

themelios

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THE GOSPEL COALITION

themelios

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.

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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

Themelios Then and Now: The Journal's Name, History, and Contribution

— Brian J. Tabb —

Brian Tabb is academic dean and associate professor of biblical studies at Bethlehem College & Seminary in Minneapolis and general editor of Themelios.

Frequently my computer or “smart” phone autocorrects *Themelios* to *Themeless*. The latter would make a rather unfortunate name for an international journal of theology! In this editorial, I will reflect on the journal's name, its history, and my hopes for its future contribution. We certainly wouldn't want *Themelios* to become “theme-less.”

1. The Journal's Name

The journal's name transliterates the Greek term θεμέλιος, which is typically rendered “foundation” in its fifteen NT occurrences. θεμέλιος refers to the foundation on which a building rests. Jesus highlights the utter folly of constructing a house with no foundation (Luke 6:49)—a warning to those who would hear his words and not heed them. Likewise, he urges would-be disciples to count the cost lest their lives resemble an abandoned construction project with a foundation but no tower on it (Luke 14:27–30). Paul stresses that the church is “God's building” established on the secure foundation of Jesus Christ (1 Cor 3:9–11). The apostle identifies Jewish and Gentile believers together as “members of the household of God, built on the foundation [ἐπὶ τῷ θεμελίῳ] of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, in whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord” (Eph 2:19–21).

2. The Journal's History

The International Fellowship of Evangelical Students first published the journal *Themelios* in October 1962.¹ The initial volume featured articles by Howard Marshall, Donald Guthrie, Leon Morris, Francis Schaeffer, and others, as well as a fine exposition of Ephesians 2:20 by the Irish missionary theologian

¹This section reflects insights gleaned from personal correspondence in February 2019 with the following current and former editors and editorial board members of *Themelios*: Gerald Bray, D. A. Carson, Andy Naselli, Dan Strange, Carl Trueman, Stephen Williams, and Stephen Witmer.

R. J. McKelvey.² McKelvey reasons that Isaiah 28:16 lies behind the NT authors' figurative references to Christ as the "cornerstone" and "foundation" laid in Zion. As the cornerstone (ἄκρογωνιάς), Christ not only supports the superstructure of God's house but also serves to unify it as it is built (συναρμολογέω in Eph 2:21). McKelvey argues that the difficult phrase "the foundation of the apostles and prophets" refers to the twelve apostles and the OT prophets as the foundation on whom membership in the church rests for Gentile and Jewish believers alike.

The journal's first editor, Andrew F. Walls, describes *Themelios* as an international and interdenominational journal "addressed to theological students, and all who are preparing for the Christian ministry, throughout the world."³ Appealing to Ephesians 2:20, Walls stresses that the journal is concerned with "the bed-rock foundation of the historic faith" and Christ, who holds the apostolic building together. He concludes:

The scope of THEMELIOS is the whole of Christian theology: the entire field of the Christian pastor and theologian. In this field, all the powers of the mind are called into service, and the journal will seek to provide information and to provoke thought – sometimes about issues which today are often too lightly dismissed. A humble and a loving heart is also a requirement, and THEMELIOS will have failed if it does nothing to stir its readers to adoration and to devotion.⁴

