notes that all the characters in the book make use of the various names of God – El, Eloha, El Shaddai, Jehovah – 'as freely as though they were Israelites'. Moreover, all three of the friends eventually 'accept with unquestioning submission the arbitrament of Jehovah, though it condemned them'.

[14] Hartley, *The Book of Job*, 122.

[15] James L. Crenshaw, *Old Testament Wisdom: An Introduction* (London: SCM, 1981), 106.

[16] Rowley, *Job*, 193.

and social obligations—as the basis on which he can expect God to pay heed to his distress.[17] Conversely, when later Eliphaz charges Job with 'doing away with the fear of God' (15:4), he uses the verb גרע, a strong term associated with the violation of a covenant (cf. Deut 2:4).[18] His incorporation of both the particle אַף ('indeed') and the emphatic second person pronoun אַתָּה in this statement further affirms that it is Job, not God, who is responsible for their damaged relationship.[19]

Similarly, when Eliphaz speaks more generally of the wicked, it is with metaphors that demonstrate the arrogant purposefulness of their evil ways: the ploughing and sowing imagery in his first speech (4:8) suggesting one who deliberately prepares and cultivates a life of depravity.[20] Such a person stands in open impudence and hostility toward God, 'stretch[ing] out his hand' (or 'shaking his fist') in a defiant yet foolhardy effort to 'def[y] the Almighty' (15:25).[21] When troubles befall him, he can know that they do not simply appear 'from the dust'—that is, from nowhere (5:6)[22]—but manifest the fact that he has been 'cursed' (5:3).

In the face of such disloyalty by his reprobate people, God the provider shows himself to be God the judge. By his own breath—blown from his very nostrils, and characteristically the source of life—he destroys them, the image reinforcing that their demise is not mere natural consequence, but an act of divine punishment (4:9).[23] In 4:10–11, Eliphaz references the lion, a biblical metaphor for the deceptively powerful evildoer (cf. Ps 58:6). The illustration of this fearsome beast dying ignominiously for lack of food vividly adds to the picture of God's inescapable judgement falling on those who oppose him.[24] The language Eliphaz uses to portray the disgrace and destruction of sinners is expansive and emphatic, both in relation to the calamities they may expect to encounter in their lifetime (15:20–35) and in their ultimate demise: they are pounded to pieces, yet no-one seems to take notice, and they end their days never having gained insight into the value or meaning of life (4:20–21).

1.3. His Justification: Divine Revelation, Observation and Tradition

Eliphaz is the only one of the three friends to expressly reference divine revelation to underpin his pronouncements about Job's suffering—indeed, it is a rarity within wisdom literature as a whole for insights to be imparted in this way.[25] The 'night vision' he recounts in his first speech, and specifically its rhetorical charge, 'Can mortal man be in the right before God?' (4:17), forms the basis of his entire argument. He repeats the content of the vision in his second address (15:14–16) and opens his final declaration with a similarly themed statement (22:2). Nevertheless, and in spite of his intimation that he

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[17] Rainer Albertz, 'The Sage and Pious Wisdom in the Book of Job: The Friends' Perspective', trans. Leo G. Perdue, in *The Sage in Ancient Israel and the Ancient Near East*, ed. John G. Gammie and Leo G. Perdue (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1990), 254.

[18] Edouard Dhorme, *Commentary on the Book of Job*, trans. Harold Knight (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1984), 209.

[19] Hartley, *The Book of Job*, 245.

[20] Dhorme, *Commentary*, 46.

[21] Rowley, *Job*, 140.

[22] Christopher Ash, *Job: The Wisdom of the Cross*, Preaching the Word (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2014), 104.

[23] Ibid.

[24] Hartley, *The Book of Job*, 108–9.

[25] James E. Miller, 'The Vision of Eliphaz as Foreshadowing in the Book of Job', *Proceedings* 9 (1989): 100.

may only have been privy to a part ('whisper') of the divine proclamation (4:12), Eliphaz will consistently presume to have the last word on this extraordinary visitation, self-importantly explaining how his own observations singularly verify the message that was revealed to him (5:3–5).[26] Indeed, he only introduces the subject of the vision after having first summarised for Job his personal perspectives on the matter of God's righteous judgement (4:7–11).

Later, Eliphaz will argue that his views are representative of unadulterated ancient wisdom, which Job, by virtue of his youth, is in no position to gainsay (15:7–10, 17–19). Here again, Eliphaz's appeal to a higher authority is at best adjunctive to his personal observations: the phrase 'what wise men have told' (15:18) forms a relative clause to the leading statement 'what I have seen' (15:17). In this discussion, Eliphaz seems to allude to the primordial, 'first principle' wisdom that governed the very creation of the world (15:7–8), which will form the subject of the book's later 'wisdom poem' (28:1–28).[27]

In other ways too, Eliphaz's discourse remains heavily self-centred. His prominent use of the first person, including throughout his recall of the revelatory night vision, stands in contrast to the oratory styles of Bildad and Zophar, and ensures that Job's attention remains on what he, Eliphaz, personally has to say.[28] His opening speech concludes in 5:27 with the definitive assertion כֶּן־הִיא ('thus it is'), leaving no room for dissent concerning the truth of what has been stated,[29] while the triumphal 'we' that forms the subject of this verse indicates that he is confident to represent all three interlocutors in the discussion.[30]

The irony, of course, is that Eliphaz is far more ignorant than he realises of the supernatural realities that lie behind Job's present predicament. With no insight into the heavenly court where Job's affliction was decreed (1:6–12; 2:1–6), Eliphaz crushes any hope Job might have of accessing, or being heard by, the members of God's council (5:1, 15:8) and confirms his confidence in an earthly assembly to pass final judgement on Job's culpability (5:27).[31]

1.4. His Accusation: Foolishness and Presumption

In line with his strict retributive-justice framework, Eliphaz holds to a firm line that suffering is proof of unaddressed sin in a person's life. However, as noted above, it is not to the wretched sinner that he first draws Job's attention but to the 'innocent' whose firm hope is deliverance and justice (4:7).[32] Already, Eliphaz has highlighted Job's piety and exemplary conduct (4:6), and as he proceeds to deliver his observations on the manifest distinction between the righteous and the wicked (4:7–11), he neither indicts Job nor demands a confession. His subsequent discourse on the fate of the self-destructively impetuous 'fool' (5:2–7) begins with a proverb that Job was likely familiar with, and hence continues

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[26] Alan Cooper, 'The Sense of the Book of Job', *Proof* 17 (1997): 238.

[27] Norman C. Habel, 'Of Things Beyond Me: Wisdom in the Book of Job', *CurTM* 10 (1983): 146.

[28] Lael O. Caesar, 'Job: Another New Thesis', *VT* 49 (1999): 437. Caesar notes that Eliphaz makes 14 explicit self-references in the opening stanzas of his first speech (4:1–5:8).

[29] Rowley, *Job*, 66.

[30] Ash, *Job*, 104.

[31] Robert S. Fyall, *Now My Eyes Have Seen You: Images of Creation and Evil in the Book of Job*, New Studies in Biblical Theology (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2002), 39.

[32] Clines, 'The Arguments of Job's Three Friends', 272.

the spirit of gentle rapport between teacher and learner that is characteristic of Eliphaz's presentation.[33] Eliphaz apparently perceives Job to have spoken erroneously and in haste, but not in a way that marks him among the truly wicked, and he can therefore have confidence that God will deal with him accordingly.[34]

In his second speech Eliphaz undeniably takes a firmer line with Job, as it were showing him the trajectory of godlessness that he is in danger of sliding down. Yet he is still charitable enough to attribute Job's irreligious outcries to hot-headed anger (15:12–13)[35] and a flawed dependence on 'wisdom' that is not grounded in sapiential tradition (15:2–3, 7–10) rather than to outright apostasy.[36] Behind Job's stubborn attempts at self-absolution lies a failure to grasp the fundamental point Eliphaz has been trying to communicate: that no-one can be wholly innocent before God (15:7–10).[37] The corrective nature of Eliphaz's otherwise uncompromising excursus on the fate of the unrepentant sinner (15:20–35) is seen in the way he does not make reference to any specific crimes in this section. Rather, mirroring Job's own language, he exposes how Job has testified to characteristics and attitudes in himself that alarmingly resemble those of the wicked man.[38]

The clue to Eliphaz's overall measured assessment of Job's offences may once again lie in the message he heard during his 'night vision': namely that mortals are naturally less than righteous and cannot stand clean before their Maker (4:17). This runs contrary to the usual vein of wisdom literature, which sees humans as intrinsically responsible and capable of carrying out God's requirements, though they may not care to do so (that is, they partake in unclean activities rather than possessing an inherently unclean nature).[39] Eliphaz purports to have been shown that impurity and fickleness extend to the very members of God's heavenly council (4:18; restated in 15:15), with the implication that all created beings are substandard by very virtue of their creatureliness: fragile like clay (4:19) and prone to trouble (5:7).

When Eliphaz speaks for the second time, it is primarily to warn Job that his foolish words are now harming both his own faith and that of others (15:4). His protestations of innocence are so vacuous as to be 15:2) קָדִים)—the dry, hot east wind that blows off the desert, bringing irritability and listlessness (a charge both Bildad and Zophar will echo in their speeches: 8:2; 11:2).[40] In seeking to defend himself and by complaining against God, Job has purposely chosen (בחר) the speech of the 'crafty' (15:5). In other words, Eliphaz deems that Job is trying to mask his guilty conscience with shrewdly deceptive words.[41] Later, he will similarly accuse Job directly of denying God's sovereign omniscience in order to cloak his sin (22:12–14, cf. Ps 73:11).[42]

Finally, his impatience apparently mounting, Eliphaz is moved to spell out some specific wrongs he believes Job has committed (22:5–9) and that have caused God's anger to be aroused against him (22:10).

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[33] Habel, *The Book of Job*, 119.

[34] Clines, 'The Arguments of Job's Three Friends', 275.

[35] Ibid., 268.

[36] Habel, *The Book of Job*, 249.

[37] Clines, 'The Arguments of Job's Three Friends', 272.

[38] Habel, *The Book of Job*, 251–52. Habel lists 14 examples of parallel language between Eliphaz's second speech in Ch. 15 and Job's various declamations in Chs. 1 through 12.

[39] Miller, 'The Vision of Eliphaz', 104.

[40] Hartley, *The Book of Job*, 244.

[41] Ash, *Job*, 179.

[42] Dhorme, *Commentary*, 332.

Once again, there is a distinctly Deuteronomic overtone to Eliphaz's accusations, which centre on Job's alleged abuse of power, exploitation of the vulnerable, and failure to care for the neediest members of society (cf. Deut 24:6, 10–13). While at one level the specificity of these accusations lends Eliphaz's discourse—and his closing speech in particular—a peculiarly harsh air, it bears acknowledgement that he alone among the friends provides Job with a concrete diagnosis of his supposed wrongdoing (Bildad and Zophar only ever speaking in generalised terms about human wickedness). This may yet reflect a sincere desire on his part to help Job begin amending his life and moving towards reconciliation with God.

1.5. His Remedy: Accept Divine Discipline and Turn Back to God

As noted previously, Eliphaz is not of the view that godly people should expect *never* to experience affliction. For one thing, this would leave no category in which to place the 'lowly', 'mourners', 'needy' and 'poor', who are shown to suffer at the hands of the unrighteous before God intervenes to rescue them (5:11, 15–16). More broadly, Eliphaz's perspective accords with an established Old Testament pattern in which even a pious person may come under God's reproof for the purposes of discipline or instruction (5:17; cf. Deut 8:2–5).[43] As Eliphaz has rigorously established, no mortal is capable of conducting himself perfectly before God (4:17) and so all must expect to suffer deservedly on occasion.[44] When it happens, the sufferer is faced with a choice either to resent and reject divine chastisement, or to submit in humility and penitence and so come through their trials to vindication and renewed blessing.[45]

This is the hope that Eliphaz steadfastly holds out to Job (5:17–26). Even when faced with the extremities of human suffering (metaphorically denoted by the 'six' and 'seven' afflictions of 5:19), he can yet be assured that God will deliver him from the humiliation of being overtaken by them.[46] Renewed comfort, prosperity and divine guardianship are still his for the taking, if only he will face up to his having offended God, and submit once more to him. In concrete terms this will mean internalising and keeping God's laws, purposely eschewing sin, and discarding his earthly securities in order that he might find true value in God (22:22–24).[47] Pre-empting Job's later appeal for a heavenly mediator (9:33–34), Eliphaz quashes the idea that any member of the divine council, themselves tainted by unworthiness and folly (4:18), would be in a position to appeal or intercede to God on his behalf (5:1). If Job wants to approach God, it can only ever be in the context of a personal admission of guilt (5:8).[48]

All this considered, Eliphaz's extended discourse on the fate of the wicked (15:20–35) need not be read as a pointed accusation but rather as a foil to the main point of his speeches, which is to encourage Job to humbly seek reconciliation with God and resume his rightful standing among the blessed.[49]

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[43] Kaminsky, 'Would You Impugn My Justice?', 303–4.

[44] Clines, 'The Arguments of Job's Three Friends', 272.

[45] Kaminsky, 'Would You Impugn My Justice?', 305.

[46] Ash, *Job*, 111.

[47] Newsom, *The Book of Job*, 112.

[48] Dhorme, *Commentary*, 63.

[49] Clines, 'The Arguments of Job's Three Friends', 268.

2. The Dialogue with Bildad

2.1. His Stance: Prophetic and Deterministic

Like Eliphaz, whose language he echoes at several points, Bildad rests his argument on the justice of God in the face of Job's alleged sin. However, his position is subtly more deterministic or even fatalistic, always looking ahead to the inevitable accomplishment of God's purpose. His is a 'black and white' view of the world, demonstrated in part by his frequent use of polarities to describe the relationship between good and evil: light and darkness (18:5–6), the hunter and the hunted (18:8–10), security versus terror (18:14).[50]

While Eliphaz was willing to talk Job through the apparent illogic of his claims to innocence before proposing a remedy to his situation (in textual terms, this part of his address spans 29 verses), Bildad seems to have little patience to indulge Job in a discussion on the matter. In the opening statements of his first speech, he merely scolds Job for his foolish talk (8:2), defies him to refute the justice of God (8:3), and states, as though already obvious, the connection between sin and punishment with regard to Job's children (8:4). He then immediately proceeds to prescribe his solution to Job's predicament: he should return and make supplication to God (8:5).

In other senses too, Bildad's manner is brisker and harsher than Eliphaz's, not least as seen in his early chilling pronouncements concerning Job's deceased family. He gives over his entire second speech to a frank exposition on the miserable fate of the wicked and specifically challenges Job for his impudence in suggesting his is an 'exceptional case' (18:4).[51] At the same time, his overall approach is perhaps less combative, and by his final (short) speech he has ceased to directly accuse Job. Satisfied with his 'self-evident' doctrine of divine governance, confident that the truth will speak for itself, he seems content to state his case and withdraw. In Bildad's view, what has happened to Job is right, and it was always going to be this way.

2.2. His Argument: God's Immovable Decrees

Bildad grounds his discourse in a doctrine of God's undeviating ways and the associated established and inflexible order of creation. In this stable and predictable cosmos, moral precepts are as fixed as physical matter and systems.[52] In both his first and second speeches, Bildad introduces his indictments against the unrighteous by reference to a 'natural law' phenomenon: first, the impossibility of a plant growing or surviving without water (8:11–12), and second, the immovability of the earth and its rocks (18:4). In this way, Bildad suggests that the doctrine of retributive justice has the validity and regularity of a law of nature.[53] There is a subtle contrast here with Eliphaz's 'natural' metaphors, which occur at the end rather than the beginning of his speeches, and appear to function as illustrative similes rather than critical premises (5:26; 15:31–33).

In Bildad's conceptualisation, the inevitability with which the godless man comes to destruction does not detract from the reality that—much like a deceptively prolific plant—he may flourish and prosper for a short time due to his resilience, resourcefulness, and capacity to exploit even the weak

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[50] Ibid., 284.

[51] Rowley, *Job*, 40.

[52] Ash, *Job*, 200.

[53] Aron Pinker, 'Bildad's Contribution to the Debate—A New Interpretation of Job 8:17–19', *VT* 66 (2016): 431.

for personal gain (8:16–19).[54] Bildad's approach, much like Eliphaz's, carries echoes of biblical wisdom writings, which acknowledged that evildoers might prevail for a time until God's justice was manifest and that during such intervals some innocent people might suffer in a manner never fully requited.[55]

Whereas Eliphaz conceived of affliction as an express intervention by God to chastise (and, in the worst cases, destroy) the wicked, Bildad projects the view that sin as it were carries its own punishment and that God merely 'releases' or 'gives over' sinners to the natural consequences of their depravity: 'he has delivered them into the hand of their transgression' (8:4).[56] Throughout the remainder of the speech, as Bildad graphically elaborates the inevitable downfall of evildoers, God is never the grammatical subject behind the action. The vitality of the wicked man is shown to be self-limiting: it is the lamp that goes out, the flame that stops glowing (18:5). The schemes by which he vainly sought to manipulate the moral order of the world are converted into the means of his own destruction (18:7–8).[57] Inanimate agents ('a trap', 18:9; 'a noose', 18:10) and personified forces ('terrors', 18:11; 'calamity', 18:12) arrest his steps and drag him to his deserved death and arraignment before the prince of Sheol (18:14).[58] Here, Bildad's perspective is more in keeping than Eliphaz's with traditional wisdom literature, which stresses the triumph of the created order over chaos, and God's unswerving competence in overseeing its function.[59]

2.3. His Justification: Transmitted Wisdom and General Observation

Lacking any expressly revelatory insight of the kind Eliphaz purports to have received, Bildad leans more strongly on the wisdom of 'bygone ages' (8:8), the language suggesting an unbroken line of truth as each generation recalls and passes on what their own fathers taught them.[60] This ancient knowledge is designated חֵקֶר, 'that which was probed',[61] and its trustworthiness is such that it is described as coming literally 'from their heart' (8:10, מִלִּבָּם).[62] Yet, as already discussed, there is also a sense in which Bildad regards the principles he is expounding as 'obvious', self-evident as the observable laws of nature. While this is essentially a repeat of the logic set out by Eliphaz, Bildad does not assert the same level of personal authority in communicating these insights, and his speeches thus carry a greater humility than was manifest in Eliphaz's self-affirming arguments.[63] Although in his closing speech Bildad directly echoes the declaration of Eliphaz's nocturnal messenger (25:4–6), he does so not as an abstract word of prophecy but as the reasoned conclusion drawn from his wisdom and observations concerning God's fixed moral order, which is established in the very 'heights of heaven' (25:2).[64]

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[54] Ibid., 426–27.

[55] Kaminsky, 'Would You Impugn My Justice?', 305.

[56] Hartley, *The Book of Job*, 156.

[57] Newsom, *The Book of Job*, 121. Newsom notes that the verbs in 18:5–6 all have a middle sense.

[58] Dhorme, *Commentary*, 266.

[59] Miller, 'The Vision of Eliphaz', 105.

[60] Dhorme, *Commentary*, 116.

[61] Habel, 'Of Things Beyond Me', 147.

[62] Joanna Hargraves, 'The Epistemology of the Book of Job' (MDiv thesis, Sydney Missionary & Bible College, 2010).

[63] Caesar, 'Job: Another New Thesis', 436.

[64] Hartley, *The Book of Job*, 156.

2.4. His Accusation: Unacknowledged Sin and Obstruction of God's Purposes

As noted previously, Bildad draws a direct and uncompromising link between sin and suffering, pointing callously to the demise of Job's children in order to illustrate his point. However, unlike Eliphaz before him, Bildad never confronts Job with a record of his personal transgressions. Rather, reflecting his overall deterministic stance, Bildad's chastisement to Job centres on his resisting God's justice and endeavouring to contend against his eternal decrees. In blunt and sarcastic terms, he challenges Job to as to whether he thinks the world's absolute moral order should be interrupted for his convenience, enabling him to escape the just punishment for his sins (18:4).[65] In the universal scheme of things man is, after all, a mere 'maggot' (25:6). Bildad gives no space for even musing on questions of God's justice: his very first address to Job denounces the latter's words of protestation as hollow and futile, abundant and yet without content, like a 'great wind' (8:2).[66] That said, unlike Eliphaz he does not identify Job's words as an integral (and purposeful) aspect of his sin. Rather, he surmises, they simply put him in company with the unrighteous, 'him who knows not God' (18:21).

2.5. His Remedy: Repent and Seek God

From the earliest parts of his discourse, Bildad presses the necessity of seeking God, entreating Job to 'plead with the Almighty for mercy' in order that his prosperity may be restored (8:5–7). However, again in contrast to Eliphaz, Bildad does not direct Job towards any concrete deeds of repentance or restitution.[67] The undertone of his exhortation is not that Job has it within his own power to make good his life before God. Rather, his act of penitent submission will *demonstrate* the pre-existent reality of his righteousness by which (according to the mechanical principles of retributive justice) he need only claim his rightful entitlement by appealing to God, and he will be saved.[68]

Indeed, Bildad apparently remains optimistic for Job's prospects of restoration. God does not pervert justice (8:3), and Job has not yet been struck dead, so the possibility is still open that he has not utterly 'forgotten God' and is innocent of any sin deserving death (8:13).[69] The Almighty may yet 'rouse himself' to deliver Job (8:6), even as the psalmist will later entreat God to act on behalf of those who have been crushed by terrible destruction without being indicted for sin (Ps 44:23).[70] Bildad closes his first speech on a note of hope that Job's lot is indeed among the righteous, as he distinguishes him—in language again evocative of the Psalms—from 'those who hate you'; that is, the ungodly (8:22).[71]

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[65] Ash, *Job*, 91.

[66] Dhorme, *Commentary*, 112.

[67] Donal O'Connor, *Job: His Wife, His Friends and His God* (Blackrock, Ireland: Columba, 1995), 52.

[68] Pinker, 'Bildad's Contribution', 431.

[69] Clines, 'The Arguments of Job's Three Friends', 278.

[70] O'Connor, *Job*, 52.

[71] Dhorme, *Commentary*, 125.

3. The Dialogue with Zophar

3.1. His Stance: Arrogant and Mystical

From the outset of his discourse, Zophar takes the bold stance of implying that he has somehow been initiated into the esoteric mysteries of divine wisdom that are normally beyond human reach.[72] He shows himself confident to speak on God's behalf (11:5), as though unquestioning that his words are divinely endorsed, and that his doctrine, unlike Job's, is 'pure' (11:4). As such he embodies a frustrating paradox, for he both lays claim to, and yet renders unattainable, a personal relationship with God as the mark of the truly pious and the solution to Job's state of affliction.[73]

Of the three friends it is perhaps Zophar whose manner is most harsh and cruel, not least for the way he persists in parodying and throwing Job's words back at him.[74] To take just one example, his use of the term עָמָל ('misery' or 'trouble') to characterise the state of the wicked man when he is sated with evil (20:22) is a mocking echo of Job's earlier reference to עָמָל as he described his own plight as a mortal (3:10, 20). While Eliphaz, and to a lesser extent Bildad, show some level of engagement with Job's complaint, there is little sense of Zophar being a 'good listener' in this respect. Indeed, his entire discourse is essentially framed around a misquoting (and misinterpretation) of Job's anguished musings (11:4). Job has not, as Zophar reports, asserted to be בַּר ('pure') in God's sight (11:4); rather, Job's self-attribution תָּם signifies his integrity and sincerity (9:20–22).[75] This will prove to be the most significant point of disjunction between his own and Zophar's understandings of his present predicament.

3.2. His Argument: The Unsearchable Wisdom of God

While Zophar retains the broad principles of retributive justice in his discourse, he is the first of the friends to effectively bypass an explanatory 'logic' of the relationship between sin and suffering. When read alongside Eliphaz, for whom affliction constituted divine judicial punishment for wrongdoing, and Bildad, in whose view wickedness entailed its own destructive consequences within the established moral order, Zophar's basis for argument seems comparatively abstruse. Certainly his speeches contain echoes of Bildad's 'natural law' theology: for example, he depicts the wicked man greedily consuming vile pleasures only to soon horrifyingly discover that they have become an emetic and poison to him (20:12–15).[76] Yet his reference point for this state of affairs remains abstract and rhetorical: the vastness and inscrutability of God's wisdom as the answer to all things (11:7). Zophar's account of retributive suffering may satisfy poetic justice, but by its own admission it does little to 'fathom the mysteries' of divine justice such as Eliphaz and Bildad have, albeit falteringly, attempted in their speeches.[77]

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[72] Ibid., 204.

[73] John C. Holbert, "'The Skies Will Uncover His Iniquity": Zophar Tries to Put Job in his Place', *WW* 31 (2011): 420.

[74] Ibid.

[75] Ash, *Job*, 155.

[76] Newsom, *The Book of Job*, 120–21.

[77] Job 11:7 (NIV).

In this vein, Zophar is notably the only interlocutor never to use the term מִשְׁפָּט ('justice'), which is otherwise a prominent theme in the book.[78] His sole points of engagement with Job's litigious speculations are found in an early and brief allusion in 11:4–6 and his closing statement in 20:29, both of which exemplify his arrogance and presumption. In the former, he quickly suppresses Job's aspirations to a day in court with the dual assertion that Job not only has no case to put, but has been treated more leniently than he deserves.[79] In the latter, he pronounces legal condemnation on the wicked on behalf of God the Judge.[80]

In spite of his general elusiveness on the subject of divine justice, Zophar is certainly more explicit than Bildad in identifying God as the agent behind the wicked man's demise (20:15, 23, 28–29; implied in vv. 24–25).[81] That his destruction is timed to fall when he least expects it, at the very height of his arrogant self-indulgence (20:22), is further evidence of its being a direct intervention by God.[82] Yet in contrast to Eliphaz and Bildad, for whom punitive justice consisted primarily in the reversal of outward circumstances, Zophar depicts God as striking the sinner in his inmost being: pouring down his anger 'into his body' (20:23), causing him to 'vomit up' his ill-gotten riches (20:15), and piercing his internal organs with a perfectly aimed arrow (20:24–25). Corporeal metaphors form an important part of the Joban drama, especially with regard to the interplay between divine power and human dignity. Job's body constitutes the final testing ground for the Satan (2:5), and its ravaged state is the enduring mark and experience of his dishonour.[83] While Job himself used extensive corporeal language to voice his complaint in response to Eliphaz and Bildad, Zophar is the only one of the friends to speak explicitly in these terms, and in doing so may be seen to have breached a last and particularly tender boundary of Job's defences.

3.3. His Justification: Personal Knowledge and Spirituality

Given that Zophar neither claims access to the supernatural nor appeals to tradition, it is not entirely clear how he purports to diagnose and speak into Job's predicament so boldly.[84] Some commentators have noted the corresponding use of the verb חלף in Eliphaz's account of the heavenly spirit that 'passed by' and revealed the mind of God to him (4:15) and in Zophar's reference to the Almighty himself 'passing by' with such force that none could stop him (11:10).[85] While this may allude to his having some form of advanced spiritual insight, Zophar does not report an actual encounter with the divine, which is in keeping with his overarching point about the inability of humans to perceive the presence of God in any direct way.[86] Nonetheless, he seems to assert the right of private judgement in spiritual matters.

While Eliphaz and Bildad appealed directly to the wisdom of 'the fathers' to substantiate their arguments (8:8; 15:18), Zophar makes no such reference. The ancients may have rightly observed the

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[78] Sylvia Huberman Scholnick, 'The Meaning of *Mišpat* in the Book of Job', *JBL* 101 (1982): 522.

[79] Fyall, *Now My Eyes*, 41.

[80] Ibid., 52.

[81] Ash, *Job*, 224.

[82] Rowley, *Job*, 181.

[83] Scott Jones, 'Corporeal Discourse in the Book of Job', *JBL* 132 (2013): 846.

[84] Cooper, 'The Sense of the Book of Job', 237–38.

[85] Caesar, 'Job: Another New Thesis', 442.

[86] Savran, 'Seeing is Believing', 341.

manifest *workings* of God, but Zophar seems to associate himself with a more profound and concealed divine wisdom that is integral to God's very being (11:7). Its תַּעֲלֻמָה—literally its 'hidden dimensions' (11:6)—are inaccessible to mortals, stretching beyond the boundaries even of the heavens and of Sheol (11:8).[87] Accordingly, the words Zophar uses to describe humanity's comparative ignorance are uncompromising: 'men of emptiness' (11:11, תַּעֲלֻמָה) and irredeemably dull (11:12).[88]

3.4. His Accusation: Ignorance and Mockery of God

Zophar is the most direct and uncompromising of the three friends in confronting Job with his alleged sin. While Eliphaz defaulted to Job's pious track record to frame his discourse on God's justice, and Bildad began by deflecting attention to the example of Job's children, Zophar's first statements boldly establish his view that Job is a sinner, and moreover a secret one—spuriously claiming purity before God (11:4) while in fact deserving an even severer punishment than that which has been sent him.[89] Once more, Zophar is unhesitant to speak on God's behalf here, asserting that the Almighty must have found *something* amiss in Job in order to be treating him in this way (11:11), whether or not he chooses to divulge it.[90] On this basis, Zophar's long discursus on the inevitable ruin of the godless (20:6–29) can be seen as carrying a sense of prediction and not simply warning.[91]

For Zophar, the heart of Job's problem is that he neither has access to nor understands the wisdom of God (11:4–12). Lacking the capacity to discern or remedy his own impurity, Job's ignorance has led to him commit such sins as are greater than he realises (11:6)[92] but that have not escaped God's notice (11:11). Moreover, even now Zophar perceives Job to be speaking boastfully and mockingly to and about God (11:2–9); thus, with characteristic self-assurance, he believes he has every right to silence such presumptuous talk (11:1–2).[93]

3.5. His Remedy: Personal Communion with God, Attained through Repentance

In keeping with Eliphaz and Bildad, Zophar does not go so far as to pronounce Job irredeemably wicked, though he certainly comes the closest of the three to doing so. The glimmer of hope he holds out to Job is that God may yet be undeservingly merciful to him (11:6): the emphatic pronoun 'you' in 11:13 suggests that Job will not necessarily turn out to be one of the 'men of emptiness' just referred to.[94] Like his two companions before him, Zophar exhorts Job to seek God in order to be restored to his favour, but there are some notable points of contrast in the manner of his appeal. Both Eliphaz's chosen term שׁרד (5:8) and Bildad's רחשׁ (8:5) simply denote orienting one's attention to an object. Zophar, on the other hand, describes in more detail the ritual practice of 'seeking God' using a number of references to the body, its posture and gestures (11:13–15).[95] He begins with an allusion to the religious practice of

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[87] Habel, 'Of Things Beyond Me', 148.

[88] Rowley, *Job*, 108–9.

[89] Clines, 'The Arguments of Job's Three Friends', 269.

[90] Phillips, 'Speaking Truthfully', 34.

[91] Clines, 'The Arguments of Job's Three Friends', 266–71.

[92] Newsom, *The Book of Job*, 127.

[93] Ash, *Job*, 154.

[94] Rowley, *Job*, 109.

[95] Newsom, *The Book of Job*, 109.

concentration that precedes prayer ('preparing the heart', 11:13). In this, the suppliant creates a physical and temporal boundary between spiritual and non-spiritual activity, and takes time to settle and re-order any turbulent thoughts before 'stretching out his hands' in prayer and an attitude of penitent self-examination (11:13–14), ultimately coming to what one author has called 'a space of tranquil intimacy with God'.[96]

While Eliphaz and Bildad focused on the material rewards that would await Job if he repented, Zophar's promises are less tangible and at best only indirectly connected to outward circumstances. Job's reinstated blessings will include confidence, fearlessness, oblivion of the past, rest, and the favour of others (11:15–19). Ultimately the end goal is for Job to 'forget' his trouble (11:16), but there is no clear assurance given here that Job will see the restoration of his health, wealth, or relationships.

In spite of Job's hopes expressed previously, Zophar crushes any possibility of a mediator to intercede for him. At the close of his second and final speech, he proclaims of the wicked man, 'The heavens will reveal his iniquity, and the earth will rise against him'. The language mockingly echoes Job's earlier appeal that (in the manner of Abel) his blood should cry out to heaven until the injustice wrought against him be vindicated by an 'advocate on high'.[97] Zophar contests rather that the earth itself will testify to Job's sin and that the skies will yield not intercession but condemnation.[98] Further, Zophar dismisses Job's hopeful musings on the prospect of vindication after death by announcing that the dust is only a grave (20:11).

4. The Divine Verdict

The text of Job does not establish for certain whether Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar were privy to God's dramatic self-revelation that is recorded in the book's closing chapters (38–41), whereby Job is brought to silent contrition for his unfettered complaints against the Almighty and ultimately to a humble acceptance of God's good sovereignty in the face of all that has befallen him (42:1–6). Regardless, the 'Yahweh speeches' undoubtedly resound with judgement against the messages of Job's comforters and illuminate their subsequent indictment by God for having failed to 'speak what is right' of him (42:7).

'Justice' has been a common thread across the friends' speeches, as they vehemently sought to confirm Job's guilt and press his acceptance of deserved punishment. Yet God shows that his perfect rule is not primarily seen in his juridical administration of man's affairs. Rather, it manifests more vastly and gloriously in his creation of the world (38:1–13), his knowledge of its structure and workings (38:16–22), his command over natural forces (38:24–38), animals (39:1–30; 40:14–24) and man (40:11–13); and in his sovereign providence for all creatures (38:39–41).[99] As far as the friends are concerned, this serves as a cutting rebuke to anyone who would assert the right to judge the course of matters in the universe from his limited mortal perspective.[100]

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[96] Ibid., 109–10. Newsom cites a description of this practice in the Mishnah, but notes there are no accounts of it in Second Temple texts.

[97] Crenshaw, *Old Testament Wisdom*, 108.

[98] Holbert, 'The Skies Will Uncover His Iniquity', 420.

[99] Scholnick, 'The Meaning of *Mišpaṭ*', 527.

[100] John E. Hartley, 'The Genres and Message of the Book of Job', in *Sitting with Job: Selected Studies in the Book of Job*, ed. Roy B. Zuck (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1992), 71.

Eliphaz is right that God loves righteousness and hates wickedness (38:12–15; 40:8–14), but he has taken too narrow a view of what it means for God to exercise moral government over the universe. God is greater and the world is more complex than to operate on observable, predictable, 'tit for tat' principles of retributive justice.[101] Bildad is right that God 'sees the end from the beginning', that his ordinances are unshakeable (38:8–11) and that the universe is ordered and demarcated according to his righteous decrees (38:4–5, 33). However, he has underestimated God's loving concern for the smallest of his creatures (38:41) and by implication the high esteem placed upon mankind as his image-bearers.[102] Zophar is right that God's wisdom extends to the extremities of creation and is beyond man's grasp (38:16–18), but in his desire to uphold the transcendence of the divine, he has effectively reduced God to a set of abstract principles and conceived of fellowship with God as some sort of esoteric experience rather than the dynamic relationship with a loving, active, speaking Creator that Yahweh's speeches show it to be.[103]

Significantly, God's self-disclosure and accompanying 'cosmic tour' do not reveal a utopian theocracy in which evil is summarily expunged as soon as it appears. Herein lies the strongest refutation of the friends' shared dogma of divine retribution,[104] for the natural world, elegant and splendid as it is, still includes elements of predation and savagery (39:26–30).[105] The extensive treatment in Yahweh's speeches of the sinister Behemoth and Leviathan, who are subdued but not as yet destroyed (38:8–11; 40:15–41:34), alludes to the ongoing spiritual realities of death and evil that pervade the created order[106] and such as characterised the events of the heavenly courtroom in the book's prologue.[107] In their ignorance of these truths, the friends have erred in regarding evil as a purely human phenomenon. Consequently, they have mistakenly fixated on the constraint of wrong and exercise of retributive justice in the here and now.[108] A corollary of this is that they could only ever hold out the hope of temporal, material blessing as the token of God's vindication.[109] By encouraging Job to repent so as to restore his health and wealth, the friends simply lent weight to the Satan's argument that no man serves God for who he is but only for what he gives.[110] Furthermore, they undermined Job's integrity by ignoring the fact that in all his complaints he never pleaded for physical and material restoration, being concerned rather for the restitution of his intimate relationship with God.[111]

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[101] Crenshaw, *Old Testament Wisdom*, 125.

[102] Hartley, 'Genres and Message', 71.

[103] Michael D. Fiorello, 'Aspects of Intimacy with God in the Book of Job', *Journal of Spiritual Formation & Soul Care* 2 (2011): 184.

[104] Gregory W. Parsons, 'The Structure and Purpose of the Book of Job', in *Sitting with Job: Selected Studies in the Book of Job*, ed. Roy B. Zuck (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1992), 32.

[105] Ash, *Job*, 393–94.

[106] Fyall, *Now My Eyes*, 137, 174.

[107] Ash, *Job*, 94–95.

[108] Mark R. Littleton, 'Where Job's "Comforters" Went Wrong', in *Sitting with Job: Selected Studies in the Book of Job*, ed. Roy B. Zuck (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1992), 255.

[109] Ash, *Job*, 112.

[110] Fiorello, 'Aspects of Intimacy', 168.

[111] Ibid., 159.

Ultimately, the weight of Yahweh's speeches is such that they 'undermine the truth value of all theological statements and expose human ignorance'.[112] As Job himself appears to express (40:3–4), to hear the Creator God speak in glorious self-revelation is in itself enough to silence the intellectual dialogues he and his friends have engaged in, and to re-orient their vision to God as the origin and giver of all wisdom. Nonetheless, it remains that even in the depths of his hardship, Job continually yearned to see and hear God, and hence now finds ultimate consolation in his manifestation and presence.[113] Conversely, Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar spent this time presuming to speak authoritatively on God's behalf with apparently no desire to personally entreat him,[114] and ultimately this renders even the more considered aspects of their discourse morally irredeemable.

5. Conclusion

It has been said of Job's comforters that their words are 'dangerous because they are nearly true'.[115] Without doubt, each of Eliphaz's, Bildad's and Zophar's basic premises—moral justice, divine ordinance, inscrutable wisdom—provides a lens through which to view the grand sweep of creation and redemption, including the dynamics of good and evil, and it would be hasty to vilify their every utterance as repugnant to the greater truths of Scripture in which they find their place. However, when rigidly applied as narrow, isolated constructs, none of these paradigms is sufficient to capture the beautiful complexity and absolute integrity of God's sovereign ways as revealed at the end of the Joban drama. Moreover, according to God's own declaration, such ignorant and inflexible dogmas fundamentally dishonour his holy name by virtue of their misrepresentation of his character and workings in the world, not least when conveyed in the guise of comfort and consolation to the suffering believer.

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[112] Cooper, 'The Sense of the Book of Job', 240.

[113] Joseph Tham, 'Communicating with Sufferers: Lessons from the Book of Job', *Christian Bioethics: Non-ecumenical Studies in Medical Morality* 19 (2013): 90.

[114] Ash, *Job*, 96.

[115] Ibid., 90. Ash draws attention to Paul's quoting of Eliphaz, in the manner of a wisdom proverb, when he warns the Corinthian church against boasting (1 Cor 3:19, cf. Job 5:13).

John's Appropriation of Isaiah's Signs Theology: Implications for the Structure of John's Gospel

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Abstract: The present article explores John's distinct use of "signs" as part of his "theological transposition" of the Synoptic Gospels by which John transforms the Synoptic concept of "miracle" into that of "signs" pointing to Jesus's messianic identity. The article proposes that Isaiah was the source for John's signs theology by demonstrating significant links between Isaiah's and John's use of signs. In addition, the article proposes that John was led by Isaiah to structure his Gospel according to Jesus's signs: the first half containing "The Book of Signs," and the second half conveying the reality to which the signs point.

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1. Introduction

In a previous article, I have sketched the OT background for John's use of "sign" (σημεῖον) in his Gospel as essentially twofold: (1) the "signs and wonders" performed by Moses at the exodus; and (2) prophetic signs predicting Yahweh's future judgment on the people of Israel (see, e.g., Isa 20:3).[1] Importantly, while the former manifestations were miraculous, the latter were not. The Synoptic Gospels present Jesus's mighty works as "miracles" (δυνάμεις); John discourages faith in "signs and wonders" (John 4:48) and replaces "miracle" with "signs" terminology. Transparently, this is done to recast the function of Jesus's works beyond their miraculous nature to point to Jesus's messianic identity.

1.1. John's Transposition of Synoptic Material

While in the Synoptics Jesus's works, as miracles, attest him as the divine Son of God who has authority over nature, sickness, death, and the evil supernatural, in John Jesus's works, as *signs*, have a

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[1] Andreas J. Köstenberger, "The Seventh Johannine Sign: A Study in John's Christology," *BBR* 5 (1995): 87–103.

deeper significance as signposts to Jesus's messianic identity. This is predicated upon the belief that it was possible, even common, for Jesus's contemporaries to witness his miracles and yet to miss the signs (i.e., the miracle's deeper, messianic significance). The crowds ate the loaves and the fishes and had their stomachs filled but their hearts remained empty. The Jewish leaders, tragically, pressed for another sign, failing to observe the significance of the feat they had just witnessed (6:30; cf. 2:18; 12:36b–37).

In my previous article, I argued that John's "signs" theology was thus broader than that of "miracle" and included not only miraculous works but at least one manifestation that is non-miraculous as well—the clearing of the Jerusalem temple by Jesus (2:13–22).[2] Yet, while non-miraculous, this act serves as a Johannine sign nonetheless in that it conveys prophetically, in Isaianic style, God's future judgment on the people of Israel, in the present case the destruction of the central national sanctuary in the Jewish capital.

John	Reference to Sign(s)	Brief Description
2:1–11	Jesus turns water into wine at Cana wedding	Jesus is the Messiah who came to restore spiritually barren Israel
2:13–23	Jesus clears the Jerusalem temple	Jesus's body will be "destroyed" and on the third day be raised as a portent of the temple's destruction
4:46–54	Jesus heal the centurion's servant	Jesus came to bring not only physical but also spiritual healing
5:1–15	Jesus heals the lame man	Jesus came to bring not only physical but also spiritual healing
6:1–15	Jesus feeds the five thousand	Jesus is the bread of life
9:1–41	Jesus opens the eyes of the man born blind	Jesus can help spiritually blind people see
11:1–44	Jesus raises Lazarus from the dead	Jesus is the resurrection and the life

In the Synoptics, the prediction of the temple's destruction serves as the occasion of Jesus's end-time discourse (the Olivet Discourse).[3] In John, who does not feature this discourse—presumably to propagate a more fully realized eschatology—the account of an earlier temple clearing than that included in the Synoptics similarly forecasts the future destruction of the temple. However, this temple is symbolically recast as Jesus's body, to be "destroyed" at his crucifixion and raised three days later at the resurrection.[4]

In this way, John presents Jesus as the new temple and means of spiritual worship. Jesus the Messiah is replacing the temple cult in Jerusalem that—from the vantage point of the earthly Jesus—was soon going to be obsolete. Similar to the dynamic at work in the feeding of the multitudes, therefore, Jesus performs the sign of the temple clearing, and the Jewish leaders promptly demand a sign—which, it turns out, Jesus has just performed! Tragically, however, the authorities have entirely missed its significance (2:18). The Johannine irony and misunderstanding—not to mention symbolism and *double entendre*—

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[2] Ibid.

[3] Matthew 23; Mark 13; Luke 22.

[4] See Andreas J. Köstenberger, Alexander E. Stewart, and Apollo Makara, *Jesus and the Future: What He Taught about the End Times* (Wooster, OH: Weaver, 2017).

are profound.[5] The sign serves to authenticate Jesus as Messiah who has authority over the temple and whose body—the new temple—will be destroyed and raised up to serve as the new center and object of spiritual worship.

This new reality is also forecast by Jesus in his words to the woman at Samaria: "Woman," Jesus replied, "believe me, a time is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem. You Samaritans worship what you do not know; we worship what we do know, for salvation is from the Jews. Yet a time is coming *and has now come* when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and in truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks. God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in spirit and in truth" (John 4:21–24).

In this way, John engages in what I have previously called "theological transposition" of Synoptic material, that is, the reworking of Synoptic material in distinctive Johannine fashion to probe the deeper theological significance of a given event or theme.[6] In his transposition of Synoptic material, as well as in his extensive appropriation of Isaianic theology, John proves to be a formidable biblical theologian, if not one of the greatest theologians of all time.

1.2. John's Transposition of Isaianic Material

When it comes to Isaiah, akin to John's use of the Synoptics, there are numerous points of contact.[7] Similar to the Synoptic Gospels, John identifies the nature of the Baptist's calling in Isaianic terms: He is a "voice crying in the wilderness, 'Make straight the way for the LORD'" (John 1:23; cf. Isa 40:3).

At three strategic junctures in his Gospel (3:13; 8:28; 12:32), John appropriates Isaiah's "lifting up" language, showing that Jesus's crucifixion did not merely involve a literal physical elevation but also a figurative spiritual exaltation (cf. Isa 6:1; 52:13).[8] In this way, (Synoptic) shame turns into (Johannine) honor, and suffering ensues in glory. Speaking of glory, while John does not record the Synoptic account of the transfiguration, he contends that Jesus's glory was visible *throughout* his ministry, not merely at certain events (1:14). Properly conceived, *all* of Jesus's ministry was characterized by divine, heavenly glory from beginning to end, and the cross constituted the climax of the glorification of the Son, the place where Jesus was exalted both physically and spiritually.

Last but not least, John quotes Isaiah explicitly at the end of the "Book of Signs" in 12:38–40 to highlight Jewish obduracy. Intriguingly, John's quotations come from both the first and the second half of the book of Isaiah (Isa 53:1 and 6:9–10, respectively).[9]

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[5] The classic article is D. A. Carson, "Understanding Misunderstandings in the Fourth Gospel," *TynBul* 33 (1982): 59–91. More recently, see Andreas J. Köstenberger, *A Theology of John's Gospel and Letters*, BTNT (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2009), 141–45.

[6] Andreas J. Köstenberger, "John's Transposition Theology: Retelling the Story of Jesus in a Different Key," in *Earliest Christian History*, ed. Michael F. Bird and Jason Maston, WUNT 2/320 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2012), 191–226.

[7] See Joshua J. F. Coutts, *The Divine Name in the Gospel of John: Significance and Impetus*, WUNT 2/447 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2017), who argues for John's use of Isaiah through his emphasis on the divine name as well as the "I am" sayings and the theme of "glory."

[8] Isaiah prophesied of the Servant, Jesus, being high and lifted up (Isa 52:13) just as Yahweh is high and lifted up (Isa 6:1). The Servant is elevated to the glorified status of Yahweh.

[9] Regarding the use of Isaiah 52–53 in John 12, see Daniel J. Brendsel, *Isaiah Saw His Glory: The Use of Isaiah 52–53 in John 12*, BZNW 208 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2014), who discusses John's citations of Isa 53:1 and 6:10 in John

1.3. The Purpose of This Essay

As I have briefly sketched above, therefore, John appropriates previous scriptural material in both Testaments—whether Old (Isaiah) or New (the Synoptics)—with creative imagination, imparting penetrating spiritual insight to the readers of Scripture. My aim in this paper, then, is to build on my previous work on the Johannine signs and on John's theological method of transposition of previous material and to argue that John does not merely engage in Synoptic transposition but in Isaianic transposition as well. Specifically, I will take one aspect one step further and argue that John consciously observes the string of references to "signs" in the book of Isaiah and perceives in these not only theological but also structural significance.

I propose that not only was John led by Isaiah to expand the Synoptic definition of "miracle" to include non-miraculous prophetic signs of Jesus (or at least one such sign, the temple clearing), he was further led to make Jesus's signs a foundational structural component of his Gospel. That is, John clustered references to Jesus's signs in the first half of his book (fittingly called "The Book of Signs" by many commentators) while focusing in the second half on the exaltation of the Son as the reality to which the signs pointed. To demonstrate this thesis, I will engage in a closer study of the references to "signs" in the book of Isaiah to see if and in what ways Isaiah serves as the source for John's signs structure and theology.

2. "Signs" in Isaiah

T. Desmond Alexander helpfully sets the framework for the book of Isaiah as follows:

> Whereas chapters 1–39 are set against historical events associated with the eighth century BC Judean kings, Uzziah (767/766–736/735; coregent from 785; not active after 750 BC); J(eh)otham (752/751–732/731 BC); Ahaz (732/731–716 BC; coregent from 736/35 BC); and Hezekiah (716–687/686 BC; coregent from 729 BC), chapters 40–66 reflect events that will take place after the sacking of Jerusalem by the Babylonians in 586 BC. In its final form, the contents of the book of Isaiah describe events that not only span several centuries but also look forward to the eschaton.[10]

It is within this framework that we explore the teaching on "signs" in the two major portions of the book of Isaiah.

2.1. Isaiah 1–39

The first sign in the book of Isaiah is found in 7:11–14, the famous passage regarding a virgin (or young woman) who will conceive a child. Isaiah tells Ahaz to ask for a 'sign' (אוֹת). Ahaz refuses, yet Isaiah tells him and the whole house of David that they will be given a sign: a virgin will be with child and bear a son and call his name "Immanuel." Matthew, of course, makes this passage a strategic plank in his string of fulfillment quotations in the first four chapters of his Gospel, indicating fulfillment of Isaiah's prophecy in and through the virgin birth of Jesus through Mary (Matt 1:18–25). Intriguingly, however,

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12:38 and 40 in the context of Isaiah 40–55 and 1–6, respectively.

[10] T. Desmond Alexander, *The City of God and the Goal of Creation*, Short Studies in Biblical Theology (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2017), 88. For a discussion of alternate scenarios surrounding the book's composition, see ibid. 88n5.

despite John's heavy dependence on Isaianic theology including his signs, he bypasses the first Isaianic sign, perhaps because it had already found a home in a preceding Gospel.

The second sign or portent in Isaiah is mentioned in 8:18. Isaiah of Jerusalem himself bears two sons who are said to be "signs" for Israel. The first of Isaiah's children is named Shear-Jashub, "A remnant will return" (7:3). After judgment will be brought upon the king of Assyria, Isaiah prophesies that "Shear-Jashub": "A remnant will return, the remnant of Jacob, to the mighty God" (10:21). Thus, Shear-Jashub is given to Isaiah as a sign that Israel will one day be restored following the fall of Assyria. The second of Isaiah's sons is named Maher-shalal-hash-baz, "The spoil speeds, the prey hastens" (8:1–4). This son is given to Isaiah as a sign that Damascus and Samaria will be carried into exile by the king of Assyria: "The wealth of Damascus and the spoil of Samaria will be carried away before the king of Assyria" (8:4). Both of Isaiah's sons, therefore, function as Yahweh's signs to Israel regarding the destruction of their enemies and their eventual restoration from exile.

The third sign is found in 19:20, Isaiah's oracle presaging God's judgment and restoration of Egypt. The oracle predicts judgment upon the Egyptians in a similar fashion to the judgment predicted against Israel in Deuteronomy 29. Isaiah prophesies that the Egyptians will be delivered into the hands of a cruel master while also being afraid of the land of Judah. Not only this, but "in that day five cities in the land of Egypt will be speaking the language of Canaan and swearing allegiance to the Lord of hosts; one will be called the City of Destruction" (19:18). Moreover, "In that day there will be an altar to the Lord in the midst of the land of Egypt, and a pillar to the Lord near its border. It will become a 'sign' (אות) and a witness to the Lord of hosts in the land of Egypt" (19:19–20). The oracle predicts that *in that day*, perhaps the last days building off 2:2, the Egyptians will swear allegiance to Yahweh and build an alter to him that will function as a sign in the land of Egypt. More astonishingly, the oracle ends in 19:24–25 by saying, "In that day Israel will be the third party with Egypt and Assyria, a blessing in the midst of the earth, whom the Lord of hosts has blessed, saying, 'Blessed is Egypt my people, and Assyria the work of my hands, and Israel my inheritance.'"

Isaiah 20, predicting the destruction of Egypt and Cush by Assyria, picks up immediately after the oracle of judgment and restoration of Egypt by recounting the narrative of Isaiah going barefoot and naked for three years. According to Yahweh, "As my servant Isaiah has gone naked and barefoot three years as a 'sign' and token against Egypt and Cush, so the king of Assyria will lead away the captives of Egypt and the exiles of Cush, young and old, naked and barefoot with buttocks uncovered, to the shame of Egypt" (20:3–4).

This is now the fourth sign featured in Isaiah. Just as Isaiah the prophet moved about (virtually) naked for three years as a sign against Egypt and Cush, so the king of Assyria will lead away the captives of Egypt and Cush to exile naked and barefoot in shame. Concerning Egypt, then, the sign in chapter 20 functions to predict the conquest and exile of Egypt at the hands of Assyria while the sign in chapter 19 is said to be given after their exile during a time of restoration when Egypt swears allegiance to Yahweh. Altogether, within the book of Isaiah the signs that are given before the narrative of Hezekiah's sickness seem to function as witnesses and memorials for the events that will take place in the future, which plays into the importance of Hezekiah's question: "What will be the sign that I will go up to the house of the Lord?"

Note that there is nothing miraculous in Isaiah's actions here. Rather, they serve as a visible sign and portent of God's coming judgment upon the people of Israel. In this sense, the sign does involve a supernatural element—prophecy of future events—but in a sense different from an actual exemplar

of the "signs and wonders" performed especially at the occasion of Israel's exodus from Egypt under Moses.

The fifth sign is featured in 37:30. Because of the arrogance of Sennacherib, king of Assyria, Yahweh is going to deliver Israel from him and send him back to Assyria. This is the sign for Israel concerning this: They shall "eat this year what grows of itself, in the second year what springs from the same, and in the third year sow, reap, plant vineyards and eat their fruit." Thus, "the surviving remnant of the house of Judah will again take root downward and bear fruit upward. For out of Jerusalem will go forth a remnant and out of Mount Zion survivors. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this." This sign, therefore, serves as a portent of Yahweh's future restoration of Israel and deliverance from their enemies.

The sixth sign is found in 38:7. The sign that Hezekiah will be healed is that the sun will go back on the stairway. This truly is an astonishing feat by which Yahweh will underscore the truthfulness of his prediction to the king.

The seventh signs reference is found in 38:22 where Hezekiah inquires: "What will the sign be that I shall go up to the house of the Lord?" Intriguingly, the question is never answered in the following chapter, and thus provides sort of a cliff hanger for the second major portion of Isaiah's book. The reader is thus led to ponder: What will be the sign of Yahweh's future intervention?

Isaiah	Reference to Sign(s)	Brief Description
7:11–14	The virgin will be with child	Sign given to Ahaz, child will be called "Immanuel"
8:18	Isaiah's two sons, Shear-Jashub and Maher-shalal-hash-baz	A remnant will return; Assyria will conquer Syria and Samaria
19:20	Erection of an altar to Yahweh in Egypt	Sign of God's judgment and restoration of Egypt
20:3–4	Isaiah the prophet walks around naked for 3 years	Conquest and exile of Egypt by Assyria
37:30	By third year, Israel will plant crops and harvest them, tend vineyards and eat their fruit	Yahweh will deliver Israel from Sennacherib, king of Assyria
38:7	Backward movement of sun on the stairway	Hezekiah's healing
38:22	Hezekiah asks what will be the sign that he will go up to the house of the Lord	The question is never answered

2.2. Isaiah 40–66

Barry Webb describes the movement from the first to the second major portion of the book of Isaiah as follows:

> The vision of the book moves, in fact, from the historical Jerusalem of the eighth century (under judgment) to New Jerusalem of the eschaton, which is the centre of the new cosmos and symbol of the new age. To this new Jerusalem the nations come (66.18–21; cf. 60:1–22) so that ultimately the nations find their salvation in Zion.[11]

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[11] Barry G. Webb, "Zion in Transformation: A Literary Approach to Isaiah," in *The Bible in Three Dimensions*, ed. D. J. A. Clines, S. E. Fowl, and S. E. Porter, JSOTSup 87 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1990), 71, cited in Alexander,

The second major section of Isaiah features only three explicit references to signs. These pertain, respectively, to a polemic against givers of alleged signs other than Yahweh; the future outpouring of the Spirit; and the commissioning of survivors of God's judgment on Israel to be Yahweh's messengers to the nations.

In the first passage, Yahweh mocks pagan signs. He alone is the Creator, "the LORD, who made all things, who alone stretched out the heavens, who spread out the earth" by himself (44:24). He, too, is the one "who frustrates the *signs* of liars and makes fools of diviners, who turns wise men back and makes their knowledge foolish" but "who confirms the word of his servant and fulfills the counsel of his messengers," predicting that Jerusalem will once again be inhabited and the cities of Judah will be raised back up and be rebuilt (vv. 25–26). This polemic establishes Yahweh as the only one who can give true signs because he alone has the power to create and to bring about what he predicts will happen. He alone is the Sovereign Lord of the universe who providentially orders the course of history of entire nations.

The second passage presages the future restoration of Israel. Chapter 55, in its entirety depicts Yahweh beckoning his people to return to him, and he promises that when they do, he will restore them and have compassion on them. As proof that he will keep his word, Yahweh promises that "instead of the thorn bush, the cypress will come up, and instead of the nettle, the myrtle will come up, and it will be a memorial to the Lord, for an everlasting sign which will not be cut off" (55:13), the point being that the pouring out of the Holy Spirit will function as the permanent sign of restoration.

Third, in the concluding chapter of the book, Isaiah affirms that Yahweh will look with favor on the humble and contrite while crushing the wicked. The chapter ends as follows: "For I know their works and their thoughts [i.e., the works and thoughts of the wicked]; the time is coming to gather all nations and tongues. And they shall come and see my glory. I will set a *sign* among them and will send survivors from them to the nations: Tarshish, … to the distant coastlands that have neither heard my fame nor seen my glory. And they will declare my glory among the nations" (66:19). The passage seems to indicate that Yahweh will send survivors (cf. 37:30) of God's burning judgment against Israel as a sign among the nations. And these survivors will bring "all your brethren from all nations as a grain offering to the Lord on houses, in chariots, in litters, on mules and on camels, to my holy mountain Jerusalem, just as the sons of Israel bring their grain offering in a clean vessel to the House of the Lord." In other words, these survivors will gather God's people from the nations to which they were scattered.[12]

Isaiah	*Reference to Sign(s)*	*Brief Description*
44:25	Yahweh frustrates the signs of liars but confirms the words of his servant	Polemic against pagan diviners
55:13	Cypress and myrtle will sprout rather than thorn bush and nettle	Restoration of Israel and outpouring of God's Spirit
66:19	Yahweh will send survivors as a sign among the nations	Messenger will gather God's people from the nations

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City of God, 92.

[12] Cf. Deuteronomy 29.

3. Isaiah as a Possible Antecedent of John's Signs Theology and Structure

Having surveyed John's signs theology and structure in a previous publication, and having now surveyed Isaiah's signs theology and structure above, several intriguing points of possible connectivity emerge. I will first list several observations and then register a number of points of interpretation.

3.1. Observations

1. John's Gospel is divided into two major parts (chaps. 1–12 and 13–20, respectively). The book of Isaiah is similarly divided into two major parts (chaps. 1–39 and 40–66, respectively).
2. Signs—in John's case, pointing to Jesus the Messiah, in Isaiah's case, pointing to Yahweh, Creator and Israel's covenant-keeping God—are a major theological and structural component of these two respective books.
3. John displays an evident affinity to Isaiah's theology, citing Isaiah explicitly several times, most strategically regarding signs at the end of his "Book of Signs" at 12:38–40.
4. John's Gospel features seven signs, all in part 1 of his Gospel. The book of Isaiah, likewise, features seven signs references in part 1.
5. John does not include any references to signs in part 2 of his Gospel (except for the purpose statement in 20:30–31), while Isaiah features three additional references to signs in part 2 of his book.

Observation	Isaiah	John
Basic structure of book	Two major parts (chaps. 1–39, 40–66)	Two major parts (1–12, 13–20)
First major portion	7 signs	7 signs ("Book of Signs")
Second major portion	3 signs	No signs ("Book of Exaltation")
Strategic reference to signs at end of book 1	38:22 (forward-looking: What will the sign be?)	12:38–40 citing Isa 53:1 and 6:9–10 (backward-looking: Even though Jesus performed all these signs in their presence)
Signs pointing to	Yahweh, Creator and covenant-keeping God of Israel	Jesus, the Messiah and Son of God

3.2. Interpretation

In light of my previous work on John's transposition of material in the Synoptics, and John's demonstrable affinity for Isaiah's theology, there is considerable likelihood that similarities in signs theology and structure between John and Isaiah are no mere coincidence. Rather, John likely took his cue from Isaiah not only in his theology of signs—pointing to Yahweh and Jesus, respectively—but also in the way in which he structured and laid out his Gospel.

In Isaiah, God provided Israel with various signs to authenticate his role as Sovereign Lord over the nations and their course of history. This ties in with the themes of revelation and witness and Yahweh's uniqueness vis-à-vis the gods of other nations which are shown to be nothing but idols and false gods.

In John's Gospel, Jesus provides Israel (note that the signs have the same recipient; cf. John 12:38 citing Isa 53:1) with various signs to authenticate his role as Messiah and Son of God. In both cases, the intent underlying those signs is to instill trust in Yahweh or Jesus as uniquely powerful in bringing out what they purpose and as the only true God and his agent in bringing about both salvation and judgment.

Isaiah and John are placed at different junctures of salvation history. Isaiah prophecies prior to the Babylonian exile, which he accurately predicts and beyond which he foresees a restoration of a believing remnant, pivoting on the strategic intervention of God's Servant. Remarkably, therefore, his prophetic vision extends all the way to a new heaven and a new earth at the end of time, citing as signs God's outpouring of his Spirit and his sending of survivors as a sign to the nations.

As a Gospel, John centers on the coming of Jesus the Messiah and his dual "lifting up" in crucifixion and resurrection. At 12:38–40, John shows that the Messiah's coming brought judgment on the nation of Israel because its leaders rejected Jesus and the messianic signs authenticating his identity and mission. This opened, salvation-historically, a way for Gentiles to be included among God's people (10:16; 11:51–52), as the result of a believing Jewish remnant—the Twelve—being commissioned by the Messiah to serve as his Spirit-infused representatives (20:21–22; cf. 17:18).[13]

Why are John's signs limited to the "Book of Signs," that is, the first major portion of his Gospel? I believe the reason is that John wanted to stress that the Messiah's signs were uniquely addressed to Israel as part of his messianic mission to Israel.[14] Following Jesus's rejection by the people of Israel, his "lifting up" fulfilled Israel's true destiny of serving a mediatorial role between Yahweh and the nations, providing salvation not only for Israel but also for the Gentiles. As John 3:16 (written, I believe, by the evangelist) says, "For God so loved *the world*."[15] Thus, the second half of John's Gospel presents the vicarious exaltation of Jesus's body as the fulfillment and realization of his messianic signs (the last and climactic of which is Jesus's raising of Lazarus, authenticating Jesus as "the resurrection and the life"). Thus, there are no more signs in the "Book of Exaltation," only the actual historical fulfillment of the reality to which the signs pointed—Jesus is the Messiah and Son of God.

And yet, John, later, in the book of Revelation, again features several signs. The first is found in chapter 12: "And a great sign appeared in heaven: a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars" (v. 1). This woman is pregnant and in agony of childbirth (v. 2). Then, "Another sign appeared in heaven: behold, a great red dragon, with seven heads and ten horns, and on his heads seven diadems" (v. 3). That dragon is poised to devour the woman's offspring as soon as she has given birth (v. 4). The male child is born but translated to heaven, and the woman flees into the wilderness (vv. 5–6) while war breaks out in heaven (v. 7). In the next chapter,

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[13] On the Johannine mission theme, see my published dissertation, *The Missions of Jesus and the Disciples according to the Fourth Gospel* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998). See also chap. 8 in my book, co-authored with Scott R. Swain, *Father, Son and Spirit: The Trinity and John's Gospel*, NSBT 24 (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2008).