In 1975, the Religious & Theological Students Fellowship, part of the Universities and Colleges Christian Fellowship in the UK, took over publishing *Themelios*. At this time the journal merged with *Theological Students Fellowship Bulletin*, a periodical that began circulating in Autumn 1951 and published a total of seventy-two volumes featuring short articles by noted theologians like J. I. Packer, F. F. Bruce, and Howard Marshall. The first issue in the relaunched version of *Themelios* featured articles by J. I. Packer ("Hermeneutics and Biblical Authority"), the new journal's first editor R. T. France ("Inerrancy and New Testament Exegesis"), and Robert P. Gordon ("Preaching from the Patriarchs"). In January 1978, Robert Norris succeeded R. T. France as general editor and held the position until David Wenham took over in January 1982. Following Wenham, *Themelios* was edited by Christopher J. H. Wright (1990–1994), Stephen Williams (1995–1998), and Carl Trueman (1999–2007). The list of contributors to the journal during the RTSF/UCCF years include influential theologians and biblical scholars such as Richard Bauckham, G. K. Beale, Kwame Bediako, Craig Blomberg, Gerald Bray, D. A. Carson, John Goldingay, Paul Helm, Larry Hurtado, Tony Lane, Howard Marshall, Alister McGrath, Richard Mouw, John Webster, Gordon Wenham, and N. T. Wright.

In personal correspondence, former editor Stephen Williams explains that the key contribution of *Themelios* in the early days was to promote worthy evangelical scholarship to help theological students during a time when liberal theology dominated university departments and some seminaries. He recalls that efforts to increase global circulation proved challenging due in part to limited funds in many parts of the world for print journal subscriptions. In fact, Williams recounted that he once met with some European scholars in Germany where someone asked, "What is *Themelios* meant to be about?" Since

²R. J. McKelvey, "Exposition," *Them* 1 (1962): 2–5, https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/pdf/ifes/1-1_mckelsey.pdf. He develops this work further in *The New Temple: The Church in the New Testament*, OTM (Oxford: OUP, 1969).

³Andrew F. Walls, "Themelios – a New Journal," *Them* 1 (1962): 1, https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/pdf/ifes/1-1_editor_intro.pdf.

⁴Walls, "Themelios," 1.

the journal had recently published a series of articles dealing with language, nationhood, and Wales (Williams's home country),⁵ a French theologian who was present for the meeting without hesitation responded to the question: "Wales."

William's successor, Carl Trueman, explains that the journal provided "many good articles on important biblical, theological, historical, and ethical topics that had scholarly integrity but were also accessible to the nonspecialist." As editor Trueman sought to establish the UCCF Statement of Faith as the guiding doctrinal standard for the journal. Our consulting editor Daniel Strange began serving with *Themelios* during these years and worked closely with Trueman as the managing editor and systematic theology book review editor. Trueman reflected that during his tenure, the global reach of *Themelios* continued to be somewhat muted as it circulated primarily in the UK, Europe, and North America.

The long-standing aspirations for *Themelios* to have a worldwide impact took an important step forward in 2008 when The Gospel Coalition relaunched *Themelios* as a freely accessible online digital journal. D. A. Carson wrote in his first editorial, "The new *Themelios* aims to serve both theological/religious studies students and pastors" while aspiring to "become increasingly international in representation."⁶ As the journal's longest serving general editor, Carson has contributed thirty-three editorials, such as his widely read pieces "Subtle Ways to Abandon the Authority of Scripture in Our Lives" and "On Disputable Matters."⁷

The decision to make *Themelios* a free digital journal hosted by TGC has dramatically expanded its global readership and impact. In 2018, *Themelios* had 694,355 page views, up from 630,165 in 2017 and 495,418 in 2016. Logos Bible Software users have downloaded over 62,000 free issues of the journal since 2013, and academic readers have accessed the journal's content tens of thousands of times using the ATLA Religion Database. Most *Themelios* readers live in the United States, United Kingdom, Canada, and Australia, but in 2018 readers in 223 countries accessed the journal online. (There are even 1,500 or so faithful *Themelios* readers in Wales, which may encourage my editorial predecessor.) The journal's editorial team includes Baptists, Presbyterians, and Anglicans who live in North America, the United Kingdom, Australia, China, and Malaysia. In recent years we have published articles and reviews by authors from many countries on six continents. We have received requests to translate *Themelios* articles into German, French, Portuguese, Spanish, Dutch, and Italian.

3. *The Journal's Contribution*

There are an astonishing variety of theological journals published in English each year, and in recent years new journals have launched such as *The Bulletin of Ecclesial Theology* (2014), *Primer* (2015), *Reformed Faith and Practice* (2016), *Journal of Biblical and Theological Studies* (2016), and *Didaktikos* (2017). Many institutions, professional societies, and publishers continue to produce journals that cover various disciplines and sub-disciplines of theology and biblical studies.

⁵ See Stephen Williams, "Editorial: Gospel, Language, Nationhood," *Them* 21 (1996): 3.

⁶ D. A. Carson, "Editorial," *Them* 33 (2008): 1, <http://themelios.thegospelcoalition.org/article/editorial5>.

⁷ D. A. Carson, "Subtle Ways to Abandon the Authority of Scripture in Our Lives," *Them* 42 (2017): 1–12, <http://themelios.thegospelcoalition.org/article/subtle-ways-to-abandon-the-authority-of-scripture-in-our-lives>; D. A. Carson, "On Disputable Matters," *Them* 40 (2015): 383–88, <http://themelios.thegospelcoalition.org/article/on-disputable-matters>.

So what does this journal contribute in such a crowded field? What themes will keep *Themelios* from becoming theme-less? Here I highlight three hallmarks of the articles, editorials, and reviews published in *Themelios*: doctrinal fidelity, scholarly excellence, and readability and relevance.

1. *Doctrinal fidelity.* *Themelios* continues its commitment to expound and defend what its first editor, Andrew Walls, called “the bed-rock foundation of the historic faith.” The journal maintained a strong evangelical perspective and doctrinal basis in its years published by UCCF. Since 2008, the journal remains unashamedly confessional, guided by the Foundation Documents of The Gospel Coalition, “a fellowship of evangelical churches in the Reformed tradition deeply committed to renewing our faith in the gospel of Christ and to reforming our ministry practices to conform fully to the Scriptures.”⁸ The editors and contributors hail from a variety of church traditions, but that does not render the journal “theme-less.” Each *Themelios* publication is marked by doctrinal fidelity, what Paul calls “the sound words of our Lord Jesus Christ and the teaching that accords with godliness” (1 Tim 6:3). This journal offers pastors and theological students (and others) first-rate engagement with current scholarship and important biblical and theological questions while maintaining a sound theological foundation.

2. *Scholarly excellence.* While the readership of *Themelios* has vastly widened as a digital journal, it has maintained its selectivity and high academic standards. The journal has an outstanding editorial board composed of accomplished scholars and committed churchmen and women, and it follows a careful peer-review process for article submissions to ensure consistent quality and integrity. *Themelios* is also accessible in full-text through the ATLA Religion Database, a leading index used by scholars and theological students. Our articles make a fresh contribution to scholarship in a way that is accessible to non-specialists. For example, Keith Johnson’s 2011 article introduced many readers to the scholarly debate surrounding the eternal functional subordination of the Son.⁹ The 2014 exchange between Gerald Bray and Tom Schreiner clarified the distinctive contributions and methodological convictions of systematic theology and biblical theology.¹⁰ The journal has regularly published articles that summarize the state of scholarship in an accessible way, such as Bob Yarbrough on biblical criticism, Nathan Finn on evangelical history, Will Timmins on the purpose of Romans, and the various articles on spiritual gifts in the present issue.¹¹

3. *Readability and relevance.* *Themelios* aims to publish high-quality scholarship that is readable and relevant for theological students and pastors. The journal has long been known for its helpful book

⁸ “Foundation Documents,” *The Gospel Coalition*, <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/about/foundation-documents/>.

⁹ Keith E. Johnson, “Trinitarian Agency and the Eternal Subordination of the Son: An Augustinian Perspective,” *Them* 36 (2011): 7–25, <http://themelios.thegospelcoalition.org/article/trinitarian-agency-and-the-eternal-subordination-of-the-son-an-augustinian->.