[14] This is consistent with the missiological teaching of all four Gospels. See my book, co-authored with Peter T. O'Brien, *Salvation to the Ends of the Earth*, NSBT 11 (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2001), chs. 3–6; I am currently preparing a second edition of this work.

[15] See my essay, "Lifting Up the Son of Man and God's Love for the World: John 3:16 in Its Historical, Literary, and Theological Contexts," in *Understanding the Times: New Testament Studies in the 21st Century: Essays in Honor of D. A. Carson on the Occasion of His 65th Birthday*, ed. Andreas J. Köstenberger and Robert W. Yarbrough (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2011), 141–59.

"another beast" is said to perform "great signs, even making fire come down from heaven," as Elijah did (13:13), in the presence of the "first beast." It deceives the inhabitants of the earth, telling them to build an image to the beast that survived a fatal wound (v. 14). In chapter 15, the seer beholds "another sign in heaven, great and amazing, seven angels with seven plagues," symbolizing the final outpouring of God's wrath on the unbelieving world (v. 1). He also sees "a sea of glass mingled with fire" and those who had conquered the beast singing the song of Moses and of the Lamb (vv. 2–4). Yet another sign featured in Revelation relates to the "unholy trinity" of the dragon, the beast, and the false prophet: three unclean spirits, demonic spirits who perform signs prior to the final great end-time battle (16:14). The concluding reference to signs in the book relates to the final confinement of the signs-working false prophet (the "other beast") and of the beast to the lake of fire (19:20). Depending on the way one counts, there are five or six signs featured in Revelation. In any case, there probably are not seven signs, thus falling short of the perfect number (7), and most of these signs relate to God's judgment of Satan and his demons. This is in keeping with prophetic OT signs which were regularly given in the context of the obduracy of Israel and other nations.

As Beale observes,

> In Jesus and John's day, Israel becomes like Pharaoh, who repeatedly received God's warning signs, but repeatedly rejected them because of his hardened heart. Now, the church, the continuation of the true eschatological Israel, had already become spiritually like Israel of old and were in the same danger. In fact, both in the gospel of John and in Revelation the plague signs of the Exodus are repeatedly alluded to in order to show that both Israel and then later many in the church were spiritually destitute and were beginning to undergo judgment.[16]

Revelation	Reference to Sign(s)	Brief Description
12:1	Great sign in heaven: a woman clothed with the sun	Symbolizing the people of God
12:3	A great red dragon with seven heads and ten horns	Symbolizing Satan
13:13–14	Another beast performing great signs, including making fire come down from heaven (Elijah)	Symbolizing the imperial cult
15:1	Another sign in heaven, seven angels with seven plagues	Symbolizing final outpouring of God's wrath
16:14	Three unclean spirits from the unholy trinity performing signs prior to great end-time battle	Symbolizing final end-time rebellion against God by the spirit world
19:20	Confinement of signs-working false prophet and of the beast to the lake of fire	Symbolizing final judgment of Satan and demons

But in the Gospel, seven signs—seven, as mentioned, being the number of perfection—in part 1 are enough. As John points out at the end of the "Festival Cycle" in 10:40–42, John (the Baptist) performed no signs—and yet everything he said about Jesus was true. Neither are the disciples shown to perform

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any signs in John's Gospel. For John, therefore, signs are uniquely performed by Jesus and singularly addressed to the people of Israel as proofs that Jesus is the Messiah.

While Isaiah presents the outpouring of the Spirit and the commissioning of emissaries to the nations as signs, therefore, John presents the giving of the Spirit as yet future from the vantage point of the earthly Jesus (7:39), and the disciples' reception of the Spirit at their commissioning is most likely to be understood as an acted-out parable infused with new-creation symbolism. Not even the commissioning qualifies as a Johannine sign, as, by definition, in John the only person who performs signs is Jesus, and his signs are directed exclusively to the Jews. In this way, John exhibits a discerning appropriation of Isaiah's signs terminology, not following him slavishly but placing his narrative strategically within the Isaianic narrative. The story of Jesus is thus shown to be part of the larger story of God's dealings with Israel and with the world (cf. John 1:1).

4. Conclusion

John's Gospel thus functions as an amplification of Isaiah's book, zooming in on the coming of Yahweh's messianic Servant, a representative of Israel and yet rejected by the nation. In this regard, the signs serve a vital role, showing that Yahweh, and Jesus, provided a more than sufficient number of signs to prove their authority (theodicy). In the face of ample divine revelation, the burden rests squarely on God's people for rejecting such light. The challenge remains for people to discern in the events around them manifestations and evidences of God's providential ordering of events as he moves human history ever closer to its climactic fulfillment and establishes God's kingdom under the supreme authority and lordship of the Lord Jesus Christ.[17]

Why Paul Wrote Romans:
Putting the Pieces Together

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Abstract: Close attention to the content and context of Romans suggests that Paul had three purposes in view in writing the letter—namely, a missionary purpose, a pastoral purpose, and an apologetic purpose. This article explores these three purposes, explains their interrelationships, and considers some neglected evidence.

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1. Introduction

It is hard to account for all the data of Paul's letter to the Romans, without concluding, along with Wedderburn, that 'no one, single reason or cause will adequately explain the writing of Romans'.[1] It is, nevertheless, helpful to distinguish between the single *occasion* that precipitated the letter, and the several *purposes* which Paul was seeking to accomplish by the letter, in view of that particular occasion. The former is Paul's imminent arrival in Rome, en route to the virgin mission field that lay in the western reaches of the Empire, namely Spain (15:22–29).[2] But it is because this impending visit had such far-reaching implications for both Paul and the churches of Rome,[3] that a number of interlocking purposes lie behind the writing of the letter.

My aim in this article is three-fold. First, I want to give to students and pastors a clear and accessible entry point to what has become a highly complex and protracted discussion. Although what follows is my own understanding of the question and is not intended as a survey of the many positions taken,[4] the reader can follow the references to pursue various avenues for further exploration.

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[1] A. J. M. Wedderburn, *The Reasons for Romans* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1991), 5.

[2] As John M. G. Barclay, *Paul and the Gift* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2015), 457, says, 'the most important exigency that Paul addresses in this letter is the one that he himself will create: his imminent arrival in Rome as "apostle to the Gentiles"'.

[3] There was not a single ἐκκλησία ('gathering/church') in Rome, but several separate gatherings of believers, perhaps five (cf. 16:5, 10, 11, 14, 15).

[4] For which see Richard N. Longenecker, *Introducing Romans: Critical Issues in Paul's Most Famous Letter* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2011), 92–166, which is probably the best introduction to the issues and views held.

Second, I seek to give an account of the relationship between the reasons for Romans, with 'reasons' understood as a combination of the letter occasion and the letter's purposes, as just defined. I will suggest that there are three main purposes that lie behind the writing of Romans, and that these purposes are conceptually related both to one-another and to the letter occasion. The attractiveness of a single-reason hypothesis for Romans is that it offers conceptual clarity, presupposing a unity amidst the diversity of the letter's contents. The problem with the various single-reason hypotheses is that they fail to account for all the data of Romans.[5] The attractiveness of a multi-reason hypothesis for Romans is that it better accounts for the sheer complexity and scope of the letter. But the problem is that it then becomes hard to see how the various reasons relate to one another or form a conceptual whole. Therefore, I will attempt to show some of the connections between the reasons for Romans.

Third, in probing the relationships between the reasons for Romans, I aim to encourage students and preachers of this great letter to treat it as a unity, and to see the wood for all the theological trees that lie within. As Douglas Moo has noted, 'we can chart the history of the discussion of the theme of Romans as a movement from a focus on the beginning of the epistle to its end'.[6] One way to work against this tendency to prioritise one part of the letter at the expense of others is to work hard to discern the interconnectedness of the whole, to push back against the blinkers that inevitably come with our own biases and historical particularity. More innocently, even though we may appreciate that Romans is not a theological treatise,[7] we often fail to consider how an individual passage relates to Paul's reasons for writing. But the question of how a passage relates to the author's purpose in writing is central both to historically sensitive exegesis, as well as to sound homiletical practice.[8] Given that the letter body contains so few references to either Paul's situation or that of his audience, in practice it is easy to forget that everything Paul writes is designed to serve particular aims that Paul had in view. If we can clearly summarise what those purposes are, then it should be easier to keep them in view when we study individual parts of the letter.

2. Paul's Missionary Purpose

Paul entrusted the letter with Phoebe, whom he expected the believers to welcome on her arrival (16:1–2). Phoebe was to bring the letter as an advance instalment ahead of Paul's own personal visit, since he was planning to 'pass through' Rome on his way to Spain (15:24; cf. 1:11–13; 15:22–29). He had completed his mission in the east (15:19, 23), and now 'Spain, for long the chief bastion of Roman

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[5] To give just one example. Both L. Ann Jervis (*The Purpose of Romans: A Comparative Letter Structure Investigation*, JSNTSup 55 [Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1991], 158–64), and Jeffrey A. D. Weima ('The Reason for Romans: The Evidence of Its Epistolary Framework [1:1–15; 15:14–16:27]', *RevExp* 100 [2003]:17–33), rightly emphasise that Paul wrote Romans so as to bring the Christians in Rome within his orbit as apostle to the Gentiles. But, this cannot be the *sole* reason, since it does not explain why Paul writes at this particular moment. Why write *now*, rather than several years previously, when the way was *not* open to visit Rome?

[6] Douglas J. Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 22–23.

[7] There have been several variations on this understanding of Romans throughout church history, for which see Longenecker, *Introducing Romans*, 94–102. Romans is no less a letter written to a particular people than Paul's other letters to churches, and so we must, similarly, reckon with its historical and circumstantial particularity.

[8] Later on, when I consider the 'apologetic' purpose of Paul, I will place the much-debated chapter 7 within this context.

power in the west, beckoned Paul as his next mission field.[9] In passing through Rome, Paul hoped to enjoy the company of the believers there for a while (cf. 1:12), as well as 'be helped on [his] journey' (προπεμφθῆναι) by them (15:24). The verb Paul uses here, προπέμπειν, speaks of the material assistance that a departing traveller would need for a journey, such as rations, logistics, protection and so on. In connection with Christian mission, where the word appears frequently,[10] it could have connotations of providing a support base. It was certainly Paul's practice to undertake his missions from a base of operations, whether Syrian Antioch, or Corinth, or Ephesus,[11] and clearly venturing further afield into the unreached western reaches of the Empire is not something that Paul could undertake alone.[12]

Thus, many scholars have argued rightly that a key reason for why Paul wrote Romans was to enlist the support of the Roman churches in his mission further west into Spain.[13] In response, it should be noted that Paul does not mention the Spanish mission until quite late in the letter. This is an important consideration. However, rather than relegating Paul's missionary purpose to a reason of lesser significance, we need to view it in its totality. That is, we need to understand Paul's purpose in writing not simply in terms of garnering support for the Spanish mission, but to further his apostolic mission broadly conceived. Paul presents three mission horizons in the letter: Jerusalem, where he is about to deliver financial aid to the believers (15:25–28), before passing through Rome (15:28–29), on his way to Spain (15:28). There is a clear tendency among scholars to see one of these destinations as more important than the others in explaining the purpose of Romans. However, not only is 'each of these trips … directly connected with his work as an apostle to the nations/Gentiles',[14] and as such is an extension of Paul's *calling*, but each is fraught with potential difficulty for Paul (on which more below). We will now view these three mission horizons within the context of a missionary movement discernible within Romans.

First, the central theme of Romans is the gospel, both a divine promise now realised and divine mystery now revealed (1:1–3; 16:25–26); it both fulfills the antecedent prophetic Scriptures and elucidates them.[15] A summary statement of the gospel message forms the heart both of the letter's opening salutation (vv. 2–4 of 1:1–7), and of what has traditionally been understood as Paul's thesis statement

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[9] F. F. Bruce, 'The Romans Debate—Continued', in *The Romans Debate: Revised and Expanded Edition,* ed. Karl P. Donfried (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2011), 187.

[10] See C. E. B. Cranfield, *The Epistle to the Romans: Romans 9–16*, ICC (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1979), 769, for references.

[11] As noted by Bruce, 'The Romans Debate—Continued', 187–88.

[12] J. A. Crafton ('Paul's Rhetorical Vision and the Purpose of Romans: Toward a New Understanding', *NovT* 32 [1990]: 327), notes that 'in Spain Paul would encounter strong linguistic and cultural barriers for the first time'. See also Robert Jewett, *Romans: A Commentary*, Herm (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2007), 88.

[13] See especially Robert Jewett, 'Romans as an Ambassadorial Letter', *Int* 36 (1982): 5–20. There is some development in Jewett, *Romans*, 80–91. The importance of the Spanish mission for Paul's purposes can be affirmed, without resorting to some of Jewett's more speculative ideas, for which see Longenecker, *Introducing Romans*, 105–8.

[14] Sam K. Williams, 'The "Righteousness of God" in Romans', *JBL* 99 (1980): 246.

[15] See further, D. A. Carson, 'Mystery and Fulfillment: Toward a More Comprehensive Paradigm of Paul's Understanding of the Old and New', in *The Paradoxes of Paul. Vol. 2 of Justification and Variegated Nomism,* ed. D. A. Carson, Peter T. O'Brien, and Mark A. Seifrid, WUNT 181 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2004), 393–436, esp. pp. 398–425.

(1:16–17).[16] The noun εὐαγγέλιον and the cognate verb εὐαγγελίζω also appear at the beginning and end of the thanksgiving section (vv. 9, 15).[17] In short, the gospel is central to the letter introduction. Although not quite so prominent within the letter closing, the gospel is, nevertheless, central to the description of Paul's ministry (15:16, 19), and to the final doxology (16:25).

The various themes which are signalled in the letter frame are developed within the letter body, whether the fulfilment of prophetic Scripture (1:2, 7; 16:25–26; cf. 3:21–4:25; 9–11), the contrast between flesh and Spirit (1:3–4; cf. 2:28–29; 7:1–8:13), God's power to bring life out of death (1:4, 16; cf. 4:18–25; 11:1–36), the obedience of faith (1:5; 16:26; cf. 6:12–23; 12:1–15:13), the universal, impartial reach of salvation (1:5, 14–15; 15:19–24; 16:26; cf. 1:18–4:25; 9–11; 14:1–15:13), grace and peace as keynotes of the new age of salvation (1:7; cf. 5:1–6:14; 14:13–23), the revelation of the righteousness of God (1:17; cf. 3:21–4:25; 10:1–13), faith as the exclusive means of salvation (1:17; 16:26; cf. 3:21–4:25; 10:1–13; 14:1–15:13), and eternal, resurrection life as the great hope of believers (1:4, 17; cf. 6:1–11; 8:1–13). Since these themes are referenced in the letter frame in connection with Paul's *gospel*, it is clear that the letter body expounds the gospel that the letter frame introduces. In short, Romans is about the gospel.

Second, it is important to notice that the leading statement concerning the gospel in 1:2–4 is tied to Paul's apostolic calling through the risen Christ, which concerns his mission to preach the gospel among the Gentiles (1:1, 5–6). Of particular note are the three appositional phrases in v. 1, each of which identifies Paul in terms of his apostolic gospel mission.[18] Similarly, the thesis statement is, in the first place, an affirmation of Paul's resolute commitment to the gospel as one who is not ashamed of it (1:16; cf. also 1:9). Later, I will suggest that this statement functions as part of a personal apologetic.[19] For now, I simply note that the gospel is tied to Paul's own mission (1:14–15). And again, within the letter closing, what Paul says about the gospel is bound up with his mission to the Gentiles (15:16, 19). He even speaks of 'my gospel' (2:16; 16:25). It is not Paul's in *origin*, since it is a revealed mystery (16:25–26), but it is Paul's as a *trust* for the furthering of the obedience of faith among all the nations (16:26).

Third, at this point in his ministry Paul is committed to bringing a financial collection from the gentile Christians of Macedonia and Achaia to the poor Jewish believers of Jerusalem (15:26) because in his mind it represents a dynamic that is at the heart of his gospel mission.[20] Not only does the gospel involve a salvation-historical movement from Israel to the world, via the resurrection of the Davidic

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[16] But see Richard N. Longenecker, *The Epistle to the Romans: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, NIGTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2016), 127–34, who understands 1:13–15 to function in this way. His argument is worthy of close consideration, especially since the earliest extant manuscripts have new paragraphs at 1:13 and 1:18. See the recent Tyndale House Greek New Testament, which reflects this early paragraphing.

[17] Rom 1:15 is where the thanksgiving section ends, as traditionally understood. With respect to Paul's introductory thanksgivings, Peter T. O'Brien (*Introductory Thanksgivings in the Letters of Paul*, NovTSup 49 [Leiden: Brill, 1977], 15) says, 'We note in these periods an epistolary function, i.e. to introduce and indicate the main theme(s) of the letter'.

[18] This applies to the first epithet, δοῦλος Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ, as well as the other two. See Jeffrey A. D. Weima, 'Reason for Romans', 19; Lionel J. Windsor, *Paul and the Vocation of Israel: How Paul's Jewish Identity Informs His Apostolic Ministry, With Special Reference to Romans*, BZNW 205 (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2014), 99–112.

[19] In other words, Paul is not simply saying something important about the gospel, but about *himself*. Paul fully stands by his gospel message, whatever personal approbation it brings him.

[20] For the Jew-Gentile 'dynamic' of Paul's gospel mission see Windsor, *Paul and the Vocation of Israel*, 17–19. I am also indebted to Windsor for the idea of Romans containing various 'movements' of the gospel.

messiah and the calling of Paul (1:1–5; 15:15b–19; 16:25–27), but its progress thus far has taken Paul on a 'circuit' from Jerusalem around to Illyricum (15:19). Bringing the financial collection to Jerusalem would represent a reverse movement to these others, which Paul also understands as integral to the gospel dynamic, namely that Jews are in turn to be blessed through the ministry of Gentiles (11:13–14; 15:25–27).[21] Since such a mutual reciprocity between Jew and Gentile is integral to Paul's understanding of his gospel mission, he is committed to going to Jerusalem with the collection.[22]

Fourth, just as going to Jerusalem with the financial collection is integral to Paul's understanding of his gospel mission, so is going to Rome. It is important to notice that Paul explicitly places his addressees within the sphere of his apostolic orbit:[23]

> Through him we have received grace and apostleship for the obedience of faith among all the nations for his name's sake, *among whom you are also* (ἐν οἷς ἐστε καὶ ὑμεῖς) the called of Jesus Christ. (1:5–6)

> I do not want you to be ignorant brothers that often I intended to come to you, and have been prevented from doing so until now, in order that I might have a certain harvest *among you just as also among the rest of the gentiles* (ἐν ὑμῖν καθὼς καὶ ἐν τοῖς λοιποῖς ἔθνεσιν). (1:13)

The same idea reappears in 15:15–16:

> Nevertheless on some points I have written to you rather boldly by way of reminder, because of the grace given me by God to be a minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles in the priestly service of the gospel of God, so that the offering of the Gentiles may be acceptable, sanctified by the Holy Spirit.

Because Paul wrote Romans to a group with whom he had no established pastoral relationship, it has been suggested that he is writing so as to give the gentile-majority churches of Rome an apostolic foundation.[24] This is unlikely, since implicit in Paul's reasons for previously working in regions other than Rome (15:20–22), is that he thinks a suitable foundation *has* already been laid in Rome. In addition, 'Paul's laudatory comments about the Roman church (1:8; 15:14–15) make it quite unlikely that he deemed the church to be lacking anything essential.'[25]

Rather, Paul is writing to the Roman churches because God has called him to be apostle to the Gentiles and the churches of Rome fall within that apostolic gentile orbit. Paul is writing to discharge a burden of apostolic responsibility for Rome, which he has long felt (1:8–15). Paul presents four parallel statements of purpose or intent which explain why he either intends or has intended to visit the church in Rome.

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[21] See Williams, 'Righteousness of God', 248, for the connection between 11:13–14 and 15:25–27, and Windsor, *Paul and the Vocation of Israel*, 114–19, for the probable background of Isa 60–61.

[22] Crafton, 'Paul's Rhetorical Vision', 327, speaks of the collection symbolising 'an equality of mutual indebtedness'.

[23] As also argued by Jervis, *Purpose of Romans*, 158–64; Weima, 'Reason for Romans', 20.

[24] See Günter Klein, 'Paul's Purpose in Writing the Epistle to the Romans', in *The Romans Debate: Revised and Expanded Edition*, ed. Karl P. Donfried (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2011).

[25] Thomas R. Schreiner, *Romans: Second Edition*, BECNT (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2018), 18.

ἐπιποθῶ γὰρ ἰδεῖν ὑμᾶς, ἵνα τι μεταδῶ χάρισμα ὑμῖν πνευματικὸν εἰς τὸ στηριχθῆναι ὑμᾶς, τοῦτο δέ ἐστιν συμπαρακληθῆναι ἐν ὑμῖν διὰ τῆς ἐν ἀλλήλοις πίστεως ὑμῶν τε καὶ ἐμοῦ. οὐ θέλω δὲ ὑμᾶς ἀγνοεῖν, ἀδελφοί, ὅτι πολλάκις προεθέμην ἐλθεῖν πρὸς ὑμᾶς, καὶ ἐκωλύθην ἄχρι τοῦ δεῦρο, ἵνα τινὰ καρπὸν σχῶ καὶ ἐν ὑμῖν καθὼς καὶ ἐν τοῖς λοιποῖς ἔθνεσιν. Ἕλλησίν τε καὶ βαρβάροις, σοφοῖς τε καὶ ἀνοήτοις ὀφειλέτης εἰμί, οὕτως τὸ κατ᾽ ἐμὲ πρόθυμον καὶ ὑμῖν τοῖς ἐν Ῥώμῃ εὐαγγελίσασθαι.

For I long to see you, in order that I might share with you a certain spiritual gift to strengthen you—that is, to be mutually encouraged among you through the faith that is in one-another, both yours and mine. I do not want you to be ignorant brothers, that I frequently purposed to come to you, and have been prevented until now, in order that I might have a certain fruit among you, just as also among the other nations. Both to Greeks and barbarians, both to the wise and the foolish, I am obligated, so I am eager to preach the gospel also to you who are in Rome. (1:11–15, own trans.)[26]

These verses offer four expressions of intent, which line up together as mutually interpreting descriptions of why Paul would love to visit the believers in Rome:

1. To share a certain spiritual gift to strengthen them (v. 11)
2. To be mutually encouraged through one another's faith (v. 12)
3. To have some fruit among them just as among the other nations (v. 13)
4. To preach the gospel to you who are in Rome (v. 15)

Reason (4) is clear enough.[27] In 6:21–23 and 7:4–5 the image of fruit is closely connected with the life that the gospel brings, so it seems that reasons (3) and (4) are closely tied together. It is possible that the 'fruit' in 1:13 could be a material harvest, i.e. a financial contribution, either for the collection for the poor in Jerusalem or for his mission to Spain (cf. the use of the same word in 15:28). But the qualifier in v. 13—'just as among the other gentiles'—suggests a spiritual sense (as in 6:21–23; 7:4–5).

Reason (1) is much less clear, but two things suggest it is another way of speaking of the gospel. First, the reason for sharing the spiritual gift—to strengthen the believers in Rome—is explicitly linked with Paul's gospel in 16:25 in the closing doxology of the letter. Second, it is unlikely that the reason

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[26] Verse 15 lacks a finite verb, and so it is not clear whether Paul is referring to his previous intention to preach the gospel in Rome, or his present plans. Peter Stuhlmacher ('The Purpose of Romans', in *The Romans Debate: Revised and Expanded Edition*, ed. Karl P. Donfried [Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2011], 237), and Brendan Byrne ('"Rather Boldly" [Rom 15,15]: Paul's Prophetic Bid to Win the Allegiance of the Christians in Rome', *Bib* 74 [1993], 89n23), argue for the former, but the latter is more likely in view of v. 13: the statement 'I was prevented until now' (ἐκωλύθην ἄχρι τοῦ δεῦρο) links Paul's present anticipated visit to Rome with his longstanding desire to visit the believers there.

[27] Assuming we understand that Paul's use of εὐαγγελίζομαι here entails gospel ministry broadly conceived, and not simply initial evangelisation. The meaning of εὐαγγελίζομαι in Paul is a discussion beyond the scope of this article, but I think there is an implicit link between v. 15 and v. 11 (reasons [1] and [4] above). For the argument that εὐαγγελίζομαι always refers to initial evangelistic work, see John P. Dickson, 'Gospel as News: Εὐαγγελ- From Aristophanes to the Apostle Paul', *NTS* 51 (2005), 212–30. However, I am not persuaded that the word's basic sense—heralding *news*—excludes a Pauline use beyond initial evangelisation, because for Paul 'evangelising' involves heralding a message which also saves and strengthens believers (e.g. Rom 16:25; 1 Cor 15:1–2; Col 1:23). In addition, I find unconvincing Dickson's reasons (pp. 226–27) for reading vv. 13–15 as a significant departure from the theme of vv. 11–12.

Paul is longing to see them in v. 11 is a completely different reason to his expressed eagerness in v. 15. By speaking of the gift he wishes to bring as a *certain* spiritual gift, Paul is deliberately 'not claiming too much'.[28] He is not expressing uncertainty as to what the gift should be until he sees them in person.[29] Rather, he is speaking with reserve, deliberately treading lightly with a group of believers with whom he has no prior relationship.[30] The same gentle approach is evident from the mutuality Paul expresses in reason (2).

With that understanding of Paul's obligation to both Jerusalem and to Rome, along with his desire to then travel further afield to Spain, it is possible to see how the various mission horizons potentially impact one another. Each of these planned trips are, in their own way, fraught with difficulty. The logistical, practical, and linguistic challenges of a mission to Spain were considerable, the possibility of being ill-received in Jerusalem very real (15:30–32), and the churches of Rome were marked by a conflict (14:1–15:7), at the heart of which was the issue that had brought Paul so much opposition thus far in his ministry, namely the rightful place of the Mosaic Law within the life of believers. To say that Paul was embarking on a very challenging phase of his ministry would be quite the understatement.

What is Paul to do? He writes a letter to the churches of Rome in advance of his visit. At the most basic level, the letter is designed to accomplish in Paul's absence what he has for so long desired to do in person. The reason Paul has long wanted to visit Rome (1:11–15) is the reason he says he has now written (15:15–16)—as apostle to the Gentiles he longs to see the gospel bearing fruit among the Gentiles of Rome. The believers in Rome *need* Paul's gospel quite simply because they are predominantly gentile and Paul is the apostle to the Gentiles. They need Paul's gospel if they are to become the people that God has called them to be, namely a united people, who 'with one mind' (ὁμοθυμαδόν) and 'with one voice' (ἐν ἑνὶ στόματι) glorify God together (15:6). Only in this way will they become an acceptable, sanctified offering to God (15:17). And Paul needs the believers of Rome to be obedient to the gospel in this way (1:5; 15:18; 16:26) if his own apostolic mission is to be fruitful further west in Spain. This would be a great encouragement to Paul (see purpose statement [2] above). In short, the global gospel mission requires, at this point in salvation history, that the Christians in Rome embrace Paul's distinct vision.[31]

But why write *now* when Paul perceives the way to be finally open for a visit? First, for their sake. Such will be the significance and impact of Paul's visit as apostle to the Gentiles, that they need advance notice to prepare themselves for it. Second, for Paul's sake. There is a danger of the successive mission horizons suffering a deleterious domino effect. Paul was concerned about his visit to Jerusalem (15:30–31). Should Paul arrive in Rome with a bad report of events in Jerusalem preceding him then he would have little traction among the believers in Rome—whose trust he still needs to earn anyway—and

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[28] Jewett, *Romans*, 124.

[29] Contra C. E. B. Cranfield, *The Epistle to the Romans: Romans 1–8* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1975), 79; Adolf Schlatter, *Romans: The Righteousness of God*, trans. Siegfried S. Schatzmann (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1995); Moo, *Romans*, 60. Gordon D. Fee (*God's Empowering Presence: The Holy Spirit in the Letters of Paul* [Peabody, MA: Hendrikson, 1994], 486–89) suggests that Paul's spiritual gift is 'his understanding of the gospel that in Christ Jesus God has created from among Jews and Gentiles one people for himself, apart from Torah'. For a similar understanding see Longenecker, *Romans*, 117; Schreiner, *Romans*, 57.

[30] See Steven E. Runge, *Romans: A Visual and Textual Guide*, High Definition Commentary (Bellingham, WA: Lexham, 2014), 7.

[31] A number of interpreters speak of Paul's purpose in Romans in terms of bringing the believers in Rome to share his 'vision'. See Crafton, 'Paul's Rhetorical Vision', 317, 320, 328–39; Brendan Byrne, 'Rather Boldly', 89, 95; Barclay, *Paul and the Gift,* 459.

hence little hope of establishing a support base for mission in Spain.[32] Only if they are on board with Paul's vision will the believers in Rome join Paul in praying to God for his Jerusalem visit (15:30–32). Such prayerful solidarity with Paul should not only contribute to his success[33] but also ensure a positive reception of Paul whatever transpires in Jerusalem. It is also, of course, the sort of prayerful solidarity Paul will need from them if he is to succeed further afield in Spain. In short, Paul writes to establish a *relationship* with the believers in Rome, upon which he hopes to build in person after his arrival. But there are other reasons for writing which are integral to the successful fulfilment of Paul's mission in Rome and beyond. To these we now turn.

3. Paul's Pastoral Purpose

In 14:1–15:13 Paul directly addresses a pastoral issue that is causing division within the churches of Rome. There are those, whom Paul labels 'the strong' (15:1) who are despising 'the weak in faith' (14:1) or simply 'the weak' (14:2; 15:1).[34] Conversely, the weak are standing in judgment over the strong. The division centres around eating or not eating certain foods (14:2–3, 6), and observing or not observing certain days (14:5–6).[35] The weak considered certain foods to be unclean (14:14, 20), and certain days to be special (14:5). These differences in principled practice were proving divisive in Rome, and it is easy to imagine each group respectively digging their heals in. Also, given that the divisive practices were inherently social and communal in nature, there was some form of separation between the groups, which Paul wanted to see reversed by the receiving or welcoming (προσλαμβάνω) of one-another (14:1; 15:7).[36] This is Paul's aim in his instruction—that the conflict be overcome through welcoming one another, such that present division be replaced by unity of mind and practice (15:5–6).

Karris argues that Rom 14:1–15:7 is a generalised, universalised version of 1 Cor 8–10, abstracted from its original living context.[37] If this is right, then what we read in 14:1–15:7 is not reflective of a pastoral situation in Rome at all. More likely is that Paul is re-shaping previous material, so as to address the particular circumstances of the churches in Rome.[38] One significant difference between the passages

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[32] A similar point is made by Arland J. Hultgren, *Paul's Letter to the Romans* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2011), 15.

[33] See 2 Cor 1:10–11 and Phil 1:19 for an indication of the high value Paul placed on the prayers of fellow believers for the furtherance of his mission.

[34] It is not clear whether Paul omits πιστεύω in 14:2b to create a deliberate contrast with the manner in which the strong eat in 14:2a (viz. by faith). See James D. G. Dunn, *Romans 9–16*, WBC 38B (Dallas: Word, 1988), 799; J. M. G. Barclay, 'Faith and Self-Detachment from Cultural Norms: A Study in Romans 14–15', *ZNW* 104 (2013): 194.

[35] It is possible that another point of division concerned whether to drink or to abstain from wine (cf. 14:21).

[36] It is probable that the tensions were *within* the churches of Rome (rather than between the churches) because of the way Paul individualises the conflict: 'one person … the weak person' (14:2). Assuming the conflict exists within the individual church cells, the suggestion of Barclay ('Faith and Self-Detachment', 198) that to welcome one another meant, in practice, to welcome one another to communal meals, is highly plausible.

[37] Robert J. Karris, 'Romans 14:1–15:13 and the Occasion of Romans', in *The Romans Debate: Revised and Expanded Edition*, ed. Karl P. Donfried (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2011), 73–75. This view is not unique to Karris. See, for example, E. P. Sanders, *Paul, the Law, and the Jewish People* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1983), 31. However, Karris offers a substantial articulation of it.

[38] See especially the study of P. S. Minear, *The Obedience of Faith*, SBT 2/19 (London: SCM, 1971), although he goes overboard in his suggestion that we can discern five separate groups in Rome.

is that whereas 1 Cor 8–10 addresses issues arising from participation in gentile idolatry, Rom 14–15 addresses disagreement bound up with the application of the Jewish Law to the life of believers in Christ (e.g. whether certain foods were 'unclean' [14:3]). It is evident from ch. 16 that Paul was personally acquainted with a number of members of the Roman churches. Joel Marcus notes that 'if he [Paul] knew so many Roman Christians, it is credible that he was well enough informed about the situation of the Roman Christian community to address his letter to specific problems that had arisen there.'[39] Certainly the directness of Paul's language, expressed as command (14:1, 7), exhortation (14:13, 19), and second-person rhetorical address (14:4, 10, 22), is most naturally read as a reflection of a concrete pastoral situation.

At least three factors indicate that the situation is serious. First, the antagonism between the weak and the strong reflected the continuance of an ethnic division that had been overcome in the gospel.[40] Perhaps the clearest evidence that the weak were predominantly Jews and the strong Gentiles—apart from the character of the dispute itself—is Paul's conclusion in 15:7–13, where he urges mutual acceptance and tangible unity based on the prophetic promises of gentile inclusion into the single people of God. Paul saw mutual acceptance as a fundamental characteristic of a community birthed by the indiscriminate acceptance of both Jew and Gentile in Christ (15:7–9). The reason that Paul does not *label* the sides in the dispute with ethnic labels is because believers are now related as brother to brother in Christ (cf. the repeated use of ἀδελφός in 14:10, 13, 15, 21).[41] The solidarity of Jew and Gentile in sin, and their inclusive participation in salvation (chs. 1–11), has formed a new community in Christ, a body within which each person is a member of one-another (12:4–5). Paul's continued use of the reciprocal pronoun ἀλλήλων thereafter ('one-another'; 12:5, 10, 16; 13:8; 14:13, 19; 15:5, 7) assumes this perspective of a mutual interdependence within the differentiated unity of the body of Christ.[42] Likewise, the repeated use of ἀδελφός in ch. 14 assumes a new communal identity that must now relativise all others.

Second, Paul presents the issue as one of standing in judgment over one's brother in Christ, an attitude expressed by both sides in the dispute (14:1–6, 13). Paul implies that the weak are 'despising' (ἐξουθενέω) their Christian brothers, and the 'strong' are 'judging' (κρίνω) them (14:3), but both are ultimately forms of judgment: 'therefore, let no-one judge one-another' (14:13). This picks up on Paul's words to his interlocutor in 2:1, where he accuses him of judging the other. This judgmentalism is bound up with 'boasting' (2:17, 23), an attitude which involved both (misplaced) confidence before God, and

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[39] Joel Marcus, 'The Circumcision and Uncircumcision in Rome', *NTS* 35 (1989): 68.

[40] Wolfgang Wiefel ('The Jewish Community in Ancient Rome and the Origins of Roman Christianity', in *The Romans Debate: Revised and Expanded Edition,* ed. Karl P. Donfried [Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2011], 85–101) presents strong evidence for the existence in Rome of 'animosity toward Jews, shaped by ignorance and prejudice'. Tensions in the churches could have been exacerbated by the events surrounding the edict of Claudius in AD 49, which banished Jews from the city (reported by Suetonius, *Claud.* 25.4), since there would have been a double change in the ethnic makeup of the church, first in AD 49 (when the edict was issued) and again in AD 54 (when it was revoked). But we have no evidence that the edict was the *cause* of problems in the churches of Rome. Cf. Peter Oakes, *Reading Romans in Pompeii: Paul's Letter at Ground Level* (London: SPCK, 2009), 74–75; Barclay, *Paul and the Gift*, 456.

[41] See further Crafton, 'Paul's Rhetorical Vision', 336–37; Barclay, 'Faith and Self-Detachment', 198.

[42] See the comments re. ἀλλήλων of Norman H. Young, 'An Analysis of Romans 15:5–6 via the New Perspective on Paul', *International Journal of New Perspectives in Christianity* 1 (2009): 62–63.

a sense of distinctiveness in relation to others.[43] In Rom. 2, Paul is describing a Jewish expression of a fundamentally *human* problem, which is probably why Paul never actually addresses his interlocutor as a Jew.[44] God's judgment in justification abolishes such boasting (3:27; 4:2), with the scope of justification (both Jew and Gentile [the horizontal]) inextricably tied to God's method (by grace, through faith [the vertical]).[45] That Paul has a special interest in Romans in the sin of arrogance or pride is evident also in 11:17–22 and 12:3, 16, as well as in 7:7–25 where Paul affirms the very solidarity in sin that the interlocutor of ch. 2 denies.[46] A justified people should be marked by mutual acceptance, rather than the persistence of judgmentalism. Indeed, to stand in judgment over one's brother in Christ is to usurp the judgment of God (14:4, 10–12).

Third, the conflict is in danger of seriously harming the practice of faith, hope, and love. The argument of Romans, as it concerns the human response to God's grace in Christ, is broadly a movement from faith, to hope, to love.[47] It is significant that all three are central to the issue Paul is addressing in 14:1–15:13. It will be instructive to look briefly at each in turn (though not in that order). First, the issue of faith. Paul describes the practice of both parties in terms of their faith, whether weak or strong. Given the significance of faith for the argument of Romans, it is unlikely that Paul is now using the word in a different sense.[48] The weak in faith are weaker than the strong in faith, in that they have not yet worked through the full implications of their faith.[49] In particular, unlike the strong, they were unable to disentangle their faith from religious and cultural traditions which are not, in fact, necessary expressions of faith in Christ, even though they believed that they were.[50] It is incumbent on the strong to accommodate themselves to the practice of the weak, since not to do so places in serious jeopardy the faith that the weak do have (14:13–23). The language Paul uses to describe the potential injury to the weak—note especially the use of 'stumbling block' (v. 13), 'destroy' (vv. 15, 20), 'condemned' (v. 23)—implies that what is at stake is their final salvation.[51] Paul does not spell out how this is so, but presumably by abandoning behaviours which they see as integral to their faith, the weak risk eventually abandoning a life of faith altogether.

Related to this danger is the obligation on the strong to walk according to *love* (14:15). Although there is only a single mention of the word within 14:1–15:13, its importance has been established by the

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[43] See Simon J. Gathercole, *Where is Boasting? Early Jewish Soteriology and Paul's Response in Romans 1–5* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), 194.

[44] See further, Will N. Timmins, *Romans 7 and Christian Identity: A Study of the 'I' in its Literary Context*, SNTSMS 170 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 19–20, 52, 59.

[45] See Barclay, *Paul and the Gift*, 479–89.

[46] Crafton, 'Paul's Rhetorical Vision', 322, cites 2:17ff, 11:17ff, and 12:3 as evidence that pride was a problem among the Roman Christians. I discuss 7:7–25 further below, when considering 'Paul's apologetic purpose'.

[47] Πίστις and πιστεύω appear 61 times in Romans: 34 times in chs. 1–4; 14 times in chs. 9–11; 9 times in chs. 12–15. Ἐλπίς and ἐλπίζω appear a combined 17 times: 11 times in chs. 4–8, and 6 times in chs. 12–15 (5 of which occur in ch. 15). Ἀγάπη and ἀγαπάω appear a combined 17 times in the letter: 7 times in chs. 8–9, and 8 times in chs. 12–15. Note the way in which faith, hope, and love coalesce in chs. 12–15 (esp. chs. 14–15).

[48] Contra Cranfield, *Romans 9–16*, 699–700. See Barclay, 'Faith and Self-Detachment', 195.

[49] N. T. Wright, 'Romans', in *Acts–First Corinthians*, NIB 10 (Nashville: Abingdon, 2002), 733; Schreiner, *Romans*, 692–93.

[50] As argued by Barclay, 'Faith and Self-Detachment'.

[51] See Schreiner, *Romans*, 709–12.

immediate context of 13:8–14, where Paul describes the person who loves as having fulfilled the Law (13:8). This connection between the Law and love establishes its significance in connection with the legal disputes of 14:1–15:13. The strong appreciated that the Law was now fulfilled in Christ, but they were exercising their freedom to the neglect of love, which is the defining characteristic of a Christian's behaviour towards his neighbour (πλησίον, 13:9). In 15:2, Paul once again speaks of behaviour to one's neighbour (πλησίον), this time of pleasing one's neighbour for his good, so as to build him up (15:2), the very opposite of behaviour which causes one's brother in Christ to stumble. That Paul uses the word πλησίον in 15:2, rather than ἀδελφός ('brother'), which has been prominent in ch. 14, suggests that he is echoing what he has said concerning the love of neighbour in 13:10. This is confirmed when we observe the Christ-shaped character of love in both contexts. As the mark of the newly-arrived day of salvation (13:11–13), a life of love involves 'putting on' the Lord Jesus Christ (ἐνδύσασθε τὸν κύριον Ἰησοῦν Χριστόν, 13:14), an image that implies that the life of love is, at the very least, patterned after that of Christ.[52] Likewise, a life of pleasing one's neighbour for his good (15:2) is patterned after Christ (15:3), involving the abnegation of personal rights for the sake of others.[53] It is this Christ-like, loving self-abnegation to which Paul is calling the strong in Rome. They are free to eat any foods they like (14:14), but they are never free not to love (13:8; 14:15).

Not only faith and love, but also *hope* is at stake in the dispute over food and days. In 15:4, Paul supports his scriptural appeal to the example of Christ (v. 3, where he cites Ps 69:9 as descriptive of Christ's self-denial) by affirming a general principle which it illustrates, namely that 'everything that was written beforehand was written for our instruction, in order that through endurance (ὑπομονή) and through the encouragement (παράκλησις) of the Scriptures we might have hope.' The reference to hope here is surprising, since Paul appeals to the example of Christ as a motivational model of *love*. The connection to hope is less direct, but still critical to grasp. Note that in vv. 5–6, ὑπομονή and παράκλησις (repeated, and now ascribed to God) are now the source not of *hope*, but of a harmonious unity expressed in glorifying God together. Presumably, therefore, it is *through* such unity issuing in lives of corporate worship that the community's hope is strengthened. The reason for this becomes apparent when Paul returns to the theme of hope in v. 13, where he ties it in with *faith*. What is to be believed are the scriptural promises, confirmed in the ministry of Christ (v. 8), which speak of the Gentiles joining the Jews in jointly glorifying God for his mercy (vv. 9–12). Believing this promised future inevitably involves the cherishing of its present manifestation within the church. This in turn strengthens *hope* in the final *realisation* of these promises in the age to come.[54] Returning to vv. 4–6, we can perceive the same sense: by persevering in Christ-like love for one another, the unity of outlook and behaviour that fulfils the promises leads to hope in their final realisation. This means, of course, that when faith and love are harmed or disregarded in the community, hope inevitably withers, since the community will no longer *look* like the one that God's gospel was designed to effect and fulfil.

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[52] See Rom 13:12; Gal 3:27; Eph 4:24; Eph 6:11; Col 3:10, 12. The image is simultaneously Christological and ethical.

[53] Cf. also the phrase κατὰ Χριστὸν Ἰησοῦν ('according to Jesus Christ') at the end of 15:5, which I think also refers to Christ's example.

[54] See Crafton, 'Paul's Rhetorical Vision', 337–38, who says that the existence of communities of both Jews and Gentiles is 'living proof' that God has been true to his Old Testament promises, and is, therefore, an 'eschatological sign pointing to the final realization of these promises'.

We have considered three lines of evidence, each of which suggests that Paul sees the dispute in the life of the Roman churches as a very serious one. First, the conflict between the weak and the strong perpetuated a division that had been overcome in the gospel. Second, the arrogance and pride being displayed was an appropriation by the community's members of the unique role that belonged to God/Christ as both Lord and Judge. And, third, the damage being caused to faith, hope, and love, had the potential to undermine the churches' identity as distinctively *Christian* communities. These points argue for the centrality of the Paul's pastoral purpose in two ways. On the one hand, the very seriousness of the issue implies its prominence within Paul's design in writing the letter. On the other hand, we have observed how each of the three lines of evidence is a development of themes that are integral to the argument of the letter as a whole, which implies that the letter functions, at least in part, to address the pastoral problem in Rome.

How does Paul's pastoral purpose relate to his missionary purpose? I will briefly note four lines of connection. First, and most importantly, dealing with the pastoral problem *was*, in fact, a fulfilment of Paul's missionary mandate in Rome, to bring about the 'obedience of faith' (1:5; 16:26). In 15:15–16 they are implicitly tied together, since Paul's boldness in writing (referring at the very least to what he has said in chs. 14–15) is presented as an expression of his priestly apostolic ministry. Second, Paul does not view the Roman believers' faith as a *fait accompli*. Paul can simultaneously affirm that they show commendable signs of spiritual maturity (15:14) and still insist that their dispute, if allowed to fester, had the potential to spiritually *destroy* the weaker brothers. Once again, since Paul's missionary mandate was to bring about the obedience of *faith*, his pastoral admonition is bound up with this missionary purpose. Third, the vision that is propelling Paul towards Jerusalem with the collection is the same vision that leads to his rather bold pastoral counsel in Romans 14–15, namely that of a brotherly, mutual interdependence that results from the solidarity of Jew and Gentile in Christ. As such, they are unlikely to wholeheartedly strive together with Paul in their prayers for a successful mission in Jerusalem (15:30–31), if they are not first willing to accept one another. Fourth, as others have noted, a unity of both outlook and worship (15:6) would seem to be the *sine qua non* of Paul being able to launch a missionary initiative into Spain from Rome. Discord and disunity is not a good foundation for missionary expansion. In sum, Paul's pastoral purpose of seeing the strong and the weak united in mind and behaviour is an outworking of his purpose of furthering his mission in Jerusalem, Rome, and Spain.

4. Paul's Apologetic Purpose

So far I have argued that Paul had two purposes in mind when he wrote Romans. The first was a missionary purpose, and the second a pastoral purpose, the two being linked in various ways. We now need to consider Paul's third purpose for writing, also closely tied to the others—an apologetic purpose. Although the content of the letter is largely explicable in terms of Paul's missionary and pastoral purposes, its *character* suggests something more is going on.

Various interpreters have observed the letter's 'apologetic accent'.[55] This apologetic accent or tone is first discernible in the thanksgiving section of the introduction (1:8–12 [or 15]) and marks the opening

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[55] Stuhlmacher, 'Purpose of Romans', 236. Cf. also Williams, 'Righteousness of God', 251, who speaks of the letter's 'apologetic tone', and Longenecker, *Introducing Romans*, 154, who notes an apologetic 'tone and temper'.

of the letter body (1:13 [or 16]).[56] As we observed earlier, Paul gives four reasons for wanting to visit Rome, going to great lengths to explain his longstanding desire to visit the Roman believers. This repetition is clearly for the sake of emphasis, and the clue that this emphasis probably has an apologetic purpose comes with the disclosure formula with which v. 13 opens: 'I do not want you to be unaware brothers that I frequently intended to come to you.' Why does Paul go out of his way to emphasise this point?[57] Probably because he is defending his past behaviour vis-à-vis the Roman churches. As Byrne puts it, 'he knows he has to explain why, if he is as he insists … the apostle responsible to God for Gentiles, he has failed up till now to visit a community where they exist in considerable numbers.'[58] There is an uninterrupted logical progression from 1:13 all the way through to 1:18, without a marked distinction between the personal and theological elements of Paul's introduction.[59] As a development of the leading statement of v.13, it is likely that v. 16 also has an apologetic edge to it, with Paul countering the suggestion (voiced by some people) that he *should* be ashamed of the gospel he preaches.[60] Contrary to the rumour that Paul's gospel both promotes sin and denigrates God's Law—taken up at length in 6:1–7:25—Paul insists that it reveals the righteousness of God with saving effect (1:16b–17).

There are hints, therefore, early in the letter, that Paul is responding to misunderstandings and even criticisms of his mission and message. It is not necessary to believe that these criticisms were already embedded in Rome to recognise the importance for Paul of providing a pre-emptive defence of his message if his visit to Rome is to be a profitable one. Criticisms of Paul's mission and message would almost certainly have *reached* Rome,[61] and would have aroused suspicions that were perhaps relayed to Paul by Priscilla and Aquila (cf. 16:3–4), co-workers who were very much 'on side' with Paul and his gospel. But more important than constructing a plausible historical reconstruction is noting the various lines of evidence in the letter that confirm these initial hints of an apologetic purpose. There are three broad lines of evidence to note.

First, Paul makes direct reference to opposition to his message. He does this in 3:8 and 16:17–20. In 3:1–8 Paul asks a series of rhetorical questions (vv. 1, 3, 5, 7) which are clearly designed to reflect objections to his gospel message, above all from Jewish opponents. The last of these in v. 7 asks, 'If the

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[56] For the argument that the letter body begins at 1:13 and not 1:16, see Longenecker, *Romans*, 131–33. See n16 above.

[57] Note that if v. 13 contains the opening statement of the letter body, then the emphasis is even more readily apparent.

[58] Brendan Byrne, 'Rather Boldly', 88. Cf. Williams, 'Righteousness of God', 251.

[59] See further Wedderburn, *Reasons for Romans*, 102–4.

[60] A number of interpreters have understood 1:16 as apologetic in tone. For example, Kenneth Grayston, 'Not Ashamed of the Gospel', in *Studia Evangelica: Papers Presented to the Second International Congress on New Testament Studies 1961, Vol 2,* ed. F. L. Cross (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1964); Wedderburn, *Reasons for Romans*, 103–4; Stuhlmacher, 'Purpose of Romans', 239; Longenecker, *Romans*, 157–63. The suggestion that Paul's statement in 1:16 reflects criticisms of the gospel he preached does not rule out an allusion to biblical texts which speak of eschatological shame. For the biblical echoes see Richard B. Hays, *Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989), 37–41. It is because Paul knows that the gospel delivers from eschatological shame that he kept preaching it in the face of ongoing misunderstanding and criticism.

[61] For example, the Christian Jews expelled from Rome under Claudius would have spent time in the Diaspora and come into contact with various objections to Paul's message and mission.

truth of God by my lie abounded to his glory, why am I still being judged as a sinner?'[62] In other words, if God is glorified through my sinfulness (his truth acting in judgment to open up a way of salvation in Christ), then have I not done him a favour? And, if so, why would he still judge me? Paul then 'amplifies'[63] this objection in v. 8 by mentioning another related one. So far, in vv. 1–7, Paul has echoed objections he encountered which sought to highlight the apparent theological incoherence of his message. Now, in v. 8, the related objection involves a distortion of Paul's message: 'and why not say—just as certain people slanderously claim that we say—"Let us do evil in order that good may come." Their condemnation is just.' The fact that Paul makes direct reference to opposition to his message in v. 8 suggests that the earlier rhetorical questions (vv. 1, 3, 5, 7) echo personal criticism he received in response to his gospel preaching. It is often noted that the compact, somewhat allusive, nature of Paul's argument in 3:1–8 points forward to future discussion in the letter, especially in chapters 6 and 9–11,[64] which implies that Paul's apologetic purpose is evident beyond just these verses.

In 16:17–20, Paul calls upon the churches of Rome to be vigilant against those who create dissensions (διχοστασία, v. 16) and obstacles (σκάνδαλον, v. 16) against the teaching they had received. Paul is speaking about a group of troublemakers whose behaviour and modus operandi were familiar to him (v. 17). Clearly the danger is not hypothetical. Indeed, some interpreters have suggested that these opponents of the gospel are already in Rome.[65] Although we cannot rule out this possibility, there is not sufficient evidence in the letter to necessitate this conclusion. The most likely scenario is that Paul feared that 'the conflicts [he] had faced in Galatia, Philippi, and Corinth with Jewish "counter missionaries" now threatened to spread to Rome.'[66] The seriousness of the danger is underlined by the way Paul links the false teachers to Satan (v. 20), as he does in 2 Corinthians 11:13–15, where he also assures his readers of their ultimate destruction. It is easy to see how devastating the arrival of such false teachers could be in Rome, since 'the weak' were already predisposed to the Judaizers' emphasis on the observance of the Mosaic Law. Although they did not believe that the Law had to be obeyed for salvation,[67] they were vulnerable to such teaching. Paul has to argue his case in Romans, because his gospel has been opposed in the past, and quite possibly will be again.

The second indication of Paul's apologetic purpose comes from the dialogical manner in which he advances his argument. In chapter 2, this resembles a classical diatribe, whereby Paul engages an interlocutor who represents a position against which Paul is arguing.[68] Even where Paul is not directly addressing an imaginary opponent in this way, there is an argumentative cut and thrust throughout

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[62] Contra D. R. Hall ('Romans 3:1–8 Reconsidered', *NTS* 29 [1983]: 192–93), I think it is unlikely that v. 7 originally began with an explanatory γάρ, rather than δέ. The text-critical issue is finely balanced, but internal factors swing the decision in favour of δέ. See Timmins, *Romans 7 and Christian Identity*, 53–54.

[63] Wright, 'Romans', 454.

[64] E.g. James D. G. Dunn, *Romans 1–8*, WBC 38B (Dallas: Word, 1988), 130.

[65] Stuhlmacher, 'Purpose of Romans', 239–40; Philip F. Esler, *Conflict and Identity in Romans: The Social Setting of Paul's Letter* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2003), 125–28; Douglas A. Campbell, *The Deliverance of God: An Apocalyptic Rereading of Justification in Paul* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009), 495–518.

[66] Stuhlmacher, 'Purpose of Romans', 239. Note the link to Phil 3:19 via use of the word 'stomach' (κοιλία). These people serve their own 'stomach', i.e. they live for self-gratification.

[67] Contra Brendan Byrne, 'Rather Boldly', 85.

[68] The classic treatment of this theme is found in Stanley K. Stowers, *The Diatribe and Paul's Letter to the Romans* (Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1981).

the main body of the letter, particularly apparent in chs. 2–4, 6–7, and 9–11. Of particular note are the rhetorical questions that Paul frequently asks (e.g. 3:31; 6:1, 15; 7:7, 13). The issue this raises is whether these questions are simply an effective teaching method, designed to draw out the inner logic of the gospel, or whether they reflect Paul's experience of personal opposition. But these are not mutually exclusive alternatives,[69] since what Paul's opponents questioned was the *coherence* of his gospel, whether in relation to God's prior promises and commands in Scripture, or in relation to itself. By advancing his argument through a dialogical, question-and-answer style, Paul defends his gospel against real objections *in order to* disclose its internal and external coherence. The clear thematic link between the questions of 3:8 and 6:1 implies that the latter is more than merely pedagogical, suggesting that 6:14, 7:7, and 7:13 are as well.[70]

Third, on a few occasions Paul directly defends himself against misunderstanding or criticism. If Paul's purpose is, in part, apologetic, then first-person statements of self-defence are to be expected, since an attack on Paul's mission or message is, ultimately, an attack on Paul himself. Just as Paul identifies himself in the closest possible way with his mission and message (1:1–5), so did his opponents. Although several interpreters of Romans have observed the apologetic tone within the first-person letter frame (1:1–12 [or 15]; 15:14–33) the apologetic tone of the first-person comments in the letter body tends to be overlooked. I will briefly note three places where this is discernible:

(1) In 3:9. It is not clear who the subject is of the first-person plural προεχόμεθα in v. 9a. It is the fourth of a string of five first-person verbs in context (vv. 5, 7, 8, 9a, 9b), and the relationship between them all is very hard to unravel.[71] The understanding of v. 9a that I think makes most sense is to hear it as another instance of an authorial 'we' alongside the prior one in v. 8—lit. 'just as we are being slandered' (καθὼς βλασφημούμεθα)—and the subsequent one in v. 9b—'we have already charged' (προῃτιασάμεθα). Both of these first-person plurals are instances of authorial 'we' and I think, on the balance of evidence, that προεχόμεθα in v. 9a is as well.[72] On this reading, the sense would be as follows. In v. 8 Paul turns the tables on his opponents by placing them in the divine dock and exonerating himself against the charge that his gospel promotes sin as a beneficial good. This is a potentially dangerous strategy, since Paul risks adopting the sort of defensive attitude in the face of accusation that he is critiquing in v. 7. In v. 9a he comes to his defence by asking, 'Am I protecting myself?' (προεχόμεθα),[73] i.e. 'am I defending myself in such a way as to exonerate *myself* in the face of God's judgment? Not at all.' So in 3:7–9 we hear Paul simultaneously defending himself against misunderstanding and misrepresentation, and confessing his share in humanity's sinful plight. The same dynamic reappears in ch. 7.

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[69] As often implied. For example, Moo, *Romans*, 356, in commenting on 6:1, says 'Paul's question-and-answer style in Romans is pedagogical rather than polemical in orientation.'

[70] Wedderburn, *Reasons*, 134, suggests the rhetorical questions raise the criticisms that led to the claim that the gospel was shameful (1:16).

[71] See Stanley K. Stowers, 'Paul's Dialogue with a Fellow Jew in Romans 3:1–9', *CBQ* 46 (1984): 709.

[72] See my defence of this in *Romans 7 and Christian Identity*, 60–63. This is one of those instances where interpretive certainty is very hard to come by. As Stowers ('Dialogue with a Fellow Jew', 719) notes, the rhetorical force of 3:9a is 'one of the more vexing problems in the letter.'

[73] This is the customary meaning of the middle voice of this verb. Understanding Paul's meaning to be 'Do we (Jews) excel (i.e. have an advantage)?' involves a meaning of the middle voice not attested anywhere else. See BDAG 869, §2 (προέχω); Timmins, *Romans 7 and Christian Identity*, 61n112.

(2) In ch. 7. In 7:1, 4, Paul signals that he is he now speaking directly concerning a matter of particular sensitivity—the Mosaic Law—by addressing the readers (twice) as 'brothers' (ἀδελφοί, vv. 1, 4). This is the first time Paul has used this intimate address since 1:13,[74] which, as we noted, is a very significant verse with an apologetic tone to it. Still today we might address a fellow Christian as 'brother' or 'sister' before engaging him or her on a point which we know is sensitive and could be misconstrued if we do not emphasise the familial bond out of which our concern arises.[75] The reason the subject matter of Rom. 7 is so sensitive should be clear by now. The Mosaic Law has been a flashpoint not only within the churches of Rome (the pastoral issue), but also within Paul's own missionary career (the apologetic issue). The possibility of success in winning the Roman churches to his missionary vision hinges on whether Paul can bring the believers in Rome to adopt his stance with respect to the Law. Paul's monologue in 7:7–25 has long puzzled interpreters, and the debate regarding the identity of the 'I' has obscured the *rationale* for Paul's use of 'I'. For example, those interpreters who read ch. 7 as an instance of 'speech-in-character' cannot explain *why* Paul should choose to use such a rhetorical device at this point.[76] However, Paul's long 'I' speech makes sense when we realise that he is simultaneously offering a personal defence and presenting a pastoral model to emulate. He defends himself against the charge that he treats God's holy Law as a sinful thing (vv. 7, 13, 14, 16, 22), and he presents a model of humble confession in the face of God's Law (vv. 14–15, 17–21, 23–25), a model that is greatly needed among the arrogant, proud believers of Rome, both 'weak' and 'strong' alike.[77] Rom. 7 is a lament, a biblical genre within which believers frequently voiced *both* a personal defence in the face of opposition *and* a confession of profound weakness or sinfulness before the Lord.[78] By voicing such a personal lament before the Roman believers, Paul finds a way to tackle the issue that is of such pressing pastoral and apologetic significance before his visit.

(3) In 9:1–3. It is of great significance that chs. 9–11 begin with another apologetic statement. The apologetic voice of 9:1–3 reappears at two other key points in chs. 9–11, namely 10:1–2 and 11:1. We will focus on 9:1–3. Immediately noticeable is the emphasis by repetition that we observed in 1:8–15.

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[74] Although sibling address is common in Paul's letters, it is relatively infrequent in Romans and 2 Corinthians. See Reidar Aasgaard, '*My Beloved Brothers and Sisters!": Christian Siblingship in Paul* (London: T&T Clark, 2004), 270–71.

[75] See further Paul Trebilco, *Self-Designations and Group Identity in the New Testament* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 25–28, for the rhetorical function of Paul's uses of ἀδελφοί.

[76] The proposal that Rom. 7 should be read as a 'speech-in-character' was first put forward by Stanley K. Stowers, 'Romans 7.7–25 as a Speech-in-Character (Προσωποποιία)', in *Paul in His Hellenistic Context,* ed. Troels Engberg-Pedersen (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1994). Many others have followed suit, e.g. among recent commentators see Colin G. Kruse, *Paul's Letter to the Romans,* Pillar New Testament Commentary (Nottingham: Apollos, 2012), 298; Longenecker, *Romans,* 653–59; Michael F. Bird, *Romans,* The Story of God Bible Commentary (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2016), 233. Nevertheless, the theory has glaring weaknesses, as I seek to show in 'Romans 7 and Speech-In-Character: A Critical Evaluation of Stowers' Hypothesis', *ZNW* 107 (2016): 94–115. Reprinted with slight modification in *Romans 7 and Christian Identity*, 12–34.

[77] Of particular note in this regard is that whereas the interlocutor of ch. 2 sought to distinguish himself from sinful humanity, Paul numbers himself with Adamic humanity in 7:7–13. See Timmins, *Romans 7 and Christian Identity*, 119–35.

[78] For reading Romans 7 as a lament see Mark A. Seifrid, *Justification By Faith: The Origin and Development of a Central Pauline Theme*, NovTSup 68 (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1992), 234–36; Channing L. Crisler, *Reading Romans as Lament: Paul's Use of Old Testament Lament in His Most Famous Letter* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2016), 94–118.

Paul piles up three phrases to underline that he is speaking the truth in what he is about to affirm. Schreiner notes that the words οὐ ψεύδομαι ('I am not lying', v. 1) not only reiterate the first statement of v. 1, but are used elsewhere when Paul is defending himself against opponents (e.g. 2 Cor 11:31; Gal 1:20; 1 Tim 2:7).[79] It is likely that the phrase functions in the same way here.[80] Paul's gentile mission has led many to question his commitment to his own nation. It is at those points that Paul's gospel had come under severest criticism—for being anti-Law, for promoting sin, and for negating God's covenant with Israel—that Paul comes most strongly to his defence (chs. 6–7, 9–11).

We have considered three lines of evidence in the letter, which taken together strongly suggest that Paul had an apologetic purpose in writing. First, Paul makes direct reference to opposition to his gospel message. Second, Paul frequently uses a dialogical manner in the letter which engages with opposing viewpoints. And, third, Paul sometimes uses the first-person voice to directly defend himself against misunderstanding or misrepresentation. As I said, I don't think there is sufficient evidence to suggest that opponents of the gospel were already in Rome causing division. However, it is highly likely that the Christians in Rome will know of the criticisms of 'antinomian, anti-Israel' Paul, which, when combined with Paul's apparent lack of previous interest in Rome, were likely to have caused suspicion, some of it potentially strong in nature. We do not have to agree that there were false teachers within the Roman churches to affirm with Stuhlmacher that 'the dialogue we are witnessing in Romans is a real one in which Paul is wrestling for the hearts and minds of the Christians in Rome'.[81] We have seen that Paul's apologetic purpose is both closely related to his pastoral purpose, and bound up with his missionary reputation, with the place of the Mosaic Law within God's ongoing plan for his people as the common factor. Paul's desire to further his mission in Jerusalem, Rome, and Spain hinges upon the believers in Rome having a right grasp of the matter.

5. Conclusion

Why did Paul write Romans? Paul wrote Romans to conduct an apologetic pastoral ministry among the believers of Rome—or a ministry of pastoral apologetics—designed to further gospel mission in Jerusalem, Rome and Spain. Such a ministry was designed to make them obedient to the gospel and, thereby, to further gospel mission in Rome and further afield. But why *this* letter of pastoral apologetics to enable their obedience to the gospel? Because conflict in their churches and confusion regarding Paul's gospel centred on the relationship between the gospel and the Jewish Law. Such conflict and confusion stood in the way of the gospel bearing fruit both in their own lives, and in the harvest fields beyond Rome in the west.