¹⁰ Gerald L. Bray, “A Systematician Reviews Tom Schreiner’s *Biblical Theology*,” *Them* 39 (2014): 18–25, <http://themelios.thegospelcoalition.org/article/a-systematician-reviews-tom-schreiners-biblical-theology>; Thomas R. Schreiner, “A Biblical Theologian Reviews Gerald Bray’s *Systematic Theology*,” *Them* 39 (2014): 9–16, <http://themelios.thegospelcoalition.org/article/a-biblical-theologian-reviews-gerald-brays-systematic-theology>.

¹¹ Robert W. Yarbrough, “Bye-bye Bible? Progress Report on the Death of Scripture,” *Them* 39 (2014): 415–27, <http://themelios.thegospelcoalition.org/article/bye-bye-bible-progress-report-on-the-death-of-scripture>; Nathan A. Finn, “Evangelical History after George Marsden: A Review Essay,” *Them* 40 (2015): 63–77, <http://themelios.thegospelcoalition.org/article/evangelical-history-after-george-marsden-a-review-essay>; Will N. Timmins, “Why Paul Wrote Romans: Putting the Pieces Together,” *Them* 43 (2018): 387–404, <http://themelios.thegospelcoalition.org/article/why-paul-wrote-romans-putting-the-pieces-together>.

reviews. The first issue of the new series in 1975 featured ten book reviews, including D. A. Carson's review of the *New International Version: New Testament*. In 2017–2018, the journal published 254 reviews.

Themelios articles have reflected deeply on contemporary moral issues such as white supremacy¹² and practical concerns like suffering.¹³ It is noteworthy that Andy Naselli's Pastoral Pensées contributions on prayer and pornography are the two most widely read articles in recent years.¹⁴ The journal does not prize theological abstraction but biblically faithful, rigorous scholarship that presses to ask for the church today, "So what?" Though our journal has many values and engages various theological topics, the singular theme of *Themelios* is Jesus Christ, the Lord of the church. S. J. Stone's famous hymn captures it well:

The church's one Foundation
is Jesus Christ her Lord;
she is His new creation,
by water and the Word;
from heav'n He came and sought her
to be His holy bride;
with His own blood He bought her,
and for her life He died.

¹²Eric C. Redmond, Walter B. Redmond, and Charis A. M. Redmond, "#Charlottesville: Some Gospel Thinking on White Supremacy," *Them* 42 (2017): 494–504, <http://themelios.thegospelcoalition.org/article/charlottesville-some-gospel-thinking-on-white-supremacy>.

¹³Eric Ortlund, "Five Truths for Sufferers from the Book of Job," *Them* 40 (2015): 253–62, <http://themelios.thegospelcoalition.org/article/five-truths-for-sufferers-from-the-book-of-job>.

¹⁴Andrew David Naselli, "12 Reasons You Should Pray Scripture," *Them* 38 (2013): 417–25, <http://themelios.thegospelcoalition.org/article/12-reasons-you-should-pray-scripture>; Andrew David Naselli, "Seven Reasons You Should Not Indulge in Pornography," *Them* 41 (2016): 473–83, <http://themelios.thegospelcoalition.org/article/seven-reasons-you-should-not-indulge-in-pornography>.

STRANGE TIMES

Sad Solo

— Daniel Strange —

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

“Once you encounter risk, you are into the basic questions of what life is all about.”¹

Stardate 8454.1. Yosemite National Park, Planet Earth.

Through hi-tech binoculars Dr ‘Bones’ McCoy nervously monitors far above his head a speck ascending a huge slab of rock. Captain James T. Kirk is free solo climbing² the infamous vertical formation known as El Capitan:

Bones (to himself): “You’ll have a great time Bones. You’ll enjoy your shore leave. You’ll be able to relax.” You call this relaxing, I’m a nervous wreck.... If I’m not careful I’ll start talking to myself.’