Two brief reflections in closing. First, understanding the relationship between the Law and the gospel remains critical for both Christian maturity and mission. We would do well to be continually mining the riches of Romans to get our thinking straight on the matter. Second, Paul offers us a model of pastoral apologetics in the service of the gospel. Apologetic rigour and pastoral sensitivity go together.

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[79] Schreiner, *Romans*, 468.

[80] Schreiner himself suggests that the reason Paul expresses the genuineness of his distress is most probably because 'the honor and faithfulness of God are inextricably intertwined with the fate of Israel' (ibid., 469). However, we need to distinguish between what causes Paul's grief and what causes him to *communicate* his grief in this way to his audience.

[81] Stuhlmacher, 'Purpose of Romans', 240.

The connections are worth pondering further, both in Romans and beyond. Neglect either one and you will either lose the apostolic gospel or lose people to the gospel, or—quite possibly—both.

Self-Deception in Theology

— Joseph Pak —

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Abstract: Self-deception is a fundamental experience and the starting point of philosophy since Socrates. This article discusses a few aspects of self-deception as a theological concept. Self-deception is closely related to sin, often creates false assurance of salvation, and is caused by disordered love. Diligent effort to gain self-awareness is vitally important to prevent self-deception. We can counteract self-deception by acknowledging its pervasive and universal presence, opening ourselves to self-examination and questioning, and avowing disavowed engagements. God often uses trials to bring us out of self-deception.

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What is self-deception? We use various expressions to describe self-deception: "He keeps telling himself the same old lie," "She rejects the truth, even though it is clear she recognizes it," "He intentionally misleads himself," "He doesn't know because he doesn't want to know," "She deliberately closes her eyes to the evidence," etc.[1] Psychologists consider self-deception as a ubiquitous phenomenon and view virtually all humans as constantly hiding the truth from themselves.[2] Because of the universal phenomenon of self-deception in human experience, we do not accept at face value what people say about themselves, not because we think they are insincere, but because we know intuitively that most of us suffer from sincere confusion and delusion when it comes to our self-understanding.[3]

Self-deception is related to a wide variety of phenomena such as irrationality, wishful thinking, delusions, imperfect memory, ignorance, avoidance, hypocrisy, maintenance of self-respect, and false belief.[4] In fact, we commonly encounter self-deception in our lives. One example would be drug and alcohol addiction. Addicts typically deceive themselves into thinking that they are in control.[5] They refuse to face the truth about themselves. For this reason, existentialists such as Jean-Paul Sartre viewed

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[1] Bruce Alton, "The Morality of Self-Deception," *The Annual of the Society of Christian Ethics* 5 (1985): 141.

[2] Pieter J. J. Botha, "Theology, Rationality and Truth-Claims: Metatheoretical Reflections on Self-Deception," *R&T* 12.2 (2005): 101.

[3] Stephen Crites, "The Aesthetics of Self-Deception," *Sound* 62.2 (1979): 110.

[4] Botha, "Theology, Rationality and Truth-Claims," 101.

[5] Neil Levy, "Who's Fooling Who? Self-Deception and Addiction," *Res Publica* 11 (2002): 6.

self-deception as the primary means to avoid self-awareness.[6] Sartre used the expression "bad faith" to describe self-deception because it is a false belief about oneself.

Self-deception is a fundamental experience and the starting point of philosophy since Socrates.[7] Benjamin Franklin once quipped, "who has deceived thee so often as thyself?"[8] Socrates declared that the worst of all deceptions is self-deception.[9] Theologians throughout history have noticed the significance of self-deception and have paid attention to the impact self-deception has on the Christian life. It has long served as "a key element in the explanation of sin, moral failure, and the avoidance of God."[10]

However, in recent years theologians have not given self-deception much attention even though philosophers have been vigorously debating the topic since the 1960s. This lack of scholarship is a dangerous oversight because self-deception, a universal phenomenon caused by the fall, is intimately related to sin and detrimental to our spiritual life if left unchecked. I have a modest goal for this article, which is to discuss a few aspects of self-deception as a theological concept. I will address, first, how self-deception is closely related to sin; second, how it often creates false assurance of salvation; and third, how it is caused by disordered love. Then I will discuss some of the ways the problem of self-deception can be solved. In the process, I will interact with theologians such as Augustine, Pascal, and Jonathan Edwards who have wrestled with the problem of self-deception, and also with the Scriptures that address and warn against the dangers of self-deception.

1. Self-Deception and Sin

In the traditional analytic philosophy, philosophers appeal to self-deception to explain ordinary, counter-evidential believing, and they tend to reduce self-deception to biased, false belief.[11] However, in theology, self-deception is considered much more seriously as a willful sin. The unbeliever will not believe the truth because he is a sinner and his judgment is fatally infected by his sin. He is comfortable with his sin and does not want to accept an unflattering account of his life.[12] Modern echoes of this description of self-deception are found in various fields:

> You refuse the revolution because you suffer from bourgeois false consciousness. You refuse psychoanalytic insight that would cure you because your "resistance" belongs to the repertoire of defense mechanisms that symptomize your neurosis. You refuse the

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[6] Botha, "Theology, Rationality and Truth-Claims," 101.

[7] Elinor Hållén, *A Different Kind of Ignorance: Self-Deception as Flight from Self-Knowledge* (PhD diss., Uppsala University, 2011), 106.

[8] Greg Bahnsen, "The Crucial Concept of Self-Deception in Presuppositional Apologetics," *WTJ* 57 (1995): 10.

[9] Alton, "The Morality of Self-Deception," 138.

[10] Gregg A. Ten Elshof, *I Told Me So: Self-Deception and the Christian Life* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009), 5.

[11] William Wood, *Searching for the Secret Instinct: Blaise Pascal and the Philosophical Analysis of Self-Deception* (PhD diss., University of Chicago, 2007), 14.

[12] Crites, "The Aesthetics of Self-Deception," 112.

> Heideggerian call of Being because you are inauthentic. You will not accept the radical
> Sartrean implications of your freedom because you are in bad faith.[13]

False consciousness, defense mechanism, inauthenticity, bad faith are different expressions of self-deception in these various fields.

In Christian tradition, as early as Augustine, self-deception was viewed as a division of the will.[14] Our desire to maintain separate, egotistic will apart from God's will is what alienates us from reality and God.[15] After the fall, and denying the reality of the fall, we have lost the ability to perceive and respond appropriately to God's will and his moral values, and we have become quite capable of deceiving ourselves when we make moral judgments and pursue our selfish will.[16] "Having spontaneously imagined a false, but alluring, interpretation of his moral situation, the self-deceiver accepts that interpretation, and reinforces it both internally, with self-talk, and externally, by acting as if it were true."[17] Self-deception leads to framing decisions that either eliminate negative ethical characterizations or distort them into positive ones.[18] In this way, self-deception leads to and justifies sin.

God is the ultimate good and the ultimate truth, but sinners lie to themselves about what is good and true. Why do we do so? We do so because we want to maintain that we love truth and goodness even though we repeatedly turn away from them. In other words, we care about truth and goodness just enough to pretend to love them.[19] When we love something or someone (like myself) more than we love the truth, we have a motive for self-deception; therefore, it is not surprising that sin is intimately related to self-deception.[20] Just as sin turns away from God, self-deception turns away from truth. Wood summarizes Pascal's view of the connection between self-deception and sin this way:

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[13] Ibid.

[14] Alton, "The Morality of Self-Deception," 126.

[15] Ibid., 139.

[16] William D Wood, "Axiology, Self-Deception, and Moral Wrongdoing in Blaise Pascal's 'Pensées,'" *JRE* 37 (2009): 357. See Blaise Pascal, *Pensées*, trans. W. F. Trotter (Christian Classica Ethereal Library), https://www.ccel.org/ccel/pascal/pensees.pdf.

[17] William D Wood, *Blaise Pascal on Duplicity, Sin and the Fall: The Secret Instinct* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 293. Wood continues, "He does all this intentionally, by forming long-term intentions that guide his behavior even when he does not explicitly attend to them. As he continues to divert his attention from his knowledge and his reasons for acting, his attention policies become habitual, which further enables him to persist in his project of self-deception."

[18] Ann E. Tenbrunsel and David M. Messick, "Ethical Fading: The Role of Self-Deception in Unethical Behavior," *Social Justice Research* 17 (2004): 231–32.

[19] Wood, *Blaise Pascal on Duplicity, Sin and the Fall*, 210.

[20] Ibid., 12. Wood argues that the main project of self-deception is constructing the false self: "Sinful self-deception begins in the imagination, as the self-deceiver is spontaneously presented with an array of different interpretations of his moral situation. In the terminology that I develop below, he then *accepts* a false interpretation, and persuades himself that it is true with rhetorical and behavioral techniques. He engages in a persuasive program of *internal rhetoric,* and he *acts as if* his favored interpretation is true. This project of self-persuasion mechanically causes him to believe his favored, false interpretation. The project of self-deception is also the project of constructing the false self, the Psacalian *moi.* The self-deceiver creates a false self and projects it into the world" (p. 180).

When viewed theologically, self-deception is more than a kind of epistemic incoherence. By constructing a false self who inhabits an imaginary world, the self-deceiver tries, and necessarily fails, to create a self out of nothing. He thereby parodies God's creative activity. Seen in this light, self-deception is not just sinful but paradigmatically so. The characteristic aversion of sin, the turn away from God, is isomorphic with the characteristic aversion of self-deception, the turn away from truth. In many forms of self-deception, including moral self-deception, one deceives oneself precisely because one knows and rejects the truth. The self-deceiver recognizes the truth and recoils from it, and intentionally tries to replace it with a lie.[21]

According to Pascal, then, the greatest threat to the moral life is neither ignorance of the moral law nor moral weakness but self-deception.[22] Sin, or moral wrongdoing, is usually a product of self-deceptive moral reasoning in which one recognizes some course of action to be immoral but persuades oneself that it is moral.

If Pascal views self-deception as a leading cause of sin, for Augustine, self-deception results from sinful behavior. For him, "the proper exercise of one's intellectual capacities depends in part on one's moral behavior and its resulting dispositions. In short, moral virtue is necessary for intellectual excellence. Sinful actions, on the other hand, not only destroy moral virtue but also undermine one's ability to understand oneself, God, and the nature of goodness."[23] Augustine believed that our sinful choices will form habits of making decisions on the basis of a distorted view of goodness.[24] We may even come to believe we are good because our choices are in accordance with that view. We are all vulnerable to such self-deception since "sinful behavior undermines our ability to judge whether we are unduly influenced by a deficient standard of goodness."[25] Moral blindness results in rational blindness.

Similar connection between sin and self-deception appears throughout the Bible. The author of 1 John views his opponents' claim to be sinless as originating from their self-deception (e.g., 1 John 1:8 "If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us").[26] The very nature of sin is deceptive in that its goal is to obstruct knowledge of itself. In fact, that is one reason why darkness is used as a metaphor for sin (Prov 4:19, "But the way of the wicked is like deep darkness; they do not know what makes them stumble"; cf. Eph 5:8).[27]

Scriptures attribute both our self-deception and sin to our fallen heart (Jer 17:9).[28] Jesus declares that the human heart is what corrupts man, resulting in darkened understanding, a perverse and

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[21] Wood, *Searching for the Secret Instinct,* 345.

[22] Wood, "Axiology, Self-Deception, and Moral Wrongdoing in Blaise Pascal's 'Pensées,'" 357.

[23] Shawn D Floyd, "How to Cure Self-Deception: An Augustinian Remedy," *Logos: A Journal of Catholic Thought and Culture* 7.3 (2004): 62.

[24] Ibid., 65.

[25] Ibid.

[26] All Scriptural references are in ESV unless otherwise noted. Marianne Meye Thompson, *1–3 John,* IVP New Testament Commentary, (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2011), 47.

[27] Johnson and Burroughs, "Protecting One's Soul," 178.

[28] Jeremiah declares that the heart of man, in his corrupt and fallen state, is false and deceitful above all things (Jer 17:9); deceitful in its apprehensions of things, calling evil good and good evil. The conscience, which should set right the errors of other faculties, is a leader in the delusion.

obstinate will, lustful emotion, and a dysfunctional conscience (Mark 7:20–23). Paul simply says, "In me, that is, in my flesh, dwells no good thing" (Rom 7:18).[29] The deceptive nature of sin that stems from the fallen heart runs throughout Scripture from the account of the fall (Gen 3:13) to the final days of human history (2 Thess 2:9–10).[30] Romans 7:11 states, "For sin, seizing the opportunity afforded by the commandment, deceived me, and through the commandment put me to death." The ultimate end of sin, working through self-deception, is death.[31]

2. Self-Deception in Assurance of Salvation

Self-deception often leads to false assurance of salvation. The Gospel of Matthew addresses those who considered themselves right with God because of self-deception. The hypocrites in Matthew are blind and self-deceived people who will not spell out their true condition to themselves. Though they present themselves as pious and moral, inwardly they are rebellious, ravenous, and unclean. They are self-deceived because the faith they avow is out of line with their disposition.[32] The dynamic generating this failure to avow their true condition is the hypocrites' desire to both be right with God and have life but also have this on their own terms—to have life by taking the broad, easy way (7:13–14). In order to believe that they can have life by taking the easy way, they must convince themselves of the lie that they are right with God. For Matthew, hypocrisy is this failure to see the truth about themselves. Since failure to see themselves as God sees them is true for all sinners, in Matthew, hypocrisy is a term for the human condition and not just a word for a few especially vicious people.[33]

Jonathan Edwards shows great concern for those who are self-deceived about their salvation. Edwards uses the term "hypocrites" to refer to those who claim to be born-again believers but in reality

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[29] "God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually" (Gen 6:5). This testimony, though spoken of men before the flood, was renewed after the flood (Gen 8:21). Throughout our lives, we will find in our hearts many and great evils which we had not seen before, and we will often wonder how such evils could remain within us, and how they should have continued so long undiscovered. According to Jeremiah, its deceits are so subtle and its corruptions so inconceivably great, that none but God can grasp its complexity and magnitude: "The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure. Who can understand it? I the Lord search the heart and examine the mind" (Jer 17:9–10a). Thus, "He that trusts his own heart, is a fool" (Prov 28:26).

[30] Robert H. Mounce, *Romans*, NAC 27 (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1995), 165.

[31] Sin deceives man concerning the law, "distorting it and imposing a false image of it on his understanding, and also deceives him by means of the law, in particular by making use of it in order to suggest that man is in a position so to fulfil it as to put God under an obligation to himself" (C. E. B. Cranfield, *Romans 1–8*, ICC [Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1975], 353). Ephesians 4:22 refers to the old self being corrupted by its deceitful desires: "You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires." As Lincoln puts it, "A false perspective on reality generates a confusion of desires which can never be satisfied because they have lost touch with what is true. Such desires serve the power of deceit, and so are themselves ultimately illusory and contribute to the ruin of the old person" (Andrew T. Lincoln, *Ephesians*, WBC 42 [Dallas: Word, 1990], 286).

[32] Dan McCartney, "Self-Deception in James," *CTR* 8.2 (2011): 32–34.

[33] Dan O. Via, "The Gospel of Matthew: Hypocrisy as Self-Deception," in *SBL 1988 Seminar Papers,* ed. David J. Lull (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1988), 513.

are not. They are sincere in their professions, and they represent themselves to the world in a way they believe to be accurate.[34]

Edwards's *Religious Affections* was an attempt to protect against the self-deception of the hypocrites.[35] Hypocrites have false assurance because they rely on religious experience in the past as their conversion moment and they stop seeking God.[36] Experience such as spending much time in religion, praising and glorifying God, and feeling confident that what they experienced came from God may be "nothing more than the common influence of the Spirit of God, joined with the delusions of Satan and a wicked and deceitful heart."[37] Hypocrites are quick to hold on to the false assurance of salvation because they want to believe that they are justified, and it is easy for them to believe that they have become righteous. As Calvin observed, "we are all naturally prone to hypocrisy, any empty semblance of righteousness is quite enough to satisfy us instead of righteousness itself."[38] Unfortunately, self-deception about their righteousness and salvation will keep the hypocrites from coming to the true, saving knowledge of God.[39]

Self-deception causes a false assurance of salvation, a false sense of righteousness, and results in active rebellion toward God. As Westphal points out, "Both Jesus and the prophets found among the greatest obstacles to their ministry those who used their theological orthodoxy to deceive themselves by directing attention from what would otherwise be clear."[40]

James also deals with those who were self-deceived about their salvation in his letter where he extols pure and blameless religion (Jas 1:27), which begins with a pure heart or single-minded allegiance to God.[41] Someone who is double-minded (δίψυχος, literally "two-souled") is someone who wants to have it both ways, to enjoy the blessings of God without obeying his Word (1:8). James calls such people adulteresses and enemies of God (4:4).

Some see the entire epistle of James as dealing with the problem of self-deception.[42] James 2 in particular serves as a severe warning against self-deception about one's salvation—faith that does not

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[34] Ava Chamberlain, "Self-Deception as a Theological Problem in Jonathan Edwards's 'Treatise Concerning Religious Affections,'" *CH* 63 (1994): 541–56.

[35] Jonathan Edwards, *The Religious Affections*, repr. ed. (Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth, 1997).

[36] Edwards, *Religious Affections*, 306.

[37] Ibid., 112.

[38] John Calvin, *Institutes of Christian Religion,* I.i.2 (trans. Henry Beveridge, repr. ed. [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989], 38).

[39] The deceitfulness of the heart is also manifest in the false pretensions which it makes, and the delusive appearances which it assumes. And this deceitfulness not only imposes upon others, but upon themselves. Under this delusion, men persuade themselves that they are not wicked, but that their hearts are good. Their virtues, or semblance of virtues, are magnified, when seen through the false medium of self-love. But the most dangerous form of this deceit is, when persons, never converted, are led to believe that they are regenerated.

[40] Merold Westphal, "Orthodoxy and Inattention," *Reformed Journal* 30 (1980): 13–15.

[41] As Fingarette puts it, "Purity of heart is to will one thing and to will it absolutely—it is the self as the unity of the entire individual acknowledged as self" (*Self-Deception,* 110).

[42] The entire epistle of James can be seen as dealing with the problem of self-deception. McCartney writes, "Each of the concerns noted in the three occurrences in James 1 are given fuller treatment. James 2 expounds the self-deception noted in 1:22 of hearing but not doing. Chapter 3 is an exposition of the self-deception of the uncontrolled tongue, contrasted with the genuinely helpful speech of wisdom. Chapter 4:1–12 takes up the self-

accompany works is a self-deception and far more dangerous than unbelief since those who profess such superficial faith do not even know their need for repentance.[43]

James 1 also warns against the danger of self-deception. For example, verse 22 states, "Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says." Here again James is referring to deceiving oneself about one's salvation. He is explaining what verse 21 means by receiving the word: it means not simply to hear the word but to do it, and anyone thinking it to be less than that deceive themselves that they have received the word. James later mentions in 2:19 that even demons, who obviously are not saved, possess orthodox belief.[44]

James 1:26 makes a similar point when it says, "Those who consider themselves religious and yet do not keep a tight rein on their tongues deceive themselves, and their religion is worthless." Failure to control the tongue reveals a self-deceived religion.[45] Those who fail to control their tongue deceive their heart and are not pure in heart (see James 4:8; cf. Matt. 5:8). Clearly, James considers those who claim to have religion but do not have works as self-deceived.[46]

In summary, self-deception often leads to false assurance of salvation, and religion can serve as an effective and dangerous mask for unbelief. In fact, "religion is unsurpassed as a means of self-deception. Pseudo-religiosity in the context of *the form* of the true religion is especially insidious because it effectively insulates the pseudo-believer from the very Word that could provide a solution to his or her predicament."[47]

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deception noted in 1:16 of blaming God when the real problem is one's own desires. Also 4:13–5:1 develops the self-delusion of merchants who think they control their own lives, and the delusion of the rich who seek security in their riches, even to the point of committing extreme injustice (possibly picking up the theme of 1:10)" (McCartney, "Self-Deception in James," 37–38).

[43] Ibid., 39.

[44] Peter H. Davids, *Commentary on James*, NIGTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982), 97. Painter's insight is worth quoting: "To hear without doing is to be guilty of self-deception. But what gives rise to self-deception? Presumably, it is a consequence of *epithymia* (1:14), which turns back the hearer from the word of the other to the desires of self. James here reveals the complexity of self-deception as involving a self-justifying rationale that may be believed and used in argument. The use of *paralogizomenoi heautous* in 1:22 to describe this self-deception, rather than one of the other terms used to speak of being led astray in 1:16 (*me planasthe*) and 1:26 (*apaton*), may imply this deceptive rationalization. The self deceives the self! Compare the use of *heautous planomen* in 1 John 1:8. There are strong theological connections between James and 1 John, and the critique of desire/lust (*epithymia*) in 1 John 2:16–17 is related to the critique in James 1:14–15, but 1 John does not go as far as James in rooting the power of temptation in *epithymia*. For James, it is through desire that humans lead themselves astray. Bound up with this is the human inclination to justify even the most inhuman and reprehensible behaviors when such seem necessary for the fulfillment of our desires. Self-deception is willful and culpable, and the further one proceeds with self-deception, the more one becomes a prisoner of the deception and committed to its defense" (John Painter, *James*, Paideia [Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2012], 79).

[45] Painter, *James*, 81.

[46] Davids, *Commentary on James,* 102.

[47] McCartney, "Self-Deception in James," 37. McCartney adds, "Lack of tongue-control and lack of concern for the poor are key indicators of whether there is a disconnect between first-order and second-order 'belief.'"

3. Disordered Love as the Root Cause of Self-Deception

In this section I will argue that the root cause of self-deception is disordered love. William Wood's analysis of Pascal's view on why we do not view ourselves accurately is worth quoting:

> Pascal argues that because our selves are formed in loving interaction with the world, and because our capacity to love and be loved is disordered, the self is inherently false and duplicitous. More precisely, Pascal argues that the self is imaginary, in a two-fold sense. First, it is one's own imaginative construal of oneself. What I call my self is just the story that I tell to myself about myself, my subjective narrative identity. This subjective self is an imaginary construct that typically does not correspond to the way I really am. Second, the self is doubly imaginary because one always sees oneself through the eyes of other people. My subjective identity is actually the story that I imagine that other people would tell about me.[48]

At the heart of it all, the entire project of self-deception is rooted in the self-deceiver's disordered love for oneself. As Joseph Butler describes, self-deception is caused by partiality to oneself: "For if it was not for that partial and fond regard to ourselves, it would certainly be no great difficulty to know our own character, what passes within the bent and bias of our mind; much less would there be any difficulty in judging rightly of our own actions."[49] Or, as Wood puts it, "the rational blindness of self-deception is tied to the moral blindness of false self-love."[50] In short, self-deception stems from inordinate self-love.

We love ourselves improperly when we do not derive our value from its true source—God—but from some other source.[51] We deceive ourselves because we know and reject the truth.[52] Therefore, to be

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[48] William Wood, *Searching for the Secret Instinct*, 254–55. Wood adds, "He argues that we are more easily persuaded by attractiveness than by truth. As a result, our reasoning is often rationalization. Like any keen observer of the human condition, Pascal recognizes that under the influence of desire, people often depart from the strict canon of rationality and believe just what they want to be true…. Here I would like to emphasize one important element of Pascal's brief against reason. If people are indeed more often persuaded by desire than by truth, then it is also the case that, in the moment, they cannot recognize this fact about themselves. We cannot admit that we believe something just because we wish it were true. Rather, from our own point of view, we seem to rely wholly on our reason, and we take ourselves to be reasoning toward the truth even though we are not. The desirable seems like the true. Rationalization seems like reasoning" (ibid., 270–73).

[49] Joseph Butler, "Fifteen Sermons Preached at the Rolls Chapel: Sermon X. Upon Self-Deceit—2 Sam. xii. 7 (Cambridge: Hilliard and Brown, 1827), http://anglicanhistory.org/butler/rolls/10.html. Butler also states, "There is plainly, in the generality of mankind, an absence of doubt or distrust, in a very great measure, as to their moral character and behaviour; and likewise a disposition to take for granted, that all is right and well with them in these respects. The former is owing to their not reflecting, not exercising their judgment upon themselves; the latter, to self-love." As Kevin Paul Kinghorn states, "The idea that character flaws can prevent one from acquiring certain kinds of beliefs of knowledge is hardly novel" ("Spiritual Blindness, Self-Deception and Morally Culpable Nonbelief," *HeyJ* 48 [2007]: 529).

[50] According to Wood, "The claim that disordered love is the fundamental motivation of self-deception suggests that the rational blindness of self-deception is tied to the moral blindness of false self-love. We cannot be formed as properly rational subjects without also being formed as properly moral subjects, because in order to reason well about the world, we must first keep our disordered love in check" (*Searching for the Secret Instinct,* 353).

[51] Ibid., 311–12.

[52] Ibid., 345.

free from self-deception, we must love the truth, which means we must love God above all things. When our loves are properly ordered toward God, we become our true selves, free from self-deception.[53] This is because those with undivided love for God are less likely to be distracted by other desires. And because their minds are not clouded by sinful desires, they will be able to better understand the truth about God and themselves.[54]

However, those who have idolatrous self-love deny the truth of their sinfulness and creatureliness, and they deny the need for repentance and new life in relationship with God.[55] So self-deception can be considered as the handmaiden of pride: the false cover story of self-sufficiency enables one to deny one's need for God.[56] As Paul says, "For if those who are nothing think they are something they deceive themselves" (Gal 6:3). Paul saw close connection between pride and self-deception (cf. 1 Cor 3:18; Jer 49:16; Obad 1:3).

One way self-deception serves pride is through self-serving attributions and comparisons. Such evaluations are often due to an "attributional egotism" whereby we credit ourselves for good outcomes and refuse responsibility for bad ones. Some of the ways we deceive ourselves may seem morally innocuous such as when we consider ourselves to be more intelligent or adept at certain skills than we really are. But we also rationalize unethical behavior, deny our complicity in criminal acts, or minimize our responsibility for others' suffering. In doing so, we invent a reality in which we are morally blameless.[57]

In summary, our fallen self-will and distorted self-love distort how we see things and how we handle evidence. Things are true or false according to how we judge them, and when the will likes something, it deflects the mind from considering an evidence against it.[58] We can also spin the evidence and convince ourselves that we believe something we do not really believe.[59] Furthermore, we are naturally inclined to deceive and credit ourselves for good outcomes and refuse responsibility for bad ones. Thus, Augustinian tradition holds that pride is the archetypal sin, and the prideful sinner loves himself with an immoderate love that ought to be directed to God.[60] Pride and inordinate love for self are the results of the fall and the root cause of self-deception. As the turn away from God constitutes sin, the turn away from truth constitutes self-deception, and both are motivated by our fallen, disordered love.[61]

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[53] Ibid., 351.

[54] Floyd, "How to Cure Self-Deception," 77.

[55] Knapp, "Pride and the Power of Self-Deception," 118.

[56] Ibid.

[57] Floyd, "How to Cure Self-Deception," 66. Our pride and self-love does not allow us to admit that we do not love the truth and goodness. So we lie to ourselves that we love the truth. However, we love the truth only enough to pretend to love it but not enough to obey it. As Wood point out, "We lie to ourselves about what really is good and true. Only then can we preserve the fiction that we love truth and goodness, although we repeatedly turn away from them. Yet even our lies witness to our love of truth. We care about the truth just enough to pretend to love it, and no more" (*Blaise Pascal on Duplicity, Sin and the Fall,* 210).

[58] Ward E. Jones, "Religious Conversion, Self-Deception, and Pascal's Wager," *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 36 (1998): 167–88.

[59] McCartney, "Self-Deception in James," 33.

[60] Wood, *Blaise Pascal on Duplicity, Sin and the Fall*, 10–11.

[61] Ibid., 11.

4. How to Avoid Self-Deception

Recognizing and correcting self-deception is difficult, but we can take the first step by acknowledging its pervasive and universal presence.[62] The second step is opening ourselves to self-examination and questioning.[63] For at the core of self-deception is the self-deceiver's failure to achieve self-reflective awareness.[64] Believers have the Bible which is the word of truth that God uses to save them from self-deception when they expose themselves to it (Eph 1:13; Col 1:6; Jas 1:17–18; 1 Pet 1:23).

Socrates vigorously defended the examined life to expose self-deceptive beliefs that obscure our moral identity from us.[65] We need to question the justifications we concoct to rationalize our actions given the connection between justification and unethical behavior.[66] Facing truth is often painful, but in order to avoid self-deception, we must love the truth more than we love ourselves. As Gregg Ten Elshof puts it, "Self-deception occurs whenever we manage our own beliefs without an eye on making progress toward the truth. It is most likely to occur when we have strong emotional attachments to belief on some topic. When we have no attachments, the general desire to believe what's true is likely to guide our inquiry."[67] Mele argues that we have some control over allowing our emotions and motivation to influence our belief and that such control is a resource for combating self-deception.[68]

According to Fingarette, to stop self-deception, the disavowed engagement must be avowed. Undeceiving ourselves means accepting responsibility.[69] So we need to recognize our tendency to select the evidence that best suits us and commit ourselves to paying attention to all the available evidence in search for the truth, no matter where it leads us. When we want to believe something because it serves our self-interest, we tend to manage our attention and allow into our minds only the things that will support our desired belief.[70] If the evidence cannot be avoided, then we direct critical attention to it not to learn from it but to creatively discount it.[71] Therefore, in order to avoid self-deception, we must force ourselves to pay attention to unwelcome evidence with the willingness to give up our cherished beliefs no matter how painful it is.

Pain is God's megaphone to get our attention, as C. S. Lewis has said.[72] Unfortunately, typical human response to pain is diversion. Pascal explored the reason why people engage in diversion. Diversion

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[62] Tenbrunsel and Messick, "Ethical Fading," 234.

[63] Johnson and Burroughs, "Protecting One's Soul," 187.

[64] Alton, "The Morality of Self-Deception," 136.

[65] Ian DeWeese-Boyd, "Collective Self-Deception, Collective Injustice: Consumption, Sustainability and Responsibility" (paper prepared for The Rocky Mountain Ethics Congress Center for Values and Social Policy, University of Colorado, 28 July, 2008), 14.

[66] Tenbrunsel and Messick, "Ethical Fading," 234.

[67] Ten Elshof, *I Told Me So,* 27.

[68] Alfred Mele, *Self-Deception Unmasked* (Princeton: Princeton University, 2001), 103. I believe this is correct because the alternative would be our having no control over our feelings and decisions.

[69] Fingarette, *Self-Deception*, 146.

[70] Ten Elshof, *I Told Me So,* 95.

[71] Ibid., 39.

[72] C. S. Lewis, *The Problem of Pain*, repr. ed. (New York: HarperCollins, 1996), 91. "We can ignore even pleasure. But pain insists upon being attended to. God whispers to us in our pleasures, speaks in our conscience, but shouts in our pains: it is his megaphone to rouse a deaf world."

serves to distract our attention from our mortality, finitude, and failures—realities that are difficult to face.[73] Pascal exposes diversion as an attempt to escape reality, and an indication of something unstable in the human condition. An obsession with entertainment is, for Pascal, "revelatory of a moral and spiritual malaise begging for an adequate explanation."[74] As Groothius points out, the compulsive search for diversion is often an attempt to escape the wretchedness of life.[75]

Pain or trials are God-ordained ways to expose self-deception. They are an integral part of the Christian life and the means by which self-deception is thwarted and self-knowledge gained.[76] Trials force us to face reality without avoiding it through diversion. Trials also force us to choose between the love of God and the love of self, which reveals the true inclination of the will and thus serve as the test of the genuineness of the professed faith.[77] For Edwards, trials are the proper "experiment of the sincerity of professors."[78] Here, Edwards is using the term "experiment" in its scientific sense in that "temptations and trials generated evidence that either confirmed or contradicted an initial hypothesis that justification had occurred."[79] To minimize the possibility of self-deception, a few isolated cases of overcoming trials are not enough; rather, a consistent pattern of successful trials of faith is required to provide true assurance of salvation.[80] In short, a life of persevering Christian practice is the only sound foundation on which to build a hope of salvation free from self-deception.[81] God uses suffering to draw us out of our self-deception by helping us grow in righteousness and holiness, which in turn allows us to know God and thereby ourselves better (Heb 12:10–11, 14).

Self-deception can have destructive results if it persists during the trials of faith. History has shown what can happen when Christians try to maintain their faith without the willingness to pay the necessary price: "Auschwitz stands as a symbol of one extreme to which our self-deception can lead. For

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[73] Douglas R. Groothuis, "Why Truth Matters Most: An Apologetic for Truth-Seeking in Postmodern Times," *JETS* 47 (2004): 451. Groothuis adds, "In the middle of the seventeenth century in France, Blaise Pascal went to great lengths to expose those diversions that kept people from seeking truth in matters of ultimate significance. His words still ring true. In his day, diversion consisted of things like hunting, games, gambling, and other amusements…. Diversion consoles us— in trivial ways—in the face of our miseries or perplexities; yet, paradoxically, it becomes the worst of our miseries because it hinders us from ruminating on and understanding our true condition."

[74] Groothuis, "Why Truth Matters Most," 452; Pascal, *Pensées*, 28–29.

[75] Groothuis, "Why Truth Matters Most," 453. Groothuis adds, "We have great difficulty being quiet in our rooms, when the television or computer screen offers a riot of possible stimulation. Postmodern people are perpetually restless; they frequently seek solace in diversion instead of satisfaction in truth." Huxley confesses: "I had motives for not wanting the world to have a meaning; consequently, I assumed that it had none, and was able without any difficulty to find satisfying reasons for this assumption…. Most ignorance is vincible ignorance. We don't know because we don't want to know. It is our will that decides how and upon what subjects we shall use our intelligence. Those who detect no meaning in the world generally do so because, for one reason or another, it suits their books that the world should be meaningless" (Aldous Huxley, *Ends and Means,* 3rd ed. [New York: Harper & Brothers, 1937], 312).

[76] Chamberlain, "Self-Deception as a Theological Problem," 553.

[77] Edwards, *Religious Affections,* 351.

[78] Ibid., 352.

[79] Chamberlain, "Self-Deception as a Theological Problem," 553.

[80] Edwards, *Religious Affections,* 354.

[81] Chamberlain, "Self-Deception as a Theological Problem," 555.

the complicity of Christians with Auschwitz did not begin with their failure to object to the first slightly anti-Semitic laws and actions. It rather began when Christians assumed that they could be the heirs and carriers of the symbols of the faith without sacrifice and suffering."[82]

5. Conclusion

In this article, I discussed how self-deception is closely related to sin, often causes false assurance of salvation, is itself caused by disordered love for self, and how God often uses trials to bring us out of self-deception. Sin hides itself by nature and self-deception is one of its major tools. It averts the truth, and since an aversion to truth is also an aversion to God, self-deception is sinful.[83] Sin involves turning away from God just as self-deception involves turning away from truth, and both are motivated by our disordered love, which is the result of the fall.

Diligent effort to gain self-awareness is vitally important to prevent self-deception. Edwards suggests meditation, introspection, prayer, and obedience as means to prevent self-deception in one's assurance of salvation.[84] Pain and trials are God-ordained ways to expose self-deception. Suffering in life is God's way of drawing us out of our self-centered, immediate concerns towards a God-centered, kingdom-seeking life of faith.[85] Suffering also forces us to face the reality of our true identity.

Let me end the article with DeWeese-Boyd's exhortation towards self-scrutiny to avoid self-deception:

> It isn't an exaggeration to say that the examined life Socrates so vigorously defends is aimed at exposing just these sorts of self-deceptive beliefs—beliefs that obscure our moral identity from us. To avoid this sort of self-scrutiny is to run the risk that one isn't leading a morally worthy life, even by one's own standards. Insofar as seeing, acknowledging what is the case, overwhelming as it may be, is necessary if we are ever going to change anything about ourselves or the conditions of the world we live in, such efforts offer us the best hope and are neglected at our peril.[86]

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[82] David Burrell and Stanley Hauerwas, "Self-Deception and Autobiography: Theological and Ethical Reflections on Speer's *Inside the Third Reich*," *JRE* 2 (1974): 100.

[83] Wood, *Blaise Pascal on Duplicity, Sin and the Fall,* 10.

[84] Chamberlain, "Self-Deception as a Theological Problem," 547.

[85] Eric Johnson and Christina Burroughs, "Protecting One's Soul: A Christian Inquiry into Defensive Activity," *Journal of Psychology and Theology* 28 (2000): 186. Johnson and Burroughs add, "We groan with all of creation, living as aliens in an unfulfilling and distressing land, longing for redemption. Living in this age requires an ongoing mourning until we arrive at the City of God; [defensive activity] typically leads us away from the pain of that mourning. A deep acceptance of our suffering in the desert of this world keeps us from the defensive activity of feeding the illusion that we are already home."

[86] DeWeese-Boyd, "Collective Self-Deception, Collective Injustice," 14.

Answering Eastern Orthodox Apologists regarding Icons

— John B. Carpenter —

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Abstract: The Eastern Orthodox Church claims that their practices have been preserved unaltered from the early church, thus making them the pristine church in perfect continuity with the apostolic church. Eastern Orthodox Apologists use this claim to offer potential converts certainty amid competing truth claims. In particular, they claim that the early church venerated images (icons) in the liturgy just as the Eastern Orthodox (and often Roman Catholics) do now. However, a careful examination of the evidence, both archaeological and written, reveals that despite the claim to continuity with the early church, the Eastern Orthodox practices of iconography directly contradict the consistent teachings of the early church. The early church, with only varying degrees of vehemence, strictly prohibited icons. This article engages typical Eastern Orthodox Apologists' strategies for dealing with the evidence of the early church while maintaining their claims to continuity and argues that there is no evidence for the use of icons in the early church.

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For decades, the Eastern Orthodox in the United States have been claiming to be drawing many evangelicals into their fold. The 2017 conversion of apologist and "Bible Answer Man" Hank Hanegraff brought attention to this apparent wave of conversions that has been occurring at least since the 1980s. Then Campus Crusade missionary Peter Gillquist led the network of house churches he established in the early 1970s seeking to restore what they thought was original, pristine Christianity to first become the Evangelical Orthodox Church (EOC) and then join, en masse, the Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese of North America in 1987. Two thousand former evangelicals became Eastern Orthodox in one swoop.[1] In 1990, Frank Schaeffer, son of renowned evangelical philosopher Francis Schaeffer, converted to Eastern Orthodoxy. By 2015 the Assembly of Canonical Orthodox Bishops of the United States of America could report that "Almost half the nearly 1 million Orthodox Christians

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[1] Peter Gilquist, "Retrospect on the EOC Reception into the Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese," *The Word* (September 2007), http://www.antiochian.org/node/17077.

in the United States today are converts," including many "former Evangelicals in search of historicity."[2]

Rod Dreher, himself originally a Methodist who became Eastern Orthodox by way of Catholicism, claims that such conversions are because of Eastern Orthodoxy's continuity with the early church: "Many evangelicals seek the early church; well here it is, in Orthodoxy."[3] Hanegraff claims that the Eastern Orthodox Church represents the "roots" of Christianity, "that for the first millennium of church history there was essentially one orthodox New Testament faith rooted in seven ancient ecumenical councils."[4] Ed Stetzer, in his *Christianity Today* commentary on the Hanegraff conversion, implicitly concedes that Eastern Orthodoxy is, indeed, in continuity with the early church.[5] Amy Slagle, in her PhD dissertation studying the causes of conversions to Eastern Orthodoxy, concludes, "Orthodox Christianity appeared attractive in offering potential newcomers moral and epistemological stability, in remaining, in their eyes at least, historically and doctrinally unchanged and unchanging." She notes that it is thus especially attractive to "those from avowedly Christian backgrounds," including those with a formal theological education and who hold the early church as the pristine church to which they seek to return. She reports that converts tend to cite the similarities between the Eastern Orthodox Church they encounter today with what they think are was the pattern of the original church:

> The early church had bishops and priests, so does the Orthodox Church; the early church had a liturgy, as does Orthodoxy; veneration of Mary, saints, and images was documented in the early literatures and has remained significant in the present-day Orthodox Church. No other Christian confessions, informants maintained, fit this mold between past and present so neatly.[6]

The problem, of course, for Eastern Orthodox apologists (EOAs), is that it is precisely this claim that is at question. Did the early church really have images that were venerated in the liturgy? Converts have been sold on the claim. Is it true? We are focusing, in particular, on the issue of icons since it is an easily identifiable issue, an "integral part" and "indispensable participant" of the Eastern Orthodox "divine liturgy,"[7] and an issue about which we have several (but not an overwhelming number) of early church sources.[8]

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[2] Jonathan M. Pitts, "Conversions Gradually Transforming Orthodox Christianity," *Baltimore Sun*, 24 June 2017, https://tinyurl.com/yadeouqm.

[3] Rod Dreher, "Bible Answer Man Embraces Orthodoxy," *The American Conservative*, 11 April 2017, https://tinyurl.com/yafxuenf.

[4] Hank Hanegraaff, "The Eastern Orthodox Church," https://tinyurl.com/y7t2nmvp (at 1:30).

[5] Ed Stetzer, "Hank Hanegraaff's Switch to Eastern Orthodoxy, Why People Make Such Changes, and Four Ways Evangelicals Might Respond," *Christianity Today*, 13 April 2017, https://tinyurl.com/yb4xvca7. Stetzer denies that the trend out of evangelicalism to Eastern Orthodoxy is large, claiming that more Eastern Orthodox are being converted to evangelicalism. This maybe but we should still seek the reasons for why evangelicals would be drawn to Eastern Orthodoxy.

[6] Amy Slagle, "Nostalgia Without Memory: A Case Study of American Converts to Eastern Orthodoxy in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania," (Ph.D. diss., University of Pittsburgh, 2008), 214–15.

[7] "The icon … is an integral part of liturgical space, which is the church, and an indispensable participant in divine services." Hilarion Alfeyev, "Theology of Icon in the Orthodox Church," Lecture at St. Vladimir's Seminary, 5 February 2011, https://mospat.ru/en/2011/02/06/news35783/.

[8] I will define the "early church" as that up until and including Augustine of Hippo (354–430).

1. What Is an Icon?

We should differentiate between art (including imagery and decorations) and icons. Orthodox theologians and icon "writers" make that distinction themselves. "Icons are not 'art' in the modern sense of individual expression, although they have many aesthetic qualities. Icons are a collaboration between the writer and the spirit."[9] Metropolitan Hilarion Alfeyev, a bishop of the Russian Orthodox Church, notes, "The icon's purpose is *liturgical*." Hence, "A gallery is the wrong place for icons."[10] The Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese of North America defines an icon as follows:

> In the Orthodox Church an icon is a sacred image, a window into heaven. An image of another reality, of a person, time and place that is more real than here and now. More than art, icons have an important spiritual role…. The primary purpose of the icon is to aid in worship.[11]

The Orthodox Church of Estonia notes, "the word 'icon' is normally used to refer to images with a religious content, meaning and use…. They come from prayer to be used in prayer and worship."[12] Thus, an icon is a sacred image used in religious devotion.

This is a crucial distinction. It means that the discovery of early Christian art does not necessarily mean the discovery of early Christian iconography.[13] EOAs frequently neglect this distinction when discussing the archaeological evidence, leaving the impression—wittingly or not—that any religious themed art is an icon and so the archaeological discovery of decorations and symbolism among early Christians is necessarily evidence of iconography.[14]

Frequently EOAs make the case that since the Bible allows and even encourages images, such as the cherubim over the ark of the covenant and the bronze serpent Moses made for the snake bitten (Num 21), thus iconography is acceptable.[15] However, this reasoning conflates decorations and symbolic images with iconography.[16] But as we have seen, for an image to be an icon it must be used in worship. They may deny that the image itself is being worshipped but it is a tool in worship. This is not the

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[9] Patricia Miranda, "The Tradition Of Iconography," *The* National Altar Guild Association, 2011, http://www.nationalaltarguildassociation.org/?p=796.

[10] Alfeyev, *"*Theology of Icon in the Orthodox Church."

[11] Cindy Egly, "Eastern Orthodox Christians and Iconography," *Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese*, https://tinyurl.com/yacu2c72.

[12] "Icons," *Orthodox Church of Estonia*, https://tinyurl.com/y72yxmhq.

[13] "Iconography" is the use of icons; an "iconodule" is one who supports their use.

[14] For example, G. V. Martini, notes what he calls "iconographic frescoes in these churches (both at Megiddo and Dura Europos)" (in "Iconography in Ancient House Churches," *Orthodox Christian*, 15 January 2014, http://orthochristian.com/67566.html).

[15] For example, Jack N. Sparks states the following with reference the cherubim in the tabernacle: "images directly connected with the presence of God, and *commanded* by Him" (in "No Graven Image: Icons and Their Proper Use," *Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese,* https://tinyurl.com/yczn89cp, original emphasis).

[16] Martini conflates imagery and icons thus writes, "If one is being honest about the witness of the holy scriptures, we must admit that there are several *approving* commandments related to the creation of iconography and even statuary in the old testament [sic]. Both the tabernacle and temple were adorned with a multitude of images, both two- and three-dimensional, which depicted everything from angels to pomegranates" ("Iconography in Ancient House Churches," original emphasis).

case with the decorations of the original tabernacle, the later temple, and not even with the famous bronze serpent Moses made. Nowhere in scripture are we told that these decorations were involved with worship.[17] Indeed, when later the bronze serpent became used in worship, King Hezekiah had it destroyed (2 Kgs 18:4).

So the discovery of decorations in catacombs or the synagogue and church of Dura Europos does not necessarily suggest iconography. One can still be "aniconic" (opposed to icons) and allow decorations. Aniconism is the belief that images should not be used in worship; it is opposition to icons but not necessarily to all images. There is a spectrum of aniconism. Rigorous aniconism insists that the natural or supernatural world should not be represented in any visible way.[18] The ban on images may only apply to the divine or extend to "saints"; it may encompass all living beings, and even, at its most rigorous, include everything that exists. When this prohibition is enforced by the actual destruction of images, aniconism becomes iconoclasm. But it need not be so extreme. It is helpful to understand aniconism etymologically. *Icon* derives from Greek noun εἰκών (an image), the negative prefix *an-* relates to the Greek alpha privative ("non-"), and the suffix *-ism* comes from the Greek –ισμός (a belief in). According to its etymology, aniconism is "non-iconism," the lack of belief in images. The Greek word εἰκών is a general term that may refer to any image. However, the term icon, as described above, has become a technical term for a particular type of image. All images are not icons. Aniconism is the opposition to that particular type of image (not necessarily images per se). Aniconism, then, is the belief that icons ought not be used.

Milette Gaifman, in a 2017 *Religion* article, defines aniconism as the practice of denoting "divine presence without a figural image in religious practice."[19] Likewise, for Tryggve N. D. Mettinger aniconism refers to "cults where there is no iconic representation of the deity (anthropomorphic or theriomorphic) serving as the dominant or central cultic symbol."[20] Thus, an aniconist could have religious art on the walls of his or her home, on the pictures in a wallet, or even where the Bible is taught so long as the images are not involved in "the framework where religion is performed."[21] That is, aniconism means that images are not used in worship (however one defines worship). Aniconism, at its barest, is imageless worship.

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[17] Robert Arakaki writes, "The Old Testament witness presents both a historical and theological justification for images in Jewish worship" (in "A Response to John B. Carpenter's 'Icons and the Eastern Orthodox Claim to Continuity with the Early Church,'" *Ancient Faith*, 16 September 2013, https://tinyurl.com/ydymcv7l). Martini states, "The priest [of the Old Testament] would prostrate himself before these images and statues, no less" (in "Iconography in Ancient House Churches"). Neither provide an example of images used in worship, instances of decorations notwithstanding, and I know of no such instance in the Bible.

[18] "According to Tryggve Mettinger, in aniconic cults 'there is no iconic representation of the deity (anthropomorphic or theriomorphic) serving as the dominant or central cultic symbol, that is, where we are concerned with either (a) an aniconic symbol or (b) sacred emptiness'" (Milette Gaifman, "Aniconism: Definitions, Examples and Comparative Perspectives," *Religion* 47 [2017]: 337, https://doi.org/10.1080/0048721X.2017.1342987).

[19] Ibid., 335.

[20] Tryggve N. D. Mettinger, "The Absence of Images: The Problem of Aniconic Cult at Gades and Its Religio-Historical Background" *SEL* 21 (2004): 89.

[21] Batairwa K. Paulin, "Aniconism and Sacramentality: Rethinking the Riddles of Representing the Sacred" (unpublished paper, October 2014), 76, https://tinyurl.com/y6u5znpx.

Clement of Alexandria (ca. 150–215) and Tertullian (155–240) held to rigorous aniconism. Clement wrote, "Works of art cannot then be sacred and divine."[22] EOA Steven Bigham notes Clement's rigorous aniconism, that he believed all images fell under the second commandment's prohibition, including images in the tabernacle. Bigham critiques Clement by appealing to the authority of scripture, arguing that he dissolved "the historicity of the passage into allegory, and in so doing, he preserved the intellectual integrity of his rigorism but falsified the scriptures."[23]

Likewise, Tertullian defended the proposition of "similitude being interdicted."[24] The image of the serpent in the wilderness was an "extraordinary precept" (i.e. a rare exception). He wrote that we are only allowed to follow suit if, like Moses, God has bidden us to do so. He required all artists to stop making images in order to be accepted into the church.

Simultaneously, "The Apostolic Tradition" (attributed to Hippolytus of Rome, c. 235) took a laxer approach: "If someone is a sculptor or a painter, let them be taught not to make idols. Either let them cease or let them be rejected."[25] Note the implicit allowance of making non-idolatrous images but also the lack of encouragement to make icons. This appears to reflect a milder form of aniconism in which images are allowed for non-religious purposes. Lax aniconism allows for images as decorations, drawing the red line at involvement in worship.

Aniconism, then, covers a range from rigorous aniconism in which all images are forbidden, including secular art, in any contexts, whether secular or religious, to mediating views of some images being acceptable in non-religious contexts; to the laxest form of aniconism, that images of all kinds are acceptable, even as decorations in places of worship but not used in worship. It is the prohibition on using an image in acts of devotion that is the sine qua non of aniconism.

The spectrum of aniconism must be remembered when EOAs try to create the impression that the choice is binary: we are either rigorously aniconistic, consistently "iconophobic" to the point of destroying even our family photos, on the one hand, or, on the other hand, fully engaged in iconography. EOA Steven Bigham claims that proponents of the "hostility theory" (that the early church was aniconic) are arguing "ancient Christianity and Judaism preached and practiced an absolute prohibition of figurative art based on the second commandment."[26] Notably, he cites, as far as I could see, no example of anyone making that case.

If EOAs can frame the debate as a binary choice between radically rigorous aniconism or full-blown iconography, many people will succumb to the logic of iconography. Hence, they typically argue, "Icons are like family photos. Just like a deployed soldier may kiss a photo of his wife, we kiss icons of Saints who have fallen asleep in Christ."[27] This is, of course, a false dilemma.

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[22] Clement of Alexandria, *Strom.* 7.5 (*ANF* 2:530).

[23] Steven Bigham, *Early Christian Attitudes toward Images* (Rollinsford, NH: Orthodox Research Institute, 2004), 133.

[24] Tertullian, *Idol.* 5 (http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/0302.htm).

[25] *Trad. ap.* 16:3 (http://www.bombaxo.com/hippolytus.html).

[26] Bigham, *Early Christian Attitudes toward Images*, 13.

[27] "The Sign of the Cross, Icons, and Tradition in the Orthodox Church," *Theoria.tv*, https://tinyurl.com/yb2csy3z.

2. Was Second-Temple Judaism Really Aniconic?

In order to explain how early Christians could rapidly develop the use of icons arising out of the Jewish synagogues that apparently prohibited such imagery, EOAs often argue that first century Judaism was not aniconic (opposed to icons) or that, at least, not to the degree we've been led to believe. For example, Steven Bigham dedicated 35 pages in his book *Early Christian Attitudes toward Images* to reinterpreting the sources from first century Judaism, concluding that the archaeological evidence discovered in the last century (such as Dura-Europos) has undermined the received idea that first century Judaism was opposed to images and that Christians had no images.[28] Bigham, followed by many EOAs, seeks to show that first century Judaism out of which the early church sprung, was not as aniconic as originally believed and so the development of iconography from that environment is not inconceivable. Andrew Louth, an Eastern Orthodox Emeritus Professor of Patristic and Byzantine Studies at Durham University, notes that the synagogue discovered in Dura Europos, Syria and another in Sepphoris, Palestine show the aniconic Jewish synagogue "is a later development, not something the early Christians would have been familiar with."[29] EOA G. V. Martini, states, "Judaism of [the first century] was emphatically *not* iconoclastic."[30] Robert Arakaki, himself a former evangelical and now an EOA, quotes the Babylonian Talmud in Abodah Zarah 33 as evidence that first century Judaism accepted some use of images:

> If it is a matter of certainty that [statues are] of kings [and hence made for worship], then all will have to concur that they are forbidden. If it is a matter of certainty [that the statues are] of local officials [and hence not for worship], then all will have to concur that they are [made merely for decoration and hence] permitted.[31]

However, note the implicit distinction in it of images for "worship," which are forbidden, and those that are not for worship, which are permitted. This is the key issue. As long as the images were not allowed to be involved in worship, the position is still aniconic. Arakaki, citing Bigham, quotes a claim that the Jews allowed "curtains embroidered with figures" in their synagogue.[32] But the excerpt

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[28] Bigham, *Early Christian Attitudes toward Images,* 21–78.

[29] Andrew Louth, *The Church in History, Vol. III: Greek East and Latin West* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2007), 43. In so doing he appears to contradict Bigham who argued the opposite: namely, that it was the first century that was rigorous in its interpretation of the second commandment and laxity was a later development. He writes, "We now know, however, due to recent archaeological discoveries, that in the centuries following the destruction of Jerusalem the Jews of the Diaspora, and even in Palestine, greatly enlarged the category of non-idolatrous images admitted into holy places such as synagogues and cemeteries" (Bigham, *Early Christian Attitudes toward Images,* 66).

[30] Martini, "Iconography in Ancient House Churches," original emphasis.

[31] Arakaki, https://tinyurl.com/ydymcv7l. Arakaki claims the quotation is from the Babylonian Talmud, according to Steven Bigham, but I was unable to find it in the Talmud, including Abodah Zarah 33 and Abkat Rokel. (Arakaki cites Steven Bigham, "Early Christian Attitudes toward Images," 73n101).

[32] "Indeed, curtains embroidered with figures are in use in almost every country where the Jews are scattered, without any fear of disturbing the thought of worshipers in the synagogue, for the reason that artistic decoration in honor of the Torah is regarded as appropriate and the worshiper, if disturbed by it, needs not observe the figures, as he can shut his eyes during prayer." Arakaki claims the citation from "*Abkat Rokel*" is a description of "early Judaism" but it apparently is a product of the sixteenth century. For example, Elisha Ben Gabriel Gallico who died at Safed in about 1583 is frequently mentioned in "Abkat Rokel" (Isidore Singer, *The Jewish Enclopedia,*

presents only one example in the Jewish Encyclopedia, the lax view of Rabbi R. Ephraim, about images in synagogues. Since the images in the curtains are not reported as in any way involved with worship, this still arguably falls within the aniconic spectrum. There follows a series of other rabbinical opinions more conservative—that is, more strictly aniconic. "The great rabbi Akiva in the early second century … prohibited the representation of all animal creatures, heavenly bodies and angels as well as anything under the earth, including whatever is reflected in water."[33]

The commitment of second-temple Judaism to build a "fence" around the Second Commandment is demonstrated by Pontius Pilate himself and the Jewish coins of the period. Bigham extensively deals with the rigorously aniconic convictions of Josephus, otherwise considered a moderate first century Jew.[34] Josephus tells how Pontius Pilate caused an uproar by introducing images on Roman standards in Jerusalem:

> By night he brought into the city busts of the emperor that were attached to the military standards, when our law forbids the making of images. For this reason, the previous procurators used standards that had no such ornaments. The next morning, the Jews were indignant and hurried to Pilate in Caesarea, imploring him to remove the images. When he refused, deeming it an insult to the emperor, they prostrated themselves around the palace for five days and nights. On the sixth, Pilate took his seat on the tribunal in the stadium, and when the Jews again pleaded, he gave a signal. The people were suddenly surrounded with a ring of troops three deep, their swords drawn, and Pilate threatened death if they did not stop the tumult. But they bared their necks, declaring that they would rather die than transgress the law. Astounded at such religious zeal, Pilate immediately transferred the images from Jerusalem to Caesarea.[35]

Jewish coins showed their aniconism in the first century. Although first Greek and then Roman coins typically had images, usually of gods, temples or political leaders, Jewish coins of the Hasmonian period (ca. 140 and c. 116) did not, except for the occasional palm tree or stalk of wheat. These coins were still preferred in Jewish contexts in Galilee in the first century. "No "graven images" ever appeared on [Jewish] coins—not even Herod the Great, who displaced the last of the Hasmoneans, stepped over that red line."[36] While Herod's son Herod Philip put images on his coins in mostly Gentile Gaulanitis (east of the Sea of Galilee), his other son "Herod Antipas of Galilee, whose territory was more extensively Jewish, had no images on his coins."[37] Further, a cache of Jewish coins discovered in 2014 from AD 69–70 show that "Jewish coins of the era were characterized by images that strictly obeyed the second

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5:141, https://tinyurl.com/y9msv42b). Even if it is authentically from early Judaism, note that the images were not used in worship, that worshippers are encouraged to shut their eyes if they are distracted by them.

[33] Louis H. Feldman, *Josephus and Modern Scholarship (1937–1980)* (New York: de Grutyer, 1984), 515.

[34] Bigham, *Early Christian Attitudes toward Images,* 42–65.

[35] Josephus, *J.W.* 2.169, in *Josephus: The Essential Writings*, trans. Paul L. Maier (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1988), 263.

[36] Colin Shindler, "Pocket history: the secrets of ancient coins," *The Jewish Chronicle*, 29 August 2017, https://www.thejc.com/judaism/features/pocket-history-the-secrets-of-ancient-coins-1.443425.

[37] Anthony J. Blasi, Paul-André Turcotte, Jean Duhaime, ed., *Handbook of Early Christianity: Social Science Approaches* (Oxford: Altimira, 2002), 249.

commandment." The coins had engravings of *lulavs* (date palm frond) and *etrog* (citrons) but not of people or animals.[38]

3. Did Luke Make the First Icon?

It is a conviction of the Eastern Orthodox Church that Luke the Evangelist painted the first icon, giving posterity an eyewitness icon of Mary, the "Theotokos" (i.e. God-bearer).[39] This report is meant to root iconography at the very inception of the church. However, this claim appears to be from the sixth century at the earliest. Later authors, like Theodore Anagnostes (died after 527) supposedly reported about Eudocia, the wife of emperor Theodosian II (408–450), sending to Pulcheria (399–453) from Jerusalem the icon of "the Mother of God" depicted by "the Apostle Luke."[40] However, other sources claim that the earliest attestation of the supposed icon of Mary by Luke is from Andrew of Crete (ca. 712–740).[41] There is no evidence of the claim of icons by Luke in the early church. Augustine of Hippo (354–430) wrote that no one knew the appearance of Jesus or that of Mary. "For neither do we know the countenance of the Virgin Mary."[42] It is highly unlikely that a bishop as erudite as Augustine would be ignorant of the claim of an eyewitness rendition of Mary if that claim had originated by his time. Bissera V. Pentcheva concludes, "The myth [of Luke painting an icon] was invented in order to support the legitimacy of icon veneration during the Iconoclast controversy [8th and 9th centuries]. By claiming the existence of a portrait of the Theotokos painted during her lifetime by the evangelist Luke, the perpetrators of this fiction fabricated evidence for the apostolic origins and divine approval of images."[43]

4. Doesn't the Archaeological Evidence Demonstrate the Existence of Iconography?

EOAs make much of the synagogue and house church discovered in Dura-Europos, Syria. Gabe Martini writes, "The Christian "house church" (and synagogue) discovered at Dura Europos (ca. AD 235) are about as explicit as can be when it comes to demonstrating—in an historical and archaeological manner—the existence of iconography within both Jewish and Christian architecture of the post-

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[38] Ran Shapira, "Hoard of Bronze Coins from Jewish Revolt Found Near Jerusalem," *Haaretz*, 17 August 2014, https://www.haaretz.com/archaeology/coins-from-jewish-revolt-found-1.5259719.

[39] Martini writes "There is also the tradition of Luke the Physician painting the first icon of the Theotokos (the Virgin Mary) and the infant Jesus (the Hodegetria, which is currently enshrined at a church on Mount Athos)" (in "Iconography in Ancient House Churches").

[40] Cited in Jelena Erdeljan, *Chosen Places: Constructing New Jerusalems in Slavia Orthodoxa* (Leiden: Brill, 2017), 80n28. After this time and especially during the iconoclastic controversy, insistence on this claim was common. For example, Andrew of Crete writes, "All who (where) then told (that) Apostle Luke painted with his own hands the Incarnated Christ and His spotless Mother and (that) Rome possesses the icons of them in a glorious house. And they accurately say to exist (these icons) also in Jerusalem" (*De Sanctarum Imaginum Veneratione*, P.G. 97,1304B).

[41] David, "Another Icon Myth: Icons Painted by St. Luke," *Icons and Their Interpretation*, 27 October 2011, https://russianicons.wordpress.com/2011/10/27/another-icon-myth-icons-painted-by-st-luke/.

[42] *Trin.* 8:5 (NPNF[1] 3).

[43] Bissera V. Pentcheva, *Icons and Power: The Mother of God in Byzantium* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University, 2006), 124.

resurrection era; and importantly, in both cases being in the context of places of worship."[44] However, besides the conflating of decorations with iconography noted above, Bigham reveals that the famous, decorated house church in Dura-Europos, so often cited by EOAs as proof of icons in the early church, had in its large assembly hall "no paintings."[45] In other words, while there are frescoes in other rooms in the house-church, the actual meeting place for the early Christians contained none of the decorations so prominent in the nearby synagogue (itself a rarity). Contrary to claims by Robert Arakaki, and others, that such synagogues are not exceptional, archaeologist Jodi Magness noted about a fifth century AD synagogue with art found in 2012, "Synagogues of this particular type—which is best represented by the synagogue at Capernaum just a couple of miles away—typically don't have mosaic floors."[46]

Certainly the catacombs demonstrate the existence of early Christian decorations and symbolism. We know from Tertullian's off-hand mention of an image of "The Good Shepherd" on a chalice used by a bishop that such decorated items were used.[47] However, the crucial question is whether they ever crossed the red line separating aniconism from iconography. Archaeology can rarely indicate the use of the images it uncovers. But the written testimony of the early church can reveal their attitudes. While, on the one hand, Irenaeus (ca. 130–202) spoke admirably of art, "a beautiful image of a king … constructed by some skillful artist,"[48] on the other he says this of the Gnostic Carpocratians use of icons:

> They also possess images, some of them painted, and others formed from different kinds of material; while they maintain that a likeness of Christ was made by Pilate at that time when Jesus lived among them. They crown these images, and set them up along with the images of the philosophers of the world that is to say, with the images of Pythagoras, and Plato, and Aristotle, and the rest. They have also other modes of honoring these images, after the same manner of the Gentiles.[49]

Notice that crowning and honoring of the images, "after the same manner of the Gentiles," means that they are being used not simply as decorations but as icons.

Hence, the archaeological evidence has not produced any examples of iconography and when interpreted by early church fathers such as Irenaeus, it shows they understood the distinction between decoration and icon and did not cross that line.

5. Is Origen's Testimony Invalid?

According to Origen (184–254), the pagan philosopher and critic of Christianity Celsus made Christian rejection of images in worship a point of criticism. He claimed that Greek philosophers

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[44] Martini, "Iconography in Ancient House Churches."

[45] Ibid., 68. Michael Peppard, in a specialized book on just this church, confirms this: "A few graffiti were preserved from [the assembly hall], but no formal paintings, if there ever were any" (*The World's Oldest Church: Bible, Art, and Ritual in Dura, Europos*, Syria [New Haven: Yale University Press, 2016], 17).

[46] A. R. Williams, "Surprising Mosaics Revealed in Ancient Synagogue in Israel," *National Geographic*, 17 July 2015, https://tinyurl.com/ydzcspsf.

[47] "That Shepherd will play the patron whom you depict upon your (sacramental) chalice" (Tertullian, *Pud.* 10 [*ANF* 4:85]).

[48] Irenaeus, *Haer* 1.8.1 (http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/0103108.htm).

[49] *Haer.* 1:25.6 (http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/0103125.htm).

understood that the images were not the gods themselves. According to Celsus, worship of the gods did not terminate on the image (i.e. icon) used in worship, but through the images passed into the actual god, never resting on the mere medium or icon. The image was a symbol for the god and not the god per se; honoring the symbol was therefore a way of honoring the god.

Origen rejected this line of thought. He replied to Celsus by admitting that Christians used no images. He states that Christians "being taught in the school of Jesus Christ, have rejected all images and statues."[50] Jews and Christians are among "those who cannot allow in the worship of the Divine Being altars, or temples, or images." [51] His refutation of Celsus would be made more powerful if he could undermine Celsus's credibility by pointing to examples of images, such as Luke's reputed icon of the Theotokos, if they existed. Also, he could have coopted Celsus's theology of iconography, building bridges with the reigning religious philosophy of the day. Celsus's philosophy defending idolatry is strikingly similar to the theological justifications for iconography later developed by John of Damascus (676–749) and other iconodules. But Origen did not do so. Rather, he mocked the contention that images were helpful in worship; that is, he rejected the theology behind iconography. Citing the second commandment he wrote, "It is in consideration of these and many other such commands, that [Christians] not only avoid temples, altars, and images, but are ready to suffer death when it is necessary, rather than debase by any such impiety the conception which they have of the Most High God."[52]

The typical EOA answer to this is that Origen was a heretic and therefore not to be trusted. It is true that in 400, Patriarch Theophilus of Alexandria convened a council in Alexandria that condemned Origenism as heretical and called Origen himself the "hydra of all heresies." In 553, the Second Council of Constantinople (the Fifth Ecumenical Council) condemned teachings associated with Origen but it's not clear whether they officially condemned Origen himself as a heretic. But this is beside the point of whether his reporting on Christian worship in the third century is accurate. The orthodoxy (or heterodoxy) of Origen's theology is not relevant to the validity of the historical data he provides. Origen's contribution to this investigation is not theological but as evidence to the practice of early Christian worship. Even if he had been fully condemned as a heretic, why would he misrepresent the lack of images in Christian worship?

In fact, Origen's apologetic to Celsus was typical for the early church. Explaining the absence of images in Christian worship was a staple of other early church apologists, including Marcus Minucius Felix (d. ca. 250) and Anthengoras (ca. 133–190). Romans frequently considered the lack of religious images among Christians as *prima facie* evidence of atheism. These apologists were at pains to explain that was not so.[53] Like Celsus, Marcus Minucius Felix's fictional polytheist, Caecilius Natalis attacked Christians for lacking images in worship.[54] The fictional Caecilius Natalis, asks, "Why do [Christians] have no alters, no temples, no public images?"[55] The question for EOAs is, why would early church apologists be answering this question if the early church used icons?

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[50] Origen, *Cels.* 7.41 (http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/04167.htm).

[51] Origen, *Cels.*, 7.64 (http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/04167.htm).

[52] Ibid.

[53] Paul Corby Finney, *The Invisible God*, 40.

[54] On see Minucius's imaginary dialogue, see Robin M. Jensen, "Aniconism in the First Centuries of Christianity," *Religion* 47 (2017): 409.

[55] Finney, *The Invisible God*, 42.

6. What of Basil of Caesarea?

EOAs will often quote the following saying of Basil of Caesarea (ca. 330–379): "…because the honor paid to the image passes on to the prototype."[56] The implication is that Basil provides a theological rational for iconography; that it is not, as iconoclasts frequently charge iconodules, "idolatry," a violation of the second commandment (Exod 20:4–6) to use icons because, as in Basil's supposed reasoning, the honor given to the icon goes to God or whatever saint is represented (and then, presumably, to God). However, first, the second commandment doesn't condemn "idolatry," leaving it up to us to ascertain what qualifies as idolatry. It condemns the making of an image and bowing to it. Further, it doesn't appear that Basil is referring to physical images in worship. He doesn't appear to be commenting on liturgy at all. He is instead offering a theological argument for the Trinity. Here is the frequently quoted phrase in context:

> So that according to the distinction of Persons, both are one and one, and according to the community of Nature, one. How, then, if one and one, are there not two Gods? Because we speak of a king, and of the king's image, and not of two kings. The majesty is not cloven in two, nor the glory divided. The sovereignty and authority over us is one, and so the doxology ascribed by us is not plural but one; *because the honor paid to the image passes on to the prototype.* Now what in the one case the image is by reason of imitation, that in the other case the Son is by nature; and as in works of art the likeness is dependent on the form, so in the case of the divine and uncompounded nature the union consists in the communion of the Godhead.[57]

More relevant is this quote from letter 360 attributed to Basil, which appears to settle the debate conclusively for the iconophiles:

> I acknowledge also the holy apostles, prophets, and martyrs; and I invoke them to supplication to God, that through them, that is, through their mediation, the merciful God may be propitious to me, and that a ransom may be made and given me for my sins. Wherefore also I honor and kiss the features of their images, inasmuch as they have been handed down from the holy apostles, and are not forbidden, but are in all our churches.[58]

To their credit, EOA rarely quote this letter, likely because it is almost certainly spurious. Basil was a major target of forgery after his death. The existence of a "Pseudo-Basil" has long been known, so that even John Calvin references "Pseudo-Basil" twice in his *Institutes* (IV.5.8n23, IV.13.8n12). Pseudo-Basil was a devotee of Thecla, a reported follower of Paul according to the late second century text "Acts of Paul and Thecla." The Catholic Encyclopedia notes that some of the letters attributed to Basil are "probably apocryphal."[59] Andrew Louth states that several of Basil's letters are "spurious."[60] Further,

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[56] Basil, *De Spiritu Sancto* 18.45 (http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/3203.htm).

[57] Ibid., emphasis added.

[58] Basil, Letter 360 (http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/3202360.htm).

[59] "The correspondence with Julian and with Libanius is probably apocryphal" (Joseph McSorely, "St. Basil the Great," *Catholic Encyclopedia* [1913], https://tinyurl.com/ya76en5a).

[60] Louth, *The Cambridge History of Early Christian Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 294.

the language of letter 360, apparently addressed to no one in particular, betrays a later date, like near the iconoclastic controversy. First, we know from the other evidence of the early church that at least significant parts of the church prohibited icons, and so the assertion that iconography, which is what is described in the honoring and kissing of the images, is "not forbidden" is false. Further, if iconography was really "handed down" from the beginning and ubiquitous, as the letter claims, why would Basil state the obvious? That is, why would an ancient Christian write to another about a supposedly ancient, pervasive Christian practice stating that it "not forbidden," if everyone knew it was not forbidden? When we do ever defend ancient, widespread Christian practices, like singing? The letter has the sound of evidence created after the fact. István M. Bugár concludes that letter 360 is "anachronistic" and is so widely doubted that it "does not feature in most collections" of Basil's letters.[61]

7. Is the Synod of Elvira Irrelevant or Misunderstood?

That large portions of the early church, at least, were aniconic and determined to stay that way is demonstrated with canon 36 of the Synod of Elvira (ca. 300–314): "Pictures are not to be placed in churches, so that they do not become objects of worship and adoration." Given that there is no real question about this canon's authenticity, it appears to settle the debate. EOAs typically deal with Elvira's canon 36 by either belittling it or obfuscating it or both.

The Council (or "Synod") of Elvira is frequently belittled by being labeled an unimportant local assembly, not an ecumenical council, with no authority over the church.[62] Such descriptions are irrelevant historiographically. We cite Elvira not dogmatically, seeking instruction; if we did, we'd also have to follow their resolution for clerical celibacy.[63] We cite it as historical evidence of what the church at the time practiced. Just as Elvira can be legitimately cited as evidence that the practice of clerical celibacy was prevalent (at least in the west) and was gaining support by the early fourth century, so too it is evidence about the church's attitude toward images. Neither are binding on the contemporary church. We can depart from its canons, either because we believe in *Sola Scriptura* and don't accept church councils as finally authoritative or because we recognize that, indeed, Elvira was a local synod and not an ecumenical council. However, the history and practice of the early church is the issue, not dogma. Elvira is historical evidence, regardless of whether one accepts it (or any councils) as authoritative. Elvira, as one of the most important church councils after the close of the New Testament and before Nicea (325) is solid documentation for the practices of the early church at that time. It is an official testament, issued by representatives of the church in Spain, substantiating the church's practice on images. This is a major obstacle for EOAs. They do not argue, as do many Catholic apologists, that their

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[61] Personal correspondence, 14 February 2018.

[62] Martini, citing Bigham, contends, "This canon (among the rest at Elvira) were neither ecumenical in scope, nor eternal in application. Like many other encyclicals, epistles, and synods in the history of the Church, the scope was both locally and historically specific" (in "Is There Really a Patristic Critique of Icons? [Part 3 of 5]," *Orthodoxy and Heterodoxy*, 20 May 2013, https://tinyurl.com/yboeexok).

[63] Canon 33 of the Council of Elvira states, "Bishops, presbyters, and deacons, and all other clerics having a position in the ministry, are ordered to abstain completely from their wives and not have children. Whoever, in fact, does this shall be expelled from the dignity of the clerical state."

church evolved over time, but that their practices preserve the pristine liturgy of the early church, with unbroken continuity.[64] Hence, Elvira's canon 36 is extremely problematic to their cause.

The nineteen bishops from the Iberian Peninsula did not necessarily discourage Christians from art, even of biblical or Christian subjects. They were not rigorously aniconic, like Tertullian. However, they drew a red line with the church. They were not as lax as aniconism allows. Art was not allowed in churches where it had even the potential to be used in worship. These bishops make the distinction between mere decorations ("pictures"), on the one hand, and "objects of worship and adoration," on the other. Pictures are not banned outright. Hence, the counsel was not rigorously aniconic. But the council was against any images in churches in order to prevent those images from becoming icons. That it warns against decorations so that they do not potentially become "objects of worship" (i.e. icons) suggests that there were no such icons in the church by the early fourth century.

Being a debate-ending piece of historical evidence, Elvira's canon 36 is subject to much attempted obfuscation. Some claim the standard translation—"Pictures are not to be placed in churches, so that they do not become objects of worship and adoration"—is inaccurate.[65] Bigham, among others, suggests the following translation: "It has seemed good that images should not be in churches so that what is venerated and worshiped not be painted on the walls."[66] While this debate on the precise translation may create a sense of uncertainty about what canon 36 actually says, none of the proposed translations changes the two relevant statements: that pictures were not allowed in churches (a moderate aniconism) and that the Synod of Elvira did not want what is "worshipped and adored" depicted in images. Karl Josef von Hefele (1809–1893), a German Roman Catholic church historian and bishop, quotes the original Latin (*placuit picturas in ecclesia esse non debere ne quod colitur et adoratur in parietibus depingatur*) and comments that "these canons are easy to understand" and that "the ancient church did not tolerate images" and that "the prohibition conceived is in very general terms."[67]

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[64] For example, "The Orthodox Church of today can trace its history back to the New Testament Church in unbroken continuity" ("Origin of the Eastern Orthodox Church," *OrthodoxPhotos.com*, http://www.orthodoxphotos.com/readings/Orthodox_Church/origin.shtml).

[65] This is the common translation, quoted in Adrian Fortescue, "Veneration of Images" (citing Hefele-Leclercq, "Histoire des Conciles," 1:240). The same translation is used with commentary by Karl Josef von Hefele and Joseph Binterim, and others, according to "The Gentile Exit," http://www.conorpdowling.com/library/council-of-elvira.

[66] Bigham, *Early Christian Attitudes toward Images,* 161. Former Catholic monk-priest A. W. Richard Sipe offers an alternative translation, "There shall be no pictures in churches, lest what is worshipped and adored be depicted on walls." Robert Grigg quotes a substantially similar translation: "There should be no pictures in church, lest what is reverenced and adored be painted on the walls" ("Aniconic Worship and the Apologetic Tradition: A Note on Canon 36 of the Council of Elvira," *Church History* 45 [December 1976]: 429). Russian icon painter and author Leonid Ouspensky also offers another rendition: "It seemed good to us that paintings should not be found in churches and that that which is venerated and adored not be painted on the walls" (*Theology of the Icon* [St. Yonkers, NY: Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1992], 1:40).

[67] Karl Josef von Hefele, *A History of the Councils of the Church, from the Original Documents* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1883), 1:151. Catholic apologists claim that Hefele elsewhere "thought it was only a precaution against possible profanation by pagans who might go into a church." (Adrian Fortescue, "Veneration of Images," https://www.catholic.com/encyclopedia/veneration-of-images). *The Catholic Encyclopedia* claims that von Hefele, with others, interpreted "this prohibition as directed against the use of images in overground churches only, lest the pagans should caricature sacred scenes and ideas" ("Council of Elvira," http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/05395b.htm). They imply that Hefele is in agreement with Binterim and Aubespine but, in fact, he

Another way to obfuscate this apparently straightforward statement is by reinterpreting it and narrowing its intent. According to von Hefele, Anton Joseph Binterim (1779–1855), a prominent leader of Catholics in Prussia, believed that canon 36 forbade only that anyone might hang images in the church according to his preference, to prevent inadmissible images. Why not, then, require the permission of the bishop or presbyter for an image? Some claim that canon 36 forbids only images representing God (because it says *adoratur*), and not other pictures, especially those of saints. But the canon also says *colitur* ("is honored"). Even if it were a temporary canon (due to the Diocletian persecution), and nothing in the text suggests it was, it still demonstrates that if images could be excluded entirely, they played no indispensable part in Christian worship by that time. Decorations are dispensable. Icons (if used) are not.

Bigham concludes that since both iconoclasts and iconodules have cited this canon in favor of their own positions in the history of the Church, "it is not a stretch to say that no one knows the exact context or meaning of this canon, rendering it moot as a piece of 'evidence' for any one position."[68] This is a logical non-sequitur. Some people's refusal to accept lucid statements does not mean that the statements aren't lucid. Finally, Bigham belittles Elvira's canon 36 as "a frail, little donkey."[69] The reality, however is that Elvira's canon 36, as the resolution of nineteen bishops, is weighty historical evidence of the use (or lack thereof) of imagery in the early church.

8. Was Eusebius Supportive of Icons?

EOAs will cite the early church historian Eusebius's (ca. AD 263–339) report of a statute in Caesarea Philippi of a man "clothed decently in a double cloak, and extending his hand toward" a kneeling woman, who, by his time, was interpreted to be the woman with an issue of blood (Luke 8:43–48).[70] This sparse, uncritical report is taken to be approval on Eusebius's part of the image, the honor given to it (thus making it effectively an icon) and pilgrimage to the site. However, in the report, Eusebius mentions that the statue and its veneration was "according to a habit of the Gentiles" (i.e. pagans).[71] A dispassionate report should not be assumed to be approving.

About the year 327 Eusebius, who lived in Jerusalem, received a letter from the emperor's sister, Constantia, asking him for a picture of Christ. He rebukes her for the request, saying that such images are inadequate and tend to idolatry. He reports that a woman had brought him two likenesses, which might be philosophers, but she claimed were images of Paul and Christ. He confiscated them lest they should prove a stumbling-block to her or others. He reminds Constantia that the Apostle Paul declares

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summarizes their conclusions and then states, "but…," offering contrary evidence and apparently rejecting their attempts to narrow the scope of canon 36.

[68] Bigham, *Early Christian Attitudes toward Images*, 161.

[69] Ibid., 166.

[70] For example, "He tells us further that portraits of the Savior and of Peter and Paul had been preserved, and that he had examined these with his own eyes as well" (Sparks, "No Graven Image: Icons and Their Proper Use"). Martini writes, "Eusebius of Cæsarea even wrote about the existence of icons and statues of Christ, which had existed well before his time" implying that such citations were approving ("Iconography in Ancient House Churches").

[71] Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 7.18 and *Dem. ev.* 4.9.

his intention of "knowing Christ no longer after the flesh."[72] Eusebius wrote that even the incarnate Christ cannot appear in an image. "To depict purely the human form of Christ before its transformation, on the other hand, is to break the commandment of God and to fall into pagan error."[73] Hence Jaroslav Pelikan, a former Lutheran pastor who converted to Eastern Orthodoxy, calls Eusebius "the father of iconoclasm."[74]

9. Was Epiphanius Forged?

Like Elvira's canon 36, the evidence from Epiphanius (d. 403), if true, is debate-ending. Epiphanius, considered a "saint" in the Eastern Orthodox Church, was Bishop of Salamis, in Cyprus. He wrote, in the last section of Letter 51 (ca. 394), to John, Bishop of Jerusalem:

> I went in to pray, and found there a curtain hanging on the doors of the said church, dyed and embroidered. It bore an image either of Christ or of one of the saints; I do not rightly remember whose the image was. Seeing this, and being loath that an image of a man should be hung up in Christ's church contrary to the teaching of the Scriptures, I tore it asunder and advised the custodians of the place to use it as a winding sheet for some poor person.

He goes on to tell John that such images are "contrary to our religion" and to instruct the presbyter of the church that such images are "an occasion of offense."[75]

This is the first, and most referenced, of writings attributed to Epiphanius that were contested during the later iconoclastic controversies of the eighth and ninth centuries.[76] The EOA answer is to raise doubts about the authenticity of these documents, especially Letter 51. Iconodules during the iconoclastic controversy first claimed the letter was spurious when the iconoclasts cited Epiphanius for their cause. Ninth century iconodule Eastern Orthodox Patriarch Nicephorus (758–828) claimed that Epiphanius's iconoclastic letters were forgeries based on Epiphanius's claim in his letter to the Emperor Theodosius that he was of the Nicene faith from an early age conflicting with the claim in a hagiographical biography of Epiphanius (*Vita Epiphanii*) that he was converted from Judaism at age 16. Nicephorus reasoned that the perceived conflict revealed the letter to Emperor Theodosis to be a forgery and thus, by extension, all his other aniconic writings to likewise be spurious, including Letter 51.[77] As thin as that chain of reasoning is, from a source with a vested interest, it held sway for over 1,200 years until Karl Holl (1866–1926) challenged it in his important 1910 manuscript *Die handschriftliche Überlieferung*

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[72] Henry Wace, "Eusebius of Caesarea," in *Dictionary of Christian Biography and Literature to the End of the Sixth Century A.D.* (1911), §40, https://www.ccel.org/ccel/wace/biodict.html?term=Eusebius%20of%20Caesarea.

[73] David M. Gwynn, "From Iconoclasm to Arianism: The Construction of Christian Tradition in the Iconoclast Controversy," *Greek, Roman, and Byzantine Studies* 47 (2007): 227.

[74] Cited in ibid., 243.

[75] Epiphanius, Letter 51, ch. 9 (http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/3001051.htm).

[76] See also Epiphanius's "Treatise against Those who are engaged in making, after the fashion of idols, images in the likeness of Christ, the Mother of God, Martyrs, Angels and Prophets."

[77] Andrew S. Jacobs, *Epiphanius of Cypress: A Cultural Biography of Late Antiquity* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2016), 241.

des Epiphanius.[78] However, to this day, EOAs will deny the authenticity of Letter 51. For example, Andrew Louth continues the questioning of Epiphanius's aniconism: "In the case of Epiphanios [sic], in particular, there are problems both of interpretation and of authenticity."[79] Other than Nicephorus's strained reasoning, it's unclear if there are any other grounds for these "problems." The interpretation seems as lucid as Elvira's canon 36. The questions of authenticity do not appear to be text-based; that is, there are no extant copies of Letter 51 without the iconoclastic remarks. According to Istvan M. Bugár, "the overwhelming majority of twentieth century scholars" accepted Holl's conclusions about the debated letters and Epiphanius's iconoclasm.[80] Bugár agrees, "Letter 51 … is authentic."[81]

Finally, contrary to EOAs' claim that even if Epiphanius's aniconism was authentic, "a single voice among millions is not sufficient cause to reject the long-standing Tradition of the Church,"[82] the reality is that the aniconism reflected in Epiphanius's documents is perfectly consistent with all that we've seen from the early church on the subject. The tearing down of the curtain reflects the same convictions expressed by the Synod of Elvira and Eusebius. As yet, I've been presented with no contrary evidence. That is, despite zealous attempts by EOAs, I've seen no authentic examples of iconography in the early church. Paul Finney, in his important book on art in the early church states, "No distinctly Christian art predates the year 200. This is a simple statement of fact."[83] The imagery that developed in the 3rd and 4th centuries is mainly narrative, such as Noah's ark, and was not likely to have encouraged worshippers to offer it veneration or focused use in prayer. It was art for viewing not icons for worship.[84]

Hence, the archeological evidence gives us some examples of Christian imagery but not necessarily in places of worship and, even if it were, as in Dura-Europas or the Catacombs, there is no evidence that it ever went beyond decorations. The actual writings of the early church leaders are consistently opposed to the dangers of iconography, ranging from the extremely rigorist aniconism of Tertullian to the moderate aniconism of Elvira and the apparent lax aniconism of a bishop with an image of the Good Shepherd on his chalice. Perhaps most revealing, Eastern Orthodox claims notwithstanding, is the absolute lack of any description of anything like iconography by anyone in the early church. As yet, I've found no evidence of an early Christian using icons. Hence, the supposed strong point of Eastern Orthodoxy, their *raison d'être* for many evangelical converts to Orthodoxy, their claim to continuity

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[78] Reprinted in Karl Holl, *Die handschriftliche Überlieferung des Epiphanius: Ancoratus und Panarion*, Classics in the History of Early Christian Literature 53 (Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias, 2010).

[79] Louth, *The Church in History, Vol. III*, 44. Steven Bigham makes the case against Epiphanius's apparent iconoclasm in his book *Epiphanius of Salamis, Doctor of Iconoclasm? Deconstruction of a Myth* (Rollinsford, NH: Orthodox Research Institute, 2008).

[80] Istvan M. Bugár "What Did Epiphanius Write to Emperor Theodosius?," *Scrinium* 2 (2006): 72–91, doi: 10.1163/18177565-90000006.

[81] Bugár's entire sentence reads, "Briefly, Basil Ep 360 is as anachronistic for the fourth century as the Epiphanian "fragments" (except for Letter 51 which is authentic, but Jerome's translation seems to have significantly altered it)." (Personal correspondence, February 14, 2018). In my 2013 article, "Icons and the Eastern Orthodox Claim to Continuity with the Early Church," (JISCA, Volume 6, No. 1), I reported that Bugár dissents from the scholarly consensus affirming the authenticity of Epiphanius's Letter 51. I was incorrect.

[82] G. V. Martini, "Is There Really a Patristic Critique of Icons? (Part 4 of 5)," *Orthodoxy and Heterodoxy*, 22 May 20 2013, https://tinyurl.com/y7nn5bmg.

[83] Finney, *The Invisible God,* 99.

[84] Jensen, "Aniconism in the First Centuries of Christianity," 408.

with the early church, is actually their Achilles' heel. At least as far as icons are concerned, their claim to continuity is baseless. Their practices are, in fact, in direct contradiction to the consistent convictions and practices of the early church.

The New Atheist Sledgehammer: Like Epistemological Air Boxing

— Ernie Laskaris —

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Abstract: In one of the chief works produced by the New Atheists, Richard Dawkins's *The God Delusion* set out to reduce the existence of God to an "almost certain" impossibility. While his words are firm and belittling, however, Dawkins fails to cause any legitimate damage to the theistic worldview. This article identifies three reasons why the New Atheist sledgehammer has widely missed its target. First, Dawkins demonstrates a deficient understanding of the God he seeks to extinguish. Second, he is unable to account for certain concepts that he appeals to in his arguments (logical absolutes, the uniformity of nature, and moral absolutes). Third, he repeatedly violates the commitments of his naturalistic materialism, resorting to metaphysical speculation on multiple occasions.

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Perhaps with greater zeal and militancy than the atheistic philosophers of the Enlightenment, the New Atheism has burdened Christians with a relentless demand for evidence in support of the existence of God. Political activist Dimitrios Roussopoulos summarizes this attitude well, "The burden of proof is on the believer to give us evidence for God's existence, something to show that there is such a reality."[1] What is the epistemological framework underlying such a demand? It is peculiarly reminiscent of that old foe we know as "logical positivism," a system of empiricism in which all knowledge claims are to be rejected as meaningless nonsense unless they are tautologous or empirically verifiable.[2] In his *Inquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, David Hume wrote:

> When we run over libraries, persuaded of these principles, what havoc must we make? If we take in our hand any volume—of divinity or school of metaphysics, for instance— let us ask, does it contain any abstract reasoning concerning quality or number? No.

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[1] Dimitrios Roussopoulos, *Faith in Faithlessness: An Anthology of Atheism* (Montreal: Black Rose, 2008), 222.

[2] Norman L. Geisler, *Baker Encyclopedia of Christian Apologetics* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1999), 429.

Does it contain any experimental reasoning concerning matter of fact existence? No. Commit it then to the flames, for it can contain nothing but sophistry and illusion.[3]

Of course, since the late 1960s, logical positivism has been emphatically deemed "as dead as a philosophical movement ever becomes."[4] It was the victim of its own sword, for this principle of empirical verifiability *cannot itself be empirically verified*. When interviewed on the subject in 1979, Alfred J. Ayer, one of the champions of logical positivism in the 1920s, noted that "the most important [defect] was that nearly all of it was false."[5] Why is it, then, that the New Atheism seems to be the modern-day reincarnation of the long dead logical positivism? Of course, while they do share a mutual rejection of all metaphysics, there are some key differences between the two.

The most significant of these differences is the New Atheism's insistence on the scientific method as the only means by which to acquire authentic knowledge—an evolved form of logical positivism (pun intended) known as "scientism," which can be considered the radical, fundamentalist wing of science.[6] Under the umbrella of scientism are the branches of "materialism" and "naturalism," which essentially claim that all things are matter and energy being acted upon by natural forces.[7] This worldview is perhaps best expressed by American astronomer and cosmologist Carl Sagan, who wrote, "The cosmos is all there is, or ever was, or ever will be."[8] That is, the only true reality that exists is that which can be rationally experienced by the senses and empirically verified by the scientific method. This quote could practically be the Genesis 1:1 of the New Atheism.

1. The Dawkins Sledgehammer

Now, the champion of the New Atheism is undoubtedly the outspoken evolutionary biologist Richard Dawkins, who would depart from his usual fields of ethology and biology in 2006 to launch perhaps one of the most sophisticated modern attacks against theism, *The God Delusion*. His goal? To reduce the existence of a supernatural Creator to an "almost certain" impossibility. In order to achieve this, Dawkins uses what Douglas Groothuis calls the "sledgehammer rhetoric," a literary technique in which one presents their case against an opponent in the strongest possible language in order to belittle the opponent as having absolutely nothing but irrationality to offer.[9] This is especially seen in the fourth chapter of the book, "Why There Almost Certainly is no God," a classic example of New Atheist scientism. Dawkins's argument from improbability, which he calls "The Ultimate Boeing 747 Gambit," is

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[3] David Hume, *Inquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, ed. Charles W. Hendel (New York: Liberal Arts, 1955), 173.

[4] John Passmore, "Logical Positivism," in *The Encyclopedia of Philosophy, Vol. V*, ed. Paul Edwards (New York: MacMillan, 1967), 56.

[5] Oswald Hanfling, "Logical Positivism," in *Routledge History of Philosophy, Vol. IX: Philosophy of Science, Logic, and Mathematics in the Twentieth Century*, ed. S. G. Shankar (London: Routledge, 2003), 194.

[6] Rustum Roy, "Scientism and Technology as Religions," *Zygon* 40 (2004): 836.

[7] Robert C. Newman, "Scientific Problems for Scientism," *Presb* 21 (1995): 73.

[8] Carl Sagan, *Cosmos* (New York: Random House, 1980), 4.

[9] Douglas Groothuis, "The God Delusion," *Christian Research Journal* 30.6 (2007): 1.

the major focus of this chapter, as well as the central argument of *The God Delusion*—considered to be his most comprehensive argument against theism.

In terms of structure, Dawkins has divided "The Ultimate Boeing 747 Gambit" into three sections.

1. An argument from complexity, that the designer must be more improbable than the design;
2. An argument against and refutation of the indolent "god of the gaps" reasoning;
3. An argument using the Anthropic Principle against the "divine knob-twiddler argument."

The overarching problem of the chapter, however, is that Dawkins's sledgehammer widely misses its target. It can be compared to a football player who believes to have successfully kicked a goal, except that it was not the right goal—it was a different goal, in a different stadium, on a different continent. To what can we attribute such inaccuracy?

The primary purpose of this paper is to analyze and expose the absurdity of New Atheist scientism by means of a critical response to Dawkins's three main arguments mentioned above. In doing this, I will argue that Dawkins's inaccuracy is fundamentally theological, stemming from his failure to understand the God that he so adamantly seeks to prove the non-existence of. That is, what Dawkins calls "the God Hypothesis" is not the God that Christians worship.

2. The Non-Transcendent "God" of Richard Dawkins

Dawkins defines the God Hypothesis in general terms: "There exists a superhuman, supernatural intelligence who deliberately designed and created the universe and everything in it, including us."[10] Remember, according to the naturalistic materialism of the New Atheists, nothing exists outside of the material universe. Thus, Dawkins argues that any creative intelligence that is sufficiently complex to be able to design anything can only exist as the end product of an extended, gradual process of Darwinian evolution.[11] The underlying assumption of this argument is Darwin's most fundamental premise, one on which his entire theory ultimately rises or falls, that "simple forms of life … gave rise to those more complex."[12]

Dawkins recognizes that such a theory is counterintuitive, contradicting "one of the oldest ideas we have"—that a lesser thing must have been made by a greater. Commenting on this, fellow New Atheist Daniel Dennett points out, "You'll never see a horse shoe making a blacksmith."[13] This, according to Dawkins, is what makes Darwin's system of natural selection so revolutionary and consciousness-raising. With such a mechanistic explanation, Dawkins believes that the mysteries of the universe can be solved without requiring a supernatural Being or divine Mind—effectively rendering the God Hypothesis "unnecessary."[14]

A brief pause is necessary here, for although this is arguably entirely false, the *necessity* of the God Hypothesis has no impact on whether or not it is *true*. The converted Christian recognizes that they

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[10] Richard Dawkins, *The God Delusion* (London: Bantam, 2006), 31.

[11] Ibid.

[12] Peter Haugen, *Biology: Decade by Decade* (New York: Infobase, 2007), 58.

[13] Cited by Dawkins, *The God Delusion*, 117.

[14] Ibid., 46.

did not arrive at the knowledge of God by concluding that theism is the best explanation of empirical data. Rather, we testify that this knowledge has been granted to us by God himself through his Gospel, which is the power of God unto salvation (Rom 1:16). Now, undoubtedly, Dawkins would scoff at such a notion, considering it to be "self-indulgent, thought-denying skyhookery."[15] However, this appeal to a revelational epistemology only becomes problematic when a strict materialistic epistemology is assumed. As John B. Howell notes, "Such an assumption creates a necessary and exclusive connection between explanatory power and truth which religious believers should not allow to go unquestioned."[16] God *is* explanatorily powerful, but this does not determine the *truth* of Christian belief. Rather, it serves to confirm the *rationality* of Christian belief, which is acquired through means that Dawkins fundamentally rejects. That the New Atheists would deem the Gospel of Jesus Christ "self-indulgent, thought-denying skyhookery," however, should not surprise any Christian. As the apostle Paul writes, "For the word of the cross is *folly* to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved, it is the power of God," (1 Cor 1:18).

Returning to his argument, the problem that Dawkins takes on is the need to explain the statistical improbability of life in this universe. It was Fred Hoyle, an English astronomer, who came up with the "Boeing 747" illustration. Upon his conclusion that the probability of cellular life evolving on earth is approximately one-in-$10^{40,000}$, he wrote, "The chance that higher life forms might have emerged in this way is comparable to the chance that a tornado sweeping through a junkyard might assemble a Boeing 747 from the materials therein."[17] Dawkins, adapting this illustration to his own purposes, argues that a designer must necessarily be more complex and improbable than the thing designed. The God Hypothesis, then, would not solve the problem of statistical improbability, for it would immediately raise questions regarding the improbability of the designer. He writes,

> Seen clearly, intelligent design will turn out to be a redoubling of the problem. Once again, this is because the designer himself immediately raises the bigger problem of his own origin. An entity capable of intelligently designing something as improbable as a Dutchman's Pipe (or a universe) would have to be even more improbable than a Dutchman's Pipe. Far from terminating the vicious regress, God aggravates it with a vengeance.[18]

Thus, "God is the Ultimate Boeing 747."[19] This, however, is a clear case of deficient theology. For Dawkins, God must be some sort of natural entity whose existence requires an explanation, but this is not the same God that the Christian proclaims as the Creator of the heavens and the earth. In his review of *The God Delusion*, Thomas Nagel recognizes this as a category error.

> But God, whatever he may be, is not a complex physical inhabitant of the natural world. The explanation of his existence as a [series] of atoms is not a possibility for which we must find an alternative, because that is not what anybody means by God. If the God

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[15] Ibid., 155.

[16] John B. Howell, "Should We Fear That We Are Deluded?" *SwJT* 54 (2011): 34.

[17] Fred Hoyle, *The Intelligent Universe* (Austin: Holt Rinehart, 1983), 17.

[18] Dawkins, *The God Delusion*, 120.

[19] Ibid., 114.

Hypothesis makes sense at all, it offers a different kind of explanation from those of physical science.[20]

Dawkins's rejection of transcendence, as well as any epistemology other than his scientism, should reveal to the reader that he is no theologian or philosopher. If the "Dawkins Sledgehammer" was intended to take a swing at the transcendent God of the biblical witness, it has not even come close to hitting its target. Perhaps Dawkins is the victim of a "god delusion" of his own.

3. The "God of the Gaps" Apologetic

Something that appears to really grind the proverbial gears of Richard Dawkins is when a gap in scientific knowledge is used "by default" as evidence for God's existence. Satirically putting on the voice of a theist, Dawkins illustrates his version of the thought process behind this reasoning.

> If you don't understand how something works, never mind; just give up and say God did it. You don't know how the nerve impulse works? Good! You don't understand how memories are laid down in the brain? Excellent! Is photosynthesis a bafflingly complex process? Wonderful! Please don't go to work on the problem, just give up, and appeal to God. Dear scientist, don't work on your mysteries. Bring us your mysteries, for we can use them. Don't squander precious ignorance by researching it away. We need those glorious gaps as a last refuge for God.[21]

Now, most Christians do not espouse this "god of the gaps" reasoning. Historically, however, it has been seen particularly in ancient cultures, where something like a week-long heatwave would be attributed to the vengeful wrath of some solar deity (such as Ra, the ancient Egyptian sun god). The issue with this *methodology* (if we could so call it) is that, as science advances, the gaps shrink.

1. If a gap in scientific understanding is found, it is attributed to the work of a deity;
2. Over time, science may discover a naturalistic explanation that fills the gap;
3. As a result, the necessity of the deity is reduced, and possibly even eliminated.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer, a German Lutheran theologian, expressed the shortcomings of this reasoning in one of his letters written while he was imprisoned for his involvement in an elaborate plot to assassinate Adolf Hitler (irrelevant to the present argument, but an admirable reason to be imprisoned).

> It has again brought home to me quite clearly how wrong it is to use God as a stop-gap for the incompleteness of our knowledge. If in fact the frontiers of knowledge are being pushed further and further back—and that is bound to be the case—then God is being pushed back with them, and is therefore continually in retreat. We are to find God in what we know, not in what we don't know.[22]

Although far from the majority, there are certainly proponents of the "god of the gaps" reasoning out there, in which case, it can be conceded that Dawkins's frustration toward it is somewhat merited. From a scientific perspective, the "god of the gaps" is lazy and ignorant thinking that inhibits scientific

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[20] Thomas Nagel, "The Fear of Religion," *The New Republic*, 23 October 2006, 26.

[21] Dawkins, *The God Delusion*, 132.

[22] Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Letters and Papers from Prison* (New York: Macmillan, 1979), 311.

progress. From a Christian perspective, on the other hand, it is simply a departure from the God of Scripture. The Bible bears witness to a rational, logical, and orderly Creator. In a universe governed by such a God, a rational, logical cosmos operating under orderly natural law is to be expected.[23] The fact that God designs and causes an event or phenomena is not contingent upon the inability of science to explain it. Even when there is an empirically verifiable naturalistic explanation, it does not eliminate God as the cause.

The problem for Dawkins, however, is the already mentioned issues raised by attributing the cause of the universe to God. Rather than solving the improbability problem, the explanation of a supernatural designer does not actually explain anything at all because, according to Dawkins, we are left without an explanation for that designer himself—as fellow New Atheist Sam Harris has written, "The notion of a Creator poses an immediate problem of an infinite regress."[24]

Here, the New Atheists fail what Peter Lipton calls the *why-regress test*. He writes, "Whatever answer someone gives to a why-question, it is almost always possible sensibly to ask why the explanation itself is so. Thus, there is a potential regress of explanations."[25] In other words, if an explanation is required for an explanation, it necessarily leads to an infinite regress—X^1 is explained by X^2, which is explained by X^3, which is explained by X^4, and so on to infinity.

Now, Dawkins asserts that natural selection is the best way to explain the complexity of life as we know it—a method known as "inference to the best explanation," where the best of a list of candidate explanations is probably the correct one.[26] However, Dawkins is inconsistent in his application of this principle. According to most philosophers of science, the best explanation does not itself require an explanation.[27] That is, in order to recognize that X^2 is the best explanation for X^1, X^2 does not itself require an explanation. Thus, if God's existence requires an explanation (the best explanation in the theist's mind), the same must be true for the theory of natural selection.

4. The Anthropic Principle: Who Created Natural Selection?

It appears that Dawkins recognizes a gap exists between natural selection and the origin of life. He notes that, "The root of evolution in non-biological chemistry somehow seems to present a bigger gap than any particular transition during subsequent evolution."[28] He also correctly recognizes that the universe appears to have been finely tuned for life to actually exist—"Physicists have calculated that, if the laws and constants of physics had been even slightly different, the universe would have developed in such a way that life would have been impossible."[29] Now, the Christian attributes this complexity to the

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[23] Rodney Stark, *For the Glory of God: How Monotheism Led to Reformations, Science, Witch-Hunts, and the End of Slavery* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003), 147.

[24] Sam Harris, *Letter to a Christian Nation* (London: Bantam, 2007), 73.

[25] Peter Lipton, "What Good is an Explanation," in *Explanation: Theoretical Approaches and Applications*, ed. Giora Hon (Haifa, Israel: University of Haifa, 2001), 44.

[26] Alexander R. Pruss, "The Leibnizian Cosmological Argument," in *The Blackwell Companion to Natural Theology*, ed. William L. Craig and J. P. Moreland (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2012), 30.

[27] J. L. Pollock, *Contemporary Theories of Knowledge* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 1999), 41.

[28] Dawkins, *The God Delusion*, 135.

[29] Ibid., 141.

intelligent design of a transcendent *intelligent* Being. As it is written in the Psalms, "The heavens declare the glory of God, and the sky above proclaims his handiwork" (Ps 19:1).

As an alternative to intelligent design, Dawkins proposes the Anthropic Principle, which states that, despite the statistical improbability of a universe with the precise conditions for life and subsequent natural selection to occur, it *must* exist. Why? Because "here we are thinking about it."[30]

1. If a life-permitting universe is impossible, observance of it is necessarily impossible.
2. Observance of this life-permitting universe is possible.
3. Therefore, this life-permitting universe is necessarily possible.

If you think it seems like he is dancing around the issue, you are not the only one—but we will allow it for now. In an effort to explain the improbability of an origin of life that brings forth the necessary preconditions for natural selection to begin to function, Dawkins suggests the following.

1. There are a billion billion available planets in the universe (a conservative estimate).
2. Suppose life was so improbable that it occurred on only one in a billion planets.
3. Although absurdly improbable, life will still have occurred on a billion planets.
4. According to the Anthropic Principle, the earth must be one of those billion.[31]

Not only does this not explain the origin of life at all, but it fails to do any damage to the theory of intelligent design. It makes me wonder how Dawkins would explain the origin of a slice of strawberry shortcake. "This cake must exist, because here I am holding it in my hands right now."

Thus, the problem of the improbability of the origin of life remains, and natural selection cannot be the answer.[32] As he himself writes, "The origin of life was the chemical event, or series of events, whereby the vital conditions for natural selection first came about."[33] In other words, natural selection is contingent, and therefore, if it is true, it must have a first cause.

In search for this first cause, Dawkins departs from his own scientism and naturalistic materialism and resorts to that which he fundamentally rejects—metaphysical speculation. Now, as of early 2018, life on the earth is the only known existence of life in the universe, and according to NASA, there is no observable evidence of any other planetary opportunity for life to exist.[34] Dawkins, however, insists that this is a reasonable conclusion, appealing to something that may surprise you.

> We can deal with the unique origin of life by postulating a very large number of planetary opportunities. Once that initial stroke of *luck* has been granted—and the Anthropic Principle most decisively grants it to us—natural selection takes over…. It needs some *luck* to get started, and the billions of planets Anthropic Principle grants it that *luck*.[35]

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[30] Ibid., 136.

[31] Ibid., 137–38.

[32] Nagel, *The Fear of Religion*, 28.

[33] Dawkins, *The God Delusion*, 137.

[34] Neil deGrasse Tyson, "The Search for Life in the Universe," *NASA Astrobiology*, 30 June 2003, https://tinyurl.com/zoeajr7.

[35] Dawkins, *The God Delusion*, 140–41, emphasis added.

I must highlight that just prior to this appeal to *luck*, Dawkins boldly claims to be filling the origin of life gap with "statistically informed science."[36] If that's not self-contradictory enough, let me also highlight that Dawkins is here claiming that natural selection *needs* chance in order to begin its operation, when earlier in this chapter, he emphatically states that natural selection is the *alternative* to chance! Arguing against a book published by the Watch Tower Society, the publishing arm of the Jehovah's Witnesses (perhaps a deliberate decision to target a theologically weak foe), he writes, "The authors omit all mention of the real alternative [to chance], natural selection, either because they genuinely don't understand it or because they don't want to."[37] Again, he writes, "Intelligent design is not the proper alternative to chance. Natural selection is not only a parsimonious, plausible, and elegant solution, it is the only workable alternative to chance that has ever been suggested."[38] All this just prior to conceding that natural selection depends on chance. In this case, the great Richard Dawkins is guilty of being inconsistent and self-contradictory, either because he genuinely doesn't understand his own argument, or because he doesn't want to.

5. One Giant Metaphysical Leap for Richard Dawkins

In a final attempt to account for the apparent fine tuning of the universe, Dawkins proposes the metaphysical theory of the "multiverse"—the idea that there are an infinite number of universes, each with different sets of physical laws and constants. In the context of this, the existence of at least one life-permitting universe is a certainty.[39] According to the Anthropic Principle, humanity must be in one of these universes that allow for life to occur and eventually evolve under the operation of natural selection. It is tempting to make a point here that perhaps more faith is required to believe in the multiverse than in an intelligent Creator, but Dawkins anticipates this.

> The key difference between the genuinely extravagant God hypothesis and the apparently extravagant multiverse hypothesis is one of statistical improbability. The multiverse, for all that it is extravagant, is simple. God, or any intelligent, decision taking, calculating agent, would have to be highly improbable in the very same statistical sense as the entities he is supposed to explain.[40]

It must first be noted that the multiverse theory itself does not rule out an intelligent Creator. Robin Collins, for example, considers the multiverse as evidence of God's "infinite creativity and ingenuity."[41] Theoretically speaking, God is able to create as many unique universes as he pleases. For what purpose, we can only speculate. John Turl makes an eschatological suggestion, noting that, even though inaccessible in the present age, these infinite number of universes that make up the multiverse might

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[36] Ibid., 139.

[37] Ibid., 120.

[38] Ibid.

[39] Graham Gould, "God, the Multiverse, and Everything: Modern Cosmology and the Argument from Design," *JTS* 57 (2006): 406.

[40] Dawkins, *The God Delusion*, 147.

[41] Robin Collins, "The Multiverse Hypothesis: A Theistic Perspective," in *Universe or Multiverse?*, ed. Bernard Carr (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 461.

become accessible and useful when all things are made new (Rev 21:5).[42] Speculation aside, however, it can be reasonably demonstrated that the "multiverse *or* God" is a false dichotomy. One does not necessarily cancel out the other.

A second issue here is, once again, Dawkins's departure from his own naturalistic materialism. The New Atheists speak with deceptive eloquence on the subject, blurring the line between *scientific* speculation and *pure* speculation, but the multiverse theory is well beyond observational science. Professor John Polkinghorne, a renowned theoretical physicist, writes, "Let us recognize these speculations [regarding the multiverse] for what they are. They are not physics, but in the strictest sense, metaphysics. There is no purely scientific reason to believe in an ensemble of universes."[43] As a hypothesis, the multiverse is not testable or falsifiable, for it is not able to be subject to repeatable experimentation and observation. Therefore, the multiverse should be treated only as a metaphysical theory that, despite masquerading as "science," is not actually a scientific hypothesis.

6. Dawkins's Violation of Naturalistic Materialism

Considering the overall inconsistency of *The God Delusion*, I thought a final section dedicated to Dawkins's unfaithfulness to his own worldview would be appropriate. As we have seen, his main arguments from improbability are built on a naturalistic perversion of God, reducing him to a *natural entity* confined to the physical, observable universe. Of course, the metaphysical assumption that there is no substance outside of matter is nothing new (just ask Alfred J. Ayer). However, Dawkins gives no argument for this assumption. Rather, he presents naturalistic materialism as an obvious, undeniable truth that is devastating to the Christian worldview. To accept this assumption as true is certainly to forfeit the argument, for Christ himself said, "God is spirit" (John 4:24), but for what reason should the Christian theist accept this naturalistic, materialistic view of reality?

I would first assert that Dawkins himself, despite his appeals to the contrary, frequently contradicts his own metaphysical assumptions. To provide an exhaustive list of each time he does this in his writing should not be something that anyone has the time to do (I dare someone to try), but for the purposes of this paper, I will provide a few examples from *The God Delusion*.

6.1. Logical Absolutes

On numerous occasions, Dawkins makes implicit appeals to the laws of logic. These laws are abstract by nature—that is, they are independent of time, space, and the physical properties of the universe. Thus, if Dawkins's naturalistic materialism is correct, they cannot exist. Yet, he writes,

> And some scientists and other intellectuals are convinced … that the question of God's existence belongs in the forever inaccessible PAP (Permanent Agnosticism in Principle) category. From this … they often make the *illogical deduction* that the hypothesis of God's existence, and the hypothesis of his non-existence, have exactly equal probability of being right. The view that I shall defend is very different—agnosticism about the

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[42] John Turl, "Do Many Worlds Make Light Work?" *Science & Christian Belief* 24 (2012): 63.

[43] Cited by John C. Lennox, *God's Undertaker: Has Science Buried God?* (Oxford: Lion Hudson, 2007), 73.

existence of God belongs firmly in the temporary or TAP (Temporary Agnosticism in Principle) category. Either he exists, or he doesn't.[44]

In this short section, under the subheading "The Poverty of Agnosticism," Dawkins has displayed awareness of and belief in all three of the laws of logic. He identifies the two hypotheses regarding the existence of God as distinct theories (law of identity); he acknowledges that it would be a contradiction to claim that God simultaneously does and does not exist (law of non-contradiction); and he explicitly states that only one of the contradictory hypotheses can be true (law of excluded middle).[45]

The problem, of course, is that Dawkins cannot account for the existence of these laws without betraying his epistemological framework. He cannot see, hear, feel, smell, or taste them, and yet he operates under the assumption that they exist, violating his materialistic commitment to the belief that there is no substance outside of physical matter and energy. Ironically, he condemns those agnostic scientists and intellectuals for being "illogical." Is it not illogical to deem something "illogical" when your worldview is unable to provide the necessary preconditions for the existence of the laws of logic? Is he not the one guilty of being illogical?

6.2. The Uniformity of Nature

A second self-contradiction that permeates through the entire book is Dawkins's insistence on the scientific method as the only way to obtain certainty in knowledge. If a question does not have a scientific answer, it is not a meaningful question. Concerning theological enquiry, he writes,

> Did Jesus have a human father, or was his mother a virgin at the time of his birth? … This is still a strictly scientific question with a definite answer in principle—yes or no…. There is an answer to every such question … and it is a strictly scientific answer. The methods we should use to settle the matter, in the unlikely event that relevant evidence ever became available, would be purely and entirely scientific methods.[46]

How does insisting on the scientific method contradict scientism? To put it simply, there are elements of the scientific method that are based on certain presuppositions that are not, and cannot be, justified by the scientific method. As an example, we will consider the "uniformity of nature."

It was Charlie D. Broad who famously said, "Induction is the glory of science and the scandal of philosophy."[47] This was his response to the "Problem of Induction," an issue most closely associated with David Hume. The principle of induction is fundamentally based on the uniformity of nature—one is able to draw certain conclusions about the future by inference to the uniformities observed in the past. The issue, of course, is accounting for such uniformity. How can one justify their belief that the future will indeed be like the past? Hume writes,

> When it is asked, "What is the nature of all our reasonings concerning matter of fact?" The proper answer seems to be that they were founded on the relation of cause

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[44] Dawkins, *The God Delusion*, 48.

[45] George J. Hayward, *Principles of Logic* (London: Paternoster, 1916), 67–68.

[46] Dawkins, *The God Delusion*, 59.

[47] Merrilee H. Salmon, *Introduction to the Philosophy of Science* (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1999), 58.

and effect. When again it is asked, "What is the foundation of all our reasonings and conclusions concerning that relation?" It may be replied in one word, "Experience."[48]

The conclusion here is that one can know that the future will be like the past because it has always been that way. That is, the sun will certainly rise tomorrow morning because it was observed to have risen on every previous morning. As he continues, however, Hume rejects this conclusion.

> But if we still carry on, and ask, "What is the foundation of all conclusions from experience?" This implies a new question, which may be of more difficult solution…. There is required a medium which may enable the mind to draw such an inference, if indeed it be drawn by reasoning and argument. What that medium is, I must confess, passes my comprehension; and it is incumbent on those to produce it, who assert that it really exists, and is the origin of all our conclusions concerning matter of fact.[49]

Essentially, Hume's problem is that one must justify their belief in the principle of induction *without appealing to the principle of induction*. As with the laws of logic, however, the naturalistic materialist is unable to provide a rational justification for nature's uniformity, and again, can only assume it to be true. Just how devastating this is to the New Atheism cannot be understated, for while all of general human experience indeed *assumes* the uniformity of nature, the scientific method *depends on* the uniformity of nature. As renowned atheistic philosopher Bertrand Russell writes,

> The general principles of science, such as the belief in the reign of law, and the belief that every event must have a cause, are as completely dependent upon the inductive principle as are the beliefs of daily life. All such general principles are believed because mankind has found innumerable instances of their truth and no instances of their falsehood. But this affords no evidence for their truth in the future, unless the inductive principle is assumed. Thus, all knowledge … is based upon a belief which experience can neither confirm nor confute, yet which, at least in its more concrete applications, appears to be as firmly rooted in us as many of the facts of experience.[50]

Consequently, the scientific commitment to the uniformity of nature on the part of the atheist is not as much scientific as it is an intrinsically religious-type faith. Can a Christian account for the uniformity of nature? Absolutely! As the author to the Hebrews writes, the eternal Son of God is φέρων the universe by the word of his power (Heb 1:3)—the present active participle implying present, continuous action. That is, the universe is currently, at this very moment, being upheld, sustained, and carried along to its appointed end by the very same orderly God who has fixed the order of the heavens and set the course of all things from eternity past (Isa 46:10; Jer 31:35). In a universe governed by such a God, uniformity of nature is to be expected, and as a result of this expectation, the scientific method and the scientific enterprise are both possible and valuable.

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[48] Hume, *Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, 18.

[49] Ibid., 19–20.

[50] Bertrand Russell, *The Basic Writings of Bertrand Russell*, ed. R. E. Egner (London: Routledge, 2009), 126.

6.3. Moral Absolutes

Finally, but certainly not exhaustively, some attention must be given to the issue of morality, without which, a critique of Richard Dawkins and the New Atheism would be incomplete. Why do I say that? When it comes to morality, Dawkins is absolutely perplexing (to say the least). In his work *River Out of Eden*, Dawkins provides an honest atheistic answer to the "problem of evil."

> In a universe of blind physical forces and genetic replication, some people are going to get hurt, other people are going to get lucky, and you won't find any rhyme or reason in it, nor any justice. The universe we observe has precisely the properties we should expect if there is no design, no purpose, no evil, and no good, *nothing but blind, pitiless indifference*.[51]

I call this an "honest answer" because, if the naturalistic materialist worldview is assumed, this is the inescapable conclusion—moral nihilism, the belief that moral values do not exist.[52] In the words of the great novelist Fyodor Dostoyevsky, if God does not exist, "everything is permitted."[53]

The problem is that, despite his crystal-clear rejection of moral values, *The God Delusion* is absolutely congested with moral indignation. This is perhaps most obviously displayed in the seventh chapter, "The 'Good' Book and the Changing Moral Zeitgeist," in which Dawkins systematically traverses the Bible in search of "the sins of Scripture." Take note of the adjectives he uses for the following examples. Are they consistent with his "nothing but blind, pitiless indifference" view of morality?

1. The Genesis account of the Great Flood is "appalling."[54]
2. Abraham bringing Isaac as an offering to God is a "disgraceful story … of child abuse."[55]
3. God's punishment of idolaters is due to his "maniacal jealously against alternative gods."[56]
4. The conquest of Jericho is "morally indistinguishable from Hitler's invasion of Poland."[57]
5. Execution for sabbath-breaking is the Law of "an evil monster."[58]
6. The foreordination of Judas's betrayal of Jesus is "unfair."[59]
7. The doctrine of the Atonement is "vicious, sadomasochistic, and repellent."[60]

Much can be said, and indeed has already been said, regarding Dawkins's exegetical failures in this chapter. Theologian Owen C. Thomas, for example, writes that "his understanding of Christianity is massively uninformed and amounts to a caricature consisting of its most fundamentalist and obscurantist

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[51] Richard Dawkins, *River Out of Eden: A Darwinian View of Life* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1995), 132–33, emphasis added.

[52] Steven Law, "Humanism," in *The Oxford Handbook of Atheism*, ed. Stephen Bullivant and Michael Ruse (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 270.

[53] Fyodor Dostoyevsky, *The Brothers Karamazov*, repr. ed. (New York: Random House, 2003), 351.

[54] Dawkins, *The God Delusion*, 238.

[55] Ibid., 242.

[56] Ibid., 246.

[57] Ibid., 247.

[58] Ibid., 248.

[59] Ibid., 252.

[60] Ibid., 253.

forms."[61] For the purposes of this paper, however, my goal is not to provide sound biblical exegesis to counter Dawkins's accusations. Rather, I seek to show that, if we were to assume Dawkins's worldview of "blind, pitiless indifference," he has no reason and no authority to support his moral indignation—unless, of course, he borrows from the Christian worldview.

To ensure clarity, let me briefly state that the argument is not that the atheist cannot formulate a system of ethics without reference to God, nor is it that the atheist cannot recognize objective moral values. The argument, as stated by Peter S. Williams, is that, "although the non-theist can do the right thing because they know what the objectively right thing to do is, their worldview can't cogently provide an adequate ontological account of the objective moral values they know and obey."[62]

Throughout the rest of this seventh chapter, Dawkins promotes the common modern-day idea of ethical relativism, or what he calls the "changing moral Zeitgeist," where morality is defined as subjective judgments that are contingent and revisable according to the social conscience of any given historical period. In one of the most ironic statements of the entire book, Dawkins writes, "It is a commonplace that good historians don't judge statements from past times by the standards of their own."[63] Considering he has just done this, I would suppose that Dawkins has failed his own test here—but something must be said about the fact that, despite his insistence on a changing moral Zeitgeist, Dawkins does seem to make objective statements about morality. That is, there are certain moral values that he would consider to be valid and binding, regardless of whether people agree with him or not. Using the Holocaust as an example, William Lane Craig writes,

> To say, for example, that the Holocaust was objectively wrong is to say that it was wrong even though the Nazis who carried it out thought that it was right, and that it would still have been wrong even if the Nazis had won World War II and succeeded in exterminating or brain-washing everyone who disagreed with them.[64]

Would Dawkins agree that the Holocaust was *objectively* wrong? Apparently so, for he emphatically deems Hitler a "spectacularly evil" man, as the majority of the world would (hopefully) agree.[65]

If we accept Dawkins's metaphysical assumptions, however, then how can anyone deem anything to be spectacularly evil? What even *is* evil? Here, Dawkins blatantly shows that his moral outcries are inconsistent with the worldview on which he stands, which views Hitler and the Holocaust, not as "spectacularly evil," but as "blind, pitiless indifference." As for the many examples given from the Scriptures (with no regard for proper exegesis), Dawkins's denial of objective moral value renders his moral indignation against Christianity (and religion in general), a characteristic of all the New Atheists, both self-contradictory in principle and toothless in practice.[66]

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[61] Owen C. Thomas, "The Atheist Surge: Faith in Science, Secularism, and Atheism," *Theology and Science* 8.2 (2010): 196.

[62] Peter S. Williams, *C. S. Lewis vs. the New Atheists* (London: Paternoster, 2013), 151.

[63] Dawkins, *The God Delusion*, 266.

[64] William L. Craig, *God? A Debate Between a Christian and an Atheist* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 17.

[65] Dawkins, *The God Delusion*, 272.

[66] Williams, *C. S. Lewis vs. the New Atheists*, 152.

7. Conclusion: Twelve Years Later

Now, why add to the already impressive list of critiques against *The God Delusion* twelve years after it was originally published? Set to premier at the 2018 Chorlton Arts Festival, *The God Delusion* has been adapted into a large-scale stage production. Commenting on this, Dawkins said, "I'm thrilled to see *The God Delusion* come to life on stage for the first time and for the message of the book to be given a new lease of life in this exciting way." This paper can thus be considered an anticipatory critique of the book for the new wave of readers it will garner as a result of this production.

As has been discussed, *The God Delusion* fails to cause any real damage to the Christian worldview; attacking a deity that is not the transcendent God that the Christian worships. Dawkins's naturalistic materialism is repeatedly betrayed by his own violations of it, as he is forced to resort to metaphysical speculation to account for the origin of life, as well as borrowing from the theistic worldview on numerous occasions to justify what naturalistic materialism simply cannot account for. What we see in *The God Delusion* is a militant New Atheist, having no "sledgehammer" of his own, needing to borrow one from the rival he seeks to destroy. In many ways, the New Atheism is similar to logical positivism— it is as dead as an epistemological framework ever becomes. Unlike logical positivism, however, the New Atheism just doesn't have the courtesy to lay down.

Book Reviews

— OLD TESTAMENT —

— NEW TESTAMENT —

— HISTORY AND HISTORICAL THEOLOGY —

— SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY AND BIOETHICS —

## — ETHICS AND PASTORALIA —

— MISSION AND CULTURE —

— OLD TESTAMENT —

John Currid and David Chapman, eds. *ESV Archaeology Study Bible.* Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2018. xxii + 2048 pp. £38.38/$49.99.

The *ESV Archaeology Study Bible* opens with an introduction emphasizing the goal of understanding the context of the Bible, in addition to expressing the "earthiness" of the Bible—that it is "rooted in space and time" (p. vii). However, the viewpoint that archaeology demonstrates the historical reliability of the Bible, often found in similar publications, was not included in the introduction nor is it an idea overtly stated throughout the volume. This viewpoint may have been omitted so that readers would draw their own conclusions on this topic. Following the introduction, biographical sketches of the contributors verify the commitment to scholarship for the project and show that those involved represent a wide range of expertise and experience.

The main text of the *ESV Archaeology Study Bible* is divided into Old Testament and New Testament sections, each of which begins with short background introductory material including "daily life" and a timeline. Features also include notes related to archaeology, geography, and history, photos, maps, charts, a glossary, and diagrams, book introductions, and 15 articles specifically written for the project (p. viii). Within the OT and NT, each book or collection of books, such as the Pentateuch or the Synoptic Gospels, is addressed by a particular scholar based on individual expertise. The editors frequently display a neutral stance and avoid disputes, or instead choose to balance both sides on issues of academic debate. Some of these include the date of the Exodus and Conquest, the authorship of several books, the time period of Job, or the composition year of Revelation. In contrast, the articles and commentary by the individual scholars generally take definitive positions, even if these are not blatantly stated. For example, the Exodus and Conquest are effectively placed in the "late date" 13th century BC category derived from a figurative numerical interpretation, while the introduction and notes for Revelation sympathetically suggest AD 69 as the date for its composition (pp. 85, 98, 283, 285, 301, 308, 1883, 1887, 1905–06). Consequently, those who prefer a historical 15th century BC Exodus and Conquest model might be disappointed with the sections addressing these periods. The articles and notes promote a 13th century BC position, and other than general context no archaeological evidence is presented which indicates that the Exodus and Conquest were historical events substantiated by archaeology. Rather, the commentary could be understood as the current archaeological finds and interpretation either contribute no definitive answers to these periods, or even disagree with a literal historical reading of the text of the Bible. Further, in the cases of the disputed sites of Jericho and Ai, positions of critical scholarship or etiological myth on these sites seem to be suggested as possibilities (pp. 292–95).

The notes and articles for the different book sections (Genesis–Deuteronomy, Joshua–Ruth, 1 Samuel–2 Chronicles, etc.) vary in depth of information, significance to the biblical text, and awareness of new discoveries. Study notes under the main text, throughout the study Bible, are copious and contain many useful nuggets of background information. However, major articles are few and explanations of the direct relevance of archaeology to the historical reliability of the text are scarce. There are also many omissions of important discoveries such as the Ebla Creation Hymn, details of the Atra-Hasis flood
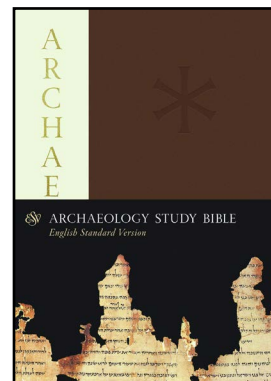
story, discussion of Sodom site candidates, Dialogue Between a Man and His God, Papyrus Brooklyn (except in reference to the "over the house" title of Joseph), Admonitions of an Egyptian Sage, the nomads of Yahweh inscriptions (a cursory reference but incorrectly interpreted), Exodus Pharaoh candidates, excavations at Jericho relating to Joshua and Judges, the Gath/Goliath ostracon, discovery of David's palace, Khirbet Qeiyafa and its ostracon, the Temple Mount Sifting Project, Jerusalem temple references such as the Jehoash tablet or Arad ostracon, inscriptions and bullae attesting to numerous kings and officials in Isaiah, the Nebo Sarsekim tablet, the Nazareth Inscription, the Pergamon "unknown gods" altar, and many others. A few minor factual errors might also be noticed, such as the hanging gardens erroneously attributed to Nebuchadnezzar II instead of Sennacherib at Nineveh, a confusion of the number and content of the different Sergius Paulus inscriptions, and the incorrect attribution of the Patmos Vera inscription to the 4th century AD (pp. 1201, 1623–24, 1887).