Meanwhile, up above and with sun shining and birds calling, Kirk surveys the grandeur of the scene. Suddenly, from nowhere, Mr Spock appears hovering in, what I’m going to call, white ‘astro-boots’:

Spock: ‘Greetings Captain. I have been monitoring your progress. I regret to inform you that the record for free climbing El Capitan is in no danger of being broken.’

Kirk: ‘Who’s trying to break any records. I’m doing this because I enjoy it. Not to mention the most important reason for climbing a mountain.’

Spock: ‘And that is?’

Kirk: ‘Because it’s there.’

Spock: ‘Captain, I do not think you realise the gravity of your situation.’

Kirk (slipping): ‘On the contrary, gravity is foremost on my mind.... Look I’m trying to make an ascent here. Why don’t you go and pester Dr McCoy for a while.’

Spock: ‘I believe that Dr McCoy is not in the best of moods.’

(cut to Bones on the ground) Bones: “Goddam irresponsible ... playing games with life.’

¹Peter L. Bernstein, ‘Facing the Consequences’ *Business Economics* 35.1 (2000): 8.

²‘Free solo’ climbing (as opposed to ‘free climbing’) is climbing that involves no aids or protection whatsoever.

Spock (to Kirk): “Concentration is vital. You must be one with the rock.”

Kirk: “Spock, I appreciate your concern, but if you don’t stop distracting me, I’m liable to be one...”

Suddenly Kirk slips and falls, hurtling towards the ground. Spock somersaults and descends in hot pursuit, white astro-boots turbo flaring. After several moments of Kirk flailing and Spock rocketing, Spock reaches out and grabs Kirk’s ankle just as the Captain is about to dash himself at the bottom. They both hover for a moment:

Spock: ‘Perhaps because “it is there” is not a sufficient reason for climbing a mountain.’

Kirk: ‘I’m hardly in a position to disagree.’

Kirk: (cheerfully upside-down as a concerned Bones runs towards them): “Hi Bones ... mind if we drop in for dinner.’

Thus begin the opening scenes of the 1989 feature: *Star-Trek V: The Final Frontier*.³ Now, I’m not a ‘Trekker’ (although perhaps I am a nerd in knowing that the more commonly used name ‘Trekkie’ is seen by some fans as a derogatory term), but I know enough to appreciate some vintage elements. There is the ridiculous fantastical improbability of it all: those white astro-boots on Spock, the decidedly dodgy 1989 CGI as Kirk descends in front of the green screen. The biggest give away, after lots of shots of the real Yosemite and the real El Capitan, is Kirk obviously holding onto the fibre-glass (or plastic?) mountain in his dialogue with Spock. Indeed, the very idea that anyone *would* and *could* free solo climb El Capitan (and certainly not a decidedly middle-aged Kirk) – it’s pure fiction, surely? What *is* real and authentic is the long-standing relationships and juxtaposition of the characters: the reckless Kirk, the responsible ‘Bones’ and, of course, the rational ‘Spock’. It’s a lovely little comedic human interplay of love, care, and dependence that has absolutely nothing to do with the rest of the film, the plot of which I have no memory.

But wait.... Fast-forward (or back?) to Stardate 2019. Fantastical science fiction is now fact: Mr Spock, please update your records. National Geographic’s BAFTA and Academy Award-winning documentary *Free Solo* charts the remarkable feat of legendary climber Alex Honnold in his successful bid on June 3rd 2017 to free solo the Freerider route of the 3,000 feet of El Capitan in 3 hours 56 minutes.⁴ Truly a final frontier. As director Elizabeth Chai Vasarhelyi ended her Oscar acceptance speech, ‘This film is for everyone who believes in the impossible.’ Rarely do I go and see something twice when it’s released, and no matter how comfy the sofas and surroundings from your average multiplex, rarely do I hunt out and pay the extortionate ticket price for the independent London cinema where the film had a limited release. But I did, and let’s be clear: I’m not a climber, and until now was unaware of the climbing sub-culture with its history, language, ‘celebrities’, media, and ‘in-knowledge’. Quite simply, this film has captured my imagination and sparked all kind of half-formed inter-related reflections, associations, and juxtapositions. As is often the case, an instance of extremeness can be a clarifying pedagogical foil for more mundane considerations.