Overall, the New Testament material is proportionally more extensive, as may be expected, but the New Testament articles and notes also draw more direct connections between text and archaeology. The Synoptic Gospels section is particularly strong, with substantial geographical, archaeological, historical, and cultural information, and very few significant content omissions. Some readers may object to the modern academic position stated in the introductions that Mark was the first Gospel written, which contradicts the claims of ancient sources, but in contrast to other major sections, very little in the Synoptics commentary will be disputed.

The price of the study Bible is economical, and the overall production quality is high. Many readers will surely appreciate the ESV translation along with the contextual notes. The articles near the end of the text are helpful and informative, but hopefully readers will not miss these due to their placement away from the main content. Page limitations are understandable, but extensive space was dedicated to several commentary and article sections with strained connections or tangential information far in time and location from the texts they are linked to. For example, article sections appear on the Egyptian Hymn to the Inundation with a photograph of nilometer and paragraph long study note (p. 88), "Branch" (p. 976), Azotus (p. 1611), Assos (p. 1646), Earthquakes (p. 1902), plus many instances of historical summaries of biblical text. At the same time, explanations of important locations or artifacts were often omitted or cursory. The sidebar informational sections could have been more numerous and more specific so that their contributions to the study Bible would be more significant, and many topics seem to have been chosen which related only to general context rather than specific attestation of events and people—perhaps as a result of attempting to avoid controversy. Yet, in an age of unprecedented information accessibility, generalized sources face difficult competition, and with so many other exhaustive or specialist books and articles available, the *ESV Archaeology Study Bible* fits only a particular niche.

Overall, the volume could have benefited from more photographs, additional details on major artifacts and sites, the inclusion of important content which was omitted, and a more thorough engagement of historical debates and issues. The only other recent comparable product, the slightly older *NIV Archaeology Study Bible*, is not rendered obsolete by this new publication, and the two might even be used in tandem by many readers wanting to consult an "archaeology study Bible."

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John Goldingay. _The First Testament: A New Translation_. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2018. xxi + 924 pp. $60.00.

The translation of the Hebrew and Aramaic text of the Old Testament is a tradition that reaches back over two thousand years. In the two centuries that led up to the birth of Christ, the Old Testament was being translated and retranslated into Greek as more and more of God's people were speaking Greek. The translation of the Old Testament into English has been a work in progress for approximately 600 years, beginning with men like John Wycliffe, William Tyndale, and Miles Coverdale, once again providing first-hand access to God's word for those people who could not read Hebrew. Goldingay's translation of the Old or "First" Testament continues this tradition, with his conviction that the Old Testament is "hugely significant for Christian faith" (p. vii). This translation is an adaptation of Goldingay's translation work in a series of commentaries entitled _The Old Testament for Everyone_ (Westminster John Know Press).
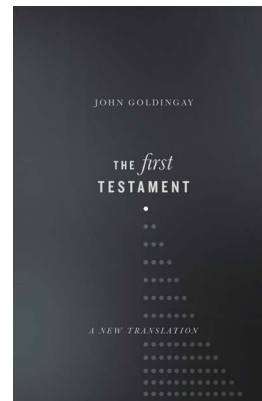
The book that includes this translation is over 900 pages in length, with a preface (pp. vii–ix), a brief introduction to the Old Testament (pp. xi–xiv), maps (pp. xv–xvii), single-page introductions before the translation of each individual book, and a helpful glossary located at the back of the volume. The layout and design are well done. There are no footnotes, but there are interpretive headings that appear throughout the translation and occasional maps where that information is significant for understanding the narrative.

In terms of audience, Goldingay "had in mind people who are familiar with some standard translations but might appreciate something _a bit different_" (p. vii, emphasis mine). When evaluating the translation of any ancient text, it is important to understand both the limits of a translated work and the principles guiding the translation itself. Every translation work, but especially translations of ancient texts into modern languages, will inevitably lose something in the translation process. When translating something like the Hebrew text of the Old Testament, it is not simply a matter of translating words from Hebrew to English. It also includes decisions regarding grammar and syntax, culture and worldview, all coming through the translator's own system of grammar, syntax, culture, and worldview. This is why every translation will represent, at least at some level, the translator's interpretation of that text. In other words, all translations are also interpretations, but especially those of a single translator. Goldingay wisely understands these limitations and expresses it well. "All translations are more or less accurate, but producing a faithful equivalent of any piece of writing in another language _is an impossible undertaking; all approaches involve compromise_. Translations thus have varying strengths and weaknesses according to the way they choose to prioritize the principles of translation" (p. vii, emphasis mine). Because of this, we will first consider the principles of translation employed by Goldingay. Then, we will review a sample of his translation work from Genesis 1–3 in light of those principles.

1. Principles of Translation

In the preface (pp. vii-ix), Goldingay identifies nine basic principles that guided his translation work. We will summarize and assess each in turn.

(1) As much as possible, this translation strives to translate word-for-word rather than sentence-for-sentence, at least to the degree that it is possible when translating Hebrew into English. There are

at least three important consequences related to this approach. First, the English translation might feel a bit awkward at times, in order to better preserve or display the look and feel of the original Hebrew. Second, the word-for-word principle makes it better suited for study and careful reading than for public reading. Third, gender specific language is preserved when the Hebrew text uses gender specific language. This first principle makes perfect sense in light of the fact that Goldingay desires to provide something "a bit different" to people already familiar with the Bible.

(2) The second stated principle of translation is to work with the "traditional Hebrew text rather than emending it" (p. vii). This is a commendable principle. Emendation of a text constitutes a further step in the interpretation of that text. In this translation, Goldingay lets the Hebrew text stand as it appears and works hard to make sense of that text, even if it remains slightly enigmatic in the final translation.

(3) This translation uses everyday English, employs contractions (e.g., "I'll" for "I will"), and avoids traditional or standard English translations for words like "salvation, holiness, eternity, covenant, justice and righteousness, where these translations don't correspond well to the Hebrew words and/or where the English words are misleading when used to translate Hebrew words that have different connotations" (p. viii). For example, in Genesis 9:9, the "covenant" (ESV/NIV) with Noah is rendered with the English word "pact." In Genesis 15:6, the "righteousness" credited to Abraham for his faith is rendered by Goldingay as "faithfulness." The use of everyday English and a relaxed style makes this translation approachable. The avoidance of traditional English translations for certain high profile words corresponds with the goal to provide something different for readers. These alternate translations represent the interpretive choice of the translator, and so readers will want to consider carefully the choices made and the theological implications of those choices.

(4) For poetry, this translation lays out the poetic lines (by subordination with indentation) in the way that Goldingay thinks the poetry works. This is a fine convention as long as readers understand that poetic lineation is a form of interpretation, and there may be more than one way to arrange or group poetic lines. Additionally, some of the poetry in the Hebrew Old Testament is already displayed in lines of text, and so it would be helpful to know when translations depart from the layout in the Hebrew manuscripts.

(5) This translation "tries to use the same English word to translate any one Hebrew word, so that one can see points of connection between texts" (p. viii). For example, there is a verb in Hebrew (עבד) that can mean "to work," "to serve," or "to worship" depending on the context in which it appears. We might "*work* the ground" or "*serve* the king" or "*worship* God." The precise translation of the verb depends on the nature of the verb's object. We don't want to "worship the ground!" The convention employed in this translation allows readers to track key words and themes that may be missed in more nuanced translations. The risk, however, is that the translation might feel a bit awkward or overly repetitive. The authors of the Hebrew Old Testament understood that their words had a range of meaning and used them with that range in mind. In this translation, readers will see the word, but they will need to work to understand the range of meaning in each particular context.

(6) In this translation, the personal name of God is rendered as "Yahweh" rather than replacing it with the titles "the Lord" or "God." This decision has a major impact on the translation, since God's personal name is the most frequently occurring name in the Old Testament, appearing 6,828 times! By way of comparison, the name "Israel" is a distant second with only 2,507 occurrences. This rendering of the divine name better highlights the personal connection its use was originally intended to signify.

In Exodus 3, we are instructed that God's name comes in the context of the promise of his presence, "I will be with you." In fact, his name is derived from that very expression. As such, the use of God's personal name in this translation does what it was intended to do. It provokes a more personal, intimate connection with the one who has revealed himself to us in the Old Testament.

(7) In this translation, certain proper names are followed by bracketed translations when their meaning may have been significant to the original audience. For example, the name Noah is followed by the bracketed rendering ['Settling Down'], and the name Adam is followed by ['Human Being']. Additionally, when there is a play on words in the Hebrew text that does not come across into English, this translation identifies them with brackets, "This one will be called Woman [*ishah*], because from a man [*ish*] this one was taken" (Gen 2:23). This is certainly an interesting and helpful convention for readers, especially for those who would use this translation as a study tool in conjunction with one or more of the other standard translations.

(8) This translation has endeavored to use more precise transliterations for Hebrew names. Goldingay has observed that the translation of the Old Testament into Greek and then into Latin left us with spellings like Moses for מֹשֶׁה, Jerusalem for יְרוּשָׁלַם, or Isaiah for יְשַׁעְיָהוּ. The goal of this convention is to allow readers to more closely approximate the original pronunciation of these names. In order to avoid any potential confusion, he sometimes adds the more familiar English translation in brackets, as in "Misrayim [Egypt]" or "Ya'aqob [Jacob]." Again, this convention will appeal to readers who would use this translation as a study tool in conjunction with one or more of the other standard translations.

(9) Finally, and related to the previous point, this translation preserves the variety of spelling differences that appear with some proper names, such as those for Hezekiah, whose name appears in three different forms: Hizqiyyahu, Hizqiyyah, and Yehizqiyyahu. This is similar to our modern day renderings for certain names in English such as Daniel, Dan, and Danny. In order to avoid any potential confusion, the standard English name is regularly supplied in brackets following the transliterated rendering.

2. Evaluating the Translation of Genesis 1–3

Having described and explained the principles of translation employed by Goldingay in his translation of the Old Testament, it will be helpful to selectively survey a small, but well-known portion of Scripture.

Genesis 1:1–2

> At the beginning of God's creating the heavens and the earth, when the earth was an empty void, with darkness over the face of the deep, and God's breath sweeping over the face of the water.

These first two verses represent a challenge for any translator. We will make three observations here. First, the rendering "At the beginning of God's creating" constitutes Goldingay's choice not to follow the traditional Hebrew text, but rather to follow an alternative rendering. A literal, more word-for-word translation (point 1 above) would be, "In a beginning, God created." For some reason, translators and translations stumble all over what is basic Hebrew in Genesis 1:1. While the interpretation may be a challenge, the translation is really very simple.

Second, "empty void" represents a translation of two nouns joined by the Hebrew word for "and," as in "formless and empty" (NIV) or "without form and void" (ESV). The translation of this Hebrew construction by an adjective followed by a noun is certainly legitimate. The difficulty is that the translation "empty void" misses the formlessness denoted by the first noun in the pairing, so a better translation would be something like "formless void." The significance of capturing the formless *and* empty nature of the description in Hebrew helps us understand the nature of the days that follow. Days one through three address the "formless" problem, and days four through six address the "empty problem."

Third, the rendering of "God's breath" for the more traditional "Spirit of God" diminishes what might be considered an explicit reference to the role of the Spirit of God in creation. This translation highlights the fact that every translation *is* an interpretation. Additionally, this same word for "Spirit, breath" appears in Gen 3:8 where it is rendered "breezy time." This seems to violate translation principle 5 above where the same English word should be used to translate any one Hebrew word in order to make important connections in the text. As such, according to this principle, the translation in Gen 3:8 should read "the breath of the day" or "the day's breath."

Genesis 1:5b

And there was evening and there was morning, day one.

The translation "day one" provides a better, more accurate translation of the Hebrew text than most modern translations, which render the text, "the first day" (cf. NIV, ESV, NET, and the older KJV). The labeling of the days of creation in Genesis 1 are as follows: day one, *a* second day, *a* third day, *a* fourth day, *a* fifth day, *the* sixth day, *the* seventh day. This numbering scheme is designed to highlight days six and seven, but most modern translation bleach out this distinction with a desire to highlight the absolute sequencing of the days. Goldingay's translation provides the accurate rendering of the numbering scheme for each of the creation days. Like Genesis 1:1, the translation is not complicated. It is the interpretation that will provide readers with a challenge. With translations like this one, English Bible readers will have an accurate resource for the challenges of careful interpretation.

Genesis 1:26a

God said, "Let's make human beings in our image."

The word translated as "human beings" is the well-known Hebrew word אָדָם. This Hebrew word can be rendered as the proper name "Adam," as a general designation for humanity or "human beings" as we have here, or simply as "man" with the nuance of male gender. This particular word appears twenty-six times in Genesis 1–3, and all three uses are signified. This makes translation a challenge, especially if you desire consistency in translation as stated in translation principle 5 above. In chapters 1 and 2, the rendering "human being" is the most common. Two times in 2:7, the translation is "human person" and in 2:25 we encounter the translation "the man." In chapter 3, the most common translation shifts to "the man," with the personal name "Adam" appearing in 3:17 and 3:21. It is an interesting exercise to compare translations and track the rendering of the personal name "Adam." Each translation will differ to a greater or lesser degrees. This particular challenge demonstrates the difficulty of Bible translation and the fact that strict adherence to any one principle of translation is virtually impossible. Goldingay was correct when he stated in the preface, "All translations are more or less accurate, but producing a faithful equivalent of any piece of writing in another language is an impossible undertaking" (p. vii).

Genesis 2:4b

> When Yahweh God made the earth and the heavens.

In Gen 2:4b, the personal name for God appears for the first time in the Old Testament. Goldingay has determined to translate God's name as "Yahweh" instead of the more traditional rendering, "the Lord." Some may object, but this is an excellent convention that highlights the personal, covenantal name of God.

We also observe that the translation "When" renders the Hebrew text appearing with the noun "day," literally, "*On the day* Yahweh God made the earth and the heavens." Goldingay's translation is not uncommon (cf. NIV, NET), but it is likely not correct. The argument from Hebrew grammar we will set aside, simply to observe more practically that the noun "day" represents an important and key word in the narratives of Genesis 1–3 (cf. 2:17; 3:5, 8, 14, 17). Additionally, this same construction appears in Gen 2:17 and is rendered by Goldingay as "*on the day* you eat from it" (emphasis mine).

Genesis 2:7a

> Yahweh God shaped a human person [*adam*] with earth from the ground [*adamah*].

In this translation, the bracketed transliterations of the Hebrew text, *adam* and *adamah*, illustrate the play on words and the close connection between the words translated "human person" and "ground." This is a helpful convention that allows reader to see significant connections in the Hebrew text that are necessarily lost in translation.

Genesis 2:8

> Yahweh God planted a garden in Eden ['Lavishness'], in the east, and put there the human being he had shaped.

In this translation, the name of the garden, Eden, is followed by the bracketed translation ['Lavishness']. This is a helpful convention, but one that involves a measure of interpretation. In addition to "lavishness," other possible meanings include "bliss" or "happiness" or "pleasure" or "delight." The choice of any one translation represents the choice or interpretation of the translator, and it is important that readers understand this necessary but interpretative feature of translation technique.

Genesis 2:24

> That's why a man abandons his father and his mother and attaches himself to his woman and they become one flesh.

In this translation, the rendering "abandons" in English can imply a more negative nuance than that which is intended by the Hebrew text. In English, "abandonment" implies something that should *not* be done. However, the Hebrew text is stating something positive, something that should be done. The more common translation "leaves" is perhaps the better choice in this context.

Additionally, the rendering "his woman" is certainly a possibility, but the clear intention of the text is "wife." It is interesting to note that Hebrew uses the same word for both "woman" and "wife," and the translation "woman" may sound a bit harsh as a modern English idiom.

Genesis 2:25 and Genesis 3:1

There is a significant play on words in the last verse of Genesis 2 and the first verse of Genesis 3 with the renderings "naked" in Gen 2:25 and "shrewdest" in Gen 3:1. In light of translation principle 7 described above, we would have expected a bracketed transliterations after each translation: [*arummim*] in Gen 2:25 and [*arum*] in Gen 3:1. It is perhaps impossible to identify every word play that appears in the Hebrew text, but this one is noteworthy and is commonly characterized as important by most commentators.

Genesis 3:8a

> They heard the sound of Yahweh God walking about in the garden in the breezy time
> of the day.

The disobedience of Adam and Eve in Genesis 3:6 precipitates the arrival of Yahweh God in judgment in 3:8. The characterization of God's arrival in the "breezy time of the day" represents Goldingay's rendering of the more traditional "cool of the day" found in translations like the NIV, ESV, NASB, and KJV (NET is identical to Goldingay). There are two difficulties with this translation. First, the rendering "breezy time" for the Hebrew word רוּחַ (Spirit, breath, wind) in 3:8 does not correspond to the translation of this same word in 1:2, where God's "breath" or רוּחַ appears over the waters. Secondly, more recent scholarship has identified the possible meaning of the construction in 3:8 as a fearful manifestation of God's (theophanic) presence in judgment, best rendered as something like "Spirit/wind of the day/ storm," another play on words (cf. Jeffrey J. Niehaus, *God at Sinai: Covenant and Theophany in the Bible and Ancient Near East* [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995], 155–59; *HALOT* 2401:, s.v. יוֹם[II]). God has not come to stroll among the fruit trees in the garden, but to render judgment for sin.

Genesis 3:24a

> So Yahweh God drove the man out and made the sphinxes dwell east of Eden Garden.

The rendering "sphinxes" for "Cherubim," which is itself a transliteration of the Hebrew word כְּרֻבִים, is a bit puzzling. I could not find any references to the identification of sphinxes with cherubim in any of the standard resources, nor was this translation explained in Goldingay's commentary on Genesis. In fact, the commentary uses the more standard rendering "cherubim." Translation like this, and others that are completely "off the grid," would benefit from a brief, bracketed explanation.
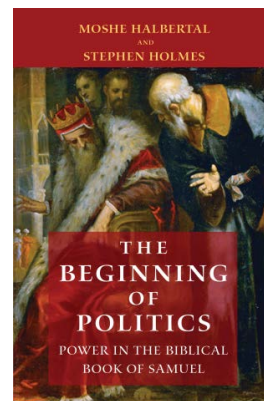
3. Conclusion

The translation of the whole Old Testament from Hebrew and Aramaic into English is a tremendous accomplishment, a labor of love for the church, extending back in history for over half a millennium. As Goldingay notes in his preface, there is no such thing as a perfect translation, and we have also emphasized that all translations are necessarily interpretations. With this in mind, we commend Goldingay's translation of the "First Testament" to readers for their use in careful study and comparison with other standard Bible translations.

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Moshe Halbertal and Stephen Holmes. *The Beginning of Politics: Power in the Biblical Book of Samuel*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2018. xi + 211 pp. £22.00/ $27.95.

Jewish philosopher Moshe Halbertal and political scientist Stephen Holmes have produced a much-needed book that first and foremost treats the biblical book of Samuel as a book about politics. Their work reflects a relatively new trend in biblical scholarship, spearheaded by Yoram Hazony at the Herzl Institute in Jerusalem, to read the Old Testament mainly as a work of philosophy, as opposed to a religious document (cf. *The Philosophy of Hebrew Scripture* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012]). Through a close exegesis of the biblical text relating to the lives of Saul and David, Halbertal and Holmes provide abundant insights into the workings of worldly politics that is relevant to "wherever and whenever political power is at stake" (p. 1).

The book is composed of four chapters of exegetical study, along with an Introduction and a Conclusion. In the Introduction the authors explain how politics originated in ancient Israel. Unlike pagan mythologies that locate the origin of kingship in the divine realm, the book of Samuel locates its origin in a concrete human condition, namely, Israel's failure to keep faith with Yahweh, the then-incumbent king of Israel, under the duress of Philistine infiltration. It is "by no means free of a residual bitterness" (p. 10), they argue, that God acceded to Israel's idolatrous request for a king and practically abdicated his throne. This divine bitterness is a key, according to the authors, to understanding the ambivalent, or indeed negative, attitude of the Book of Samuel toward human political projects. In the subsequent chapters, the authors attempt to decode the self-defeating dynamics of human politics that are encrypted in various episodes relating to Israel's first two kings, Saul and David.

Chapter One covers various episodes in 1 Samuel 9–2 Samuel 9 with special attention to the first two kings' efforts to gain or maintain sovereignty. Both Saul and David are portrayed as thoroughly political figures, ready to do anything in the pursuit of power. The authors observe, however, that their moral or religious trespasses have much to do with the inherent nature of politics itself, not necessarily rooted in the personality of those who inhabit high offices (p. 17). They further argue that since sovereign power easily turns into something that is desired for its own sake, those who have successfully attained it become pathologically obsessive about holding on to power.

Chapter Two examines two distinct *modi operandi* of political violence: one by insane paranoia exemplified in the episode of Saul's slaughter of the priests at Nob, and the other by calculation dramatized in David's murder of Uriah through a chain of agency. Although being the locus of absolute power, the lengthy chain of agency that kings command serves as a convenient mechanism to confer deniability and impunity, as a chain of surrogates help the kings to dissociate themselves from the crimes committed on their behalf. This theme is masterfully explored in the story of Uriah, the authors notes, through the power of David to "send," i.e., his capacity to control action from a distance (p. 82).

Chapter Three explores the self-defeating dynamics of dynastic monarchy through two consecutive narratives—the rape of Tamar and the rebellion of Absalom. Although dynastic monarchy assures the smooth transfer of power, thus ostensibly obviating civil wars among factious groups during the interregnum, the authors contend that it is fraught with self-defeating potential. This is illustrated in the costs that David had to pay in order to maintain his sovereignty until he bequeathed it to Solomon.

According to the authors, dynastic monarchy did not resolve the problem of violent transfer of power, but instead replaced it with the fratricidal and oedipal violence within David's own household. The ultimate price that dynastic monarchy exacted upon David is encapsulated in his cry: "My son, Absalom! My son, my son, Absalom!" (2 Sam 19:4; p. 172).

Chapter Four deals with David's last words to Solomon. It encompasses the many political themes explored in the preceding chapters, especially the ambiguity of political action, as underscored by David's order to kill Shimei, to whom he had promised amnesty (p. 161). The authors observe that the essential ambiguity of political action, which stems both from the impossibility to know the true motivation of a power wielder's action and from the possibility of the motivation being truly composite, namely moral and political at once, feeds into the readerly impression that David was a master of walking the fine line between morality and manipulation.

Overall, this book represents an exemplary fusion of biblical studies and political science. It is commendable both for its close reading of the biblical text and for its penetrating insights into worldly politics. Specifically, Halbertal and Holmes, as a team of a philosopher and a political scientist, effectively bring their respective expertise to bear on their interpretation of the book of Samuel. However, the authors' lack of expertise in the ancient context of the Old Testament reveals itself at times. For instance, the authors argue that David used Michal's love in the service of his political interest and held him responsible for the moral sin of instrumentalizing what ought not to be instrumentalized (p. 33). But this may not be a fair accusation of David, because David used marriage, not love, for his political purpose, not to mention that romantic love did not figure prominently in ancient marriage alliances. It is a modern sensibility that considers using marriage as a means to something else as a morally dubious act. Marriages in traditional societies were by definition practical alliances, instrumental to other ends. Hence it is unfair to equate the way David treated Michal with Saul's treatment of David, since Saul's behavior was morally depraved as it involved deception and murder. But this example is an exception to the otherwise impressive hermeneutics that informs the book. Evangelical readers may take issue with this or that element of the authors' exegesis—for instance, Samuel portrayed as a political rival of Saul. They may even complain about the complete lack of God-talk (theology) in the book. Nonetheless, this book is certainly worth a read.

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Robert L. Hubbard Jr. and J. Andrew Dearman. *Introducing the Old Testament*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2018. xxi + 538 pp. £33.99/$40.00.

With *Introducing the Old Testament*, two able and respected OT scholars have teamed up to produce a readable and accessible introduction to the OT. Using the analogy of the first swimming lessons that enable someone to move to being able to swim themselves, Hubbard and Dearman's aim is to provide guidance in the basics so as "to prepare readers to take the plunge into the deep end—the OT itself" (p. 4). Although their readership is not explicitly stated, the back cover says that this "student-friendly text" is "for university and seminary students."

Hubbard and Dearman take the "basics" to be how each OT book "originated, its historical or cultural background, its literary features and main characters, and its structure" (p. 3). This prepares readers for what they consider to be "the most important section" (p. 4): the "reading section" which asks readers to read the OT for themselves using the supplied list of questions.

The volume is divided into six parts. Part 1 is titled "Getting Started," and includes an introductory chapter followed by another dealing with the OT in its historical context, dating, and interpretive matters. Here we see that elaborating the historical context of the OT is central to the authors' aim of getting their readers into the deep end.

Part 2 is a treatment of the Torah, beginning with an introductory chapter ("What is the Torah?"). Genesis 1–11 and 12–50 are given separate chapters, after which Hubbard and Dearman follow a book-by-book approach. Each chapter for the most part is a brief orientation to the biblical book, including general familiarization (e.g., discussing the book's title for the most part, but also occasionally structure), historical context, summary, and the "reading" questions. As an example of typical reading questions, the first three from the chapter on Genesis 12–50 are as follows:

1. Which character (male or female) did you find yourself relating to (or perhaps reacting against) most? Explain why you think that character so affected you and what you learned from that person.
2. List the things that these stories have taught you about God and the ways he relates to people. In what way (if any) has this affected your own relationship with God?
3. What do you observe about women in the stories? Describe how you see God connecting with them. What questions or concerns do their stories raise for you? What do you learn from their stories about what it means to be a woman today. (pp. 57–58)

Part 3 provides an overview of all the historical books as per the LXX ordering of books. Among other things, an introductory chapter here provides a discussion of ancient historiography.

Part 4 then treats the prophets, after which Part 5 takes in the remaining poetic books. Again, introductory chapters provide orientation to the subject matter of each section: "What is Hebrew poetry" and "Who and what are the prophets?" for Part 4; and "What are the wisdom books?" for Part 5. Part 6 is a one-chapter conclusion, which deals with the canonization of the OT books.

To further support their aim of equipping students to read the OT with understanding themselves, the volume includes many full-color maps, pictures, tables, and timelines. Also, select bibliographies conclude each chapter, allowing readers to follow up leads suggested by the authors in more detail.
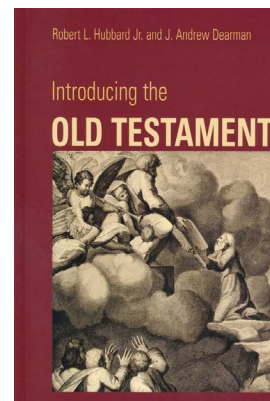
The main strength of *Introducing the Old Testament* is certainly its focus on the historical context of the OT. This sustained focus on history sets this introduction of the OT apart from others, and for this reason it may well be a suitable textbook in a university context. In a seminary context where the focus is preparing students for gospel ministry, this is still helpful, but this introduction to the OT would certainly need to be supplemented with additional material. In my estimation, each chapter is too light on in terms of providing students with a survey of the text, main themes, and biblical-theological contribution of each OT book. Indeed, *Introducing the Old Testament* actually for the most part avoids presenting the themes of a book and its related biblical-theological contribution. Why this is the case is not stated. And yet these are the very things that seminary students need in order to be in a position to teach the OT to others in a ministry setting. History is important, but so is being able to state simply the message of each OT book and where it fits in terms of biblical theology. I would consider these elements to also form part of the crucial "basics" needed for students to be able to "swim well" in the OT themselves.

In addition, *Introducing the Old Testament* advocates various positions that for some seminary instructors may make it less suitable as the sole textbook for an introductory OT class. The long pre-flood lifespans are said to be doubtful (p. 11). The book of Deuteronomy contains some Mosaic traditions, but is originally composed in the monarchic period to support the reforms of King Josiah (pp. 91–92; also p. 32). The books of the Former Prophets were never independent books, but form part of a larger literary work now called the Deuteronomistic History, which underwent a double redaction, the first in 620 BC to support the reforms of Josiah, and the second in 550 BC to explain the exile (p. 116). The book of Esther is "novelized history" which "embellishes the story's historical core for edification and enjoyment" (p. 243). The book of Jonah is a "parable, drawing on a figure known from the past and associated with prophetic tasks" (p. 372). Only part of the book of Isaiah contains genuine material originating from Isaiah, with most of the book composed after the time of the historical prophet by additional anonymous authors (pp. 282–83). The book of Daniel is written in Maccabean times with Maccabean concerns, albeit adopting older traditions regarding exilic persecution (p. 333).

Nevertheless, *Introducing the Old Testament* is a worthwhile contribution in the area of OT introductions. Its sustained focus on history is unique and should be consulted for this reason.

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Richard D. Nelson. *Judges: A Critical and Rhetorical Commentary*. New York: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2017. 376 pp. £28.99/$39.95.

Richard D. Nelson is Professor Emeritus of Biblical Hebrew and Old Testament Interpretation at Perkins School of Theology, Southern Methodist University. Nelson has previously written commentaries on both Deuteronomy (2002) and Joshua (1997) in the Old Testament Library series and 1–2 Kings (1987) in the Interpretation series. His doctoral work focused upon the double redaction of the Deuteronomistic History (DH). Thus, it was not surprising to see a commentary by Nelson concerning Judges as part of the larger work of the DH.

Nelson's approach in this commentary is an attempt to be both critical and rhetorical (thus the subtitle) in his personal reflections on the text/s of Judges. While he claims that commentaries on Judges (or any book for that matter) should not be "idiosyncratic" (p. 1) but should offer multiple voices and various interpretive possibilities, he also states that he made the "painful" decision to not include any bibliographic references for this commentary. This would seem to make this commentary precisely idiosyncratic in that it is only the voice of Nelson offered throughout. Further, his approach seems to call into question part of the very nature of a critical commentary as that which engages scholarship on the subject. This leaves one wondering throughout the volume just who the referents are that Nelson has in mind as he indicates viewpoints on various readings.

Thankfully, the volume includes numerous insightful interpretations making use of rhetorical reading strategies. For instance, in Judges 6 the function of Gideon's nickname "Jerubbaal" (Judg 6:31) is teased out for its ambiguous potential of whether Baal or Yahweh will win out as the god of Israel in light of Judges 8:33 (p. 135). Another example is Nelson's drawing out of the rhetorical function of "house of Micah" in Judges 18 (vv. 2, 13, 15, 18, 22) in order to address issues of lodging, proximity of spies to the house, and the overhearing of a voice that is recognized as the Levite (p. 291).

While he is insightful in his readings of the text and while he offers many helps throughout in ways to better attempt to hear the intent of the text, it remains always only his readings without any citation or bibliography. He notes only that his "scholarly peers can track down any sources they want to pursue" (p. 1) but provides no direction or discussion of variant critical or rhetorical readings of Judges. One place this becomes particularly problematic is in his form critical reconstructions of the text. This volume would be benefited by pointing toward and engaging sources for further evaluation of various proposals and arguments (see, for instance, the many bibliographic references throughout Serge Frolov's commentary on Judges in The Forms of the Old Testament Literature series).

One thus might wonder in what ways such a text might be called properly "critical." Nelson's application of a "critical" approach entails primarily the following two critical methodologies: form criticism (discerning the forms of the text as it developed in proposed various settings) and textual criticism (sifting the various manuscripts to propose the most likely original reading). As an example of his form critical approach, Nelson offers potential origins for the Song of Deborah (Judg 5) as potentially belonging to a period of the "Tabor sanctuary," either "in the late pre-state period or the early northern monarchy," and setting "aside romantic notions of a date of composition close to the event described" (pp. 113–16). As an example of his text critical approach, Nelson prefers the reading "hair hangs loose" (Judg 5:2) after engaging the root word פרע in relation to potential similar uses of translated phrases in
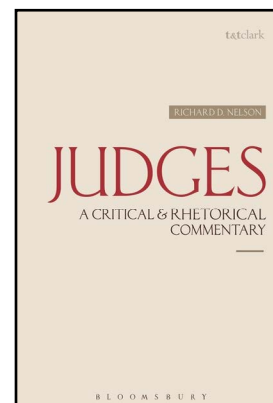
the Septuagint Vaticanus and Symmachus (citing several English translations that follow this reading), against proposed Arabic and Ugaritic cognates, the Vulgate, Syriac, and Old Greek and the LXX of Deuteronomy 34:42 (and the English translations which follow a reading: "leaders take the lead"; pp. 94–95). It is a welcome feature that Nelson has made use of the most recent published text critical work on Judges in the pertinent volume of *Biblia Hebraica Quinta*.

As to the "rhetorical" elements of this commentary, Nelson relies upon his own diachronic reconstruction of Judges for drawing out various elements of the way the language and structure of Judges was intended to address various issues for original settings he has proposed. Problematic to this methodology is that Nelson does not expound upon his reconstruction of the text in the introduction nor does he engage scholarship on the various proposals for such reconstruction.

Further, Nelson does not describe the ways in which the commentary unfolds with the following elements in each chapter: (A) his translation of sections, (B) text-critical and translation notes, (C) structure and rhetoric, and finally (D) genre and composition. A more expansive introduction (the introduction is only three and a half pages) that includes a more detailed summary of this approach and how it will play out for the overall structure of the commentary would have strengthened this volume immensely.

In the brief introduction, Nelson proposes the commentary was written for any who might make use of such a text (including rabbis, pastors, artists, etc.) and thus he opted to not include Hebrew (or other pertinent foreign language fonts), but instead to transliterate throughout. While this might be an attempt at accessibility, it misses that a "critical and rhetorical" commentary is most likely to be helpful to advanced students of the Old Testament or scholars, and thus would have proven yet more helpful maintaining original language with standardized fonts. However, for those who might access this volume for careful study of Judges, Nelson's rhetorical and text critical insights would prove helpful in considering the shape and intended impact of the text.

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Alastair J. Roberts and Andrew Wilson. *Echoes of Exodus: Tracing Themes of Redemption through Scripture*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2018. 176 pp. £13.81/$17.99.

Bryan D. Estelle. *Echoes of Exodus: Tracing a Biblical Motif.* Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2018. xiv + 392 pp. £33.99/$40.00.

It is not often that one gets to review two books on the same topic, published in the same year, and bearing the same title. These volumes invite comparison even as their respective subtitles set expectation for intertextual and biblical-theological analyses of Exodus. This is an important pursuit, for "no other event is as basic to the fabric of both Testaments" and yet it is challenging to interpret this motif precisely because it is so pervasive ("Exodus, Second Exodus," in *Dictionary of Biblical Imagery*, ed. Leland Ryken et al. [Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1998], 253).

Alastair J. Roberts is fellow of Scripture and Theology with the Greystone Theological Institute and Andrew Wilson is teaching pastor at King's Church London. Their stated purpose for *Echoes of Exodus* is to convince readers that "Scripture contains all sorts of connections, riffs, and themes" which may have heretofore been missed, and to do that by showing rather than telling (p. 13). The authors state they will err on the side of hearing echoes (p. 14) as they develop their controlling metaphor: "Scripture is music" (p. 21). Consistent with this metaphor, Exodus motifs are approached as "perhaps the clearest example of a recurring, time-consuming, rhythmic, melodic theme in the entire Bible" (p. 27).

The remaining twenty-one chapters listen to the rhythmic melody of the exodus by focusing on select biblical sections. Passover motifs in Matthew 26 form the "Overture" (ch. 2). This leads in turn to exploration of Exodus 1–Judges 7 (chs. 3–6) as the "First Movement." Chapters 7–10 shift discussion back to Genesis on the basis that Genesis 3–6 looks remarkably similar to Exodus 1–2 (p. 61). The re-echoing of exodus themes in Ruth, Samuel, and Kings is treated in chs. 11–15 before a brief look at the Prophets (ch. 16) and Ezra-Nehemiah (ch. 17) concludes the focus on the OT. The book's "Fourth Movement" dedicates five chapters to unveiling exodus motifs in the Gospels (2 chapters), Acts, Romans–Jude, and Revelation.

Roberts's and Wilson's study is wide-ranging and teems with textual observations and proposed parallels. Many are insightful. The sections charting how Exodus functions as intertext in the Gospels (pp. 125–29) and Revelation (pp. 150–51), for example, are excellent. Other proposals, however, remain much more tenuous—like Israel's so-called "birth" in Exodus 12: "Israel steps out from the womb through doorposts covered in blood … and later emerges into new life from a narrow passage through waters, which then close again behind them" (p. 44). Although the authors recognize that not all parallels and connections are equally probable, in practice they are given identical weight. I will return to the methodological questions this raises below. It is also difficult to discern which exodus Roberts and Wilson are trying to hear echoes of. The discussion moves between identifying lexical and thematic similarities with the book of Exodus, approaching exodus as a paradigmatic geopolitical event, and investigating patterns of divine deliverance considered more broadly.
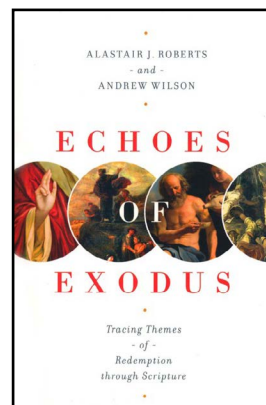
Bryan Estelle is professor of Old Testament at Westminster Seminary California. He states his aim as follows: "My goal throughout this book is to help readers grow in their 'allusion competence,' especially in their ability to recognize scriptural allusions to the exodus motif" (p. 2). Estelle proceeds to lay a hermeneutical foundation by surveying intertextual theory—including criteria by which to assess possible allusion (pp. 19–39; further treatment appears in an appendix [pp. 327–51]). He also makes a case for reinstating typological readings of Scripture, advocating a stance that lies somewhere between historicist and allegorical approaches (pp. 39–60).

With these principles in place, Estelle proceeds canonically to tease out how and why exodus motifs are used. Chapter 2 explores exodus themes in Genesis and helpfully addresses the wider relationship between creation and redemption. Chapter 3 turns to the book of Exodus where Estelle summarizes the essential motif as follows: "deliverance from the enemies of Israel in Egypt and the wilderness wanderings as described in the Sinai pilgrimage, which culminate in the arrival at the foot of the mountain of God" (p. 102, italics removed). This formulation sets parameters for discussion of Exodus resonances in the Psalms (ch. 4), Isaiah (ch. 5), and in the exilic and postexilic texts (ch. 6). Throughout, Estelle demonstrates the inner-biblical exegesis at work—that is, not just quoting Exodus material but actively reworking it. Five more chapters survey NT material: Matthew and Mark (ch. 7), Luke-Acts (ch. 8), Paul (ch. 9), 1 Peter (ch. 10), and Revelation (ch. 11). A strong case is made regarding the importance of exodus grammar for hearing the message of the NT. Again, Estelle reveals how images and themes are not simply repeated but are advanced and supplemented. For instance, 1 Peter's contribution is summarized as an ecclesial reading of exodus motifs in which the church is conceived as liberated Israel (p. 296).

Both iterations of *Echoes of Exodus* are full of valuable insights and unquestioningly demonstrate the importance of exodus motifs for biblical interpretation. Yet, comparing the volumes is revealing and underscores the potential benefits and dangers of intertextual readings of Scripture. Although both are shaped by similar agendas, the end results are markedly different. To be fair, Roberts and Wilson have written a shorter work aimed at a popular audience whereas Estelle has produced a longer, more technical book suited for higher-level study. Nevertheless, a degree of criticism is warranted.

The lack of methodological constraint felt when reading Roberts and Wilson is only thrown into sharper contrast when put alongside Estelle. Throughout, Estelle's explicit hermeneutical framework tempers his exegesis; connections and parallels are demonstrated rather than assumed. Subsequent discussion of function thus has a secure footing. For Roberts and Wilson, however, proposed connections are at times simply incorrect or slide towards the allegorical. The former is exemplified on p. 66 where the town of Haran is said to be named after Abram's brother, even though the words are different (חרן vs. הרן). The latter is seen in the conjecture that, akin to Pharaoh's piercing (Isa 51:9), so "Goliath is pictured as a villainous snake, covered in scaly armor (1 Sam. 17:5)" who ends up with bruised head (p. 94). No explanation is given for why armor made of "scales" (קַשְׂקֶשֶׂת) in 1 Samuel 17 should relate to snakes, let alone the Genesis 3 serpent (elsewhere, קַשְׂקֶשֶׂת is used for *fish*, not reptiles). Moreover, this strained connection obscures the more obvious intertextuality: Goliath falling over and losing his head as divine judgment resembles the fates of Dagon and Saul, not Pharaoh. The more fundamental issue concerns authorial intent. While intertextual theory accommodates reader-centered synchronic approaches in which connections remain in the eye-of-the-beholder, these must necessarily jettison
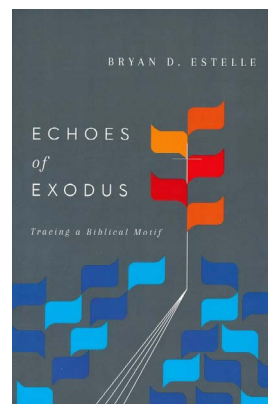
original intent. While I suspect the authors involved want to hold on to intended meaning, the lack of methodological constraint subverts that end for Roberts and Wilson.

In his conclusion Estelle hopes that he has demonstrated a responsible use of intertextuality (p. 318). By and large, I think he has. I don't think Roberts and Wilson succeed to the same degree. Nevertheless, for discerning readers, both volumes reveal the wonderful tapestry of allusion and echo that continually recalls the exodus, whatever part of the Bible you are in.

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Jeremy Schipper. *Ruth: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*. Anchor Yale Bible 7D. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2016. xvii + 221 pp. £45.00/ $65.00.

This commentary by Jeremy Schipper, associate professor at Temple University, Philadelphia, succeeds the volume by Edward Campbell in the Anchor Yale Bible series, published in 1975. The series is interfaith (Protestant, Catholic, and Jewish) in scope, and aims to present contemporary scholarship for scholars and the educated nonspecialist. Schipper does not intend to "replace or supplement" Campbell's volume but to produce an independent contribution (p. xi). He has indeed produced a fresh and thought-provoking reading of the book of Ruth, using a minimalist interpretive approach that ends up being complementary to the volume it replaces. While Campbell's is strong on theology, historical context, and narratological features, Schipper's is strong on human relationships, ancient historical literary context, and Hebrew diction.
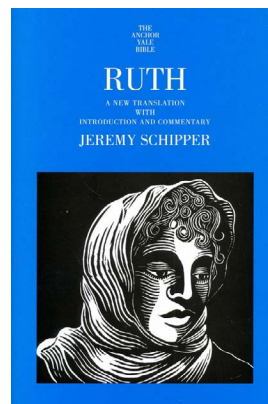
The commentary begins with a 51-page introduction. In a thorough and closely-argued manner, Schipper begins by outlining his translation approach, then explains his reason for reading Ruth within ancient Israelite literary traditions (without assuming that Ruth is dependent on any biblical text, or vice versa) instead of canonical contexts (pp. 13–16). Authorship and composition are then discussed, with Schipper tentatively dating the book to the early Persian period (p. 22). He then discusses his focus on "the nature of relationships in Ruth" (pp. 28–51), covering topics such as divine activity and acts of kindness, sexual desire (including queer readings), exogamy and ethnicity, and household organization. This volume follows the Anchor series format and includes the following sections: an introduction; a bibliography focusing on works since 1975; Schipper's own translation of Ruth; then detailed textual and translational notes on the verses, with interpretive comments at the end of each textual unit.

Schipper's translation aims more at accuracy than style, although his translation reads well. Two of his more novel translations derives from his identification of interrupted speech. Instead of smoothing over the syntax, Naomi's speech is translated as, "May YHWH give to you … [Oh, forget it!] Find rest, each one in the household of her husband!" (2:9). Similarly, the speech of the supervisor of the harvesters is translated as, "She came and stood from then, the morning until now, this … her sitting … the house … a little" (2:7). Other translations reflect his focus on social relationships: Naomi's daughters-in-law are "under her authority" (rather than "with her"; 1:7, 11, 22); Orpah is said to return to "her people and *her ancestors*" (rather than "her gods"; 1:15); and similarly, Ruth vows, "your ancestors, my ancestors"

(rather than "your God, my God"; 1:16). Schipper prefers "kindred redeemer" throughout. On the threshing floor, Ruth follows Naomi's instruction to undress herself, rather than to uncover Boaz's feet (3:4, 7). While not all readers will find these, and other, translations convincing, Schipper does provide support for each one in his textual notes.

In contrast to the majority of Ruth commentators, Schipper takes a minimalist approach. He makes a distinction between the author, narrator, and commentator, which is important for him, because "one should not necessarily attribute a commentator's interest, interpretative proposals, or textual connections to Ruth's author or narrator" (p. 28). The outcome is a circumspect, text-centric approach, whereby Schipper only offers definite interpretations if he finds them explicitly stated by the narrator. For instance, the interpretation of Boaz's provisions to Ruth, including the large amount of grain that she gleans, is left to "readers' discretion" (p. 131). The provisions are evidence of Boaz's generosity and/or alliteration and wordplay based on his name (*b'z* and *'azb*, meaning "abandon" in 1:16; 2:11, 16, 19). At times, like in this instance, I wondered if Schipper made too much of these literary features (to which he also includes puns, assonance, and rhyme; p. 7), elevating their literary effect above meaning. As he freely admits, an interpreter cannot be certain that these were intended by the author (p. 7). As such, I tend to consider them as secondary, used to highlight phrases or words, or to support the meaning of words in the text.

Schipper does well to apply his minimalist approach throughout the commentary. At times, he skirts very close to providing an interpretation, although the narrator does not clarify an action. For instance, on the threshing floor, "that Ruth undresses and lies down close to Boaz, possibly even at his genitals, is extremely suggestive." And based on the cumulative evidence in the chapter, he argues that there is a "strong possibility of sexual activity" (p. 157). To be clear, Schipper still views the encounter as ambiguous, and leaves the final interpretation to the reader. At other times, this opportunity is not left to the reader. For instance, when Ruth happens to "chance upon" Boaz's field, Schipper forecloses the possibility of God's action (2:3; p. 117). This is based on the noun's usage elsewhere in biblical prose (1 Sam 6:9; 20:26). A different form of the noun, with a different subject (Gen 24:12; 27:20), is viewed as inadmissible evidence for "chance" as granted by God. Yet I wonder if narrowing the focus to a particular word, and a specific form of the word, might skew the biblical evidence. The motif of chance and the working of God might be found in the Old Testament without the use of the specific word found in Ruth 2:3. If so, verses such as Proverbs 16:33 might be adduced. Again, Schipper here suggests that the word could be "a product of narrative style since *miqrehā* creates alliteration and rhyme" with *mākĕrâ* (2:3 and 4:3; p. 117). Based on explicit narratorial attribution only, Schipper limits God's role in the book of Ruth to the provision of fertility (4:13), although he views this action as "very important" (p. 35).

This commentary achieves the aim of the series to present contemporary scholarship to academics and educated laypeople. The selective representation of characters and events in narrative does leave gaps for a reader to fill in (pp. 24–28). The beauty of Schipper's minimalist approach is that it allows for readers to fill those gaps. While many readers will find more meaning, and more of God in the narrative than Schipper does, his focus on human relationships brings out important issues about the interactions between Judahites and Moabites, and the roles of different members of social groups in ancient Israel.

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Ernst R. Wendland. *Studies in the Psalms: Literary-Structural Analysis with Application to Translation*. Publications in Translation and Textlinguistics 8. Dallas: SIL Academic, 2017. xxii + 523 pp. £34.67/$44.95.

This book is a tour de force of poetic discourse analysis. Those familiar with Wendland's contributions will quickly locate him among the ranks of Louth, Kugel, Alter, and Berlin. In this detailed and well-researched work, Wendland systematizes a method for higher-level (entire poem) poetic discourse analysis and formulates techniques to improve the translation of Hebrew poetry into different languages. These two valuable contributions combine some of the latest advancements of linguistic studies in Psalms research and contextualization methodologies in Bible translation.

Typically in each chapter of the book, Wendland begins by explaining a component of his method and then applies it to a particular psalm. His basic methodology is presented in the first chapter. Subsequent chapters further clarify and expand on it. The last few chapters of the book are more focused on translation theories.

Wendland's ten-step process for analyzing poetic discourses is as follows: (1) Delimitation, (2) Spatialization, (3) Text criticism, (4) Segmentation, (5) Confirmation, (6) Distinction, (7) Contextualization, (8) Conversation, (9) Summarization, (10) Translation and Testing.

Delimitation (1) is the process of identifying the pericope for analysis, and *Text criticism* (3) is understood in the traditional sense. In my opinion, the heart of Wendland's method of higher-unit poetic discourse analysis is found in steps (2)–(6).
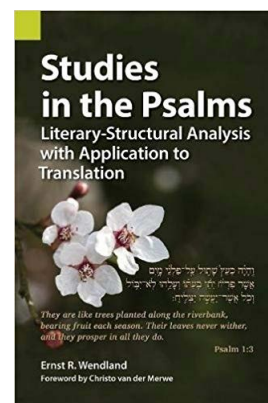
v.co	Post-Verb2	Post-Verb1	VERBAL	Pre-Verb2	Pre-Verb1
A[a]					
0.1	לְדָוִד	מִזְמוֹר[b]	-----		לַמְנַצֵּחַ
	of/to-David	a-psalm			to-the-director
1.1			חָסִיתִי[c]	יְהוָה	בְּךָ[d]
			I-took-refuge	O-Yahweh	in-you

The figure above shows how *Spatialization* (2) is done (Ps 31:1–2a; p. 101). With the aid of software (Paratext), Wendland lays out every colon of the text on a grid (under column v.co, we have stanza A; "0.1" means line 0 and colon 1). The main verb of each colon is centralized (in 1.1, חָסִיתִי, "I took refuge") and words that come before or after the main verb are located along the grid. This exercise provides a way to visualize the text and facilitates the identification of syntactical, morphological or phonological patterns that may be present. From a linguistic point of view, the vertical plane of this spatialization grid allows the student to explore the paradigmatic features of the text (recurring concepts), while the horizontal plane expresses the chosen syntagmatic combination of words. Wendland points out, for instance, that the usage of pre-verbal elements is potentially a display of "added significance" (p. 10).

With *Segmentation* (4) Wendland seeks to clarify the continuity and discontinuity of text within the poem. Specifically, he looks for shifts in topic, content, repetitions of words, etc. that distinguish the poem's main stanzas and strophes (p. 16). *Confirmation* (5) and *Distinction* (6) are further elaborations of *Segmentation* (4) based on linguistic and artistic considerations. Steps (2)–(6) also clarify any thematic

progression or macrostructural prominence in the poem. The process of *Contextualization* (7) identifies certain lexeme or concepts that require further historical, intertextual or canonical examinations. In *Conversation* (8), the exegete looks for clues in the text to understand how words or speeches act upon their implied recipients and accomplish the desired effect. In *Summarization* (9), major text units of the poem are crystallized with thematic (or topical) titles that are subsequently combined and reworked into a message-oriented, structural outline of the entire poem.

The final step in Wendland's method is *Translation and Testing* (10). For him, this process involves translating psalms into the Chewa language (or the vernacular, *ndakatulo*). A key translational principle that Wendland adopts is to "express the biblical text in a euphonious, rhythmic, more literary and lyrically-equivalent manner—one that is amenable to public recitation, oration, chanting, or simply oral elocution in an appropriately reverent mode" (p. 289).

Several other positive features of Wendland's work are easy to list. First, this book is up-to-date, detailed and comprehensive. Wendland's prodigious footnotes and bibliography show that he is aware of the most recent scholarship in this field. His analyses of Exod 15:1–21 and Ps 22 alone span 100 pages collectively. At one point, he provides seven continuous pages of footnotes discussing the Hebrew text (pp. 344–50). Wendland's analyses also take us from ANE poets to Athanasius to the Alakatu poets of Africa (pp. 363, 254, 278). Second, Wendland emphasizes sensitivity and fidelity to the oral-aural aspects of the text. This means that the exegete and translator need to understand any assonance, cadence, euphony, paronomasia, rhyme, and other phonetical parallelism in the text. These need to be replicated in the translation where possible (p. 276). Third, Wendland's discourse-oriented approach and focus on macrostructure have not only allowed interpreters to embrace the poem as an aesthetic whole, but also corrected a century-old fixation on genre categories and diachronic concerns of the psalm for interpretation (this is not to say that he has excluded the latter in his analysis). Wendland's structural-oriented approach is somewhat akin to those of Pieter van der Lugt, Jasper Labuschagne and Jan Fokkelman, though analyses of syllable, word or colon counting are absent from Wendland's work.

Nonetheless, several areas of Wendland's work can be improved. I have found the five hundred pages a laborious read partly because of the detail of the analyses and the somewhat loose connections between the chapters. As such, the title of the book, *Studies in the Psalms*, is apt because it accurately depicts Wendland's work as a compilation of connected studies. The ten-step method presented at the beginning of the book is not consistently adopted or systematically explicated (e.g., analysis of Ps 85, pp. 381–99). New interpretive terminologies do occur abruptly at times ("porhetorical analysis," p. 339). Without tightening these inconsistencies, it is not always easy to understand how Wendland works through a particular poem methodologically.

I heartily recommend this book to any serious student of Hebrew poetry. Especially for those involved in the translation of the Psalms, this is a must-read!

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Paul R. Williamson. *Death and the Afterlife: Biblical Perspectives on Ultimate Questions*. New Studies in Biblical Theology 44. London: Apollos, 2018. xvii + 226 pp. £14.99/$25.00.

Paul R. Williamson (Lecturer in Old Testament, Hebrew and Aramaic at Moore College, Sydney) has produced a timely and informative contribution to the New Studies in Biblical Theology series. In response to recent challenges to traditional views regarding personal eschatology, Williamson surveys the biblical teaching on the intermediate state, resurrection, judgment, hell, and heaven. The book is very well organized. Each chapter introduces a recent challenge from within evangelicalism and then surveys the Old Testament teaching on the subject, intertestamental developments, and the New Testament teaching on the subject.

Chapter 1 briefly explores contemporary perspectives and misunderstandings of the biblical perspective, then surveys ancient Near Eastern and Graeco-Roman perspectives, and finally outlines the various biblical issues that will be tackled later in the book. Williamson holds that personal eschatology was progressively revealed so that the fullest understanding of it does not come until the New Testament, though the Old Testament already anticipates where the New Testament will go. In Chapter 2, Williamson defends the idea of an intermediate state, arguing that the Bible supports a "dualistic holism" in which the soul can exist apart from the body, though the soul is incomplete until reunited with the body.

In Chapter 3, Williamson defends the traditional view of resurrection, which he argues comes not from Persian influence but from an incipient pre-exilic resurrection hope that comes to fruition as God's people later face crisis. While Williamson rejects claims that Psalm 1:5 or Hosea 13:14 or Job 19 has a resurrection in view, he holds that "the germ for such belief was present in what [the Old Testament authors] understood about Yahweh" (p. 81), as one with the power to raise the dead (Deut 32:39: 1 Sam 2:6). The last part of the chapter surveys the New Testament teaching on the subject and shows that the resurrection "will occur on the last day, and not a moment before" (p. 93).

Chapter 4 defends the view that the final judgment is according to works. After considering Old Testament types and predictions of "the day of Yahweh," Williamson argues that Matthew 25:31–46; Romans 2; and Revelation 20:11–15 teach not "salvation by works, but judgment based on unimpeachable evidence—evidence that reveals the nature of a person's relationship with God" (p. 121). Williamson warns against "foregrounding" one side of the tension between salvation by faith and judgment by works.

In Chapter 5, Williamson defends the traditional view of hell as eternal conscious punishment. Williamson sees no problem in the fact that "there is almost nothing that might imply eternal conscious punishment" in the Old Testament (p. 137), since "we would expect the antitype to transcend or be qualitatively different from the type that foreshadows it" (p. 135). He surveys intertestamental literature and the New Testament to argue that eternal conscious torment is the view of the New Testament. Finally, Chapter 6 clarifies the nature of the final state of the righteous and opposes evangelical universalism, which sees hell as a kind of "purgatorial wake-up call" that leads the unrighteous to repent and thereby leave hell (p. 164).

The greatest strengths of this book are its organization, its readability, and its thorough presentation of the Old Testament, intertestamental, and New Testament passages on each question that is discussed. This reviewer would have liked Williamson to address later texts that may reveal trajectories that already existed in New Testament times (e.g., rabbinic literature, the church fathers, New Testament apocrypha).
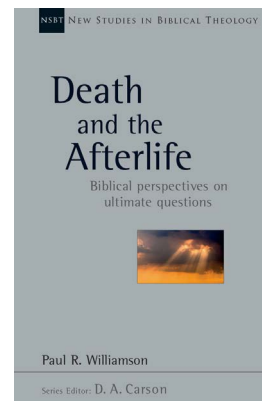
But what Williamson has provided is quite helpful and is therefore recommended as a course textbook on personal eschatology or as personal reading for the individual who wants a systematic presentation of the biblical data. Williamson's emphasis on progressive revelation is also helpful, and he rightly avoids anachronistic readings of Old Testament passages that some might use to support later Christian theology. At times his exegesis is phenomenal and provides correctives to misinterpretations that are common (e.g. Job 19 or Matt 25:31–46).

The greatest weakness is Williamson's approach to his "dialogue partners" (pp. 1–2). Williamson gives the impression that he is responding to recent challenges to traditional views, but his interaction with proponents of those views is thin and sometimes unfair. Books can be mentioned as "especially influential" (e.g., p. 34, n. 4) and then never mentioned again. Several of Williamson's dialogue partners are quoted only when they "concede" a particular point ("concede" is probably an unfair term in several of Williamson's many uses of the word). Williamson often does not discuss how his opponents interpret a passage differently, giving the impression that his opponents have not addressed the issues he raises. And when he does engage his opponents, he sometimes resorts to *ad hominem* attacks (e.g., "those who are out on a theological limb," p. 180); question begging (e.g., in discussing the meaning of αἰώνιος on p. 180); non sequiturs (e.g., proposing that the final fate of the unrighteous would probably be similar to their fate in Hades before judgment day, p. 151); and straw man arguments (e.g., opposing annihilationism simply by noting the presence of "some degree of conscious punishment" in passages that discuss the final state of the wicked, an idea that most annihilationists affirm, p. 151). Perhaps Williamson's failure to interact deeply with theological opponents is by design. He writes in his introduction, "My primary focus … is not the *theological* case that proponents of various views can mount, but rather the prior question: What does the Bible say?" The problem is that many of the arguments that Williamson ignores are not *theological* arguments but *biblical* arguments.

Therefore, if one is looking for a direct refutation of evangelical alternatives to the traditional views, this might not be the most helpful book, but if one is looking for a general survey of the biblical teaching on personal eschatology, then Williamson has provided an excellent resource.

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— NEW TESTAMENT —

Barry Beitzel and Kristopher Lyle, eds. *Lexham Geographic Commentary on the Gospels*. Bellingham, WA: Lexham, 2018. xvi + 448 pp. £41.99/$39.99.

The recently published *Lexham Geographic Commentary on the Gospels* is more than a mere geographic commentary—it is a detailed and informative study tool emphasizing the geographical background of the Gospels, while also touching on historical, archaeological, architectural, and social issues. Geography is certainly the focus and strongest aspect of the commentary, but it is by no means the only type of background material addressed. Composed of 48 chapters, each in a concise yet thorough article form written by different authors, the book is ordered chronologically from the time of the birth of Jesus until the resurrection appearances. The chapters address all of the major events and locations in the Gospels, plus several more obscure but interesting topics such as crowds, the hill of Moreh, weather, pig husbandry, and geography of forgiveness. The volume is supplemented at the end by 6 maps and 2 charts, some of which are very useful and others unique, although the map about Absalom and David was an odd choice considering the limited number of maps (p. 527). The main text also is sprinkled with helpful maps, charts, illustrations, and photographs related to the particular topics. The writing team is comprised of sixteen authors with a wide range of qualifications and experience, ranging from seasoned professors and archaeologists to graduate students, but none of the chapters suffers from noticeably poor quality or lack of knowledge.
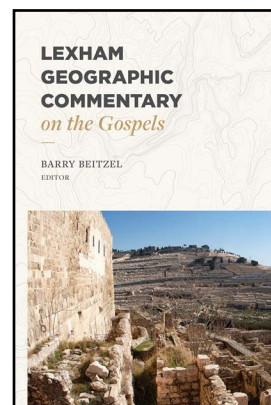
The volume itself correctly states that there is virtually no end to the number of Bible commentaries, but the *Lexham Geographic Commentary on the Gospels* fits effectively into a niche due to its specialist nature and specific topical focus (p. xiii). Graduate students, pastors, educated laypeople, and even professionals in the field will find material in the volume that is helpful in their studies on the Gospels, or at the least the chapters will inspire them to further inquiry. Subjects and locations of interest that can be appreciated by nearly all readers include the birthplace of Jesus, the wilderness temptation of Jesus, the location of the baptism of Jesus, Capernaum, Nazareth, Caesarea Philippi, Gehenna, the pools of Bethesda and Siloam, the Temple Mount, the Garden of Gethsemane, and the site of the crucifixion and tomb of Jesus. The chapters contain detailed geographical information linked with the historical events and text of the gospel, and the authors note differing positions on topics that are debated both in the public arena and in scholarship. For example, places such as the praetorium of Pilate (pp. 494–97) and the tomb of Jesus (pp. 506–15) are handled in such a way as to inform the reader about the opposing views, while explaining the relevant evidence and still taking a definitive position informed by the facts. The bibliographies at the end of each chapter are also a useful resource for further investigation of the topics.

As with any work of this nature, there are sections that could be criticized, weaknesses pointed out, or positions some may object to, since it is impossible to please or accommodate everyone. The way in which the Quirinius census issue is addressed may leave readers searching for more answers or disagreeing with the author about the nature of the census and the date of the birth of Jesus (pp. 11–13). The section about the magi is quite short and neglects to mention the geographic possibilities presented

by an ancient text referred to as *The Revelation of the Magi* while endorsing disputed ideas such as a summer birth and a meeting of the magi and Jesus at Bethlehem (pp. 6–9). Bethsaida is placed at Tel el-Araj, which has recent and convincing evidence, but nearby et-Tell as Bethsaida may be cemented in the minds of many readers (pp. 230–42). Those who are attached to the Garden Tomb theory might not agree with the conclusions, but hopefully all readers will recognize the case for the Holy Sepulchre as legitimate and substantial (pp. 504–15, 520–22). The chapter on Caesarea Philippi gives illuminating geographical context, although what could be interpreted as sympathy towards the view that Peter is "rock" of the Church may draw the ire of those who firmly believe the example is not referring to Peter (pp. 293–94). However, the volume excels in the area of geography, which is its stated purpose and the primary category it should be evaluated upon, even if points of criticism can be found in certain areas of archaeological, historical, or textual information. Because it is a geographic commentary, the volume could have benefited from more maps, especially topographical, and more photographs, particularly aerial or satellite. Overall, however, the *Lexham Geographic Commentary on the Gospels* achieves its purpose of creating a volume addressing the important geographic locations and related background found in the Gospels, and it is a resource which many will appreciate as an excellent addition to their research library.

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Lonnie D. Bell. *The Early Textual Transmission of John: Stability and Fluidity in Its Second and Third Century Greek Manuscripts*. New Testament Tools, Studies, and Documents 54. Leiden: Brill, 2018. x + 265. €110.00/$127.00.

New volumes in the NTTSD series, edited by Bart D. Ehrman and Eldon J. Epp, are cause for celebration among those who enjoy critical studies that advance the fields of New Testament Studies and early Christian origins. Granted, books of this kind are rarely gripping. But this one may be among the exceptions.