³ *Star Trek V: The Final Frontier*, directed by William Shatner (Paramount Pictures, 1989).

⁴ *Free Solo*, directed by Elizabeth Chai Vasarhelyi and Jimmy Chin (National Geographic Documentary Films, 2018).

Alex Honnold himself is a fascinating jumble of the super-human, the sub-human and the simply-human. A mortal who has achieved climbing immortality at the age of thirty-three. Viewing a sample of the numerous blogs and articles in the days following Honnold's achievement, and then subsequently in reviews of the film itself, one just reads a string of superlative superlatives and a colourful array of analogies and metaphors as to the measure of his achievement: 'The single greatest achievement by any individual human being ever' is not untypical.⁵ As a physical specimen, think the choreographed balletic grace of a dancer and raw power of a martial arts master (please *don't* think William Shatner with slight paunch). Honnold is the body beautiful – fearfully and wonderfully made. But it's an ugly beauty, seen most clearly in his hands: 'When you shake Honnold's hand, what stands out is not its strength but its suppleness, capped by pillowy fingertips swollen wide from doing pull-ups on a fingerboard. In that sense, it feels more like gorilla than man.'⁶ Marvel at the mental capacity needed to research (Honnold is an obsessive note-taker), memorise and practice endlessly every single move, every single body position – thousands of them. Then think of the imagination needed. The imagination to contort the human body in order to crack the fiendish puzzles that *El Capitan* sets its ascender. 'Freeblast' is the section of the climb that is almost vertical and is akin to walking up glass. It can only be climbed by 'smearing' as much of your rubber shoe onto the surface to create friction. Balance must be perfect and it has to be done at speed before one starts to slip. The most notorious 'pitch' of Honnold's climb is the beautifully understated 'Boulder Problem'. You really just need to watch it but it involves Honnold grabbing a pea-size nub of rock with his left thumb, stepping his feet over onto a similarly small nub beneath him, then switching from his left thumb to his right thumb, and 'karate kicking' one of his feet onto another vertical wall with only friction holding him up. If you want a go you can try it at your local climbing centre (the only difference being you get a crashmat and are not 1,500 feet up).⁷ The imagination to create and conjure what we mortals would see only as microscopic dents and cracks in that rock into steps, handholds and fat gaps for wedging hands and feet. Yes, Mr Spock is onto something about being one with the rock. What divine imagination to create an indentation in a rock, thousands of feet above ground, but that suddenly becomes a ledge of life for a Honnold.

Think perfection. Think not only perfection, but think the absolute *necessity* of perfection, a perfection of body and mind. As we are told by Honnold and his free solo fraternity, free-soloing is the closest thing to perfection there is. You *must* be perfect in each move. 'There's no margin for error. Imagine an Olympic-gold-medal-level athletic achievement that if you don't get that gold medal, you're going to die.'

Is Honnold even human? The film, in somewhat clichéd fashion, attempts to answer this by handing him over to 'science' and the 'scientists'. What we see is that his amygdala, the part of the brain that reacts to fear is pretty dormant:

Medically, it would seem, Honnold does not experience fear. At least not in the way that you or I would. Or, if he does experience it, he requires a lot more to set it off

⁵ However, for a *very* different and *very* scathing feminist attack on the film and Honnold himself see Erin Monahan, 'Ambient Dominion: How "Free Solo" Points to An Epidemic of Toxic Masculinity'. *Terra Incognita*, 7 December 2018, <http://tinyurl.com/y4ghjbq4>.