Lonnie Bell, lead preaching pastor of Four Corners Church in Newnan, GA, and recent PhD graduate from the University of Edinburgh, is not a household name even in those few households familiar with the names of New Testament textual critics. But not all New Testament textual critics have as strong a claim as Bell does to enhance our understanding of the transmission of the Gospels in the early centuries of the Christian tradition. What does Bell argue, and how is it different from the current consensus?

"It has been widely claimed or accepted among New Testament textual critics," Bell begins, "that the earliest centuries of textual transmission for the texts that now comprise the New Testament were characterized by 'freedom,' 'fluidity,' 'instability,' 'laxity,' 'proneness to error,' 'carelessness,' 'wildness,' 'chaos,' 'lack of control,' etc." (p. 1). Indeed, this academic consensus maintained by scholars often masquerades without challenge as unimpeachable wisdom.

Not so fast, says Bell. What if this general depiction is wrong? What if the early centuries were not marked by major alterations? What if copyists did not exercise considerable freedom in changing texts?
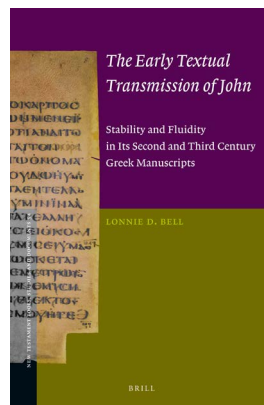
What if stability, continuity, and strictness are better characterizations of the early textual transmission of the New Testament?

In order to address these types of questions, Bell examines fourteen of the earliest extant Greek manuscripts of the Gospel of John. Why pick the Gospel of John? More manuscript evidence from the second and third centuries AD—the earliest period with extant evidence—exists for the Gospel of John than any other New Testament writing. More specifically, we have seventeen Greek manuscript witnesses of it: sixteen papyri (P[5], P[22], P[28], P[39], P[45], P[52], P[66], P[75], P[90], P[95], P[106], P[107], P[108], P[109], P[119], P[121]) and one parchment (0162). Bell purposely sets aside P[45], P[66], and P[75], due to the size and scope of those manuscripts and his project, though some data from P[66] and P[75] are included.

The issues at the heart of this volume come into sharp focus when he analyzes each manuscript and diachronically compares the number and character of unique (singular and sub-singular) readings in each manuscript with all majuscules up through the seventh century that completely overlap with it. The bulk of the book is devoted to such meticulous scrutiny of the evidence (pp. 34–225). Bell covers his subject matter with admirable thoroughness. He anticipates and parries the most obvious critiques, such as the occasional limitations regarding certain bodies of evidence from which he is drawing conclusions. Bell persuasively argues that none of the earliest extant manuscripts he studied revealed anything other than continuity in transmission with subsequent centuries. Indeed, the opposite was true. There was remarkable stability in the transmission of these texts. Variation was relatively minor. There was a propensity towards precision in the transmission of these writings.

What, then, is likely to be accomplished by this study? Bell has written a wonderfully rich book, packed with evidence. Part of what makes his argument so persuasive is the way in which he combines and compares the evidence from earlier and later periods. The evidence is compelling, and it impels us to look more closely at the general characterization of New Testament textual transmission up to the fourth century. His major contribution is his conclusion that the second and third centuries were probably *not* a time of significantly more instability than later centuries. Instead, he argues, the character of transmission reflected in the earliest manuscripts of the Gospel of John points to a more striking stability and impressive continuity with later periods than previously acknowledged or asserted.

The reader comes away from this volume persuaded that there is strong evidence pointing in the direction of Bell's conclusion. But the questions of how far this applies beyond his database of one New Testament book—a point he strategically notes and even emphasizes—are far from settled. Nevertheless, his study provides a helpful guide to what the future might hold for determining that extent and more confidently answering such questions. Anyone planning to deal with this topic going forward should keep this book handy, and every theological library should own a copy.

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Allen R. Hilton. *Illiterate Apostles: Uneducated Early Christians and the Literates Who Loved Them*. Library of New Testament Studies 541. London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2018. vii + 181. £85.00/$114.00.

When faced with an ocean of information or apparently conflicting data, we need to ask a few fundamental questions. What is the problem? What evidence is available in relation to the defined problem? Are we missing any important information? Allen Hilton, a former Assistant Professor of New Testament at Yale Divinity School, seeks to answer such questions in his new volume, *Illiterate Apostles*.

I have never read a new academic work quite like this one. The topic is great. The issues are real. But the research is too far removed from current scholarship to give readers an honest assessment or the necessary nuances that the current state of investigation provides. In fact, there are only eight sources referenced from this century and three of them are by the volume's editor; giving the appearance that they were only added to the previously established endnotes.

How, then, does one review an academic work two decades out of touch with modern scholarship? Herewith are two specific examples of issues that plague the entire volume, followed by a simple summary of the main topics covered.

Hilton opens his book, with presumably a straight face, by saying: "until very recently" (p. 2), "the most recent research" (p. 2), "[t]he latest authoritative estimates" (p. 3), and "in the academy in recent years" (p. 3). Yet his bibliography does not reflect such statements. On numerous occasions, he speaks as if an author "recently" published something, but the publication is almost 30 years old (e.g., p. 88, n. 10). Never mind the numerous studies that would directly challenge or overturn certain statements and arguments he makes, Hilton does not even offer the reader the latest sources from the scholars he relies so heavily on for his key arguments, such as William Harris concerning ancient literacy. Harris, for instance, has since defended his 1989 findings, but the reader will not learn that here.

Furthermore, even when Hilton tries to connect his topic with today, the evidence is either dated or absent if the serious reader tries to track it down. For example, Hilton begins Chapter 2 by stating what "polls tell us" regarding the reasons why nations continue "inserting education's enormous price tag into their budgets" (p. 35). If readers pursues his endnote 22 pages later, they will discover that the only source referenced is a blogsite. If they were then to go another step further in trying to track down the blog, they would quickly learn that the blog post was from a decade ago and points to no research or polls to verify. Granted, that does not mean such polls do not exist. But why keep readers that far removed from any available data, even if it is outdated?

Hilton divides his book into two parts. The first part of the book—titled, "The Cause of the Criticism"—seeks to answer one key question: "If most ancients lived out their uneducated lives quietly and almost unnoticed by their educated neighbors, why were the early Christians criticized for being uneducated?" (p. 3). In order to answer this question, Hilton spends three chapters picturing for the reader what he imagines everyday ancient life would have looked like.

Chapter 1 surveys various aspects of ancient literacy. Framing a picture of ancient literacy is certainly a (the?) key to many of Hilton's arguments throughout the book. Disappointingly, this is the weakest chapter in the book, especially for the reasons shared above.
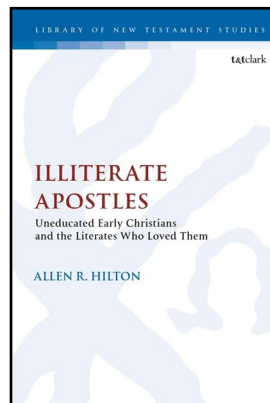
Chapter 2 looks at six pagan authors writing in the late second and early third centuries. Hilton believes they "represent for us what must have been a widespread opinion" (p. 4). He ultimately seeks to answer the question, "why were the early Christians criticized for being uneducated?" (p. 37). Hilton gleans three reasons from his survey of the criticisms: (1) they lacked rhetorical skills, (2) they could not weigh arguments and discern truth, and (3) they were immoral.

Chapter 3 outlines how Hilton understands the various stages of ancient education. Then he places the issue at hand within that arrangement. As Hilton sees it, certain Christian apologists responded to the so-called "illiteracy criticism" by substituting that charge with the strong moral virtue of "stubborn courage that so ruled the philosophical day" (p. 86). In doing so, the positive philosophical statement about courage undermined the negative educational criticism of illiteracy.

Part 2—titled, "A First-Century Reply"—sets out to answer the question: "why does an author like Luke include a detail like the apostles' illiteracy [Acts 4:13] in his book?" (p. 148). Before providing an answer to this question and concluding in Chapter 6, Hilton spends two chapters discussing various aspects of the Greek term παρρησία (= "courage") used in Acts 4:13 in order to "add value to the history of exegesis on this passage" (p. 98). Chapter 4 deals with the social dynamics of the term. Chapter 5 addresses the philosophical nature of the term.

Hilton ultimately argues that critics would have assumed that Christians' supposed lack of education would have also handicapped them morally. Therefore, Luke purposely answers and refutes this assumed implication of their so-called illiteracy by noting their noble παρρησία.

Hilton's final chapter—titled, "The 'Education' of the Apostles"—wraps up his study by trying to determine "[t]he source of the apostles' astonishing courage" (p. 149). Hilton argues that Luke understood Peter and John's courage to be God-given—not via Greco-Roman philosophical training—for the purpose of defending and advancing the gospel. "Clearly," Hilton deduces, "Luke had Christianity's critics in view when he constructed the narrative, and it is just as clear that he answers them in a cogent way" (p. 164).

At best, Hilton reminds us that such discussions are not new. He indeed recaps for us what some of the critical questions are. But his research is simply 20 years too late in publication to be useful for the stated audience of this book series, which also claims to be "premier," "cutting-edge," and "innovative."

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Joshua E. Leim. _Matthew's Theological Grammar: The Father and the Son_. Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament 2/402. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2015. xiii + 298 pp. €84.00/$120.00.

I like bold writing. I like an author who has a clear thesis and argues for it with direct language. If the thesis proves unconvincing, at least no one will doubt what the author meant because the writing was obscured by prose aimed to tow a middle line or to satisfy academic shibboleths. Leim's narrative critical study of Matthew's use of the verb προσκυνέω and his subsequent doctrine of θεός is just such a study. He provides "a reading of Matthew's Gospel whose force turns on the cumulative literary effects of προσκυνέω and Jesus' divine-filial identity" (p. 234). He concludes that προσκυνέω in Matthew means _worship_ and its use "bind[s] together the identity of Father and Son" by taking up the verb "in ways that evoke Israel's commitment to the one God while constantly and strategically applying it to Jesus" (p. 27). Translations and interpretations of προσκυνέω as homage or obeisance or honor gut the Gospel of its theological creativity and strip Jesus of his identity, the very point Matthew aims to expose.
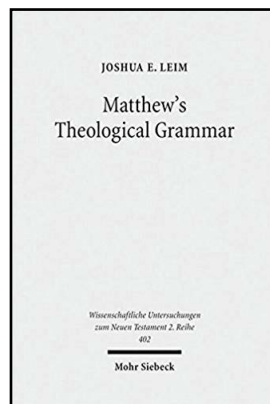
Leim begins by arguing that προσκυνέω is a _Leitwort_ and therefore essential for understanding Matthew's Christology, which is absolutely necessary for understanding the gospel. But scholarly vagueness over what it means that "worship" of Jesus lends to an "exalted" or "heightened" Christology empties προσκυνέω of its power in individual passages and the narrative as a whole. "This means nothing less than that Jesus' identity remains unclear, though, ironically, his identity is exactly what the Gospel is about" (p. 11). "Rather than attending closely to how προσκυνέω shapes and is shaped by the flow of the narrative," Leim goes on, "its 'meaning' continues to be governed largely by concerns either external to the narrative or in rather clear contradiction to what the narrative says" (ibid.). "The result … is that Matthew's Christology is rendered in abstraction from his own Gospel and ultimately expressed in theologically incoherent terms" (p. 13). To redress this, Leim employs a narrative critical approach where the verb's "embeddedness in _this particular_ symbolic world makes all the difference" (pp. 15–16, emphasis original). It must be understood, therefore, within "the whole of Matthew's narrative" and "the early Christian way of life in which he participates" (p. 24). The meaning of words is not drawn merely from a list of options within an historically determined semantic domain (here Leim follows Wittgenstein), but the discourse in which the words are embedded shapes the meaning within _that_ narrative world (as the intratexture is allowed to work interpretively forward and backwards over the narrative). In turn, such discourse-determined words have the power to shape an author and audience's perceptions of reality _because of_ the use of the term in such and such a way. Though, to be clear, the historical usage of terms bears as well; nothing happens in the abstract. The significance of προσκυνέω for Matthew, therefore, "emerges when one attends to its history of usage in scriptural and contemporary Jewish literature … while simultaneously setting it beside Matthew's christologically momentous appropriation of it" (p. 27).

To make his case Leim considers the "cultural encyclopedia" to see how προσκυνέω was used in "the texts and contexts to which Matthew is most deeply indebted" (p. 31). The lion's share of attention is given to OT books, especially Isaiah, the Psalms, the Pentateuch and Daniel, "since they are the larger frame into which Matthew fits his portrait of Jesus" (p. 32). After a brief but enlightening survey Leim summarizes that προσκυνέω is overwhelmingly used in the LXX to denote "worship" reserved exclusively

for Israel's God, and equally used to censure those who "worship" anything less (i.e. committing idolatry). In the noticeably few places where προσκυνέω is used of "obeisance" or "honor" of exalted figures, the language is qualified "to curtail the possible misinterpretation" (p. 42). When the word is not so nuanced, the burden of proof is on the translator who would render it as anything less than full "worship." Leim's coverage of προσκυνέω in Isaiah and Daniel (esp. in combination with πίπτω in the latter) proves particularly helpful in understanding Matthew's usage. Similar uses, and qualifications in unique contexts (noting "theologically-charged situations"), are also found exceedingly in Second Temple literature, the NT and early Christian texts. Again, the burden of proof, according to Leim, falls to those who would render προσκυνέω as anything less than "worship" in Jewish and Christian literature without clear contextual reasons.

Chapters 3–6 then give careful attention to the Matthean narrative discourse, particularly periciopae that feature the verb προσκυνέω. The "worship" of Jesus by the Magi in 2:1–12 and the injunction that only the Lord God should receive "worship" in 4:8–10 together create an *ungrammaticality*, a word or concept that appears unintelligible in the narrative flow. Several factors—particularly intertexture and intratexture through chapters 1 and 2, as well as the combination of πίπτω and προσκυνέω in the cultural encyclopedia—suggest the Magi indeed offer *Jesus* the worship due exclusively to Israel's *one God*. But how can this be if "worship" belongs only to God *as explicitly stated in 4:10*? "[O]ne does not actually know the answer until reading the *whole story*" (p. 53); only at that point is the ungrammaticality rendered intelligible by the full text. Thus 4:10 forces the reader to reconsider 2:1–12, creating the ungrammaticality that only further (retrospective) reading will resolve. Nonetheless, "in these opening sections of the narrative Matthew is already (re)shaping his readers' *theo*logical imaginations around the life of the Son" (p. 79, emphasis original).

Of the subsequent eight uses of προσκυνέω, seven have Jesus as their object (8:2; 9:18; 14:33; 15:25; 20:20; 28:9, 17; 18:26 the exception), serving to re-activate and intensify the ungrammaticality each time. Increasingly, "Matthew has narrated these accounts in a way that remolds Israel's worship christologically, and in so doing, binds together the human life of the Son with the identity of Israel's κύριος" (p. 90). It is, then, 14:22–33—commonly recognized for "the numerous OT theophanic elements … that are directly appropriated in Jesus' speech and actions" (p. 129)—that "opens a unique hermeneutical space" (p. 125) to decode the ungrammaticality, and to connect the beginning of the narrative where the ungrammaticality first appears to the end where the resolution is found, namely 28:9, 17. "Indeed, the swathe of intertexts in 14:22–33 … is so thick that one gets the impression that Matthew has narrated this scene almost entirely from the language of Exodus, Isaiah, and the Psalms, all interpenetrating one another, the chorus of which amplifies what Matthew is saying about Jesus" (p. 145). Thus, what is perceived in 2:1–12 and the truth of 4:10 get pushed together for mutual clarification and interpretation.

As the reader continues toward the narrative's end, Matthew has "provided … the proper repertoire for interpreting 22:41–46" (p. 186) and an invoking of Israel's Shema (23:8–10; cf. Deut 6:4 and Mal 2:10) to bind the identities of the Father and the Son together (which also encourages rereading passages like 1:21–25, 3:1–17, 11:1–12:8, and 18:19–20 though without the verb προσκυνέω). Across Matthew, therefore, the reader perceives "the sweeping and unified narrative christology that renders the identity of Jesus: the Christ, who is the unique Son of the Father, who as such is κύριος along with this Father, bring[ing] to fruition the eschatological salvation portended by the prophets as the return of the κύριος to his people" (p. 202).

In short, Matthew "binds together the identity of Father and Son through the language of προσκυνέω" (p. 107 *et passim*). To miss this, or to translate προσκυνέω as merely homage "is much too anemic an interpretation" (p. 106) and misses the very point of the entire gospel: to portray the identity of the Son *and the Father* (think 11:25–27). In so doing, "Matthew has reshaped the identity of—and therefore Israel's fundamental confession of and commitment to—'the Lord God' around the Father and the Son" (p. 234). "But it is precisely the worship of the *Son* that is key for Matthew's theological grammar, and it is with this filial language that Matthew skillfully navigates the double commitment to Israel's basic confession of the one God and the full worship of Jesus" (p. 240–41).

There is little to demur from in Leim's method, presentation of the evidence, rationale and conclusions. In fact, I think this is but another example of the fruits of the recent upsurge in narrative critical attentiveness to the Gospels. They are whole texts that cohere in their parts to present a consistent narratival universe. The more we attend to the connectivity of the parts across the whole, the more we see the complete picture the evangelists are giving us. When such studies are grounded in their original compositional contexts, the clearer still they become. It is the fact that Leim has attended so carefully to these things that make his argument very compelling.

Ironically, however, it is this very strength that makes one small critique seem big: I think 18:26 deserves more attention. There πίπτω and προσκυνέω are used together but not for Jesus or "God," suggesting that something less than "worship" (perhaps "invocation") can be understood for προσκυνέω within Matthew's grammar. Leim's rebuttal is that "the referential and symbolic nature of the parable" reveals that "the 'King' in the story manifestly represents God" (p. 65). I easily agree. But because Leim's method depends so much on the consistency of these terms (with the ungrammaticality generated by their apparently disparate uses a tool for rhetorical effectiveness, not a hindrance) I suspect a lot of readers will want a more detailed explanation of 18:26 within the scope of Matthew and a more thorough refutation of the scholars who have used 18:26 against the sort of position Leim defends.

These are, of course, comparatively minor complaints. Leim's work is, overall, sound and convincing. I hope Matthean scholars will wrestle with it thoroughly.

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Peter J. Leithart. *Revelation 1–11*. International Theological Commentary. London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2018. 512 pp. £81.00/$102.00.

Peter J. Leithart. *Revelation 12–22*. International Theological Commentary. London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2018. 512 pp. £81.00/$102.00.

Peter Leithart is well known as an erudite biblical and theological scholar. His commentaries such as *A Son to Me: An Exposition of 1 and 2 Samuel* (Moscow, ID: Canon, 2003) and *1 and 2 Kings*, Brazos Theological Commentary (Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2006) reveal his particular ability to write fresh, engaging theological commentaries that balance scholarly rigor with accessible application to the modern church. His two-volume commentary on Revelation is no different.

Leithart's contribution to Revelation scholarship is unique in a few positive ways. First, it is arguably the most *theological* Revelation commentary on offer. One of the most influential publications from recent decades on the theology of Revelation is Richard Bauckham's *The Theology of the Book of Revelation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), however that volume is a brief overview of major theological themes rather than a verse-by-verse commentary on the text. Craig Keener also comes to mind (*Revelation*, NIV Application Commentary [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2000]), but his contribution is pitched at a more popular level. At a towering 1,000 pages, Leithart's set obviously covers more theological ground, but his most unique theological contribution is his attention to Trinitarian themes, canonical contextualization, and theological ressourcement. Truly, no other Revelation commentary engages so well the storehouse of canonical, patristic, and medieval sources. Further, Leithart's ability to read retrospectively as a Trinitarian brings fresh and valuable insights to reading Revelation as a modern Christian. In this way, Leithart richly delivers on the promise laid out by the series editors.

For example, one of the most disputed items in Revelation scholarship is the identity of the "seven spirits" (Rev 1:4; 3:1; 4:5; 5:6). For some, the seven spirits are merely angelic or otherwise spiritual beings. Others argue that the number seven represents perfection or completion, arguing that the seven spirits more likely refer to the sevenfold power or ministry of the Holy Spirit. In his commentary on Revelation 1:4, Leithart takes the latter position, but does so with an intensely Trinitarian emphasis. He spends several pages (vol. 1, pp. 84–90) on the "triadic" nature of this opening doxological formula, highlighting a few things:

1. "Grace and peace come from a triple source" (p. 84);
2. "Filled out Trinitarianly, 'grace and peace' mean this: To establish peace on earth, the Father gives the Son and together with the Son gives the Spirit" (p. 85);
3. The order of the persons in the formula (Father, Spirit, Son) is different than traditional creedal formulas (Father, Son, Spirit). However, he does not find this entirely odd since throughout the New Testament, "the Father acts on and gives life to the Son through the Spirit. Father, Spirit, Son" (p. 85);
4. The shape of redemption is Trinitarian, both ontologically and economically (pp. 85–87);
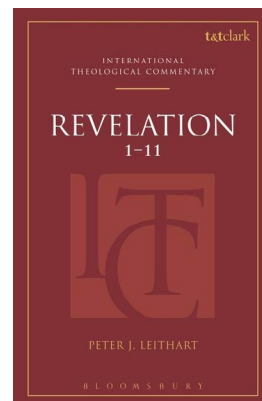
5. The order of the formula is also strange because the Spirit is given a sevenfold designation, however this might compute with Gen 1:2, in which the Spirit helps form creation in seven days (pp. 87–88);

6. John likes to play with sevens in general with the Spirit (3:1; 4:5; 5:6), Jesus (1:20), and the chapters on the seven churches (2–3) (pp. 89–90).

Second, in the vein of G. K. Beale (*The Book of Revelation*, NIGTC [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), Leithart also emphasizes the influence of the OT on Revelation. He asserts, "Revelation alludes to or echoes to virtually every book of the OT. It is the NT's "OTest" book" (vol. 1, p. 4). While this is a given in Revelation scholarship, Leithart stays close to the OT text as he comments, not allowing his theological method and presuppositions overpower the plainest sense of the book—the OT shape of John's vision. The danger of any theological commentary, especially one as explicitly stated as this contribution, is to exaggerate the systematic categories without giving proper due to the biblical and canonical storyline. Thankfully, Leithart largely avoids this trap. His treatment of the theological implications of the tree of life (Gen 2; Rev 2:7; 22:2–19) is a paramount example (vol. 2, pp. 425–31).

Third, the lack of an excessive focus on debates regarding the millennium in Rev 20 is refreshing. While this is an important theological conversation when dealing with Revelation, some discussions on the millennium would have you believe that Rev 20 is the entire focus of the book. Leithart still engages this debate with fairness and precision, ultimately taking a generally postmillennial position, but interprets the millennial mentions of Revelation against the horizon of first-century expectations and conditions, rather than using current news events as interpretive binoculars.

Our second commendation, however, leads to the most glaring flaw in Leithart's work. This review is not demanding Leithart's commentary become an historical-critical work, especially since that is clearly not its aim; however, the lack of sustained engagement with John's cultural and literary "world," particularly with reference to contemporary apocalyptic literature, at times undermines some of the theological depth. Systematic and biblical theologians can easily launch into theologizing from biblical texts without remembering that theology is not merely a retrospective culmination of OT and NT big picture ideas—it is also a product of its time, with its theology being formed by concepts, illustrations, and competing worldviews of its day. This is not to say that Revelation or any other biblical book is simply an amalgam of Jewish or Greco-Roman ideas; rather, it should not be ignored that Revelation is an example of a distinctly Christian rebuttal to the theological and political myths of its own time. Because he largely overlooks the apocalyptic background of the book, some of Leithart's theological deductions end up shallow.

One brief example must suffice. In dealing with the "one like a Son of Man" passage (1:9–20), Leithart helpfully brings out many of the theological and linguistic aspects—namely the heavenly glory of Jesus, the chiastic structure of John's description, and John's allusion to the Danielic Son of Man (vol. 1, pp. 103–28). However, while he briefly acknowledges other Jewish apocalypses in a few places (vol. 1, p. 56; vol. 2, pp. 196, 223, 231), he never mentions the Son of Man tradition in these sources, which at the very least *may have* influenced John's theological project. The same could be said for the "seven spirits" example listed above.

For example, one could note that John's Son of Man theology is distinguished from other Jewish apocalypses that his audience would have been familiar with, such as *1 Enoch* or *4 Ezra*—both of which refer to Daniel's Son of Man as a type of divine-redeemer. It is important to the theology of Revelation to note that John takes it a step further and continues to elevate Jesus higher than other Son of Man

stories as Revelation progresses, eventually placing him at the center of worship in the throne-sharing scenes of Rev 4–5. John evidently uses extrabiblical and theological reflection common in his day and turns it on its head. The Son of Man is not merely messenger of God's redemption as he appears in other apocalyptic works—he is God *himself* returning to make all things new. Theologically speaking, then, Revelation is not simply a storehouse for later Trinitarian reflection as Leithart ably shows; it is also an ancient document that uniquely elevates Jesus to the super-divine status of YHWH himself, when both Jewish apocalypses and Greco-Roman imperial cults thought men entering the divine realm was amazing enough as it is.

This is one of several examples that illustrate how ignoring the apocalyptic influence on John's own apocalypse weakens theological reflection. It is well past time for biblical and systematic theologians to learn from and engage one another in a consistent, concrete way. This commitment will only strengthen the theological reflections and precision of both disciplines.

This quibble aside, Leithart's two-volume commentary is remarkable in its depth, breadth, and creativity. This student of Revelation warmly welcomes this contribution to Revelation's scholarly corpus. It is highly recommended for any serious student or scholar.

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Richard N. Longenecker. *The Epistle to the Romans: A Commentary on the Greek Text*. New International Greek Testament Commentary. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2016. lxvii + 1140 pp. £61.99/$80.00

Given its length, depth of argument, and breadth of coverage, Longenecker's contribution to the NIGTC series takes its place alongside the most significant and valuable English-language commentaries on Romans. In part, this is because it represents the fruit of a lifetime of study of Paul and his letters. Some of the seeds for this present work were sown in *Paul, Apostle of Liberty* (New York: Harper & Row, 1964 [rev. ed. 2015]), and the groundwork laid in *Introducing Romans: Critical Issues in Paul's Most Famous Letter* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2011). It is best read alongside the latter, since the introductory section is relatively brief for a commentary of this size (39 pages), in many cases summarizing what Longenecker deals with at much greater length in *Introducing Romans*. The commentary divides the letter up into ten major sections, with various subsections therein. Each subsection of the letter is discussed under the following headings: "Translation," "Textual Notes," "Form/Structure/Setting," "Exegetical Comments," "Biblical Theology," and "Contextualization for Today."

A flow diagram is not given, but Longenecker's understanding of the letter's structure is readily discernable from the "Contents" and the beginning of each section. Notable here is that he understands the letter body to start at 1:13 (pp. 132–34), and 1:16–17 to function as the thesis statement of 1:16–4:25 (and not of the whole letter, pp. 155–57). This opens the way for Longenecker's main thesis (reiterated at various points), that 5:1–8:39 functions as a discrete contextualization of the gospel, distinct from, rather than a development of, 1:16–4:25. Writing to a church that had its theological roots in the Jerusalem
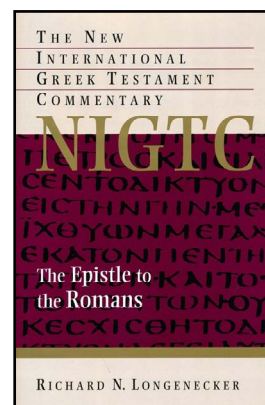
church (pp. 9, 267), Paul presents his "spiritual gift" (1:11) in 5:1–8:36, namely his contextualization of the gospel to gentile audiences, which he otherwise refers to as "my gospel" (2:16; 16:25; pp. 16–18, 27, 283). By contrast, in 1:16–4:25 and 9:1–11:36 Paul presents a Jewish contextualization of the gospel, referencing ideas already familiar to the believers in Rome. There are other notable theses and emphases: in terms of its genre, the letter is a "protreptic message" (*logos protreptikos*, "word of exhortation," pp. 14–15, 41), the apostle filling "this ancient form of rhetoric with Christian content" (p. 768); Paul had two "primary" purposes (giving of the "spiritual gift" and seeking support for the Spanish mission), a "subsidiary" purpose, and two "further" purposes in writing Romans (pp. 10–11); 9:1–11:36 is an example of a "christianized version of remnant rhetoric" (p. 769); and there is a pervasive interest in rhetorical conventions and oral patterns, which Longenecker sees as key to unlocking various parts of the letter.

The commentary has a number of significant strengths. The foremost in my view is that each passage is interpreted within the context of the history of interpretation, from the patristic period to the present day. Longenecker often summarizes this history in a remarkably full manner. For example, the excursus on "The Righteousness of God" (pp. 168–76) references Plato, Aristotle, Tertullian, Cyprian, Minucius Felix, Arnobius, Lactantius, Erasmus, Ambrosiaster, Augustine, Simplicianus, Aquinas, Cajetan, Luther, Cremer, Stuhlmacher, Sanders, Dunn, Ziesler, and Fitzmyer. Second, Longenecker presents a wealth of suggestive information, enriched by decades of studying Paul's letters. For example, the discussion of the phrase καθὼς γέγραπται ("just as it is written") in 1:17 is accompanied by an overview of Paul's use of scriptural citation formulas (pp. 180–82), and the interpretation of 5:13 is informed by the pattern of Paul's use of οὐ ("not") and ἀλλά ("rather," "nevertheless") in 2 Corinthians (pp. 592–93). Numerous other examples of the breadth and depth of Longenecker's knowledge of Paul's letters could be cited. Third, he has a keen eye to the apologetic force of some of Paul's statements. This fits with his understanding of Paul's "subsidiary purpose," which was to defend against criticisms of his person and misrepresentations of his message (pp. 11, 283). Although several scholars have argued convincingly for an apologetic purpose behind Romans, arguably few commentators have been as attentive as Longenecker to the apologetic import of various parts of the letter.

There are weaknesses. First, the cost of the breadth of Longenecker's coverage is a prose style that is typically discursive rather than precise, and is, therefore, quite different in presentation from, say, Cranfield on Romans. The effect of this is that it is sometimes difficult to access what Longenecker thinks about a particular verse. Second, I would have appreciated more *weighing* of interpretive options and *validating* of exegetical decisions. To give just one example, Longenecker argues that understanding ἐφ' ᾧ (5:12) to mean "on the basis of which" is "more accurate linguistically and makes better sense contextually" than the other options (pp. 589–90), but he does not explain why this is so. Third, there is a certain unevenness of coverage, with some parts of the letter receiving much more attention than others. For example, although 48 pages are given to the treatment of 2:1–16, 6:1–14 is covered in merely 11 pages. Fourth, I am unpersuaded by Longenecker's main thesis, which to my mind underplays the significant linguistic, theological, and biblical connections between 1:16–4:25 and 5:1–8:36.

These strengths and weaknesses combine to suggest that Longenecker's commentary is better suited to some applications than to others. Among the major English-language commentaries on Romans it will not serve the pastor or preacher as well as some others. But any scholar, pastor, or student will learn

much from the wealth of scholarship contained within this volume. When it comes to outlining the history of interpretation of Romans, it has very few peers.

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Paul Trebilco. *Outsider Designations and Boundary Construction in the New Testament: Christian Communities and the Formation of Group Identity*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017. 366 pp. £75.00/$99.99.

Some of the richest insights when interpreting the Bible come when readers attend to its subtle details. In *Outsider Designations and Boundary Construction in the New Testament,* Paul Trebilco demonstrates the fruit of such labor. A NT professor at the University of Otago, he has previously written on the subject of self-designations and group identity in the early church. Trebilco now turns his attention to the way that a close study of outsider designations can assist in the exegesis of Scripture and shed light on the early Christian movement.

Aside from an introduction and conclusion, the book has nine chapters. It begins by explaining Treblico's methodological approach. He draws from multiple disciplines, including social identity theory, sociolinguistics, and the sociology of deviance. He then surveys a broad range of terms found in the Bible to distinguish outsiders from insiders. Some designations were common to the surrounding culture. Others stem from the LXX, including "sinners," "transgressors," "evil doers," and "the unrighteous." These observations illustrate continuity between the early church and its Jewish roots. As will be seen, this background also highlights the contrasting ways that Christians refashioned such language for their own purposes.

Biblical writers demonstrate flexibility and creativity when using outsider designations. For instance, Treblico highlights the uncommon (if not unprecedented) use of ἄπιστος to identify outsiders as "unbelievers." He adds, "'Unbelievers' as a designation is a strongly negative term that creates a much higher boundary than 'low boundary terms' like 'neighbours', or 'all people'. Those designated by this term do not have the key insider-feature of πίστις" (p. 51).

Even more generic terms for "outsider" (e.g., οἱ ἔξω, οἱ ἔξωθεν, ἰδιώτης) draw a clear distinction between insiders and outsiders. Trebilco sharpens the point by noting how ancient writers made a "strong contrast between ἀδελφοί and all other non-family members who are 'outwards' – ἔξω" (p. 100). Still, he warns against the impression that outsider designations were intended to "vilify or demean outsiders." In 1 Corinthians, for example, "[Paul] encourages social differentiation from these clearly labelled 'outsiders' but without a corresponding social distance" (p. 58).

The discussion of οἱ ἁμαρτωλοί ("the sinners") in chapter 6 typifies the insights offered in the book. It shows how Jesus and Paul altered conventional ways of using ἁμαρτωλοί. In the Gospels, Jesus undermined this well-known outsider label in two ways. First, he applies the term ἁμαρτωλοί to those whom he accepts as followers. Second, one sees in other passages, "Jesus is redefining 'sinners': they are no longer blatant law-breakers, but rather those who reject him" (p. 129). As Trebilco summarizes, Jesus
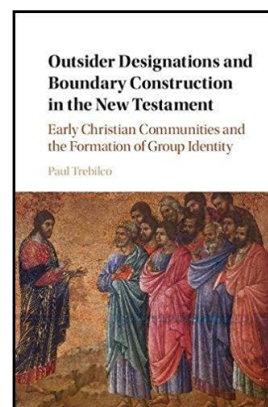
"un-othered the other." Despite appearances, Paul like Jesus also subverts the term by contending that "'sinners' need be outsiders no longer" (p. 140). Paul does so by designating all humanity as ἁμαρτωλοί, magnifying the extensive reach and power of sin.

Trebilco shows respect for context and nuance. This is a consistent strength in his analysis. He observes how terms like τὰ ἔθνη and οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι function in seeming contrary ways depending on context. While the former routinely denotes "Gentiles" or "all nations" (i.e., outsiders with respect to Jews), Paul describes non-Jewish Christ-believers as "former Gentiles." Thus, a Jewish term for outsiders is reapplied to non-Christian outsiders. Other authors also adapt the meaning of ἔθνος, referring to "new community of Jesus' followers in Matt 21:43 and 1 Pet 2:9" (p. 176). Likewise, writers use Ἰουδαῖοι to suit their need. While "Jew" can refer to an ethnic or political identity, it can signify outsiders who oppose Jesus (cf. John's Gospel) or are outsiders to the Christian movement (cf. Acts). Alternatively, it becomes a positive designation for insiders, even Gentile believers, in Rom 2:26–29 (cf. Rev 2:9).

The NT epistles exemplify a major theme found throughout the book. According to Trebilco, NT writers strategically blend high boundary terms as "a clear demarcation of group identity" and low boundary terms to "encourage interaction and mission" among outsiders (p. 279). Strong boundary lines serve different purposes. In 1 Corinthians, Paul's outsider language seeks to "reinforce the distinctiveness and 'set-apartness' of the Christian community," whose identity was threatened by their conformity to the surrounding culture (p. 215).

In Romans, Paul's critique of outsiders is indirect. The function of outsider terms is to highlight the significant change brought about by Christ. However, in some passages, "the actual language he uses to refer to outsiders encourages harmonious relations" (p. 225). Thus, in Rom 12:14–13:10, Paul "avoids (whether consciously or unconsciously) terms that create a strong social and theological dualism" (p. 231).

While Trebilco broadens our understanding of the NT, the book's most significant contribution might lie elsewhere. His insights equip readers to construct a practical theology whereby the church can discern its identity in relationship to the world. The early Christians' use of terms reveals the conscious and/or unconscious ways that Christ reshaped their identity and mission. Trebilco gives a practical implication of outsider designation when he says, "High group boundaries enable them to cope with persecution and resonate with the call to endurance" (p. 239).

The early church did not eradicate all social distinctions; in a sense, they reinforced the lines that distinguished insiders from outsiders. Trebilco concludes, "to undermine all outsider labels would be to destroy group boundaries and hence group identity" (p. 286). Accordingly, this book will benefit anyone who wants to consider how biblical writers both understood and shaped the church's sense of identity amid diverse social groups.

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— HISTORY AND HISTORICAL THEOLOGY —

David P. Barshinger and Douglas A. Sweeney, eds. *Jonathan Edwards and Scripture: Biblical Exegesis in British North America*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2018. xiv + 276 pp. £22.99/$34.95.

As the Edwards Renaissance continues, a happy trend is interest in studying Edwards's approach to the Bible. This interest is pursued by Edwards scholars from various backgrounds and disciplines, as participation in the recent *Jonathan Edwards and Scripture* compendium demonstrates. The editors, Douglas A. Sweeney and David P. Barshinger, have each written authoritative, pioneering works on the topic (see Sweeney's *Edwards the Exegete: Biblical Interpretation and Anglo-Protestant Culture on the Edge of the Enlightenment* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015] and Barshinger's *Jonathan Edwards and the Psalms: A Redemptive-Historical Vision of Scripture* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015]). They have assembled an anthology of essays attending to Edwards's engagement with the Holy Writ—the aim of which is to observe Edwards's devotion to scripture, assess him as a biblical interpreter in comparison to his Reformed heritage and enlightened context, and to appreciate the uniqueness of Edwards's constructive biblical theology and theological interpretation of scripture. Since a comprehensive summary is impractical, this review focuses on how the contributions, though valuable independently, ought to be read in tandem. Their arguments corroborate one another and display a consensus on Edwards's scriptural interpretation. Apologies to readers who anticipate a linear account; this review is thematically produced.
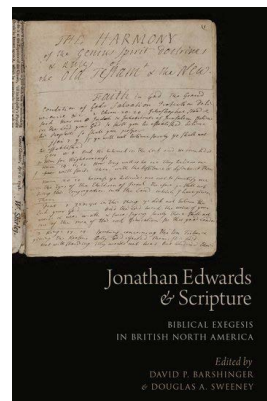
Kenneth Minkema (chapter 1) depicts Edwards's scriptural practices. Edwards kept canonical reviews of scripture and had favorite texts and textual "clusters," which are found in Edwards's "Miscellanies," "Blank Bible," "Notes on Scripture," other thematic notebooks, and the scripture texts he habitually re-preached. Minkema's introduction to these less known parts of Edwards's corpus is helpful because all later contributors amply use these texts. Adriaan Neele's study (chapter 3) explores Edwards's secondary interlocutor, Matthew Poole, who introduced to Edwards much more secondary literature. As Neele summarizes, Poole's *Synopsis* "is a composition of a vast number and variety of authors of various faith traditions" (p. 56). Robert Brown's case-study of Edwards and the Pentateuch furthers these arguments (chapter 7). Edwards gave generous time to studying the historical narratives of Genesis and Exodus in order to defend Mosaic authorship (cf. entry No. 416 in "Notes on Scripture"). Edwards also resourced English translations of French-Catholic scholars, Richard Simon and Louis Ellies Du Pin, for his research. Brown's article is preceded by a Pentateuchal case-study from luminary of American historical studies, Mark Noll, who provides an account of Edwards's interpretation of Genesis 32:22–32, Jacob's wrestling with "a Man" (chapter 6).

In chapter 2, Stephen Nichols asserts that Edwards's reformed interpretive heritage caused him to place great value on harmonizing the Old and New Testament. This harmony respected the "Christological scope" of Scripture. Edwards also appropriated interpretive practices from late antiquity and medievalists by reading texts typologically; this allowed for infinite spiritual senses of the text. Later, David Kling reveals that Edwards believed the unconverted may correctly interpret scripture's historical and exegetical sense, but only the converted may comprehend scripture's spiritual sense (chapter 12).

Ava Chamberlain's essay on Edwards and Jonah's whale is a case-study of Edwards's typological and spiritual interpretation (chapter 8). She compares Edwards's theological work with Cotton Mather's use of natural science to resolve the unbelievable elements of this story. Edwards repaired the historical and natural science problems by employing his spiritual sense of the text.

Chamberlain's essay demonstrates how fruitful research comes from matters even Edwards gave scant attention. Three other essays reveal this. Remarkably, each one surfaces theological and cultural tensions Edwards managed in respect to Catholicism. Stephen Stein's essay on Edwards and the Virgin Mary exhibits that Edwards staunchly opposed the Catholic doctrine of Mariology, but he did not marginalize Mary (chapter 10). Her role in redemptive history as the pre-natal vessel for the two-natured Son of God becomes, for Edwards, a typological picture of those who "foster the life of Christ in the world" (p. 190). James Byrd's blend of intellectual, social, and military history discusses Edwards's function as a civil figure, who supported a just war interpretation of scripture to enlist support for England's conflicts with Catholic Spain and France (chapter 11). Gerald McDermott's inquiry into evangelical Edwards's theological commitments suggests that Edwards was quite Thomistic on a handful of positions (chapter 13). Furthermore, Edwards appears to subscribe to a *Prima Scriptura* rather than *Sola Scriptura* position. Before readers rise up against McDermott's assessment, it is vital to observe that Protestantism's catholicity has always featured marks of Thomism; Edwards is no outlier.

Charles Hambrick-Stowe's contribution on the Bible in Edwards's personal life and spiritual practice illumines his fundamental preaching aim to elicit revival and stir affections (chapter 4). Edwards's writing practices were exercises of biblical spiritual reflection to foster personal revival and ongoing conversion, which Kling alludes to in chapter 12 (p. 229–31). Jan Stievermann's and Ryan Hoselton's contribution compares Cotton Mather's experimental piety to Edwards's (chapter five). For Edwards, experimental piety is denoted by "spiritual notions in Scripture lively to the mind by stirring the saint's internal senses and perceptions to feel and see their beauty, concinnity, and goodness" (p. 102). Michael McClymond neatly pulls together these conclusions about Edwards's spiritual understanding of Scripture as he unfolds his "logic of fullness" in John's writings (chapter nine). Edwards believed that the spiritual life involved an ever-increasing experience of God's grace as one perpetually comes into deeper intimacy and union with the triune God. McClymond asserts that Edwards's "logic of fullness" anticipates the inaugurated eschatology of Richard Bauckham and the "dynamic relation" of C. H. Dodd.

These essays will engender further critical engagement by scholars preoccupied by Jonathan Edwards. Furthermore, by acquainting readers with ongoing projects, like Cotton Mather's *Biblia America*, this study alerts readers to the value of exploring Edwards's and Mather's Atlantic World frontier. Pastors and interested lay-readership will find comfort and encouragement from Edwards's traditional yet innovative interpretive work; Edwards preserved his Reformed heritage, while creatively protecting sound doctrine from sceptics' and liberals' assault upon the church.

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Robert W. Caldwell III. *Theologies of the American Revivalists: From Whitefield to Finney*. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2017. 246 pp. £26.87/$35.00.

Evangelical history has benefited from a growth of studies aimed variously at its institutions, people, theology, and movements. The Great Awakening, the Second Great Awakening, along with other smaller revivals have all received attention. Likewise, the theology of the revivalists such as Jonathan Edwards, George Whitefield, John Wesley, or Charles Finney have also received treatments. What are not always clear are the theological connections across the revivals and revivalists. Robert Caldwell, associate professor of Church History at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, has provided a much-needed book that explains these historical and theological connections of the revivalists as well as the major pushbacks against revival theology. As a result, *Theologies of the American Revivalists* masterfully lays open one of the most important theological motivators of early American Protestant religion: revival theology.
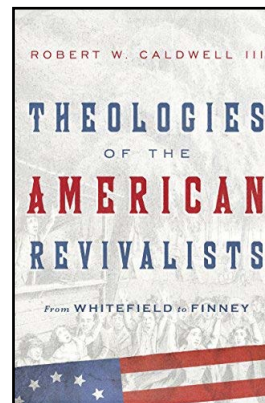
Behind revival writing stood various theological schools as well as theological and practical issues. These schools, and their issues, largely drove revival theologies. Caldwell argues that the major issues were the nature of human redemption, the proper balance of divine and human activity in conversion, the nature of true religious experience, and the various ways that a preacher can or should call individuals to Christ (p. 4). The underlying theologies drew from traditional Calvinism, Wesleyan Arminianism, and Edwardsean Calvinism. The practical issues were what does a preacher do while preaching and what does an individual need to spiritually experience conversion (pp. 5–6)? Taking these assumptions and questions into account, Caldwell argues that there are essentially three components to a revival theology: "their theologies of salvation, the ways they practically preached the gospel, and the conversion experience they expected from those experiencing salvation" (p. 6).

The book traces a chronological line from the first major revivalists (chapter one), then follows the main Edwardsean tradition (chapters two, three, four, and seven), considers some critiques (chapters two and eight), and explores side paths taken by the Methodists (chapter five) and Baptists (chapter six). Theologians as diverse as Jonathan Edwards, Andrew Crosswell, Samuel Hopkins, Nathaniel Taylor, John Wesley, Andrew Fuller, Charles Finney, Charles Hodge, and Alexander Campbell receive accurate, though brief, presentations.

In the end, Caldwell traces four major streams of revival theology: moderate evangelical revival theology (traditional Puritan Calvinism, beginning with Whitefield), free grace revival theology (more radical evangelicals), Edwardsean Calvinist revival theology (Edwards through the New Divinity and New England theologians), and Methodist Arminian revival theology (Wesley through its American expositors, concluding with Finney). Beyond these four streams, there were divergences and variations. Baptists, for one, do not fit the streams and were more eclectic in their appropriations. There were more progressive revival theologies, such as New Haven Theology and Charles Finney. And, there were major resistances against revival theology, such as the Princeton theologians and the Restoration movement leaders. Caldwell gives four factors at play in revival theology: the bondage or freedom of the will, particularism or universalism, understandings of the standard length of conversion, and the tension between traditional theological systems and common-sense readings of Scripture (pp. 223–26). These four factors, the theological answers to these questions, and the theological underpinnings attached

to the various systems go a long way to explaining why revival theology (and American theology in general) developed in the various ways it did.

Caldwell has provided a valuable service to the study of American theology. His exposition of Edwards's theology and the subsequent Edwardsean stream is a vital resource for students looking to grasp the flow and development of American theology up to 1850. To understand the theological debates that centered on the atonement, imputation and original sin, perfection, or even the "New Measures" of Charles Finney, one would do well to gain a grasp of the history laid out in this book. This book is not a full-blown history of American theology during the colonial period and early republic, but such a history is simply incomplete without the content of Caldwell's work. There is no other work on American religious history that provides such a detailed overview of revival theology and its place in American religious history. Though the subject matter can be dry for readers unfamiliar with the complex theological debates of the time period, Caldwell does well to ameliorate against this both with clear prose and clear signposts of where he is going and where he has been.

Beyond the theological and historical discussions there is also a wonderful pastoral dimension. The author ably shows how revival theology was driven, at its heart, by a need to know how God works in the pastor's heart and in the heart of his people. Caldwell argues that our secular age and the church's critique of it could use explicit consideration of the issues of revival theology. His own pastoral suggestion is on point and worth repeating: "A robust revival theology, one that intimately unites head and heart, Scripture, proclamation, and life, would certainly help galvanize preaching, capture the religious imagination of the lost, and aid in imparting a theological vision that draws sinners to life and raises up God-glorifying disciples" (p. 229). On the whole, *Theologies of the American Revivalists* is a skilled presentation of historical theology that admirably serves historical, theological, and pastoral purposes. I highly recommend the work.

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Jeffrey S. McDonald. *John Gerstner and the Renewal of Presbyterian and Reformed Evangelicalism in Modern America*. Princeton Theological Monograph Series 226. Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2017. 263 pp. £26.00/$33.00.

In *John Gerstner and the Renewal of Presbyterian and Reformed Evangelicalism in Modern America*, Jeffrey S. McDonald argues that John Gerstner played a significant role in the development and expansion of a Reformed subculture among 20th century evangelicals. McDonald finds Gerstner to be "astonishingly overlooked" in both American Presbyterian history and the wider literature of American evangelicalism (p. 11). McDonald's volume, an adaptation of his University of Stirling dissertation supervised by David Bebbington, offers a corrective to this trend and an early contribution to Gerstner studies.

McDonald weaves two story arcs throughout the book: Gerstner's life and ministry and the trajectory of post-WWII American Presbyterianism. In this sense, McDonald's volume is similar to George Marsden's *Reforming*
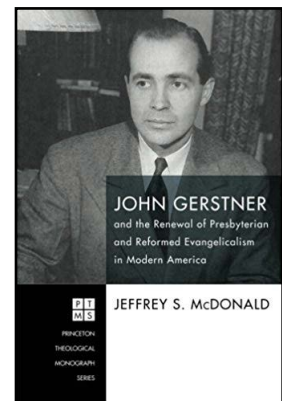
Fundamentalism, though Marsden uses Fuller Seminary as a lens through which to understand Neo-Evangelicalism, whereas McDonald uses Gerstner as a lens through which to understand the renewal of Reformed theology in America. Throughout an introduction and eight chapters, McDonald provides a chronological account of Gerstner's life and evaluates his importance to American religion (p. 2).

McDonald demonstrates that much of Gerstner's later thought was forged in his early days of study at Westminster College (under the tutelage of John Orr), Westminster Theological Seminary, and Harvard University. Gerstner's lifelong theological distinctives—championing Old Princeton theology, safeguarding inerrancy, and advancing evidentialist apologetics—were "cemented" in these early days, especially through Orr's influence (p. 49). Gerstner's teaching career began in 1950 and carried on for over four decades. McDonald highlights the theological tension Gerstner faced among his Presbyterian brethren throughout his ministry and denominational service. He summarizes Gerstner's teaching, speaking, and writing goals well: "oppose theological liberalism, promote Reformed theology within evangelicalism and the UPCUSA, defend rational apologetics, and use Jonathan Edwards and the Old School Princetonians to achieve the first three objectives" (p. 106). Because of his conservative views and strong personality, Gerstner often found himself in the middle of theological and denominational skirmishes. One colleague quipped, "don't get into a debate with Gerstner … he will win even if he's wrong" (p. 196).

McDonald emphasizes two key elements of Gerstner's life: his promotion of Jonathan Edwards and his influence upon the infrastructure of American evangelicalism. Gerstner's decades-long fascination with Edwards helped spur evangelical interest in the American colonial theologian. McDonald demonstrates why Gerstner is an important figure in the renaissance of Edwardsian scholarship, even if Gerstner's legacy is checkered on the topic. Gerstner was Edwards's megaphone to post-WWII evangelicals (p. 129).

If Edwards had a profound impact on Gerstner, Gerstner too had a profound impact on many evangelical leaders, schools, and institutions. From his mentoring of R. C. Sproul (and his later affiliation with Sproul's Ligonier Ministries), to teaching at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, to helping establish the International Council on Biblical Inerrancy, John Gerstner was an "evangelical dynamo" (p. 106). Two strengths that fueled Gerstner's influence were his pointed speaking style and his ability to write in effective ways for lay audiences. These skills allowed him to play a "leading role" in the Reformed evangelical movement (p. 212).

McDonald's volume is an important contribution to the history of American Presbyterianism and the broader evangelical movement. He reclaims Gerstner as not only a figure deserving of attention in his own right, but a figure who is vital for a proper understanding of the emergence of Reformed convictions and sympathies in a variety of evangelical denominations, schools, and movements. McDonald shows that Neo-Evangelical theologians (whom Gerstner supported in the pages of *Christianity Today* and counted as theological comrades) were not the only thinkers combatting theological liberalism. Gerstner was as well, and he in the context of a mainline denomination suspicious of his views.

McDonald's volume is balanced. He is appreciative of Gerstner's ministry and yet offers critical remarks where necessary, especially regarding Gerstner's weaknesses as a historian and interpreter of Jonathan Edwards. The reader gains a sense of Gerstner's "resilience" and "persevering spirit" in the face of professional, scholarly, and denominational disappointments (p. 199). As the book contains numerous Presbyterian acronyms and cites them throughout (often without reference), readers acquainted with American Presbyterian history will track with the terminology easier than readers

unfamiliar with the terrain. Still, this does not harm the book's readability and is understandable considering Gerstner's historical context. Scholars and students of American evangelicalism will find the book to be an important contribution that addresses a blind-spot in American evangelical research. Interested pastors will find in Gerstner a model of how to communicate complex ideas in an engaging way to their congregations.

Overall, *John Gerstner and the Renewal of Presbyterian and Reformed Evangelicalism in Modern America* is a worthy assessment of Gerstner's life and legacy. It provides a cogent and compelling account of the man who, despite numerous setbacks and marginalization, provided "the necessary energy that has led to the expansion of Presbyterian and Reformed evangelicalism" in America (p. 212).

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Ben Myers. *The Apostles' Creed: A Guide to the Ancient Catechism*. Christian Essentials. Bellingham, WA: Lexham, 2018. 147 pp. £11.99/$15.99.

Ben Myers deftly presents an inviting, expository journey through a familiar document of the Christian faith in his recent work *The Apostles' Creed: A Guide to the Ancient Catechism*. Whether you have grown up reciting the Apostles' Creed weekly or came to it academically as a theologian, pastor, or lay-person, this short volume is certainly weighty enough to become your field guide. Myers, an Australian professor of theology, literature, and philosophy, research fellow at the Centre for Public and Contextual Theology at Charles Sturt University, and director of the Millis Institute, composes his work from a personal background of academia, causing this book to read with more depth than an average trade publication on the topic might. However, despite its academic credentials, the writing is accessible and tight as Myers loads each word with maximum gravitas so as to say as much as possible in the small space allotted.
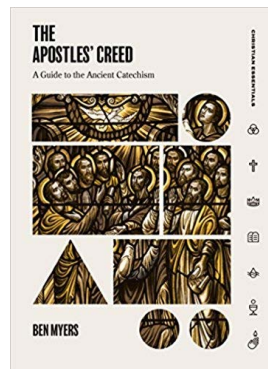
The content itself is an easy to follow exposition of the Apostle's Creed text. The book first divides the larger Creed into thematic articles then tackles the individual ideas. Sometimes a whole phrase, at other times a single word, the chapters use this episodic framework to delve into theological and scriptural issues raised by each portion. This model allows for the one of the greatest strengths of the work as Myers retethers each phrase to its context in historical theology. Myers's approach is a welcome response when the typical Christian of today would rarely consider the fact that each phrase was carefully selected to speak to real issues being raised at the time of its composition and compilation.

One historical theology example Myers illuminates involves the line "He ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father." While this seems like a simple declaration of a literal reading of scripture, the book points out that many dualist heresies and the teachings of Marcion had made it their mission to dissect the miraculous and spiritual from the physical (pp. 87–89). The ascension of Jesus created problems for all of these groups for different reasons. Yet, those holding to the orthodox stance on the union of God and man bound inseparable in the figure of Jesus chose to go on record in defense

of a literal ascension and a return to full glory, honor, and power alongside God the Father in the form of this seemingly simple line.

The writing is brief and succinct to the point that at times the reader is left wanting more on a certain thought or idea. For example, early in the book Myers references that early Christians were baptized naked but then proceeds to awkwardly avoid commentary on this point and chooses instead to maintain his laser-focus on the theological implications of the act rather than the sociological questions of the reader (pp. 1–2). Yet despite this effort to contain so much inside the confines of the series format Myers writes with vivid imagery that welcomes the modern reader into the mind of the ancient Christian who is literally living out the words of the creed in real time.

Perhaps due to the effort to keep the work connected to the historical context or perhaps instead to keep it short, alternative interpretations or arguments against elements of the creed are not exposed to their full potential. For example, did Christ descend into a literal hell or someplace else, and what are the ramifications of this doctrine (pp. 79–84)? Myers instead focuses more on the original intent of the document coupled with the scripture and tradition used to compose it. In many ways, the creed is taken at face value with a quiet assumption that the reader has a favorable view of the creedal theology.

If I began the book with moderate expectations due to my familiarity with the creed itself and my skepticism towards Myers's brevity, I noticed that my interest and speed of reading picked up momentum with each passing page. I wanted to know more, and this hunger kept me scurrying madly towards the back cover. The series preface claims to be producing volumes that pass down "tradition that matters" (p. ix). As I personally write from a Baptist perspective, I have been rewarmed to a document that my tribe has often avoided simply because it bears too much the smell of tradition and creedal austerity. Myers presents the creed instead as simple, theological truths, rooted in a defense of scripture and doctrine that were summarized and standardized to help early believers stand firm in the face of persecution, heresy, and insult. In this way, Myers opens an illuminating door for all who would sit at the feet of the earliest church fathers and be reintroduced to the simple, distilled truth proclaimed by the Apostles' Creed.

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Jeffrey P. Straub. *The Making of Battle Royal: The Rise of Liberalism in Northern Baptist Life, 1870–1920*. Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2018. vii + 390 pp. £34.00/$48.00.

The buildings are grand. In now-faded images, the trees are tall and blooming. The picture of Rochester Theological Seminary in the early twentieth-century is one of confidence, ambition, and solidity. Here is a school, the campus says, that will endure and make inroads for the kingdom of God. The northern Baptists were ascendant, and schools like Crozer, Colgate, and Chicago pursued a similarly heady course.

Fast forward 100 or so years. Today, neither Crozer, nor Rochester, nor Colgate stands on its own. In a strange twist of conglomeration, the three schools are one, though each seeks to preserve its unique heritage through the affiliate designation: Colgate Rochester Crozer Divinity School. According to online sources, the school has about 90 students.

Curious minds can only wonder: what happened to northern Baptists as a movement—once an empire on the rise, now a marginal religious presence in America? We find many of the answers in *The Making of a Battle Royal: The Rise of Liberalism in Northern Baptist Life, 1870–1920*. Jeff Straub, professor of Historical Theology and registrar at Central Baptist Theological Seminary, built the present volume off of his doctoral research under historian Michael Haykin. *Battle Royal* fits well with ongoing scholarship on Protestant liberalism. Straub's book stands alongside the previous publications of Gary Dorrien (with his trilogy on liberal theology), Richard Wightman Fox (particularly his work on Reinhold Niebuhr), and Gregory Wills (his history of Southern Seminary includes several essential chapters on C. H. Toy and others).

Battle Royal shows, in sum, that the pyrotechnics set off by Harry Emerson Fosdick in the 1920s were prepared decades before. They took shape in the place where ministry—sound or unsound—is often incubated: the seminary. Though this sturdy text is academic in tone and format, I was gripped in my own analysis of the text by how urgently missiological Straub's academic scholarship is. Because of this modern-day relevance, I now list three principles I identified in *Battle Royal* that speak not only to the settled past, but the unsettled present.

First, everything depends upon the doctrine of Scripture. Over and over again, we see that the first doctrine the liberal leaders reenvisioned was that of bibliology. In the mind of this mold, the text is sacred but not inerrant. Witness William Newton Clarke, who made the sly argument that poring over the Bible led to just this view: "[T]he Bible itself, upon examination shows me that it is not a book infallible throughout, in which error does not exist" (p. 105). That is, the serious student of Scripture finds that Scripture does not want its students to be so theologically serious. Then as now, Christians were encouraged to doubt the Bible, but not to doubt those who doubt the Bible.

Bibliology was the first doctrinal domino to fall, but many fell after it—a propitiatory atonement, an exclusivistic call to Christ on the mission field, a commitment to expository preaching. The church became a social change agent, committed to a gently Marxist vision of economic uplift in the Rauschenbuschian form. "Soul salvation" was out; social betterment was in. Over time, the church's mission mirrored that of progressive politics until the two essentially merged.

Second, conservatives only woke up to the true threat of liberal theology when it was too late. The Baptist movement in general was ripe for just the sort of plucking that occurred in this period, for
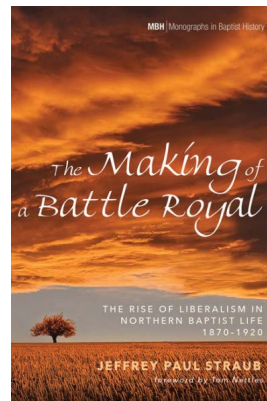
the Baptists of the north had not lashed themselves to confessions. The New Hampshire confession provided some basis for theological mooring, but the liberal theologians merely worked around it, employing "double-speak" and shrewd words (pp. 16, 264). In general, the liberal leaders proved far, far more cunning than the conservatives. They organized against protests from the right; they gave public affirmations of Baptist pieties that mollified the masses; they networked and hired and corresponded like crazy.

These insights matter for today. Then as now, conservatives are often better at building individual ministries, led by a singularly gifted figure, while liberals are often better at laying the institutional groundwork for wholescale takeover that proves impossible to dislodge. By the time Bible-loving northern Baptists woke to the threat of their eclipse, it was too late. They were in checkmate. Contra the stereotype—the canard, in some cases—of the "fighting fundamentalists," the conservatives, in point of fact, often *wavered* in the face of doctrinal compromise. Division and massive ecclesial change came because of one group and one group alone: the liberals.

Third, the church needs theologians and pastor-theologians who together promote sound doctrine. Perhaps the saddest figure we encounter in the text is A. H. Strong. He is the strangest of characters: he held to a form of Reformed doctrine but hired Walter Rauschenbusch, giving the latter a priceless platform for his social gospel (pp. 147–50, 229–34). This type, the conservative who wants to be friend to all parties (ala Clarence Macartney), is perhaps the most bewildering type of leader found in the fundamentalist-modernist controversies of the 1920s.

Such sad examples remind us that the great need of our own age is men who will lead churches and seminaries and colleges with personal warmth, doctrinal conviction, and confessional fidelity. God has called men to be the theological leaders of the home, church, and the teaching institutions of his body. This is the need of the hour. We read Straub's study for scholarly purposes, but the scholar or pastor who loves the church cannot read it in a detached way. The northern Baptists let the fire ebb on their watch. Will we?

The verdict on liberal Baptist theology is in. It bankrupted schools, closed countless churches, and shuttered many missions outposts. This is not opinion; it is fact. Sound doctrine brings life. Unsound doctrine steals it away. We see this in the 19th and early 20th centuries, when liberalism entered grand buildings and teeming classrooms. Over time, it left them empty, collecting dust on an elegant hill, a "For Sale" sign placed discretely by the road.

In so many places in America, churches must compete with one another, block by block, for members. The burden is a terrific one for pastors and church planters. But in the north, and particularly the northeast, a different burden predominates. There, one can drive for miles and not encounter a Bible-loving assembly. Strangely, much of this territory is not unchurched, at least historically. Much of it is burned-over. In the northeast, in New England, sound doctrine once ruled the roost. Now, it is buried and gone, the old white churches of the past increasingly a relic of disbelief, a block of condos, the neighborhood's newest gastropub.

It was not always so. Once, the northeast pulsed with spiritual activity. Once, the gospel rang out from a thousand sound pulpits. Then the liberal theologians came. They took over churches. They infiltrated the seminaries. They won the *battle royal*. Through their church-weakening, Bible-undermining teaching, they wrote ICHABOD over the doorways of their schools and churches. The historical questions surrounding the decline of the northern Baptist movement have clear and cogent

answers. The real question for us today—those of us who love Christ's church like nothing else on earth—is this: Will anyone come and speak a better word?