⁶ Scott Tobias, 'When One Mistake Means the End of Your Movie – and Its Star', *Vulture*, 26 September 2018, <http://tinyurl.com/y5sv225o>.

⁷ See 'Alex Honnold Climbs Freerider Boulder Problem in the Gym', *Climbing*, 31 January 2019, <http://tinyurl.com/y6gsk77d>.

than anyone this team of neuroscientists at least has ever studied. What Honnold does have in spades, from a neurological perspective, is a tendency to seek out sensations, a drive nearly double that of your average brain based on their study. This pushes him, of course, but it also hints at something darker, something addictive.⁸

But, of course, Honnold *is* human, and arguably, it's his humanity, which makes this study so engaging and watchable. He comes across as a funny, intelligent, not completely un-self-aware kind of cool geek. Indeed, his humanity seems to magnify his achievement because we realise he is indeed one of us. After an abortive first attempt at the climb, the co-director of the film notes (somewhat ironically given our opening), 'In some ways it's kind of reassuring that Spock has nerves.' Years of the most meticulous planning and preparation are accompanied by a serendipitous spontaneity that means only Honnold knows when it 'feels' right to make the attempt, and the camera crew better be ready. Honnold does not appear to have a nihilistic death wish, but quite the reverse: it's a-life-to-the-full wish. He wants to climb. He needs to climb. He loves to climb. And so, he just climbs.

Certainly, Honnold seems to have lower filters for normal social niceties and cues which current society would lazily label as being 'on the spectrum,' but both his bluntness and laid back 'underwhelmedness' is frankly endearing. For example, on completing the climb, we get a big smile, but only a small, softly spoken, 'I'm so delighted, I'm so delighted.' What is more awkward is the subplot that charts Honnold's parallel 'journey' with his girlfriend Sanni McCandless. She acts as a nice foil, as emotionally intelligent and assertive as he isn't. They make a good team, but his relational clumsiness is in stark contrast to his harmony with the rock. The stuff of normal life does not come naturally to our Alex as we witness him in a variety of domestic settings. Moreover, the film questions whether this intrusion of the ordinary will be a fatal distraction to Honnold's singular and obsessive quest. For example, with McCandless on the scene, he suddenly experiences two minor falls, rare for Honnold. Then, there is the nurture of his childhood and upbringing. While one doesn't want to be guilty of a pat over-psychologising, it appears a perfect storm of factors. We learn of a 'dark soul'; a physically and emotionally isolated child who starts solo climbing because he's too scared to ask someone to hold a rope for him; a father who dies young; and, a mother who repeatedly tells him that 'good is not good enough' and 'nearly is not there'. Honnold is frank that he is driven by a 'bottomless pit of self-loathing'. So, we're back to perfection:

I don't want to fall off and die ... but there's a satisfaction in challenging yourself and doing something well. That feeling is heightened when you're for sure facing death. You can't make a mistake. If you're seeking perfection, free soloing is as close as you can get. And it does feel good to feel perfect. Like for a brief moment.

Yes, he struggles with the stuff we all struggle with. Honnold is human, all too human.

Thematically, *Free Solo* offers us several lines of enquiry, some of which the film touches on obliquely. There are the ethical questions concerning voyeurism: Should a camera crew be filming Honnold? Should we be watching a camera crew filming Honnold? Are Honnold and the film-makers irresponsible in encouraging viewers to emulate Honnold? What difference does it make that we know Honnold

⁸ Nate Scott, 'Science Shows Alex Honnold Feels No Fear', *News.com.au*, 7 June 2017, <http://tinyurl.com/y257hd8d>. It should be pointed out that the scientist scanning Honnold notes that whether the lack of activity in Honnold's amygdala is caused by nature or nurture is difficult to determine.

succeeds? What would have changed in terms of the release of the film, let alone the appropriateness of us watching it, if it had recorded Honnold falling to his death?