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— SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY AND BIOETHICS —

Thomas Andrew Bennett. _Labor of God: The Agony of the Cross as the Birth of the Church._ Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2017. 145 pp. £30.99/$34.95.

Thomas Andrew Bennett's work _Labor of God_ is a short but dense book, in which he seeks to address the apathetic response from hearers to what we should expect to be the scandalous idea that the cross is the central symbol of the Christian message. From the beginning of the first chapter Bennett sets out the problem that he perceives with the mainstream language of Christ's work on the cross, claiming that traditional metaphors have become stale and meaningless through over-familiarity. With this concern in view, Bennett's work is an apologetic impulse to breathe new life into the proclamation of the cross. His answer is a biblical metaphor that he perceives to have been abandoned, that of "the crucifixion of Jesus of Nazareth as the birthing pangs – the labor – of God, who bears renewed, spiritual sons and daughters into the world" (p. 5). He draws upon the Johannine concept of second—and spiritual birth particularly, leaning on John's gospel and the familial language along with the relationship between Jesus and his followers. He defines the concept within historical theology, first citing medieval theologians Anselm of Canterbury, Julian of Norwich and Marguerite d'Oingt, and then citing more recent feminist theologians and the biblical scholar Murray Rae (who endorses the book) in support of the metaphor of childbirth to explain the work of Christ on the cross.
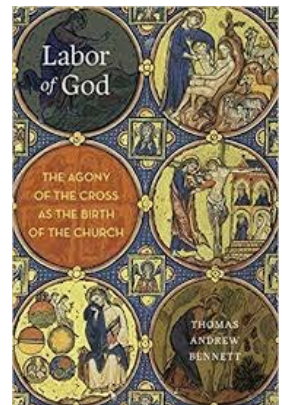
In chapters 3, 4 and 5, Bennett addresses the achievements of the cross according to this metaphor. He first addresses the issue of violence, which has become a major feature of discussions about atonement theology in recent years. He observes that childbirth is simultaneously painful and joyous due to the life-giving process of birth. The work of Christ in the light of this has a transformative element as at the cross Christ transforms human violence into something live-giving: the birthing of the church. Secondly, Christ's work as the labor of God, also reverses the consequences of sin. Bennett helpfully presents sin as a corrupting influence, which distorts our world and our perceptions on every level. As a result, we are morally and ethically unable to correctly discern right from wrong. The work of Christ delivers rebirth to a new people as a means to restoration. God creates a new heart and a new spirit, therefore bringing about a change in nature reflective of our divine parentage. Finally, with such an approach Bennett avoids the economy of exchange that he identifies within traditional metaphors of atonement, because the gift of atonement is rebirth into a new community without the corruption of sin. This he believes offers a more faithful reading of the atonement in Romans 5.

Bennett's work has much to commend it. He has restored a biblical and historical model of atonement that can helpfully sit beside other interpretations of the work of Christ. Furthermore, his apologetic and missional motivation in presenting this model is praiseworthy, grounding theology in a ministry context and presenting a helpful ecclesiological emphasis.

However, his bold claim that traditional understandings of atonement models such as sacrifice, victory and ransom have become stale, is unhelpful. Other recent works on the atonement still to some extent draw upon these classic models (e.g., Peter Leithart, *Delivered From the Elements of the World* [Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 1996]; Fleming Rutledge, *The Crucifixion: Understanding the Death of Jesus Christ* [Cambridge: Eerdmans, 2015]). Does the existence of such works not imply that the models Bennett dismisses still have much to teach us?

Bennett is critical of substitutional and sacrificial models of the atonement because of their mutual reliance, calling them a "Frankenstein's monster" of atonement, then referring to these models as "a bizarre, piecemeal metaphorical universe" (p. 78). This conclusion presents an internal problem, as Bennett's criticism of metaphors leaning on others forces his own theory to be all encompassing and to stand-alone. No single metaphor, including Bennett's, can achieve given the ineffable nature of the work of Christ.

Bennett's work is helpful; he clearly and concisely presents a metaphorical reading of atonement that can expand and strengthen our understanding of the work of Christ. However, his critique of other atonement models as a means of expressing his own, steps beyond biblical and theological reasonability.

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Stewart J. Brown, Peter B. Nockles and James Pereiro, eds. *The Oxford Handbook of the Oxford Movement*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017. xx + 646 pp. £95.00/$150.00.

The Oxford or Tractarian Movement arose circa 1833 because its leading figures believed that parliamentary decisions then unfolding in Britain were working to undermine the prerogatives of the Church of England. They combatted these changes by promoting the conception of the apostolic succession (and independence) of Anglican bishops and doctrinal teachings of a Roman type which had found support in the era of former Archbishop William Laud (1573–1645). Their stance was, broadly considered, hostile to the legacy of the Reformation. In the face of strong opposition generated within and beyond Anglicanism, there were major defections to Roman Catholicism circa 1845. What began as Tractarianism continues as the Anglo-Catholic expression of Anglicanism. By late 19th century, the influence of the Oxford Movement reached beyond Anglicanism to other forms of Protestantism, creating ferment there.

Major works on this 19th century movement and its leading personalities—whether biographical or of a reference orientation—have often been released at the approach of notable anniversaries of what began in 1833. The volume under review—which comprises an anthology of 42 independently-authored chapters organized under 8 thematic divisions—is an exception to this pattern. Instead it is a consolidative
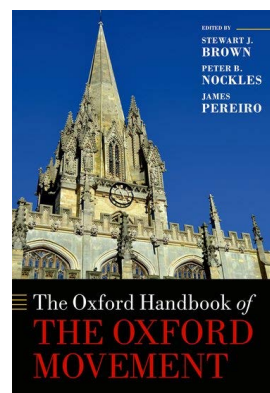
volume providing readers with a sampling of the best scholarship of the last quarter-century on this part-romantic and part-reactionary early Victorian religious movement. One can perceive continuity between it and a previous volume edited by Brown and Nockles, *The Oxford Movement: Europe and the Wider World 1830–1930* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012; reviewed in *Themelios* 38.3).

Researchers do not immerse themselves in the study the Oxford Movement merely because it awaits the daring; they give themselves to the study of the movement because of a fascination with its leading personalities and an attraction to the convictions which they championed. Their fascination is often driven by admiration and party loyalty; it may also be driven by the conviction that this movement was wrong-footed. To its credit, this *Oxford Handbook* provides us with contributions of both kinds, though the former clearly outnumber the latter.

This *Oxford Handbook* could not serve as an effective introduction to this field of study; any novice would be avalanched under its detail. But the reader who had taken in hand a good biography of John Henry Newman (1801–1890) would soon be able to profit immensely by the resources provided here. With this said, it would still be wise to begin at the *Oxford Handbook's* end. For there, in two reflective chapters concluding the work (42 and Afterword), the writers Peter B. Nockles and Colin Podmore provide the best of starting points. Nockles provides an informed survey of the kinds of historical writing about the movement (partisan and otherwise) penned since 1850. Of equal importance is Podmore's sketch of what has become of this movement which beginning as Tractarianism soon morphed into Anglo-Catholicism. Today's Anglo-Catholicism reflects all the fissures over gender and sexuality which confront the Anglican Communion globally.

The forty-two chapters are arranged under eight categories, a few of which are: "Origins and Context" (I), "The Theology of the Oxford Movement" (II), "Cultural Expressions, Transmission, and Influences" (V), "Beyond England" (VI) and "Into the Twentieth Century" (VII). Few readers will have the leisure to plow through the book's 632 pages in linear fashion; they will instead gravitate to the section(s) which shed light on questions which have arisen in their own reading.

In an uncanny way, our own generation is now sharing in a romantic longing for "imagined Christian pasts" which longing was such a pronounced feature of the original Oxford Movement. A reader who acknowledges this affinity will be especially helped by the contributions on the evangelical background of many of the first Tractarians (ch. 3) and the commitment to the Bible which characterized the first (but not the subsequent) generation (ch. 16). In spite of these original moorings, the first generation generated both empathy and hostility with the steady release after 1833 of their "Tracts for the Times." Shortly, both High Church Anglicans and evangelicals within and beyond Anglicanism were alarmed at the Romanizing tendencies detected in these pamphlets (ch. 10) and this alarm brought with it a decided reaction which led to the termination of the series (ch. 12).

The *Handbook* also explains how Newman's re-affiliation to Rome in 1845, rather than crippling this movement, only obliged to enter a new—and more stable—period of existence (chs. 21–22). Across the remainder of the 19th century, the Anglo-Catholic party grew, though at its height it would not have included more than one in twenty Anglican clergymen, persons who by outlook were most oriented to parishioners of the middling and professional classes (ch. 24). Anglo-Catholicism, in addition to embracing the original Tractarian emphases, came to enfold two other tendencies with which it was not at first associated: a liturgical movement originating in Cambridge, dedicated to the recovery of ancient liturgies, and an aesthetic movement determined to see Gothic architecture revived (chs. 25, 28).

We find, on reading, that we owe thanks to this movement for the role it played in the recovery, composition and compilation of hymnody (a thing to bear in mind the next time we sing, "Of the Father's Love Begotten" or "Holy, Holy, Holy" [ch. 26]). If we want to know the origin of the re-institution of Protestant religious orders for women and men, we find it with these same Anglo-Catholics (ch. 27).

In sum, here is a most valuable guide to the Tractarians. The volume establishes that global Anglicanism in all its expressions has taken on hues provided by this "ginger group." Yet it bears repeating that this major work gives only a very minor place to cautionary voices which draw attention to the error entailed in affirming—as the early Tractarians did—that it was the extent to which their Church approximated the faith and devotional norms of Rome that would determine her legitimacy. Now, just as in early Victorian England, this delusion needs to be opposed.

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Shao Kai Tseng. *Karl Barth's Infralapsarian Theology: Origins and Development, 1920–1953*. New Explorations in Theology. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2016. 319 pp. £29.94/$39.00.

Karl Barth described himself as a "supralapsarian" insofar as his theological reasoning is "detached and purified from the doubtful presuppositions" of the seventeenth-century Reformed controversy (*Church Dogmatics* [*CD*] II.2, §33, p. 142). According to Barth, the older "presuppositions can be removed without setting aside the basic thought," after which the purer material form can be "developed in a christological direction" (*CD* II.2, §33, p. 143). And this is exactly what Barth attempts to do in his christological restructuring of the doctrine of election: or so he thinks. As the title of the work under consideration reveals, Shao Kai Tseng questions the internal coherence of Barth's supralapsarian claim. The overall structure of Barth's theology should not be considered, according to Tseng, "supralapsarian" but rather "infralapsarian," and this despite Barth's self-professed—though not uncritical—alignment with the supralapsarian position of the seventeenth-century. Tseng argues, given the historic definitions of the original debate, Barth's theological position is "basically infralapsarian" insofar as Barth increasingly maintains the "object of divine election is God's eternal conception of fallen humanity" (p. 42). The adverb "basically" is not superfluous. Tseng is careful to consider "supralapsarian" elements within Barth's theology as they unfold over the course of his complex theological development, even though Tseng ultimately contends the structure of Barth's thought is "basically infralapsarian" given that the theological "Yes" to humankind in Jesus Christ always presupposes and negates the "No" of humankind's fallenness and corruption (p. 267). In more technical terms, for Barth the "object of predestination" is "*homo lapsus*, but not *simpliciter* so" (p. 292).
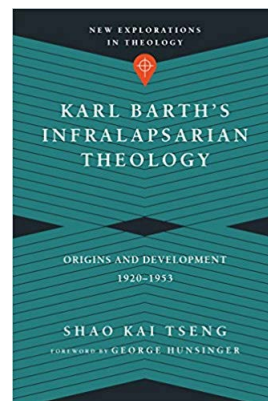
The argument unfolds in two parts. Part one (chs. 1–2) explicates the historical definitions of the lapsarian debate within seventeenth-century Reformed theology (ch. 1), as well as Barth's understanding of those definitions in his small print excursus in *CD* II.2, §33 (ch. 2). According to Tseng, Barth's predilection for the supralapsarian position is in part based on his terminological imprecision as it pertains to the lapsarian *ordo* in the original debate. In particular, Barth seems to think that the

infralapsarian position portrays predestination as having taken place temporally after the fall. This, given historical definitions, is simply incorrect. Both lapsarian positions indicate that the divine decree precedes the whole history of God's engagement with creation. Tseng is most certainly correct in his assessment then that Barth's excursus "tells us much more about Barth's own lapsarian thinking than it does the Lapsarian Controversy" (p. 68).

Part two unpacks Barth's lapsarian thinking vis-à-vis his developing christological doctrine of election. To do this, Tseng navigates Barth's early inclinations in *Römerbrief II* (ch. 3) to his time in Göttingen and Münster (ch. 4), then from his Bonn years (ch. 5) to the publication of *Gottes Gnadenwahl* in 1936 (ch. 6). Tseng locates in *Gottes Gnadenwahl* Barth's groundbreaking resolution to the "contradiction between his actualism and critical realism that marked the chief defect of his theology from *GD* [*Göttingen Dogmatics*] to *CD* I/1" (p. 204). What is most important here is that Barth's christological revision of election did not arise solely as a result of hearing Pierre Maury's lecture on Calvin's doctrine of predestination, but arose out of Barth's continued struggle with the lapsarian question *and* Maury's lecture. In this sense, the basic structure of Barth's mature theology is laid bare in *Gottes Gnadenwahl* as Barth theologically works through the lapsarian problem in light of Maury's lecture. After explicating Barth's christological reworking of the lapsarian problem in *Gottes Gnadenwahl*, Tseng traces Barth's solution through *CD* II/2 (ch. 7) and *CD* IV/1, §60 (ch. 8). By the time of *CD* IV/1, §60 (1953), Barth's basically infralapsarian outlook had, according the Tseng, fully bloomed: "The incarnation *is* the history of the electing God's entrance into the history of God's fallen covenant partner, in order to sublate the latter's history of fallenness *for the sake of* and *in* the election of all in Christ" (p. 289). Barth, it seems, is a rather complicated infralapsarian.

Overall, Tseng has produced a first-rate study on the intersection of election and christology in Barth's thought, and has done so from the angle of the historic Lapsarian Controversy. In terms of Tseng's analysis of the successive stages of Barth's career, the argument is illuminating and commendable. Tseng helpfully brings out the complexity of Barth's lapsarian position, which dialectically includes supralapsarian (i.e., the election of Jesus Christ) and infralapsarian (i.e., the presupposition of the fall) elements. And apart from a few less-than-irenic comments regarding Barthian "revisionists," I say so far so good. However, I must agree with George Hunsinger's assessment in the "Foreword" that it would still be better to consider Barth a "purified supralapsarian" with "strong infralapsarian elements" (p. 10). For Barth—on Hunsinger's interpretation—God's primordial will-to-covenant is eternally grounded in Jesus Christ, and this with or without the fall. When all of Barth's theological revisions are taken into account, Hunsinger concludes that the manner in which Barth made Jesus Christ the object of election cannot fit easily into the mold of the seventeenth-century debate (p. 12). This is a helpful evaluation and puts a finger on the most contestable aspect of Tseng's thesis: the Lapsarian Controversy as definitional canon. Tseng wants to frame the question around the seventeenth-century controversy, though he remains somewhat indiscriminate as to the difference between the Lapsarian Controversy and lapsarian christology. In terms of the former, Tseng's taxonomy is not misleading. The driving question in the original debate centers on the individual "object of predestination" within the logical order of the divine decrees. Yet throughout his argument Tseng blends this discussion with that of lapsarian christology. Lapsarian christology asks the following: How does one construe the ordering of creation around the person of Son, in particular his incarnation? This question does not technically fall within the purview of the original debate, even if Reformed theologians during that period had various opinions about it. The two remained discrete discussions. Once one blends them though, historical contours have been traded for constructive engagement. This is exactly what Barth claims he is doing; he is purifying

lapsarianism vis-à-vis christology (*CD* II.2, §33, p. 149). Tseng certainly recognizes this, which is why he does not mask the admixture of infra- and supralapsarian elements within Barth's mature theology. My contention is that if Tseng took seriously the contours of the historical debate, as well as the idiosyncrasy of Barth's position, then the thesis would be inverted. Barth should be considered a twentieth-century supralapsarian after all, although with strong (and historic) infralapsarian tendencies.

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— ETHICS AND PASTORALIA —

Rosaria Champagne Butterfield. *The Gospel Comes with a House Key: Practicing Radically Ordinary Hospitality in our Post-Christian World*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2018. 240 pp. £15.99/$19.99.

Some people are going to hate this book because it speaks truth and does so in a concrete and piercing way. It's true not just in the sense of being orthodox and biblical. It's also true in its specific and pointed applications. Some may even feel that the book is self-righteous, legalistic, and naïve. (Personally, I hated it because it made me weep like a baby.) But Butterfield excels in moving her readers in all her books, so the fact that this new installment evokes anger, thoughtfulness, tears, and perhaps even conviction comes as no surprise. And lest any misunderstand my own position, I wholeheartedly commend this book. *The Gospel Comes with a House Key* is reformed theology at its best, merging sound biblical teaching with practical living—all narrated through the wise voice of one regularly engaged in repentance and committed to walking with the Lord.
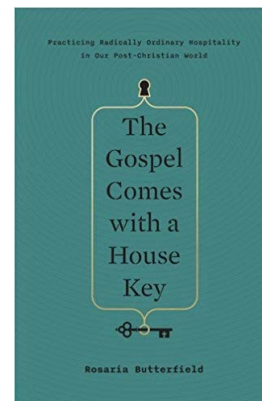
Throughout the book, Butterfield weaves the story of her experience with her neighbor Hank, a meth addict, and his infinitely loyal pit bull, Tank. Interspersed are other moving narratives, including stories from Butterfield's "former" life, her complicated relationship with her mother, and the literal ups-and-downs of regular hospitality. The first half of the book orients the reader to the subject of hospitality, mainly through a healthy mix of Butterfield's personal experiences and biblical teaching. Taking her cue from the Bible, she defines "hospitality" as "love of the stranger" (p. 35). The book then addresses questions readers would ask of Butterfield, including boundaries, potential liabilities, and special cases (e.g., hospitality toward those that have been excommunicated). The book concludes with some practical suggestions, though it could be said that the entire book is practical.

Butterfield doesn't shy away from presenting herself (and her family, including her children) as exemplars of biblical hospitality. Here is where some might feel that her tone is self-righteous or that she is commending herself. But this would be a misunderstanding. Her purpose is to show that she is more than "just talk." Indeed, I was reminded regularly of Paul's willingness to point to himself as an example for all to imitate. Personally, I found it refreshing to hear from someone who at least implicitly says, "Do not just as I say but also as I do."

A repeated phrase in the book is "radically ordinary," a phrase that captures perhaps the message or ethos of the book. The phrase seems to be an appropriation (and, perhaps, a correction) of David Platt's

Radical: Taking Back Your Faith from the American Dream (Colorado Springs: Multnomah, 2010) and Michael Horton's *Ordinary: Sustainable Faith in a Radical, Restless World* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2014). Butterfield contends that followers of Christ should be radical, but not necessarily in the sense of becoming the next Tim Keller or serving at an underground church in China. Perhaps the most radical thing we can do is simply to obey the ordinary things the Bible calls us to, especially the care and entertainment of strangers. Certainly, Butterfield's own life illustrates how daily obedience can be radical, and how God seems to prefer to use our ordinary obedience to accomplish extraordinary outcomes—namely, the conversion of avowed atheists. In short, her book is a summons to be radially obedient about the ordinary calling to be hospitable.

What is perhaps most helpful *and* challenging about the book is the way it teases out in painfully concrete ways how all believers are "missionaries," with their "mission fields" being the neighbors God has providentially placed in their lives. Over the years, members of my church have given one reason after another as to why they don't share the gospel with those around them. The main reason usually relates to not knowing how to answer difficult questions. Butterfield suggests that this outlook is far too reductionistic and that the way to share the gospel is by engaging with the entire person through regular hospitality. Hospitality allows unbelievers to encounter the faith in more "natural" ways—to see Christians in action in their everyday lives. I suspect that people won't like this radically ordinary means of evangelism because it forces us to confront our tendency to idolize our homes and to transform them from being "castles" and retreats (p. 41) into "hospitals and incubators" (p. 64). But for anyone who is serious about fulfilling the Great Commission, the clear challenge of this book will lead to radical change.

This reviewer was particularly challenged by Butterfield's idea of having "margin time" (p. 12) and her willingness to sacrifice income and career to pursue hospitality. The first demands that we stop trying to max out every minute of our lives in order to have plenty of time to be readily and extensively available for our neighbors. This is especially challenging for helicopter parents, persons who want to make more money, and individuals that want to travel and taste every new place and restaurant posted on Facebook. Perhaps in our current climate the creation of such "margin time" can be the most radical thing we do.

The other example hits home for many (at least in my church) where most of the households "enjoy" dual-income. While Butterfield never says this is unbiblical, the reader at least wonders whether it is possible to pursue hospitality if both husband and wife are working full-time. If a reader concludes, "Everything Butterfield exhorts just isn't possible," it may be because they have committed to a dual-income lifestyle. It's helpful to keep in mind that Butterfield herself was once a tenured professor at Syracuse University and clearly has the ability to enjoy a lucrative career as a writer, teacher, and speaker. But she intentionally limits her "professional" activities so that she can support her husband in his ministry, attend to their children (whom she homeschools), and be a good neighbor with the hope that strangers would become neighbors and eventually friends and perhaps even family in the Lord. Rather than dismissing her book as naïve, the reader should consider whether Butterfield has teased out in real and difficult ways the cost of following Christ. Clearly, she has.

Butterfield also addresses the complex question of being a good neighbor and raising children in the Lord. Some parents may wonder whether the sort of open-door policy Butterfield practices is wise given that children can be exposed to undue danger. As Butterfield narrates, hospitality is messy and risky work, seen especially in having her home burglarized or befriending a meth addict. She herself

would wholeheartedly agree that children (and the church) need to be protected, particularly from those engaged in unrepentant and egregious sins. Nevertheless, she suggests that perhaps what is more dangerous is modeling a Christian household that is foreign to the Bible itself. Paul, for instance, says to his spiritual son, "share in suffering for the gospel" (2 Tim 1:8). Butterfield's children get that following Jesus isn't primarily about attending a fun youth program. It's about embracing the marginalized, writing to those in prison, and sharing meals with people who have never tasted "normalcy." Perhaps the worst thing we can do for our children is to instill in them the idol of safety. After all, Jesus, as Butterfield highlights, saved us by surrendering his own safety.

I've touched on just a few of the reasons why some people may not like the book. But truth, as seen ultimately in the ministry of Jesus, always offends to some degree. However, I don't want to suggest Butterfield's book is perfect. I read with some reservation her account of various people leaving her husband's church (there's always another side to a story, and sometimes the reasons for leaving are complicated); the sustainability of her hospitality practice; the occasional tangents; and perhaps an implicit low view of rest. But these possible minor blemishes should not detract from the wisdom, force, and prophetic quality of the book. While Butterfield never outright says it, the reader is left wondering whether an absence of hospitality should cast doubts on the veracity of one's faith. If hospitality represents a basic expression of the love command, we cannot claim to love God whom we have not seen and yet fail to be hospitable to those who are right in front of us.

Finally, this book is about hope. We are often tempted to believe that some people are so hardened to the gospel that they can never come to faith. Butterfield describes a few such people in her book. Yet, many did come to faith—not because of anything extraordinarily radical on Butterfield's part but because of her commitment to the radically ordinary "discipline" of hospitality, particularly toward difficult persons who are usually dismissed and rejected as enemies of the gospel and menaces to society. Yes, God has the power to change such people, but such power is expressed through the ordinary means of regularly breaking bread with strangers; hence, the gospel comes with a house key. In this sense, Butterfield's book is an encouragement to never give up on people—or on God—but to endure in love by keeping the doors of your home open. You never know. Perhaps God will take this seemingly simple act of faith and obedience and do far more than anything we could ever ask or imagine.

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Sinclair B. Ferguson, _Some Pastors and Teachers: Reflecting a Biblical Vision of What Every Minister is Called to Be_. Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth, 2018. 824 pp. £34.55/$45.00.

"While this is a _big_ book," says Sinclair Ferguson, "it only seems long! For each chapter is an entity on its own" (p. xiv, emphasis in original). The reason for this is that _Some Pastors and Teachers_ is a collection of Ferguson's essays written over his many years as both a pastor and an educator. Despite this, there is a consistent depth and breadth across its eight hundred pages. The book, therefore, a one-stop resource where Ferguson's numerous chapters, articles, and essays are compiled and shaped into a volume directed specifically for those whom the Lord has called to the task of pastoral ministry.
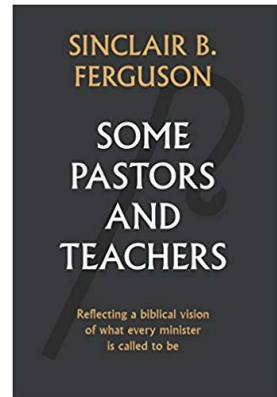
Ferguson retired from pastoral ministry in 2013, having served for many years as Senior Minister of First Presbyterian Church in Columbia, South Carolina. Prior to this pastoral role, Ferguson held the Charles Krahe chair for Systematic Theology at Westminster Theological Seminary in Philadelphia. Over the years, he has written numerous books and articles, and he has held various roles with evangelical institutions and ministries in the United States and Scotland. Thus, if readers could hope for anyone to cull together a collection of essays to encourage, strengthen, correct, and form pastors for the work of ministry, then Ferguson's reputation, faithfulness, and perspective qualify him to assist busy pastors in their ministerial tasks.

Spanning five expansive sections, the book introduces readers to three Johns whose ministries warrant inquiry. In the three chapters comprising this first section, Ferguson investigates John Calvin, John Owen, and John Murray. He helpfully shows how each of these three men held a high view of Scripture, were sound exegetes of texts, and were precise in biblical and theological reflection. From here, Ferguson spends the totality of section two, which comprises six chapters, on John Calvin. These chapters address Calvin's piety, his pastoral ministry and theology. Noteworthy are two illuminating chapters on Calvin's theology of the Holy Spirit. The section concludes with a crisp summary of Calvin's perspective on the Lord's Supper.

Section three turns the reader's focus to the Puritans. John Owen receives the most attention in the nine chapters comprising this section. However, Ferguson's chapter on John Flavel's theology of providence sheds a welcome light on this lesser known Puritan whose contribution is spiritually rich and pastorally applicable. While Owen is rightly considered a theological giant, Ferguson appropriately presents Owen as a pastorally sensitive thinker.

Comprising thirteen chapters, section four casts a wide net in its focus on pastors and teaching. With introductory chapters on Scripture and inerrancy, to specific chapters on Reformed theology in general, Ferguson seeks to buttress his emphasis on the minister's theological task. Perhaps the gem of section four is chapter twenty-two, "What is Biblical Theology?" (pp. 417–48). Even if one does not adhere to Ferguson's method, one could easily conclude that this chapter provides an exceptional summary of the history, discipline, and extension of biblical theology. Pastors would be hard pressed to locate a more informative summary than the one Ferguson offers here.

Section five comprises eight chapters focused on the proclamation aspect of pastoral ministry. Some readers will quibble with Ferguson's approach to "Preaching Christ from the Old Testament Scriptures" (chapter thirty-four), but his approach is consistent with his tradition. Chapter thirty-seven, "Preaching

to the Heart," addresses, among other things, the effective use of imagination in the homiletical task. Ferguson shows that preaching to the heart does not neglect or ignore the Holy Spirit's work inner work among those hearing the Word preached; rather, preaching to the heart flows from sound exposition and an "imaginative creativity that bridges the distance between the truth of the word of God and the lives of those to whom they speak" (p. 728). Lastly, a brief epilogue follows section five.

While any Christian would profit from some or all of these essays, those who may need this wise counsel most are those whom the title addresses: pastors and teachers knee-deep in the overwhelming work of pastoral ministry. In this regard, four types of readers will strike gold in Ferguson's book. First, those ministers who are now in their early years of ministry. These early years are formative ones whose lessons will linger for years to come. Portions of this book will help young pastors locate rock solid principles which help produce a trajectory of ministerial success. Each of the chapters on Calvin will prove beneficial for young preachers, but so too will later chapters such as "Exegetical Preaching" (chapter thirty-three) or "The Preacher as Theologian" (chapter thirty-five).

Second, there are a host of ministers who have been in ministry long enough that the good work of ministry grows tiring or cumbersome. In these seasons, there is a danger of one's heart hardening or growing faint due to the moral and emotional complexities of daily ministry. For these ministers, Ferguson's work will be a salve to their tired souls, in some ways interjecting a resolve to move forward in faithfulness. (See, for example, chapter ten, "Puritans: Ministers of the Word"). It is possible that some may doubt the import of Puritan theology and piety for contemporary ministry, but Ferguson shows his readers a pattern to their devotion, calling, and gospel ministry which transcends time. Ministers in this season can learn from the Puritans because, as Ferguson states, they had "the ability to unfold the mysteries of the gospel in a manner which reached into men's hearts and touched their consciences— and all set within the context of a prayerful dependence on the Lord" (p. 169).

Third, for seasoned ministers who bear the joys and scars of long-term faithful ministry, this volume contains a goldmine of information urging them to finish well. Whether it is one of the early chapters where Ferguson's focus targets a personality (Calvin, Owen, Murray, Flavel, etc.) or the section on Calvinistic singing in the epilogue entitled, "Doxology," seasoned ministers will find fresh resources to renew their vows to end their service faithful to Christ and his church.

Fourth, those tasked with training the next generation of ministers, often working through various seminaries and divinity schools, will find in this resource a clarifying call to prepare ministers with a long arc of ministry faithfulness. Ferguson's work will help teachers and seminarians reject faddish attempts to accomplish ministry in human strength and ingenuity. Additionally, seminary and divinity school professors need to be reminded about their main calling to train ministers to serve the local church (which is why the chapter on John Murray is especially helpful). Ferguson's career in the church and academy give him the platform to speak to the academy on behalf of the church. In clever ways, this book helps those who are training future ministers to stay on task.

Beyond its practical use for the sorts of ministers listed above, Ferguson treats certain historical and systematic issues in succinct installments. The chapter on *Sola Fide*, for example, is both illuminating and instructive. As for criticisms, one could wish for more depth in some chapters, and one might wonder at times how any given chapter relates to those surrounding it. But these minor blemishes should in no way hinder readers from mining these chapters for lasting riches. Ferguson casts a big vision for pastors to hunger for God's word, apply deep theological and practical truths to everyday

ministry, and be concerned with a sort of piety and perspective which substantiates their calling. For these reasons alone, Ferguson's book should be widely read.

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Jonathan Gibson and Mark Earngey, eds. _Reformation Worship: Liturgies from the Past for the Present_. Greensboro, NC: New Growth, 2018. xxxiv + 690 pp. £54.17/$69.99.

Many younger church leaders sense an incongruity between the doctrines of grace they believe and the worship paradigms they practice. Worship leaders from the "Young, Restless, and Reformed" movement know that the reformation reclaimed the doctrine of justification, but they are less familiar with the reformers' passion to reform worship.

Young church leaders have been raised with contemporary worship services patterned after a mixture of youth ministry, Pentecostalism, and the church growth movement (for a defense of this lineage see Lester Ruth and Swee Hong Lim's book, _Lovin' on Jesus: A Concise History of Contemporary Worship_ [Nashville: Abingdon, 2017]). These services follow an order of events that traces its roots back to the New Measures of the frontier revivals. Beginning with a casual welcome and announcements, the services continue with a four or five song set that ends with a prayer. After singing, the preacher delivers a sermon that concludes with another song of response and (in more charismatic circles) a time of ministry before dismissal.

For these young church leaders, the Calvinism on their bookshelves does not match the revivalism in their church gatherings. And while they might not entirely recognize the incongruity, they at least feel something is wrong. Something smells Finney!

A new book provides an unusually rich opportunity for church leaders to learn from the gathered worship services of Reformation churches. _Reformation Worship: Liturgies from the Past for the Present_ is a new collection of 16th century liturgies assembled from international outcroppings of Reformation rock. It provides this outlook using three introductory chapters and twenty-six primary liturgical documents. While the book thoughtfully synthesizes these different elements, it is helpful to consider them individually before evaluating their cumulative effect.

The first introductory essay, by Jonathan Gibson, is entitled, "Worship: On Earth as It Is in Heaven." I have never read a better chapter-length biblical theology of worship. Beginning with Eden, Gibson makes the case that humanity was created to worship, but that the practice of worship necessarily transformed after the fall. Using typological insights from Adam, Israel, and Solomon, Gibson follows the basic contours of Graeme Goldsworthy's biblical theology to argue that God's idolatrous sons (e.g., Adam, Israel, and Solomon) failed to worship him perfectly, so that God's perfect son was needed to worship him aright and make us into worshipful sons of God. His essay ends by considering how our present moment of salvation history ought to be reflected in our corporate worship gatherings.

The second essay, by Mark Earngey, "Soli Deo Gloria: The Reformation of Worship," traces the historical background and development of reformation liturgies. Against medieval devotion and the
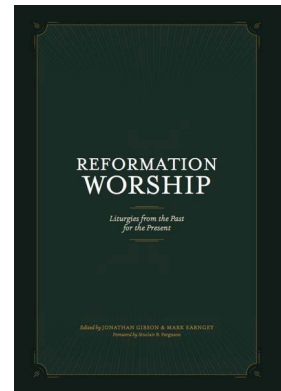
accretion of Roman Catholic liturgical practices, Earngey describes Reformed worship as a "drastic simplification" which allowed "the power of the unadulterated good news stand out" (p. 27). These liturgies spread the gospel through Europe as much as the publication of any Reformed document. Earngey, in a triumph of concision, avoids simplicity and demonstrates the commonality and diversity among Reformed liturgical practice.

Gibson and Earngey co-write their third chapter, "Worshiping in the Tradition," harmonizing insights from the many original source documents they survey. Though the main headings are not surprising—Christian worship is Trinitarian, saturated with the written Word, centered on the preached Word—this is not to say that there are no surprises to be found. Today's worship service planners will probably be taken aback by the Reformers' insistence upon church discipline at the Lord's Supper (pp. 59–61) and the prominent, singular role of the presiding minister (p. 69). Each of these sections provides illustrative examples from the Reformation texts demonstrating their main headings.

The editors introduce each of the primary works with helpful and concise essays that situate the liturgical documents within their context. By explaining the terroir of each liturgical document, readers are equipped to understand the necessary changes to adapt reformation practices to their own situation. Additionally, a helpful section of terminological "conventions" is included to assist readers who don't know their "Matins" (morning prayer) from their "Paten" (Eucharistic bread plate).

Each of the primary works is presented in a fresh translation—a monumental feat. A quick comparison of Luther's 1523 "Form of the Mass" situates this translation as more modern than Paul Zeller Strodach's attempt (as found in Bard Thompson's *Liturgies of the Western Church* [Minneapolis: Fortress, 1980], 106–37), yet slightly less colloquial than Ulrich S. Leupold's update (*LW* 53:15–40). Separate translators oversaw German and Dutch, French, and Latin works. Older English works have been given updated language, and musical notation has been provided (a fine advance over Thompson). Overall, the texts read with admirable clarity and appropriate devotional warmth.

Collections like this are often criticized for arbitrary editorial decisions: Why was one text selected and another omitted? This volume avoids much of that criticism with clear editorial criteria and generous page length. Gibson and Earngey ought to be commended for their clear purpose and careful execution and New Growth Press ought to be commended for printing such a lengthy (724 page!) tome.

Books discussing worship often succumb to the danger of advocacy. What role ought Protestant worship traditions have in Protestant churches today? The Reformers held that while *final* authority rests in the Scriptures alone, tradition has a *derivative* authority to the degree that it clearly reflects Scripture's authority. They refused to confuse biblical *magisterial* authority with ecclesial *ministerial* authority. To the degree that Gibson and Earngey help church leaders more thoughtfully consider Scripture's call to worship, the Reformers would be pleased.

Protestant worship service planners will pursue biblical faithfulness through their own study of God's Word and through thoughtful examination of how other believers have planned their services. Protestant churches, to borrow Kevin Vanhoozer's metaphor, act as a "neighborhood association," voluntarily organizing activities within a neighborhood. They are not like a "homeowners association," mandating and enforcing strict codes of compliance. This book cheerfully commends the values of Reformation worship without carelessly commanding the adoption of all Reformed practices.

Overall, the book achieves its irenic goal. It advocates for a liturgical retrieval—a creative recovery of our Protestant heritage for the purpose of faithful ministry within our Protestant churches. Every

person who oversees the gathering of the Lord's people for their local church ought to purchase this book and carefully search out its riches.

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Glynn Harrison. *A Better Story: God, Sex and Human Flourishing*. London: Inter-Varsity Press, 2017. x + 223 pp. £7.40/$15.00.

I ought to say from the start that I am an unabashed enthusiast for this book and have been busy commending it since it was published.

The author is a psychiatrist, Professor Emeritus of Bristol University. He is a theologically well-informed evangelical. Importantly, he belongs to the generation which has lived through the sexual revolution and seen the results. He speaks with authority.

As the title indicates, his thesis is that the biblical faith constitutes a demonstrably better story than that which has propelled the sexual revolution, and that we need to do all that is necessary both to keep Christians adhering to the truth and also to show the world that there is a better way to be human. His fear is that the Christian leadership has timidly fallen silent and that '[c]onfused and ashamed, some young evangelicals have already begun salami-slicing their convictions about the authority of the Bible' (p. xv).

The book falls into three parts. The first, titled 'A better understanding' (chs. 1–7), is an analysis of what has happened to turn the world upside down and how it has happened. Harrison rightly calls this a revolution, and begins by describing the ideology, moral vision and story-tellers of the revolution. He links the radical individualism of the new ideology to ancient Gnosticism and shows how it turns us inward to the inner self, making gender something which emerges from individual choice rather than biology. This creates a subjective morality often focused on individual needs rather than general principles. The revolution then proceeds by telling stories which have the power to erode and subvert such big and sacred values as the sanctity of life.

Harrison is excellent at describing the power of the revolution through narrative and through heroic individuals who garner support by standing against the ruling principles in the name of compassion. He isolates the three-part structure of the revolutionary narrative: heroic individualism, a redemptive trajectory and a clear moral vision. He then goes on to show how shame is used against those who disagree, making it deeply uncomfortable to hold Christian views in the contemporary world. Christians, not least young people, are face to face with ardent moral crusaders, who are immensely persuasive precisely because they use stories, appeal to emotion and impute evil to those who disagree with them.

At each point, Harrison challenges us as Christians to recognise that we are now in a very different world and that our approach to cultural engagement must reflect this. In a telling analogy, he describes us as being 'the away team' rather than 'the home team' (p. xv) and challenges us to adopt strategies suitable to our new reality. Not least should we be self-critical, recognising that some of the power of the sexual revolution has arisen from the mistakes of Christians in our own teaching and behaviour.
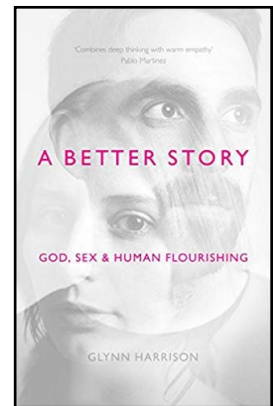
The second part of the book begins 'A better critique' (chs. 8–11). Harrison here provides us with the evidence of the failure of the sexual revolution:

> The bravado of the sexual revolution, with its clarion call of freedom and liberated pleasure, has turned out to be a weak, vulnerable thing needing constant coddling by an army of agony aunts and sex therapists. And because it never quite delivers, people end up thumbing through a copy of Fifty Shades of Grey, or making yet more swipes of the Tinder app, or another visit to a pornography site. (p. 94)

He concludes, 'the sexual revolution is failing to deliver on one of its central promises' (p. 99); namely, more and better sex.

Part 3 (chs. 12–17) shares the title of the book—'A better story'—and skillfully works through the various ways in which the biblical vision of sex 'connects us with heaven' (ch. 13), 'confronts shame and puts the gospel on display' (ch. 14), and 'opens the road to flourishing' (ch. 15). In a particularly illuminating and helpful chapter (ch. 16), Harrison gives advice on how we are to put our story together with some ideas on living it out. He will have none of the suggestion that our attitude to sex is a matter of adiaphora and that we can all afford to get on with one another despite diametrically opposed ideas: 'It is tempting to think that we can simply pick and mix from God's moral law, depending on the contingencies of culture. But the biblical vision for sex is like a sweater with a loose thread hanging out: if you pull at it, eventually the whole thing unravels' (p. 184). Harrison concludes by demonstrating that "the away team" has the better story, that the biblical view of sex and marriage make complete sense and serves human flourishing, whether we are single or married.

Here is a book full of common sense and uncommon facts—that is, facts not commonly acknowledged. Furthermore, Harrison is deeply interested both in how we guard Christians in a world so viscerally opposed to what we teach and also how we commend the better story to those who will listen to it. He explicitly challenges us to do the deeper intellectual work required to help us live this out in daily life. There is, of course, much more to be done to give us a substantial and detailed exposition of the biblical view of sex than he attempts in this work. But what he does say is on target.

We frequently hear from Christians who sigh about our apparent obsession with sex and advise us simply to get on preaching the gospel. This superficially attractive advice is, in fact, untenable. The world we live in is sex-saturated. We can hardly avoid addressing the subject if we wish to apply the gospel, challenge people to live in a godly way, and protect the faithful. At a deeper level, when we consult the Scriptures themselves, we see that the whole business of sexual relations is very much connected to our humanness. At any period of human history, it would be right to give attention to this subject if we wish to understand who we are and how we are to please the Lord. Since there is a close biblical connection between the abuse of sexuality and idolatry, if we wish to analyse the false religions of humanity, we will need to talk about sex.

In particular, the advice to stop talking about sex and instead to just preach Jesus, would, if embraced, lead to a false gospel. For it would mean that one of the chief gods of this age would not be mentioned and therefore some of the chief sins of this age would not be labelled. In the end, a gospel without repentance would be the result and that is no gospel at all.

Harrison's book has much good advice about how we are to play as 'the away team' and much encouragement about 'the better story' which we have. It is accessible, challenging and addressed to all Christians. I retain my enthusiasm.

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Gerald Hiestand and Todd Wilson, eds. *Beauty, Order, and Mystery: A Christian Vision of Human Sexuality*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2017. x + 226 pp. £17.94/$25.00

Scripture urges us to "taste and see that the LORD is good!" (Ps 34:8). Our God is not just mighty, he is not just true—he is good, and this goodness can and should be tasted by the people he has made. The world around us can only offer flavorless gruel. Only God can truly excite the taste-buds of our soul.

When it comes to the issue of human sexuality, Psalm 34 might suggest to us that merely demonstrating what the Bible says about marriage, sexuality, and gender while necessary is not sufficient. We need in this area of life—as with all others—to show the beauty of God's ways. Increasingly today people are not going to care if our words are true if they don't believe they are good.

So this volume from the Center for Pastor Theologians (CPT) is very welcome indeed. It draws on presentations given at the CPT 2016 annual conference and aims to present a theological vision of faithful human sexuality for the church today. Given its genesis in the CPT, it combines academic insights with practical and ground-level application. It is, consequently, neither an academic tome nor a popular level introduction; rather, it successfully occupies a halfway space between the two. As such it is well-suited to pastors and thinking lay Christians, and especially to those thinking through the challenging issues of human sexuality in the church today who are happy to delve a little deeper but might not have any formal theological training.

Despite its various contributors and the wide range of subjects covered, the book's common basis is "the historical Christian consensus on sexuality," including "the significance of biological sexuality" and of the theological importance of our having been made male and female (p. 3). The book's title indicates something of the vision it offers—that human sexuality evidences beauty, order, and mystery.

In this respect the book is largely successful. In today's context, it is common for treatments of human sexuality to major on the negatives; that is, upon the biblical prohibitions and the ways in which our culture has drifted further and further away from a Scriptural framework in how it thinks about issues of marriage, sexual ethics, and gender identity. This is a necessary part of being faithful to the biblical witness, and the book does not shy away from this. Wesley Hill's essay in particular is a model of careful, critical engagement with the likes of "affirming" thinkers such Robert Song, James Brownson, and Eugene Rogers, and offers a sparkling exposition of Jesus's teaching on marriage and sexuality in Matthew 19.

But the overall thrust of the book is to help us both to think through and to communicate a positive message of human sexuality. As Todd Wilson points out, this is an urgent missional task for the church today. We need to be "not just convinced of the truth" but "ravished by the beauty" of this biblical
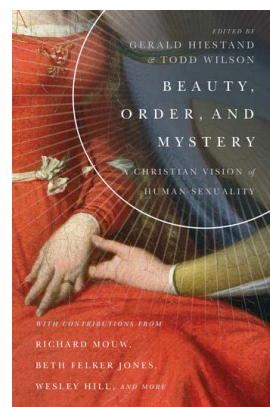
vision (p. 18). Wilson summarizes this vision as "mere sexuality," something he has gone on to expound more fully in his excellent book, *Mere Sexuality: Rediscovering the Christian Vision of Sexuality* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2017).

Elements of this vision include our creation as male and female, and our embodied humanity. As well as affirming these elements the book also takes care to account for the various ways in which life in a fallen world has taken its toll on all of us. There are careful treatments of gender dysphoria, transgenderism, and of unwanted same-sex attraction. This is perhaps where the book is most helpful, and where its origins in a gathering of pastor-theologians is most valuable. The theology is scholarly and insightful, as one would expect and require from those with one foot in the academy, but also pastorally applied, as one would expect and require from having the other foot in the life of the local church. One senses that the authors have encountered the issues about which they write, not just in books but in flesh and blood pastoral encounters. It is one thing to deal with, say, transgenderism in the abstract; quite another to deal well with someone on the church doorstep. Throughout this book is earthed and applied.

Another strength of the book, which comes from the diversity of the contributions, is that it pulls together doctrines which are not normally deployed in our consideration of human sexuality. For example, in his essay, "The Wounded It Heals: Gender Dysphoria and the Resurrection of the Body" (ch. 10), Matthew Mason does a sterling job of showing how our future resurrection brings to full fruition in us the original creation design.

There are, of course, more areas the book could have usefully addressed. Not much reflection is given to the issue of nomenclature, especially to the treatment by some evangelicals of sexual orientation as a matter of ontology—an issue which has become urgent especially in the US church over recent months.

On the whole, this is a very helpful book, and I found fresh insight in virtually every chapter. It deserves to be on the shelf of every pastor. I look forward to more volumes of this standard coming from the Center.

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Eric L. Johnson. *God and Soul Care: The Therapeutic Resources of the Christian Faith*. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2017. 721 pp. £34.83/$45.00.

This massive tome is a magisterial effort claiming to articulate Christianity as 'a therapeutic faith—a theocentric form of soul care' (flyleaf). It has not been without associated controversy. This stems, in part, from the author's presupposition that, in the context of soul care, Christians should not ignore the wealth of resources available from the psychological tradition, including specifically research relating to psychotherapy and counselling. For some within the 'biblical counselling' tradition of thought and practice, this may be received as anathema. Without becoming unhelpfully embroiled in the associated controversy as it has unfolded, it perhaps suffices to remember that questions of interdisciplinarity and sources of justification are not new when it comes to
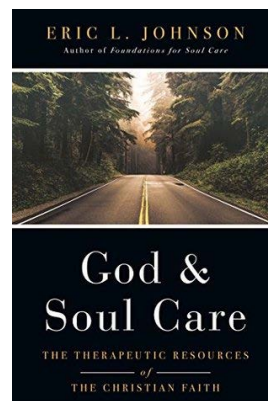
determining practical theological method. Nor must an expressly evangelical theological method which honours Scripture's primacy necessarily exclude all other sources of knowledge.

That an affirmation of the normative status of Scripture need not have the corollary of excluding all other sources as helpful in the construction of an evangelical theology appears to be the supposition underlying Johnson's thought. He writes in the preface that as a result of all knowledge of God's creation belonging to him and stemming from creation grace, 'Christians should be among the most eager to learn from the sciences, even the human sciences, *rightly interpreted*' (p. 2, emphasis mine). Admittedly, more explicit discussion of his metatheological assumptions (see Richard Robert Osmer, *The Teaching Ministry of Congregations* [Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2005], 306–8), and specifically of the relative weighting of his sources of justification, might have provided some comfort to those questioning the implications of his interdisciplinarity for his doctrine of Scripture. Defining his work as coming from the perspective of Christian psychology, Johnson himself expresses regret at not having sought out a theologian to collaborate with him on this project (p. 573). Perhaps to have done so would have resulted in a more clearly-defined position regarding these methodological aspects. Nonetheless, an implicit but very high regard for Scripture does clearly imbue these pages. It is, furthermore, evident that Johnson's particular interest in this book is not so much what he calls 'creation-grace resources' but rather 'the use of *redemptive*-grace resources' (p. 8). He is not against biblical counselling *per se*, which he defines as 'soul care that works primarily with biblical teachings'—but argues rather for a 'progressive form' of it whereby pastors may remain opposed to secularism while staying open to what he calls 'valid empirical research, interpreted Christianly' (p. 454). Notwithstanding the reaction from certain strands of biblical counselling, the book has been endorsed by the president of the Association of Biblical Counselors as a 'thoughtful synthesis' and a staggering number of well-known theologians offer similar endorsements. Whether one agrees or disagrees with Johnson's basic thesis, this work contains a wealth of thoughtful discussion which bears in-depth study and ongoing reflection.

God and Soul Care is organised into six parts, comprising twenty chapters in total. Each chapter is matched with an item from a list of axioms or principles of Christian psychotherapy and counselling. Broadly speaking, the book moves from discussion of the triune God as the centre of Christian psychotherapy and counselling via a presentation of Scripture as the 'primary agenda setter' through to anthropological, ecclesiological and eschatological principles of Christian psychotherapy and counselling rooted in an understanding of the incarnation. Whereas the contents page offers simply chapter headings organised into their respective structural parts, a so-called analytical outline a few pages later presents a far more detailed summary of the book (pp. 15–17).

Part One, which consists of the first five chapters, explores a number of axioms, each of which has its own corollary. The axioms include statements regarding the centrality of God and the creation of human beings in his image, the triune nature of God as archetypal for human life in its personal and social form, and God as especially glorified in his Son, such that the intrinsic goal of human development is conformity to the image of Christ. Other chapters deal also with the person of the Spirit and the Scripture's place as the singular communication of God's 'understanding, appraisal, and activity regarding human beings'. Here, Johnson does describe the Bible as 'the canon of Christian psychotherapy and counseling, the primary guide for its agenda, and provid[ing] … its "first principles"' (p. 127).

Thereafter, chapters 6–20 contain discussion of ten principles of Christian psychotherapy and counselling deriving from the five axioms. These cover a variety of subjects, including the nature of human flourishing, sin, effects of the atonement and the inauguration of new creation, the place of

the church, the process of conformity to Christ and the eschatological hope. Each chapter commences with Christian teachings regarding the topic in view, followed by a number of therapeutic implications and, finally, a list of resources for counsellors and counsellees. This list of resources is divided into classical and contemporary sources, with a number of texts marked as recommended more specifically for counsellors/pastors rather than counsellees. Chapters are full of in-text referencing to a number of sources—centrally Scripture, but also various other sources, both theological and psychological. As a practical theologian, I have appreciated the generally careful theological reflections and have benefited from their extension into therapeutic implications, a discipline less familiar to me.

It is also as a practical theologian that I have a couple of areas of concern with the book. The first is noted above: a fuller discussion of method, perhaps framed within broader practical theological discussions, would sharpen the reader's understanding of what Johnson intends by an approach dubbed 'radical Christian scholarship' (p. 6). While he references an unpublished manuscript here, this is insufficient given the length and weightiness of its proposals. My second concern relates to the nuancing of certain theological claims. For example, chapter 2 is based on the presumption that God as a triune communion of persons is archetypal for the personal and social form of human life. It seems that Johnson too easily makes the jump from theology proper to anthropology. Although he admits that '[f]or the most part', Jesus is to be understood as the 'primary archetype' for human development (p. 59), one sentence later he segues into proposing that the Trinity, as persons in reciprocal relationship, also operates archetypally for human persons. Though this latter statement has an associated endnote, there is no discussion of the literature questioning the validity of such a move, nor is there further clarification of the argument (made in that endnote) for maintaining 'a dialectic between Christ as the archetype for humanity and the Trinity as the archetype for humanity, depending on the precise issue in question' (p. 582).

I am, however, conscious that such criticisms are made of a work which presents itself as not coming, primarily, from a theological perspective. Accordingly, although I think such a critique is necessary, I am also sympathetic to Johnson's own admission that he regrets not having collaborated with a theologian. Nor am I suggesting that Johnson has not worked hard to make up for this lack. Seventy-one pages of endnotes tell their own story: this book covers vast swathes of ground and references many external sources. It would thus serve very effectively as a text for graduate-level students, whether in Christian psychology or in pastoral theology, for, despite its length, the text is very readable.

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Jonathan Leeman. *How the Nations Rage: Rethinking Faith and Politics in a Divided Age*. Nashville: Nelson, 2018. 251 pp. £16.99/$22.99.

If the past few years have revealed anything in the United States, it is that Christians in that country continue to struggle with the role of their faith in the public square. This has made international news with a bevy of religious leaders of various theological persuasions telling the faithful that to honor God they must vote for one particular candidate and protest mightily if the desired candidate does not win. Meanwhile, in light of growing ostracization of orthodox Christians who refuse to conform to the various demands of the spirit of the age, other Christians are calling for the faithful to withdraw from the public square, build distinctly Christian sub-communities, and hope to remain standing when the political forces of the world have destroyed one another.
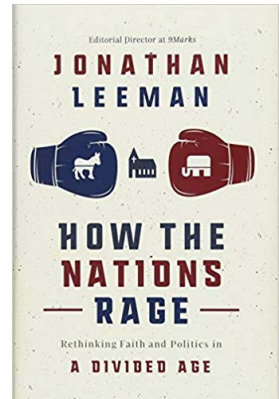
Faithful political engagement for those who believe in the God of the Bible is not a new topic for debate. Indeed, Scripture provides numerous examples of rightly and wrongly working in the public square. Church history is replete with case studies of good and bad practices. The challenge is not a lack of examples or material for discussion, but clear principles that can be applied in a variety of circumstances. Only by understanding the broad, enduring strategies for participation in political activity as uncompromised Christians can the church effectively retain its witness without neglecting the duties of citizens.

Jonathan Leeman's book, *How the Nations Rage: Rethinking Faith and Politics in a Divided Age*, offers a positive framework that should help Christians meet today's challenges and those of the future, as well. Leeman serves as editorial director at 9Marks, a ministry focused on building healthy churches, and has written academically on both church polity and Christian political engagement. This volume offers a very accessible distillation of his earlier book, *Political Church: The Local Assembly as Embassy of Christ's Rule* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2016).

How the Nations Rage is divided into eight chapters, with a conclusion. In Chapter One, Leeman sets the stage for the book and outlines his goals for the following chapters. He focuses on faithfulness, calling Christians to be better disciples in order to make the world better. The second chapter details one of the major problems Christians confront in a liberal democracy: the assumption that a naked public square is both possible and desirable. This chapter offers a reasoned critique of the political philosophy of John Rawls, encouraging believers not to abandon their faith when making persuasive arguments in the public square. Chapter Three wrestles with the thorny question of patriotism; Leeman offers a moderating approach that views the nation as a good subordinate to the greatness of God.

The fourth chapter of *How the Nations Rage* is a helpful political hermeneutic. No "side" in contemporary political debates has a corner on proof-texting. Leeman recommends seeing Scripture as a constitution rather than a set of cases to be gleaned for precedent. In Chapter Five the argument shifts to the purpose of government, which is limited and significant. Government, for Leeman, serves as a means to pursue the common good and restrain evil, but not as a functional savior. The sixth chapter deals with the proper function of the church as a political organization concerned with the advance of the gospel rather than particular policy agendas.

In Chapter Seven, Leeman addresses the important question of the manner in which Christians comport themselves. He argues the church should assume the posture of ambassador—firm, reasonable,

and confident in the goal of justice—not of culture warrior. When the church engages in political strife improperly, it risks being coopted by parties with ulterior motives and thus risks losing the gospel. The eighth chapter sketches out arguments on justice and rights. In this chapter, Leeman attempts to articulate some of the complexity of the careful balance between freedom and responsibility. He first defines justice, then offers a dozen principles for doing justice drawn from Scripture. The book concludes on a hopeful note. Though the United States is divided and rages against itself and those outside, Leeman finds comfort in the sovereignty of God over all things, which will lead to the final arrival of justice when Christ's kingdom is fully inaugurated on Earth.

How the Nations Rage is a good book and well suited for the present political environment. Leeman's arguments are helpful and refreshing. As a Christian political philosophy, the path paved by this book weaves narrowly between totalizing engagement and monastic withdrawal. Whether the reader agrees with Leeman on every point, the arguments of this volume are careful made and deserve diligent consideration. The gospel is at the heart of Leeman's vision for the church, which ensures that the uniqueness of the bride of Christ remains at the forefront of this book about politics.

This book is subject to the limitations of its format; it is a popular level book with rigorous research behind it. As such, the astute scholar is likely to find Leeman's case under-supported. There are points where some readers will want additional explanation, but which were likely limited to make the book succinct and accessible. However, if the reader places this in tandem with Leeman's academic volume on the subject, the strength of the case improves immensely. Additionally, this volume is contextually oriented toward the United States, which will limit its appeal to Christians in other nations. Despite this contextual limitation, it may still benefit readers outside of the United States.

This is a useful and worthy book for the church right now. *How the Nations Rage* will serve as an excellent resource for pastors and congregations as they seek to navigate the ongoing political turmoil. This is a book that deserves wide reading and careful consideration. Healthy conversations about the church and politics are likely to result.

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Brian Rosner. *Known by God: A Biblical Theology of Identity*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2017. 274 pp. £18.99/$29.99.

In *Known by God,* Brian Rosner offers a very satisfying study of biblical anthropology framed by the question of identity. Repeatedly, and rightly, he returns to the fact that being known by God is the ground of all human identity, and to be known by God is to be a child of God. He observes that while Christians have often studied what it means to "know God" (as in J. I. Packer's celebrated *Knowing God*), there has been little reflection on the equally prominent theme of being known. Rosner sets this theme in contrast to the late-modern view that identity is self-constructed; i.e., we make ourselves to be what we choose. He illustrates the theme with several personal reflections of how the reality of being known by God sustained him through the crisis of the sudden end of his
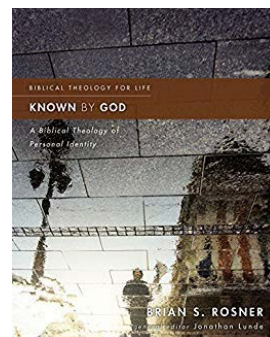
marriage. At the start of the final chapter he comments that "in one sense the whole of this book has been my personal testimony" (p. 246). How appropriate for a book on personal identity.

Known by God is a fascinating study in biblical theology, offering biblical perspectives (or a biblical perspective) on the basic question: "Who am I." Rosner's own previous description of biblical theology is that "it proceeds with historical and literary sensitivity and seeks to analyse and synthesise the Bible's teaching about God and his relations to the world on its own terms, maintaining sight of the Bible's overarching narrative and Christocentric focus" ("Biblical Theology," in *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, ed. T. Desmond Alexander and Brian S. Rosner [Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press, 2000], 10). *Known by God* does more than this, though never less. It engages directly with a host of contemporary cultural, ethical and philosophical issues, and it offers extended discussions which not only explore and organise the biblical material but apply it in a wide range of ways. So, the scope of *biblical* theology is extended beyond the analysis and synthesis of the Bible 'on its own terms' to include much that is found in traditional *systematic* theological discussion. This is the explicit goal of the series in which authors offer "descriptions of biblical theology" and then "draw out that theology's practical implications for the contemporary context" (p. 17). *Known by God* illustrates the value of the approach and raises intriguing interdisciplinary questions, to which I will return at the close of this review.

After two introductory chapters, which set up the question of personal identity and the approach of the book, Rosner examines some of the common markers of identity (e.g., occupation, marital status, wealth, race, gender). He shows that the biblical writers are well aware of these but do not look to any of them as a basis for identity. He warns that each can become an idol. Building on his previous work on greed as idolatry (*Greed as Idolatry: The Origin and Meaning of a Pauline Metaphor* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007]), he argues that idolatry is a metaphor which means "putting something in the place of God, trusting something instead of God, and loving something more than God" (p. 61). Here is one point of many where Rosner does more than biblical theology. Partially inspired by Tim Keller, Rosner suggests that the markers of identity can become idols which fail to satisfy and degrade their devotees. This insightful discussion is an extension and application of biblical teaching into new areas.

In chapter 4 Rosner looks at how the Bible understands human existence, reviewing key biblical anthropological terms and the presentation of human constitution as soul, body, flesh, mind, heart, and spirit. The rest of the chapter examines the foundational text of Genesis 1–3 to show that humans are presented as special, social, sexual, moral, and spiritual beings. This is a very useful summary of standard observations, which are sometimes the focus of treatments of biblical anthropology. Rosner understands that there are far wider horizons to be examined, and the rest of the book focuses more directly on the question of personal identity and its basis in being known by God.

Rosner builds his case with a chapter dealing with humans as "the image and likeness of God," which he understands to mean that we are God's children and members of his family. He suggests this is the core meaning of the term, which provides a basis for understanding the other dimensions of image bearing (rationality, righteousness, relationship, rule, etc.). He further argues that "the sonship dimension to the image of God has great potential for a more unified biblical theology of personal identity" (p. 84).

I am not convinced that sonship is the core meaning of image language. J. Richard Middleton's biblical theological argument that the image is royal-priestly terminology remains persuasive, and it is surprising that Rosner does not engage with it (*The Liberating Image: The Imago Dei in Genesis 1* [Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2005]). This does not invalidate Rosner's project, but it does raise the question

as to whether "personal identity" (as important as it is) is the most comprehensive lens through which to view theological anthropology.

In the same chapter, Rosner deals with how Adam and Eve lost their identity as God's children; treating the fall as one of the two "archetypal episodes of temptation" in Scripture (Jesus's temptation in the wilderness being the other). There is no discussion of the implications that Adam and Eve's sin has for their children beyond it being an archetype of all temptation.

The heart of the book is in chapters six to ten which trace the theme of being known by God as his child through the Bible. Several of these chapters include exegetical studies of "sample texts" which show in detail how various passages present the theme under consideration. Each discussion is stimulating and helps to make Rosner's case. Chapters six and seven focus on the theme of God's people being known by him in the Old Testament and then the New. The Old Testament chapter relates being known by God to belonging to him; being loved and chosen by him; and being his child. All of these are shown to be part of the experience of Israel and individual figures in the Old Testament. Chapter seven offers a similar survey of the New Testament, relating being known by God to the similar themes (belonging, loved and chosen, adopted).

Chapters eight and nine look more closely at the Christological foundation of personal identity. Chapter eight sets out the New Testament presentation of Christ as the Son of God and relates that to salvation in Christ. Union with the Son makes believers the children of God. This is a crucial chapter in giving the book deep roots in the gospel. Rosner is more tentative than needed when he comments that "while no New Testament text says it explicitly, Jesus being known by God as his Son may well be the grounds by which we are known by God as his sons and daughters" (p. 145). He is ready to move beyond explicit textual evidence in much of his discussion, and on this point he has made his case convincingly.

Chapter nine takes up the New Testament theme of sonship as it is applied directly to believers. After a helpful discussion about biblical metaphors, it examines the familial metaphors of the New Testament. Rosner shows how these metaphors, which develop from both Old Testament themes and Christ's identity as the Son, assure believers that in Christ they are loved children and heirs; members of a wide family of brothers and sisters. This relationship calls them to imitate the Father and his Son, to live in harmony with and care for their siblings and to expect God's loving discipline (p. 171).

The final core chapter sets personal identity in a temporal and communal context, exploring the role of *shared memory* and *defining destiny* in shaping identity. It presents identity narratively. Believers remember they have been bought at a price, have died with Christ and carry the death of Jesus with them. They likewise live hard pressed but sealed for redemption, belonging to the day when they shall be like Christ with resurrection bodies. Each of these is a communal truth: "we have died," "we were sealed," "we shall be like him."

The third part of the book applies the biblical and theological discussion to four issues which are highly relevant to personal identity: significance in the face of disappointment, disability and death; pride and humility; comfort and direction. I will not summarise these chapters, but I commend them to readers for their own spiritual good, and to preachers for material to share with and apply to their congregations.

The final chapter deals with how believers come to know themselves as known by God in Christ. Rosner's answer is "the basic disciplines of the Christian life" (p. 245)—or we might better say "the means of grace." Scripture, fellowship, prayer, worship, the sacraments and "living the gospel" are the matrix in which we can grasp the truth that we are the children of God (p. 260).

Known by God is a fine work. Like other volumes in the series, it offers more than most biblical theological treatments in terms of synthesis and application. It is generously sprinkled with stimulating quotes from a wide range of sources—from Calvin and Augustine to Alasdair MacIntyre and singer, Kasey Chambers. The theology is articulated personally, not only applied personally. This is best displayed in the cumulative reading of Jesus's encounters with individuals in John's Gospel (pp. 126–37), which not only highlights Jesus's knowledge of individuals but encourages readers "to expect Jesus to meet them and direct them in the particularity of their individual lives and circumstances" (citing Richard Bauckham, *Gospel of Glory: Major Themes in Johannine Theology* [Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2015], 17). Rosner shows that the Bible, understood in terms of the gospel of Christ, has much to say to contemporary issues of identity.

There are a range of other issues to which this material could be applied. The obvious ones are the pressing ethical questions related to gender, sexuality, life and death and bio-technology. Rosner touches on some of these but is right to have kept his focus on the central question of personal identity.

My interdisciplinary question (as a systematic theologian) is: If this is biblical theology in full flower, is there any need for systematic theology? As I worked through *Known by God*, I wondered at several points if my own discipline had anything further to add. My conclusion (perhaps not surprisingly) is that it does. So I finish this review with a short reflection on where Rosner's work might be developed more fully.

Surprisingly, *Known by God* does not refer to Calvin's classic discussion of self-knowledge, found in the opening chapter of the *Institutes*. Calvin claims that "nearly all the wisdom we possess, that is to say, true and sound wisdom, consists of two parts: the knowledge of God and of ourselves." With this, I am sure Rosner would agree. Calvin then observes that there is a proper order—knowledge of God leads to proper self-knowledge: "man is never sufficiently touched and affected by the awareness of his lowly state until he has compared himself with God's majesty" (*Institutes*, I.i.1–3, trans. McNeill). In the light of the knowing of God, we recognise we are dependent creatures and sinners in desperate need of mercy. Again, none of this is foreign to Rosner, but it raises the question of how self-knowledge relates to knowledge of God.

Rosner presents his work as a balance to the traditional emphasis on "knowing God." It, in turn, needs to be supplemented with a discussion of coming to know that we are known—by knowing God. It is one thing to assert that human identity is not grounded in our own wills, or even in our shared human experience, but is framed by God making us, knowing us and determining us from before birth (Ps 139:13–16). Calvin's discussion points us in the right direction. We will know ourselves as known by God only in knowing God. This is a theme which would importantly supplement Rosner's discussion. He hints at it in the final discussion in which he argues that the means of grace are the way in which we may know ourselves as we are known (p. 246). However, they are, first of all, the ways in which we know *God*. It is precisely because of this that they lead us to know ourselves before and in him.

This supplementation would, I suspect, make the theme of sin and fallenness more prominent. Rosner does, of course, discuss sin, and it is implied in the many discussion of redemption. Yet, in the (admittedly brief) subject index there is no entry for sin or the fall. That confirms my sense of reading the book—knowing myself as a sinner is not a primary category for the discussion. Systematic considerations would suggest it needs to figure more fully.

Finally, knowing ourselves in light of knowing God highlights the eschatological dimension of personal identity. Naturally, Rosner refers to 1 Corinthians 13:12 several times: "now I know in part;

then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known." Primarily, he makes the point that we are already fully known by God. Yet the text underscores the incompleteness of *our* knowledge; knowledge of God, but also of all else in light of God. Personal identity rests in being known by God. The existential appropriation of that is possible as we know him, and that is always compromised by sin. Only when we see Christ as he is will we know ourselves properly in him. None of this is denied by Rosner, and there are points where he affirms elements of it. But again, it deserves to be more prominent.

These systematic reflections may or may not deserve a place in *Known by God*. They at least need to be put alongside it. I suggest them, not to diminish the value of the book, but as a contribution to reflection on being known and knowing—and to the discussion of the theological disciplines.

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Chris Tomlin and Darren Whitehead. *Holy Roar: 7 Words That Will Change the Way You Worship*. Nashville: Nelson, 2017. 128 pp. £10.99/$15.99.

The origin story of Darren Whitehead and Chris Tomlin's *Holy Roar: 7 Words That Will Change the Way You Worship* goes like this: Tomlin heard Whitehead preach on the seven biblical Hebrew words for praise. It was a sermon that, in his words, would "change the way I led worship from that day forward." Tomlin texted Whitehead immediately. "Your message was amazing. Everyone needs to know these words. It needs to be everywhere. Maybe even a book!" Whitehead texted back saying they should write it together. They did just that over the summer of 2017. Right around the time of the book's release in October, Whitehead joined Tomlin on his "Good Good Father Tour," delivering the seven-words message as a powerful exhortation on each night of the tour.
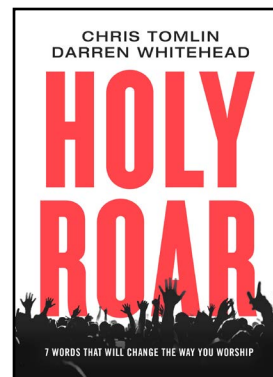
The result of their collaboration is a book which is neatly structured and very easy to read. Whitehead and Tomlin's writing is skillfully efficient; big on impact but not on word count. At 128 pages of relatively large print one can read the whole thing in an hour or two. Each chapter forms a consistent triptych. Panel 1: A well-crafted retelling of an event in Whitehead's life. Panel 2: An explanation of a Hebrew word and its implications for Christian praise. Panel 3: Tomlin telling the story of a song he's written that captures the chapter's theme.

The stories that bookend each chapter are gripping. Two excited sixty-year-olds dragging Whitehead into the festivities at a rowdy Jewish wedding; the spiritual potency of the Christian music played during his wife's labor; crying over the phone with a father whose son was on life-support after a motorcycle accident … and suddenly woke up. They're emotive. They're sharp. And each illustrates its chapter's theme precisely. Here the sermonic history of the book's content brings with it a persuasive rhetoric which works in its favor.

Each chapter also has a section of quotes and discussion questions. These excerpts from historical voices may be the best part of the book. Calvin, C. S. Lewis, Luther, Tozer, Spurgeon—each lends a short and sweet sound bite. Martin Luther King Jr. introduces the final reflection with a profoundly rich quote on the social experience of worship as a realization of unity that transects all levels of life: "Whenever

the church, consciously or unconsciously, caters to one class it loses the spiritual force of the 'whosoever will, let him come' doctrine, and is in danger of becoming little more than a social club with a thin veneer of religiosity" (p. 118).

Despite these positive aspects, the book's core content fails decidedly. How so? The short answer is that the seven Hebrew words simply *do not mean* what Whitehead tells us they mean. Each one has been semantically mishandled, mostly due to his reliance on a very outdated Hebrew dictionary.

His definitions are taken from Strong's *Concise Dictionary,* a concordance-turned-dictionary written in 1890 which doesn't delineate homonyms (rather than a modern dictionary which makes it clear when two words with the same spelling have different meanings). With the different senses of these praise words conflated, Whitehead then tries to show how each one is unique. We're told, for example, that ידה—which basically means "praise" *or* (rarely) "shoot/throw"—means, "To revere or worship with extended hands. To hold out the hands." (p. 18) The concept of shooting has meshed with that of praise to form a definition which bears no relation to the way the word actually functions. Whitehead gets six out the seven words wrong in a significant way, and four times it is because of conjoined homonyms.

This error demonstrates one of the basic "exegetical fallacies" well-known to biblical scholars. The "root" or "etymological fallacy" draws conclusions about a word's meaning based on the meaning of cognate words, whether they be ancient ancestors or contemporaneous cousins. The mistake is equivalent to suggesting that when a poker player folds, it carries the notion of creasing and bending his cards. Or, because "clue" derives from the Middle English "clewe" (a ball of yarn used to guide one out of a labyrinth), modern usage of the word clue therefore contains a deeper meaning related to balls of string. The words certainly have a genetic resemblance, but they are different words. We know sometimes words have two meanings, but (excepting cases of puns or double entendre) they don't mean two things at the same time.

Not all of the misdefining results from root fallacies, however. In one case Whitehead expands a word which means "thanksgiving" to include "Thanksgiving for things not yet received." (p. 56) The dictionary citation provided says nothing of this additional nuance, despite the footnote making it appear to have been found there.

While this and other linguistic gaffes are the book's primary flaw, it also contains a number of significant errors of fact. For example, Whitehead claims that the Hebrew word ברך (meaning "bless") occurs 289 times in the Psalms; it actually occurs 74 times. Examples of words as they are used in laments end up generating conclusions about singing in contexts of enthusiastic celebration, which leads to speculative historical reconstructions. He appeals to "Scholars of the ancient Hebrew" at one point to make an ungrounded claim about ברך (p. 74). According to these unnamed experts it means "bending low while keeping one's eyes fixed on the king." No doubt such actions could accompany a blessing, but they are not included in the meaning of the word itself.

One of the strangest things about Whitehead's thesis is that there are various Hebrew words that *do* mean all of the things that he tries to make his seven words mean. While some of the chapters land in reasonably good places the exegetical vehicle that gets us there is dangerously unstable. And that matters because a whole host of subordinate conclusions are drawn along the way that mislead the reader. More concerning still is the fact that the book teaches a method of interpretation that is potentially generative of false theology.

Tomlin says he truly believes that this book will change the way you worship. It might. But it won't be because it teaches you very much about ancient worship practices or the true meaning of the various

Hebrew words. In fact, the inaccuracies in *Holy Roar* are such that it impoverishes our understanding of biblical praise. It thus serves as a salutary reminder of the importance of sound exegetical method, linguistic skill and even a little bit of fact-checking. Therefore, instead of reading it in the hope of finding out what is hidden behind the words in your English Bible, read your Bible confident that the translation committees know more than a little about the meaning of Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek words.

Despite these deficiencies, the book's intended aim is admirable, and most of the overarching sentiments reflect true aspects of a theology of music which is in harmony with the teaching of the Scriptures. Music does touch the affections in profound ways. We should praise God for the things he has promised he will do. Our focus in praise should be King Jesus. The themes of the final chapter are especially good: God's love is such that it can inspire praise even when we find ourselves in life's "dry places"; all nations are called to join in praise of the one true God; our voices can combine in powerfully united anthems; and we praise God for the sake of the next generation. These are all welcome theological landing points, and the book's call for the church to engage in more exuberant, embodied praise is important to hear.

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Todd Wilson. *Mere Sexuality: Rediscovering the Christian Vision of Sexuality*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2017. 187 pp. £10.99/$16.99.

Questions about the "Christian sexual ethic" are never ceasing. No less is this true today than is the fact that the Christian sexual ethic has gone from being the dominant ethic of society—one nearly universally assumed—to one that is almost scorned at present. A radical moral revolution is underway in our society. From *Obergefell* to Bruce Jenner, the idea that sexuality is endlessly plastic and deferential to personal desire is the new modus operandi. Moral instincts and plausibility structures have shifted that result in the Christian vision for sexuality being less appealing and frankly, less tenable.

Enter Todd Wilson's helpful, accessible volume, *Mere Sexuality*. In less than two hundred pages of what is physically a small book (meaning, it can be read quickly), the reader is exposed to a helpful primer on a vision for sexuality that is much broader than just narrowly focused proof texts. In Wilson's owns words, his aim is to put the question of sexuality "in a larger theological context" (p. 14).

Of the issues the book addresses, homosexuality plays a major backdrop. And that's because, as best as I can tell, Wilson sees how evangelicals have discussed homosexuality as evidence of how anemically we've addressed sexuality more broadly. For Wilson, the question is not first and foremost "why is homosexuality wrong?" in a narrow sense but why in God's larger purpose for sexuality something like homosexuality is a deviation and rebellion against this original grand design. Too often, Christians base their judgments only in the negative, failing to depict their vision for sexuality in a larger affirmative framework.
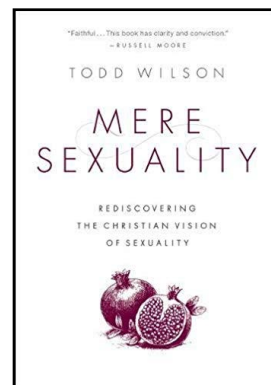
But, first, what is "mere sexuality"? Reacting against a "truncated vision of human sexuality," Wilson argues that Christians have "lost our grip on the deep logic that connects our created nature as male and female with how we ought to live relationally and sexually with one another" (p. 32). Wilson is impassioned with retrieving a grander vision for sexuality, one that he insists has a pervasive consensus within Christian history but has been presently overshadowed. The heartbeat of mere sexuality springs from the reality that that sexual differentiation—male and female embodiment—is morally and theologically foundational to human existence. We are not automatons. We are not asexual. That God created enfleshed humans with sexual capacity means that our design is bound up with our destiny: "We need to recover the moral logic behind Christian sexuality: how babies relate to marriage, and marriage to sex, and sex to identity, and identity to being male and female—and how all of this relates to the person of Jesus Christ" (p. 38).

One of the most compelling aspects of Wilson's book is his reliance on the humanity of Jesus to understand the sexuality of Jesus. Jesus had a Y Chromosome. He was birthed through the vaginal canal of his mother, Mary. Jesus was sexual, Wilson insists; not sexual in that he engaged in a romantic relationship, but sexual because he was an enfleshed, sexually differentiated human. Jesus was not hermaphroditic or just a spirit. He was, and is, a man. Though God could have manifested his deity in any number of ways, "he chose to reaffirm the basic binary sexuality by becoming a man" (p. 45). This may seem like a fact to overlook, but Wilson makes the provocative observation that the narrative of Scripture is unveiled through sexed realities: A baby boy was born of a woman. To downplay the centrality of the sexed experience in Scripture is to downplay how the narrative unfolds and its centrality to our own experience. The incarnation represents God's profound blessing of the embodied experience, and the resurrection is God's reaffirmation that sexed matter, well, *matters*.

But here, Wilson makes an even more interesting turn that rebuts so much of the sentiment running through our culture and through progressive Christianity. By looking at Jesus, "we learn that sexual activity isn't essential to human flourishing or personal fulfillment" (p. 49). This is a particularly helpful insight because it rebuts the insistence that sexual fulfillment is necessary for human flourishing. More than that, it exposes the argument that Jesus was unfulfilled or underwent some type of dignity harm because he never had sex as a form of Docetism—the heresy that denied that Jesus was fully human. It's at this exact point that Wilson helpfully critiques all attempts to elevate sexual desire to the level of personal identity. In a punchy quote from Oliver O'Donovan, Wilson cites him arguing against the rise of "psychological positivism" (p. 67).

Wilson goes on to explore in greater detail the meaning of our sexual complementarity, the idea that men and women come to know what it means to be a man or woman in reference to their counterpart. Here, I applaud Wilson for his careful analysis of the meaning of the "one flesh" union, the symbolic yet visceral description of the sexual union of man and woman that seals the covenant union, but is also capable of bringing forth new life. It is the procreative element that makes the marriage union deeply and ontologically corporeal. As Wilson writes, the rejection of the procreative primacy of the one flesh union results in the inversion of sexuality more broadly. It turns it into a recreational activity instead of a solemn activity shared within the context of covenant. Here I want to commend Wilson for speaking forcefully against same-sex marriage and less forcefully, though still cautiously, about contraception. In Wilson's view, these contemporary realities indicate a vision for sexuality that vitiates the biblical picture of sexuality. In place of the comprehensive union that the Bible speaks of, same-sex marriage facilitates emotional union only. And instead of orientating marriage toward the reality of children, contraception

thwarts bodily design and subjects the begetting of children to the pleasure of those engaging in sexual intercourse. Wilson should be commended for introducing natural law types of arguments without necessarily stating his reliance on natural law (fraught as that conversation can be with Protestants).

The last thing I'll highlight is Wilson's call for a reinvigorated concept of friendship. According to Wilson, "singleness" as a category within the church is sub-biblical. As he writes, "Singleness isn't a particularly biblical idea. In fact, the language of being single assumes that marriage is the preferred norm, which it isn't" (p. 118). While I would quibble with his notion that marriage is not the "norm," I do think Wilson is onto something powerful. We form better friendships when we realize that marriage is not the resolution to all loneliness and human existence. Marriage is not self-sufficient to overcome every human longing. As much as I value marriage, Wilson is right to call Christians to a view of marriage that does not exalt it beyond what it was originally designed for. Once we do, we realize that those whose who are not married are not defective or odd, but capable of teaching those of us who are married what intimacy and depth can look like in friendship without it being sexualized.

Wilson's book is stellar and warmly recommended. The one shortcoming in an otherwise terrific book is Wilson's failure to be more fulsome in defending the intelligibility and universality of the Christian sexual ethic to broader human society. To be fair, he broaches this subject, but where he could have offered more explanation that would bolster Christian confidence in explaining how our ethics are creational (meaning, not simply sectarian), he did not. And this is probably the book's only real weakness. At a time when Christians are having difficulty explaining the relevancies of Christian sexual ethics to the broader culture, we need to learn that we are not irrational or simply fideistic in our beliefs about how God made every human being, male or female.

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— MISSION AND CULTURE —

Catherine M. Barsotti and Robert K. Johnston, eds. _God in the Movies: A Guide for Exploring Four Decades of Film_. Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2017. vii + 269 pp. £12.99/$21.99.

There is no denying the power of film to shape culture, attitudes, behaviors as well as cause individuals to reflect on life and issues that they may not otherwise contemplate. The influence of film comes from both its widespread popularity as an entertainment medium and from its inherent storytelling power. We watch films for many reasons, but regardless of the specific reason, we watch them because they have the power to captivate, move, and delight us.

It is because of the power and influence of film that scholars and filmmakers have contributed to the book, _God in the Movies: A Guide for Exploring Four Decades of Film._ They are affiliated with the Reel Spirituality Institute of the Brehm Center for Worship, Theology, and the Arts at Fuller Theological Seminary in Pasadena, California. Editors Catherine M. Barsotti and Robert K. Johnston intend the book to be used primarily as a tool for leading film study groups or for learning how to analyze mainstream films for their spiritual content.

After an introductory chapter outlining the book's rationale and guidelines for how to best use it, forty films (ten from each of the last four decades) are reviewed with a particular focus on their spiritual significance. Each chapter/review includes study questions, prominent themes, suggested Bible verses, and other ideas regarding how to engage viewers with the spiritual dimensions of the film. The authors also suggest ways to incorporate film clips into sermons, lessons, and other teaching opportunities.

The book is another in a growing list of books written about films and spiritual content and impact. Several contributors have written their own books on similar topics encouraging the reader to engage in serious analysis of secular, mainstream films for their spiritual significance. This genre of book has as its underlying assumption that this type of analysis of film is an appropriate and valuable means of "engaging the culture."

Films are certainly worth studying for their historical, cultural, and behavioral significance, and, occasionally, for their artistic merit. Some of them do have worthwhile treatments of religious or faith-oriented themes. However, to suggest that studying a broad range of films for purposes of spiritual enrichment is a worthwhile pursuit, is perhaps wishful thinking.

I am speaking as one who thoroughly enjoys the watching and studying of films. I earned degrees at two of the top film schools in the United States. I have taught film courses for nearly 30 years at the university level. I know and appreciate the art and history of film. However, there is sometimes an impulse to over spiritualize works of art—and especially films—in an attempt to justify spending so much time watching and analyzing them. Yes, all films have a worldview and viewers should become adept at spotting and analyzing that aspect of a film. But to suggest that most films are inherently spiritual is a stretch. Can God reveal himself through films and/or other works of culture/art? Of course. However, that does not mean that all films or works of art are equally valuable for discerning his revelation.

While the authors provide some encouraging examples of how films can play a role in pointing people to spiritual things—and sometimes even God, there is little solid evidence that this is an effective evangelism or discipleship tool. While the inclusion of film clips in sermons and other church-based
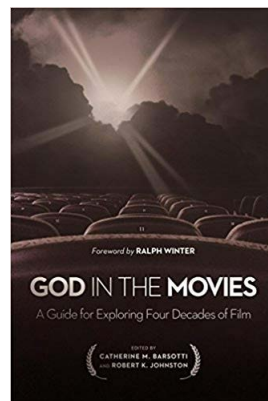
lessons is common practice in today's churches, the impact of such inclusion usually means that there is less focus on actual biblical exposition. It is not a good tradeoff.

So, do I recommend the book? Not really. The book might be helpful by virtue of its synopses of the films listed. Some of the study questions may help families (at least for the few family films included in the forty) as they discuss films they might view together. However, I do not think the book will be much help for the small group purposes for which it is intended. I hesitate to endorse its use in any outreach strategy.

The other caution I have pertains to the choice of films included in the volume. There are several films among the forty that I would not encourage believers to see. Of course, what films to view is a matter of conscience for every believer to determine, but we should not casually dismiss the power of film to influence us as individuals. Some of these films are clearly questionable.

Like the rest of God's creation, the arts belong to him. Therefore, there is value in studying, creating, and displaying works of art that bring honor and glory to God and point people to great truths about him and to his beauty and greatness. However, few works of art (including film) do that very clearly. That is why I cannot wholeheartedly embrace the concept of this book as a useful tool for ministry and outreach. *God in the Movies* aspires to connect the sacred and the profane, but in the end, it too often seems forced and not all that helpful.

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Sam Chan. *Evangelism in a Skeptical World: How to Make the Unbelievable News About Jesus More Believable*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2018. 288 pp. £10.99/$24.99.

The dramatic pace of cultural change in the Western world has left many Christians feeling battered and unsure about the task of evangelism. The approaches that seemed to work so well in the past have little impact on our unbelieving friends. Though a number of valuable books address this issue, Sam Chan's book provides a depth of engagement that is much needed in this area. Though theologically rich, Chan also draws on philosophy, psychology, sociology, and missiology to give a robust defense of his approach.

The essence of Chan's argument is that Christians need to utilize a wide variety of evangelistic methods to effectively engage our secular pluralist culture. In chapter 1, Chan provides a biblical and theological foundation for this conviction, drawing on his earlier work in speech-act theory (*Preaching and the Word of God: Answering an Old Question with Speech-Act Theory* [Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2016]). He helpfully reminds us that evangelism is defined by its content not its form. Effective communication of the gospel is the goal, yet the methods we may employ are many and varied.

Chapter 2 discusses the impact of plausibility structures on evangelism and outlines a range of practical ways to get started in personal evangelism. He emphasizes the lifestyle dimension of evangelism and the value of a communal approach. Though the implications for a church are briefly mentioned, a more in-depth discussion of these principles for church communities would be appreciated.
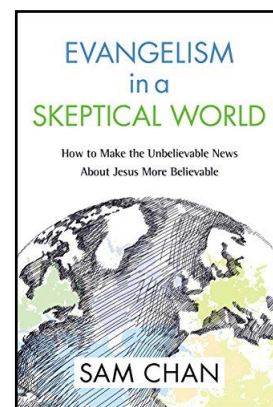
The tendency among evangelicals to demand a single mode of evangelism is addressed in chapter 3 with a biblical survey of gospel metaphors. Some common gospel outlines are critiqued. Chan surveys the breadth of imagery employed in the Bible for God, Jesus, sin, atonement, and salvation. Readers would benefit from further reflection on these perspectives as a way of broadening their gospel vocabulary and fluency. The following chapter's review of post-modern epistemology reinforces this need for diversity in approach. The contrast between modernism and post-modernism that Chan outlines is a valuable introduction to the impact of western philosophical paradigms on personal and public evangelism.

Chapters 5 and 6 draw heavily from the field of missiology to apply the principles of contextualization and cultural exegesis to our western contexts. Building on the work of Paul Hiebert and Kevin Vanhoozer, these chapters introduce essential skills for culturally sensitive evangelism. Chan outlines a method for this practice that readers can apply to their own situation.

Storytelling, topical preaching, and expository preaching are discussed in chapters 7–9 as indispensable tools in our evangelistic arsenal. Narrative communication, and Bible storytelling in particular, has been widely promoted in cross-cultural missions circles for some time. Chan appeals to the preferred learning styles of our listeners, arguing that a narrative approach is equally relevant in western contexts today. Though people may not fall into the abstract or concrete-relational learner categories as neatly as Chan suggests the practices he prescribes are widely used and well tested.

Chan's defense of topical preaching is passionately presented though again argues for a plurality of approaches. In this and the following chapter on expository preaching, Chan outlines a range of practical approaches for preparing evangelistic sermons. He shows a commitment to both knowing and engaging the audience that builds on the earlier discussion of cultural exegesis. The book even gives tips on illustrations, preaching at special events, and leading people in the sinner's prayer. These chapters are an invaluable source of fresh ideas for those regularly using this mode of communication.

The final chapter explores religious epistemology as it applies it to the practice of apologetics. Contrasting evidentialist and presuppositional approaches, Chan presents his "middle way" of winning over the listener emotionally while presenting a biblical perspective. Unashamedly drawing on the ministry of Timothy Keller, he provides a useful model through a number of worked examples.

The strength of this book is its multidisciplinary approach to evangelism. Though deeply theological and gospel-centered, the insights from other fields of knowledge provide richness and depth to the argument. The missiological perspective is particularly valuable as we increasingly wrestle with the cultural obstacles to evangelism in western contexts. Yet regardless of one's context, Chan's focus on understanding both the gospel and the listener more fully is a great encouragement.

The book only occasionally mentions the implications of this approach for a local church. Readers will find regular emphasis on the power of community in evangelism but little discussion about the evangelistic role of our church communities. This would be a valuable addition.

Overall, this book is a wide-ranging and valuable introduction to the increasingly challenging task of evangelism. The gospel message is central, but there is passionate ambivalence about the mode of communication. It would make an excellent textbook for a seminary course or an encouragement to anyone wanting to lead people to Jesus.

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Michael W. Goheen, ed. <u>*Reading the Bible Missionally*</u>. The Gospel and Our Culture Series. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2016. xiv + 343 pp. £24.99/$35.00.

Since the end of the 20th century, scholarly discussions considering the intersection between biblical hermeneutics and mission have become more and more commonplace. From Johannes Blauw and David Bosch to Christopher Wright and Richard Bauckham, the cross-disciplinary conversations have proven fruitful for both missiological and biblical disciplines. Michael Goheen's edited volume *Reading the Bible Missionally* joins these conversations by presenting a survey of topics related to mission and Bible interpretation. With contributors like Richard Bauckham, George Hunsberger, John Franke, Christopher J. H. Wright, Craig Bartholomew, Dean Flemming, N. T. Wright, and Joel B. Green, this text provides a helpful orientation for students unfamiliar with the missional hermeneutic conversation as well as challenging scholarly articles for advanced students on the topic.
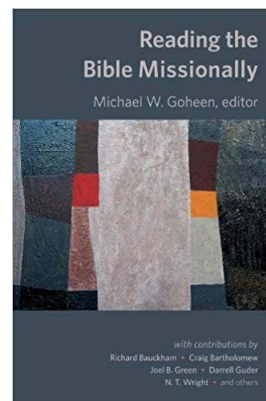
Goheen divides the book into five sections: (1) A Missional Hermeneutic, (2) A Missional Reading of the Old Testament, (3) A Missional Reading of the New Testament, (4) A Missional Reading of Scripture and Preaching, and (5) A Missional Reading of Scripture and Theological Education. The first section begins with a brief historical overview. It introduces the three central aspects of a missional hermeneutic: "reading the whole Scripture with mission as a central theme, reading Scripture to under what mission really is, and reading Scripture to equip the church for its missional task" (p. 15). Bauckham, Hunsberger, Bartholomew, and Franke build on those central themes as they impact biblical interpretation, historical perspective, theological interpretation, and intercultural hermeneutics respectively.

In particular, Franke's chapter adds a decidedly philosophical and theological timbre to the predominantly biblical and missiological conversation. His treatment of intercultural hermeneutics moves readers to consider how these conversations relate to theological disciplines. He guides readers through deep theological waters, addressing the doctrine of the Trinity, modern and postmodern philosophies, their impact on hermeneutics, and insights from anthropological scholarship. Franke should be applauded for the helpful complexity of his consideration. His treatment, however, leaves readers questioning the status and role of the inspired biblical text in his system, which grows out of his focus on the diverse contextuality of Christian knowledge and the impact of context in the Scriptures themselves. Yet, he helpfully takes intentional steps to affirm a robust realism in his interaction with postmodern philosophy.

In the second section, Christopher J. H. Wright introduces his framework for reading the Old Testament missionally. Readers acquainted with his larger work *The Mission of God* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2006) will find this chapter familiar. Mark Glanville and Carl J. Bosma follow Wright with a narrow lens focus on Deuteronomy, Psalm 67, and Psalm 96. Both of these chapters are rich with observations on how their respective passages help the church better recognize God's missional working in Israel looking forward to Christ.

In the third section, N. T. Wright begins by arguing the New Testament should be read "from the entire missional agenda of the early church" (p. 176). Joel B. Green and Dean Flemming follow Wright by offering in-depth treatments of James and Colossians read through a missional lens. Green's

treatment of James through the lens of narrative identity and incarnation gives readers a helpful lens through which to consider a book not normally associated with a missional impulse.

The fourth section moves the book into a natural and necessary treatment of how a missional hermeneutic can result in missional preaching. Goheen brings preaching into the missional hermeneutic conversation by considering its *telos*—"to form a distinctive community for the sake of the world" (p. 247). Goheen's high view of both Christ and the Bible is laudable and refreshing. Next, Timothy M. Sheridan compares missional preaching with Tim Keller's gospel-centered preaching, arguing that preaching influenced by a missional reading of Scripture is preferable to a gospel-centered approach.

Finally, Darrell J. Gruder and Goheen consider the impact of missional reading of Scripture on theological education. Gruder outlines the historical development and current contours of the theological education. He argues that a missional reading of Scripture "must reshape theological education so that the community of saints may be equipped through their encounter with the written word of God" (p. 297). Gruder's ability to juggle the complexities of theological education and synthesize a missional hermeneutic into those conversations makes this chapter a valuable addition to the growing body of literature about the purpose and role of the seminary in the life of the church. Goheen concludes the book by framing his perspective on a missional hermeneutic and theological education through the lens of the 1952 International Missionary Council in Willingen, Germany. He proposes a constructive model for how to create a theological curriculum centered on the gospel, the mission of God, and the mission of the church.

Goheen's edited volume truly is a multi-disciplinary look at nature of a missional hermeneutic and its application to the life of the church. The genuine diversity of the contributors allows readers to consider the reality of a missional God and his missional text from a number of different angles. As a result, the ability to uncover and tease out the implications for a missional interpretation from so many varied perspectives drives home the reality that the Scripture and the life of the church truly are centered on God and his mission. In addition, all of the contributors share a commitment to pre/post-Enlightenment interpretation of the Scriptures. For readers who do not align with these philosophical presuppositions, this text could prove occasionally troublesome. Even so, *Reading the Bible Missionally* is a rich resource. It is a must-have for scholars and students in missiology and biblical studies.

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John W. Mehn. *Multiplying Churches in Japanese Soil*. Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 2017. 208 pp. £10.74/$13.99.

Planting churches in Japan is hard. Despite centuries of missionary efforts in Japan, the church has little fruit to show for its efforts. In an attempt to investigate and remedy this situation, John Mehn wrote *Multiplying Churches in Japanese Soil*. Mehn has lived in Japan for more than thirty years and is well versed in the history, culture, and traditions of the Japanese people.

The book is organized into eight chapters. The first four chapters give some historical and contextual background to the work of planting churches in Japan. Mehn explains this history of church planting in Japan and the contextual factors that make church planting so difficult. He then presents the background of traditional Japanese religious groups and provides lessons learned from historical and contemporary church planting in Japan.

In the final three chapters, Mehn examines several contemporary models of church planting in Japan. These models include target penetration, network planting, simple church, cell churches, multisite churches, and sending churches. For each, he not only explains the model but also gives examples of churches in Japan utilizing that model. He then outlines how certain church leaders in Japan are developing leaders in their churches. Common characteristics of these leaders include a God-given ministry vision, a risk-taking faith, a view of the church as a dynamic sending community, an emphasis on the development of lay people for ministry, a relational approach to leadership through encouragement, and an aggressive implementation through practical ministry. Finally, he presents challenges for the future of church planting in Japan.

Mehn does a tremendous job outlining Japanese history and culture. His treatment of religion in Japan and the need for adequate contextualization is worth the cost of the book. He explains one of the challenges to contextualization, "Japanese culture is often hard to determine, as the Japanese people fail to be very self-reflective of their culture and are reticent to speak to people they don't know well regarding their cultural views" (p. 15). In a later chapter, he laments that unhealthy contextualization has led the church to overemphasize the clergy/laity divide, see the church more as an institution than a gathering of people, and fail to engage the local community (pp. 27–35).

His treatment of spiritual warfare is likewise helpful. He explains that it does not take long in Japan to sense the spiritual darkness surrounding the people. And yet, Mehn displays a biblical perspective by writing, "Our task is preaching the truth of the gospel to ourselves and others" (p. 48). He continues on the issue of prayer, "Rather than praying against spirits, the kind of biblical prayers needed are that God would open the eyes of people in darkness and lead them in repentance for their rebellion against him" (p. 48). An additional strength of the work is that he does not advocate only one model for church planting in Japan but gives numerous models for consideration.

While Mehn's desire to see more churches planted in Japan is admirable, his overdependence on church planting movement (CPM) methodology hinders the book's effectiveness. With no support except a quote from Winter and Koch, he asserts, "Only multiplying new communities of believers saturating the country will accomplish the task of displaying the missionary nature of the church in every community" (pp. xix–xx). He criticizes the church's over-institutionalization and the lack of lay leader ministries. But even if these issues are addressed, it is difficult to see how multiplication could
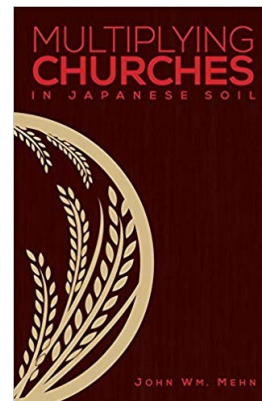
happen "naturally" (p. 127) in a context as structured and regimented as Japan. In the same way, in a culture so deeply committed to sacred space, it is difficult to understand how cell churches and small groups can flourish.

To be fair, Mehn's approach is not as extreme as other CPM-type methods. Though he celebrates the need for multiplication, the churches in his research planted a new church at least three times over a twenty-year period. Such growth is hardly characteristic of CPM methodology, whose advocates claimed that CPM churches reproduce at the rate of once per month. CPM methodology seems only to affect his analysis and description of the church and its leaders. For example, church is only defined as a "dynamic sending community" (pp. 125–29). This view is not wrong, per se, but it misses key elements of what makes a healthy church, such as biblical preaching, teaching, worship, and prayer.

Along the same lines, the necessity of strong biblical and theological foundations is sadly lacking from his discussions of church and leadership. He does mentions areas where the Japanese church needs greater theological reflection (pp. 13–14). However, when he addresses needs of existing churches (p. 26), contemporary church planting models (p. 99), or church leaders, theology is not listed as a priority. Mehn fails to recognize that unhealthy contextualization flows out of unhealthy interpretation. If churches are going to live out the gospel and be a light to their communities, they need to know the Bible and how to interpret it. Strategies and methods for multiplication simply are not enough to lead the church to health for generations to come.

While Mehn's work has some weaknesses, we can be thankful that this book advances a needed discussion on the necessity of church planting in an area of great need. Those working in Japan will certainly learn much from this book, but even church leaders in other locations will benefit from reading about the challenges and opportunities for church planting in a place that has long resisted the gospel's life-giving power.

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Lawrence R. Samuel. *Happiness in America: A Cultural History*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2018. 194 pp. £22.95/$32.00.

What do I need to be happy? Possessions? Relationships? An attitude adjustment? More hobbies? Better hobbies? Wine, women, and song? More serotonin? In *Happiness in America: A Cultural History*, Lawrence R. Samuel examines the role that "the pursuit of happiness" plays in the American self-concept and in our vision of a life lived well (the "American Dream"). Lawrence Samuel works as a culture consultant, advising corporations and advertising agencies on topics relating to cultural trends in the United States. Having earned a PhD in American studies from the University of Minnesota, he is the author of many books on the subject. He argues in this latest book that our definitions of happiness are ambiguous and incoherent, our methods of pursuing it misguided, and our expectations about it wrongheaded.

Drawing on both popular and scholarly sources, the book is organized chronologically. In the introduction, after presenting his basic message about happiness, Samuel briefly

discusses the use of the phrase "pursuit of happiness" in the founding American documents and the general understanding of happiness at that time. He then proceeds to trace American thoughts on happiness through the interwar period (ch. 1), World War Two and the 1950s (ch. 2), the tumultuous 1960s and 1070s (ch. 3), the final two decades of the twentieth century (ch. 4), and the dawn of the twenty-first century (ch. 5). In the final chapter, Samuel presents his description of the current state of the pursuit of happiness, and then gives his concluding thoughts in an epilogue.

Samuel presents a consistent message, arguing that Americans tend to earnestly desire happiness, but we do not quite know what it is or what secret techniques we can employ to obtain it. Despite decades of research in which we see that happiness has no strong connection to material wealth, Americans seem unwilling to abandon the idea that if we just had more money or the newest gadget, we would enter into a state of long-lasting bliss. The search for the method or purchase that will ensure happiness is made more difficult by the proliferation of shallow self-help books (a genre that grew into a substantial body of popular literature in the 1930s) that overshadows the more scientifically-rigorous efforts by various scholars to assess happiness through surveys and laboratory research.

One possible outcome of this confusion is a recurring contrast between Americans' self-identification as a happy people and the troubling levels of more objective indicators of psychosocial functioning (e.g., substance abuse, mental illness, stress, divorce, etc.). In addition, at every turn, we see counter-pressure being brought to bear by critics of "happyology," who argue that happiness cannot be an end in itself but must be seen as a pleasant side effect of a life spent in the service of something more meaningful than individual subjective gratification. We also see scholarly disagreement over the degree to which happiness depends on individual effort versus social conditions. Some of us who are involved with the "positive psychology" movement might be surprised to learn that the application of social-scientific methodology toward a description of happiness, and a set of empirically-supported techniques for pursuing happiness, is a project that stretches at least as far back as the 1920s. We might also be surprised to see that the debates currently surrounding the science of happiness are, in fact, perennial.

Speaking of positive psychology, Dr. Samuel does a fair job of sketching out the birth and rise of this field, introducing us to eminent early researchers such as Ed Diener, David Myers, Richard Easterlin, and Mihalyi Csikszentmihalyi. The positive psychology movement officially began in 1998 with Martin Seligman's tenure as president of the American Psychological Association. We get a glimpse into the research on learned optimism that gave Seligman the inspiration for his call to psychologists to give greater emphasis to a scientific understanding of the things that make life worth living. Samuel presents positive psychology as the latest (and greatest) manifestation of an ongoing project to create a science of happiness that can be fruitfully applied in order to give everyone a chance at living a happy life.

Despite his kind words for positive psychology (he concludes the book with a set of twelve tips drawn from a century of happiness scholarship), Samuel emphasizes the incoherence of the field. He describes the difficulties in defining happiness, measurement problems in the scientific research literature, contradictory theories of happiness, and general failures to produce universally-effective methods for teaching people how to be happy. In this way, *Happiness in America* joins the ranks of critics of happiness science such as Barbara Ehrenreich (*Bright-Sided* [New York: Metropolitan, 2009]) and William Davies (*The Happiness Industry* [New York: Verso, 2015]), cautioning us that the pursuit of happiness is not all that it is cracked up to be.

Those who are interested in a Christian perspective on happiness and/or positive psychology will have to look elsewhere. While this is an informative book about the history of twentieth and twenty-first century attempts to quantify and cultivate happiness, religion receives only a few passing mentions. For a Christian viewpoint, I recommend that readers seek out books such as Christopher Kaczor's *The Gospel of Happiness* (New York: Image, 2015) and Mark McMinn's *The Science of Virtue* (Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2017).

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Jason Sexton and Paul Weston, eds. *The End of Theology: Shaping Theology for the Sake of Mission*. Minneapolis: Fortress, 2016. xxvii + 299 pp. £25.99/$39.00.

This book is not as pessimistic as the title might suggest! In fact, it is a positive book in many ways. The preface traces the origin of the book to the 2014 meeting of the Tyndale Fellowship Christian Doctrine Study Group. Emma Wild-Wood (senior lecturer at the Centre for the Study of World Christianity in New College, Edinburgh) then provides a foreword that sets the book in the context of the changing face of World Christianity.

"Theologians and missiologists do not often talk to each other," so say Jason Sexton and Paul Weston in the opening line of their introduction (p. xxi). But they go on to explain how the essays in the book point in a different direction, deliberately drawing missiologists and theologians together. They admit, "It was not an entirely easy conversation" (p. xxii). Although many perspectives are represented in the book, "at every point, the focus of the authors was the central question of what it means to *do theology* for the sake of mission" (p. xxii).

The editors helpfully arrange the book in three parts. Part one is entitled "Theology and Mission in Dialogue." This section has three main papers, each followed by a response. Where the main chapter is written by a specialist in mission, the response is given by a systematic theologian, and *vice versa*.

Part two is entitled "Assessing the Shape of Theology and Mission in Dialogue." Here several authors reflect (to a greater or lesser extent) on the relationship between mission and theology in the light of the earlier chapters. Of the four essays by Mark Elliott, Brian Stanley, Pete Ward, and Jason Sexton, I particularly appreciated Elliott's appreciative remarks on the importance of mission while pushing back against those who wish to argue that it is the hermeneutical key to Scripture. Also noteworthy is Brian Stanley's challenge to do self-consciously *theological* work that relates to Christian mission. I found the clarity and verve of Stanley's paper particularly engaging.

In Part three, "The Practice of Shaping Theology for Mission," I particularly enjoyed reading David Kirkpatrick's exploration of the influences on Ecuadorian theologian C. René Padilla, including Arthur Holmes at Wheaton College; F. F. Bruce, who supervised Padilla's PhD in New Testament at Manchester University; George Eldon Ladd, with his theology of the Kingdom and a church living "between the times"; and John A. Mackay, the Scottish missionary from Inverness who called for theology in the Latin
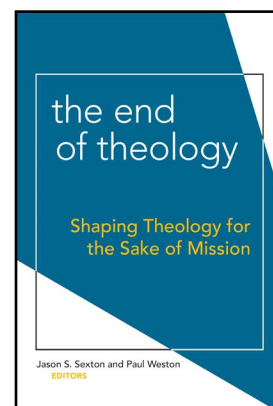
American church to be written in context. Other essays reflect theologically on personal experiences of people seeking to engage in mission in various ways and contexts.

This book has an important statement of intent—namely, theologians and missiologists must speak to each other. It is also a useful snapshot for students of the kinds of conversations that are taking place regarding the interface between theology and missiology. At the same time, this is not the first place I would point people looking for theological reflection on mission. I found some essays rather heavy going. Despite the editors' best efforts to create a measure of coherence, a collection of essays typically has a disjointed feel to it. It was inevitable that I should warm to some essays more than others. Nonetheless, I am grateful for the work that went into this volume. It contains several excellent papers and is a valuable addition to the range of resources available to support serious theological thinking.

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Brian Stanley. *Christianity in the Twentieth Century: A World History*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2018. xxi + 477 pp. £27.00/$35.00.

Brian Stanley, respected historian of world Christianity and professor at the University of Edinburgh, invested six years producing his latest work, *Christianity in the Twentieth Century*. Stanley's two previous works—*The World Missionary Conference, Edinburgh 2010* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009) and *The Global Diffusion of Evangelism* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2013)—also explore issues of twentieth-century world Christian and mission history.

Stanley's aim is to evaluate the "multiple and complex ways in which the Christian religion and its institutional embodiment in the Christian churches have interacted with the changing social, political, and cultural environment of the twentieth century" (pp. 3–4). To do this, he chooses fifteen themes that show how the church responded to the changing twentieth-century world, offering two case studies for each theme to make his point.

In the opening chapter, the author shows how British and American Christianity were affected by the First World War. Next, with a focus on Poland and Korea, he discusses the dynamics of Christianity and nationalism (ch. 2). The following three chapters consider prophetic and revival movements in Africa and the South Pacific (ch. 3), state-imposed secularization in France and the Soviet Union (chap. 4), and faith trends and church attendance in Scandinavia and the United States (ch. 5). He then explores church unity in India and China (ch. 6), racism in Nazi Germany, genocide in Rwanda (ch. 7), and the plight of Christian minorities in Egypt and Indonesia (ch. 8). Stanley continues his study by articulating twentieth-century mission theologies (ch. 9), exploring liberation theology in Latin America and Palestine (chap. 10), and discussing justice and the gospel issues in South Africa's apartheid state and among Canada's first nations population (ch. 11). He devotes one chapter to questions about the ordination of women in Australia and gay rights in American churches (ch. 12). In the remaining chapters, he discusses global Pentecostalism (ch. 13), Eastern Orthodox Christianity (ch. 14), and the
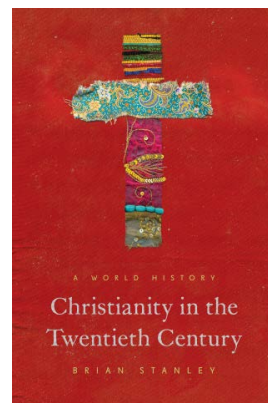
impact of global migration on the church (ch. 15). He concludes the book with a concise and summative chapter that brings the work together.

Christianity in the Twentieth Century is a rich and thorough resource. Though Stanley limits himself to fifteen themes and two case studies per theme, he succeeds in providing the reader a rather comprehensive picture of twentieth-century global Christianity. This includes some places and people that may not get as much attention in other survey works (e.g., Polish Catholics, African Orthodox Christians, Australian Anglicans).

Though Stanley adequately narrates the story of world Christianity in the last century, his many smaller nuggets of historical insights throughout the work are especially compelling. For example, he shows how WWI fractured the mission unity garnered from the 1910 Edinburgh World Missionary Conference and particularly alienated German missionaries from their European and North American counterparts (pp. 14–15). Also, he asserts that Egyptian Coptic Christians learned to be resilient as a religious minority by looking to their monastic past, to the desert fathers who remained firm in their faith amid periods of Roman persecution (p. 181). Stanley also questions the commonly held view that global Pentecostalism originated from the 1906 Asuza Street revival in Los Angeles. He points to other factors and spiritual movements that encouraged this expression of Christianity (pp. 291–92). Finally, Stanley shows how Eastern Orthodox practices, particularly the "Jesus Prayer," spread to Europe during the middle of the century because of the large number of Russian Christians interned in German prison campus during WWI (p. 315).

I have just two minor critiques. First, though Stanley gives space to both Latin American liberation theology movements and the holistic missiology of Latin American evangelicals (Padilla, Escobar, Costas) at Lausanne 1974 (pp. 210–13, 223–31), he makes no connection between the thought and practice of these two movements. This is especially surprising given his good argument for the Protestant influences on liberation theology within the Roman Catholic Church. Second, while the author does a good job of surveying twentieth-century global Christianity, his work still seems a bit overly focused on the church in America. The biggest twentieth-century Christian story was the church in Africa. This deserves more space.

In sum, Stanley has produced an inviting, well-written, and excellent survey of twentieth-century global Christianity. Scholars, professors, and graduate students of Christian history will greatly benefit. Paired with primary source readings, this fifteen-chapter book would be a great anchoring text for a graduate or seminary level course on Christianity in the twentieth century.

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John Mark Terry and Robert L. Gallagher. *Encountering the History of Missions: From Early Church to Today*. Encountering Mission. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2017. 418 pp. £19.99/$29.99.

John Mark Terry and Robert Gallagher should be commended for attempting to survey the history of Christian missions in a single volume that is both succinct yet comprehensive enough to serve as a textbook for a semester-long course. The eighteen chapters of *Encountering the History of Missions* span roughly 350 pages. It takes readers from the well-trod ground of "missions in the early church" to a rare and insightful chapter explicating the pervasive influence of Fuller Seminary's Church Growth Movement school of thought. The authors aim to provide a global perspective in three main ways: (1) by turning from the imperial Roman church to a chapter on Persian and later Nestorian missions (chapter 2), (2) by discussing a millennium of Eastern Orthodox missions (chapter 4), and (3) by including notable majority world church leaders and missionaries in their survey of the modern era.
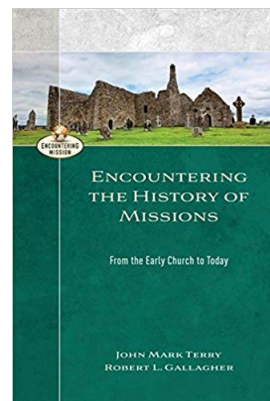
In a largely chronological presentation, readers progress through succinct chapters on "Celtic" (curiously including Boniface) and Orthodox missions as well as Dominican and Franciscan, Medieval Renewal, and Reformation missions. This is followed by respective chapters on Jesuit, Pietist, Moravian, and Methodist missions. Next comes chapters on The Great Century of Protestant Missions, The Twentieth Century, Missionary Councils and Congresses, and Specialized Missions (developed in the twentieth century). Thankfully, there is a topic index. The second half of the book is more cohesive as the focus narrows on evangelical Protestantism, though not exclusively. The authors find their own voices after relying, perhaps too uncritically, in the first half of the book on scholars of the Catholic, Orthodox, and Nestorian traditions.

A book like this is attractive for a few reasons. Textbooks of this genre and scope are few and far between. Terry is a longtime Southern Baptist professor and former missionary. Gallagher is a Charismatic Australian department chair at Wheaton College and member of the CMA. These seasoned missiologists have provided leadership for a swath of evangelicals. They survey mission theory while introducing the history of missions. The authors believe the history of missions "is as inspiring as it is instructional" (pp. 361–62). It is written for evangelical students and practitioners.

The book's purview is ecumenical; its perspective is broadly evangelical, not polemical. Terry and Gallagher offer a charitable introduction to the place of missions in Luther's thought, early Lutheran missions and the eventual Lutheran expansion throughout Scandinavia (pp. 138–48). They survey the missionary contributions of John Calvin's Geneva. Although the chapter on Reformation missions is too narrowly focused on Wittenberg and Geneva, the authors avoid erroneously dismissing the Reformation movement as unmissionary.

A few weaknesses make me hesitant to assign it to undergraduate students, at least without careful mediation on my part. I am especially troubled by the authors' uncritical attributions and statements. The following references deserve yet lack theological comment: the liberal Adolf von Harnack is quoted merely as a "German Lutheran theologian" (p. 6); "Arian Christianity" is noted without critical assessment (p. 13); a supposed quote from Jesus is taken from the Gospel of Thomas without qualification (p. 30); Spaniards are said to have searched for gold and "brought Christ" to native peoples through military conquest and forced conversions (p. 91); Ignatius Loyola is said to have had a "radical conversion to

Christ" (p. 150), and post-Trent Jesuits are said to have "presented the gospel" (pp. 157, 158, 170). The authors present Jesuits as being both "faithful to Christ" and "flexible in [Christian] expression" (pp. 150, 170). The laudable pedagogical intentions of these professors, it seems, get in the way of discerning historical and theological reflection.

Furthermore, curious omissions and unclear writing span the book. The authors do not cite Tertullian when they write, "The blood of the martyrs really did prove to be the seed of the church" (p. 10). Nor do they indicate that their turn of the phrase, "The world was his parish," is derived from John Wesley (p. 224). They do not always clearly distinguish between Persian, Syrian, and Nestorian churches. Medieval renewalists are unhelpfully called "Reformers" with a capital R. Martin Luther's 95 theses are framed as a summary of Reformed thought rather than a focused critique of indulgences (p. 139). Several other simple errors could also be mentioned

This book will serve readers seeking a better understanding of the missionary component of the history of world Christianity. Instructors and graduate students may find it a useful reference and pedagogical resource. A twenty-five-page long reference list includes approximately 500 entries. Many helpful sidebars throughout the book highlight particular events, issues, or primary documents, and persons, including modern era majority world church leaders Ko Tha Byu, Samuel Adjayi Crowther, John Sung, and Sundar Singh. Several women are mentioned throughout the book, including Ann Haseltine Judson, Helen Roseveare, Amy Carmichael, and Betty Green.

The chapter on the Church Growth Movement proved a helpful, objective though sympathetic explication of the current missions scene. Terry and Gallagher posit eight socio-historical factors that facilitated the trending of this school of thought (pp. 338–40). They then posit seven consequent "streams" flowing from Donald MacGavran's influence. This chapter could serve as a stand-alone resource well describing what is "out there" and requiring critical, discerning engagement. The authors note six needed improvements to the Church Growth Movement. They suggest, as well, that it "never developed a thorough theological foundation" while emerging from a pragmatic and sociological point of view (p. 352).

The book's perspective on contextualization seems noncontroversial, albeit uncritical. Their claim that elements of a pre-Christian culture could serve as a "foundation" for the Christian faith (p. 158) may be taken as either overstatement or, perhaps, a more accommodating Charles Kraft-like posture toward indigenous worldviews and culture. They rightly commend the usefulness of anthropology and sociological insights for faithful missions (pp. 284–86, 343) but do so without any accompanying warning of potential missteps.

The authors' final chapter fails to deliver on their promise to consider *how* to meet the remaining needs in our contemporary world. To be fair, readers will find much "instruction and inspiration" for missionary praxis in the content-packed chapters that precede. Despite its weaknesses, *Encountering the History of Missions* accomplishes in textbook form, and as a single volume, what no other book I'm aware of does.

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Elmer John Thiessen. *The Scandal of Evangelism: A Biblical Study of the Ethics of Evangelism*. Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2018. 274 pp. £26.00/$33.00.

I am often asked to give seminars help Christians tell their friends, family, and work colleagues about Jesus. Over the last decade, the nature of the questions afterwards has increasingly changed. Whereas the questions previously concerned the *method* of evangelism—e.g., "How do I bring up my faith in a conversation?"—the questions now relate to the *ethics* of evangelism—e.g., "As a boss, am I allowed to tell my workers about Jesus?"

This has been an under-explored area of Christian evangelism. Most books on evangelism have a brief treatment on the definition of evangelism, something on the biblical warrant for evangelism, and then a suggestion of methods of evangelism. But there is very little on the *ethics* of evangelism. Can a doctor tell her patient about Jesus? What about a school teacher to her students? What about an uncle to his niece?

Elmer John Thiessen fills this gap with his latest book *The Scandal of Evangelism: A Biblical Study of the Ethics of Evangelism.* This is familiar territory for Thiessen. He previously taught philosophy for 36 years at Medicine Hat College in Alberta, where he was open with students about his Christian faith. His earlier book, *The Ethics of Evangelism: A Philosophical Defense of Proselytizing and Persuasion* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2011) was written for both Christian and non-Christian audiences.

The audience of this book, *The Scandal of Evangelism*, is the Christian reader. The goal is twofold: (1) to provide a biblical grounding for a Christian ethics of evangelism, and (2) to apply this to contemporary examples. These two aims divide the book into two halves.

The first half of the book achieves the first aim by providing a biblical theology of evangelism. Thiessen spends some time on what I call the *prolegomena* of evangelism. What is the gospel? What is the relationship between word and deed? What is the relationship between evangelism and mission? What is the relationship between personal salvation and kingdom membership? Do I proclaim the gospel for conversion to make disciples or to grow disciples? Thiessen's treatment here is both welcome and thorough.

Thiessen then surveys what evangelism looks like in the Bible, giving particular attention to the New Testament. From this, he generates ethical guidelines for evangelism. The most useful guideline is the Golden Rule: "Evangelize others as you yourself would like to be evangelized" (p. 115). I also appreciate the guidelines that deal with the *motivation* for evangelism (pp. 129–30). After all, this is the heart of Christian ethics—not so much what we do, but *who* we are when we do it.

The second half of the book applies these guidelines to four specific, contemporary situations: (1) evangelism of children; (2) evangelism in professional life, with particular attention to the academy; (3) evangelism and humanitarian aid; and (4) the ethics of proselytism, with particular attention to "sheep stealing"—i.e., evangelizing Christians from another church, denomination, or tradition.

Once again, I found Thiessen's treatment to be highly informed—benefitting both from research and his personal experiences—with nuanced and balanced conclusions. Whether or not you agree with his conclusions, you will always grant that he gives the other side a fair hearing and then adequately justifies his own conclusions.
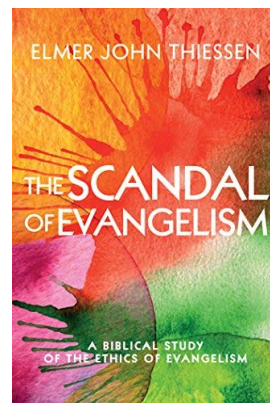
This book is actually more than a book on the ethics of evangelism. Thiessen also gives us *theological* treatments on important subjects, such as freedom, coercion, work, and social action. He also gives us useful categories for navigating the ethical minefield of evangelism, e.g., a "sliding scale" for evaluating the relationship between humanitarian aid and evangelism (pp. 191–93). At other times, the book is an *apology*, i.e., a defense—of Christian evangelism.

In the end, the *crux* of the ethical debate regarding evangelism is the notion of coercion. At various sections of the book, Thiessen does a great job of giving us a philosophical and theological analysis of coercion—for example, distinguishing between it and constraint (p. 187).

If I have concerns, they are minor. First, most books on evangelism pit the work of the Holy Spirit against human effort. For example, "Ultimately, any success we might have in evangelism is the work of God's Spirit, and not the result of our own abilities" (p. 86). But can't it be a *both-and* rather than an *either-or*, especially if the Spirit is the supernatural, personal agent, *and* the human evangelist's efforts are the natural, instrumental means? Second, at a style level, Thiessen often says, "First …" and then I can't find a "Second …" and "Third …"! But, like I said, these are very minor concerns.

Overall, this is a welcome addition to the canon of books on evangelism. This book covers much territory on the prolegomena of evangelism, which many other survey books do not address. Its most valuable contribution is that it fills a gap—on the *ethics* of evangelism—which has been surprisingly untreated until now. It is timely, because our post-Christendom 21st century world is very concerned about issues of power, violence, and coercion. Christians will need all the tools they can get to navigate this new world. Finally, this book is both highly informed by academia and personal experience. I recommend it highly.

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Amy Young. *All the News That's Fit to Tell and How to Tell It: How to Write Christian Newsletters*. CreateSpace, 2018. 142 pp. £7.06/$10.99.

To anyone who has never been required either to write or read a steady flow of missionary newsletters, an entire book dedicated solely to that purpose might seem excessive. Nevertheless, having periodically found myself at both ends of the newsletter production line, I have seen and can testify that Amy Young's latest work is a godsend for missionaries and their supporters alike. Young, Director of Global Operations for Velvet Ashes, speaks from her years of experience as a missionary to Asia. The result is both spiritually insightful and deeply practical, a gift and a guide to amateurs, veterans, and every newsletter writer in between.

Young begins where the process of writing itself begins, in the mind of the writer. Her first section (pp. 5–15) addresses "The Unseen Battle" of correcting and solidifying one's mindset in order to write with confidence. In this chapter, she demonstrates how to break out of the negative patterns of thought and attitude that so easily derail the writing process: perfectionism, fear of failure, comparison, fear of criticism, and so forth. She then devotes a chapter to clarifying and establishing one's individual motivation for newsletter-writing,
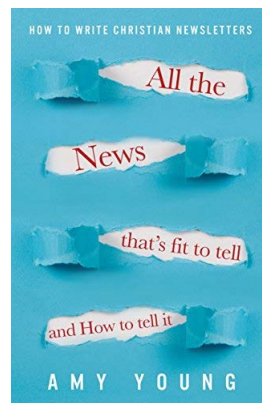
finding a "why … strong enough to hold you when emotion dies" (p. 18). Having established the mental, spiritual, and emotional posture that undergird the process of writing newsletters, she then devotes the remainder of *All the News* to equipping readers with a set of practical tools.

Some of Young's input is designed for newsletter writers in particular. She outlines the unique structure common to this genre and demonstrates how to enliven that structure with visual elements. Along with this instruction, she provides a full chapter on "blend[ing] explaining and storytelling," moving beyond the plain delivery of news to "act[ing] as a bit of a tour guide sharing your cultural context … while illustrating your explanation with stories" (p. 35).

The bulk of *All the News*, however, is simply good writing advice, tailored ever-so-slightly for the newsletter-writing missionary. This includes ground rules for employing strong verbs and concrete language as well as rooting out repetitive language and developing a concise, readable style. Some chapters equip writers to foster their unique writing voice. Other sections help missionaries to seek out and accept qualitative feedback. She even demonstrates how to cultivate the introspective and observational skills needed to glean writing material from the rhythms everyday of life.

If those seeking to master writing should consult Douglas Wilson's *Wordsmithy: Hot Tips for the Writing Life* (Moscow, ID: Canon Press, 2011), then *All the News* is for those who have had writing thrust upon them. Young acknowledges this reality in her first chapter, admonishing the reader that "[w]hether you enjoy writing or not, the truth is your job now requires you to write" (p. 7). She takes on the role of training a potentially unwilling audience in a daunting task. Her tone, content, and structure all expertly flow from a sober recognition of that fact.

In light of that dynamic, Young's chapters on mindset and motivation are essential to the success of *All the News*. Cross-cultural ministry is one of the most disorienting experiences a believer can undergo. All the tethers of identity (e.g., homeland, language, hobbies, friends, family, religious experience) have drastically changed, if not entirely disappeared. All the daily rhythms of life have been disrupted. In the midst of such an undertaking, the added stress of communicating that experience to a distant audience can register as an existential crisis rather than a passing annoyance. Young's description of the devil's attacks in this area is not remotely hyperbolic: "He is your adversary, strongly opposed to you communicating and connecting with your supporters. He will … tell you that you are not a good enough writer, not doing enough, not being spiritual enough" (p. 8). As such, far from being a mere perfunctory pick-me-up, these chapters establish the exact tone of grace and encouragement necessary for the reluctant writer to hear and accept her advice.

Young balances that advice skillfully between the general and the specific, casting a clear vision without being unduly prescriptive. Her advice on outlining and prewriting provides structure, but she also creates ample space for creativity within that structure. Likewise, the chapter on visual elements (co-written with photographer and missionary Kathryn Bronn) is a magnificent miniature crash-course in photography. Her recommendations for "Where to Find Material" (pp. 102–12) are an especial boon to missionaries whose communications are hampered by security concerns.

Even the visual structure and layout of *All the News* facilitate Young's intentions. The work is broken into carefully measured paragraphs with bolded subtitles, optimizing the work not only for initial digestibility but also for ongoing review. Each chapter ends with action steps for applying and practicing new methods and ideas. She even closes the book with a brief checklist reviewing the key takeaways of each chapter, the perfect conclusion for this guidebook.

Step by deliberate step, Amy Young dispels the glamour and mystery surrounding good writing. She reveals the entire process to be a simple (if not easy) matter of hard work and consistent practice. In the end, *All the News* more than earns its place in the limited square footage of any missionary's luggage.

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