One area upon which I've meditated since watching *Free Solo* concerns the concept of risk. Like most things, I thought I had a rough idea of what we mean by risk until I start digging a little deeper. It's a vast area of study and as a concept is as slippery as 'Freeblast'.⁹ While there has always been danger, the concept of risk is relatively recent. In terms of the history of the concept, the seminal study remains economist Peter Bernstein's, *Against the Gods: The Remarkable Story of Risk*.¹⁰ Philosopher P. B. Thompson delineates five different ways of defining risk:

1. *Subjective risk*: the mental state of an individual who experiences uncertainty or doubt or worry as to the outcome of a given event.
2. *Objective risk*: the variation that occurs when actual losses differ from expected losses.
3. *Real risk*: the combination of probability and negative consequence that exists in the real world.
4. *Observed risk*: the measurement of that combination obtained by constructing a model of the real world.
5. *Perceived risk*: the rough estimate of real risk made by an untrained member of the general public.¹¹

Honnold himself makes a distinction between risk and consequence.¹² For him, the 'real' and 'objective' risk can only be calculated by the climber himself, rather than a public 'perceived' risk which sees him in a photo without safety gear, thousands of feet above the ground and where – if he falls – the consequences are obvious. Given Honnold's own perception of his own ability, skill, training, as well as knowledge of the environment (e.g. the route, the rock itself, the weather, etc.), he believes there is a *low* risk in his free soloing, but a *high* consequence (i.e. certain death) if it goes wrong. Phew. Honnold's safe then? The directors of *Free Solo* appear to put forward a slightly different take. Tommy Caldwell, another lauded free solo climber, is Honnold's inspiration, friend, and training partner. He is also the viewer's voice of sanity: People who know a little bit about climbing are like, 'Oh, he's totally safe,' says an emotional Caldwell. 'People who know exactly what he's doing are freaked out.' Later on, Caldwell observes, 'Everybody who has made soloing a big part of their lives ... is dead now.'

This is brought home during filming with the news that another climbing legend, Ueli Steck, has died from a fall in Nepal: cue a montage of the smiling faces of the great and good of the free solo world with the date of their birth and death captioned at the bottom of the screen. The film captures Honnold's

⁹ For a helpful survey, see Catherine E Althaus, 'A Disciplinary Perspective on the Epistemological Status of Risk', *Risk Analysis* 25.3 (2005): 567–88.

¹⁰ Peter Bernstein, *Against the Gods: The Remarkable Story of Risk* (New York: Wiley, 1998). As Althaus notes, 'Bernstein *et al.* closely align the concepts of chance and probability with risk and argue that risk was introduced over time as a means of transforming the tradition of fate. Thus the notion of fate, which attributed existence and uncertainty to divine planning or control, was replaced with belief in the ability of humanity to master uncertainty with the use of probability. Any distinction between risk and uncertainty or chance today has been linguistically lost.' 'A Disciplinary Perspective', 571.

¹¹ P. B. Thompson, 'The Philosophical Foundations of Risk', *Southern Journal of Philosophy* 24.2 (1986): 273–86, quoted in Althaus, 'A Disciplinary Perspective', 568.

¹² Alex Honnold – 'There's a Difference between Risk and Consequence', *EpicTV*, 20 November 2014, <http://tinyurl.com/y5q8bm8h>.

reaction to Steck's death in reference to his now widow: 'What did she expect to happen?' Free Solo climbing is very, very dangerous, but Honnold believes that making the danger safe is the sweetness of the experience in adventure climbing. It's interesting to put these comments in the context of a recent study (which refers to Honnold's achievement) exploring the relationship between climbing, risk and *recognition*. Relying on qualitative interviews and autoethnography, and utilising the work of sociologist Pierre Bourdieu, Tommy Langseth and Øyvind Salvesen 'explore to what extent risk-taking is built into the value system of climbing, and to what degree risktaking leads to peer-recognition and credibility within rock climbing communities.' They argue that in being immersed in a climbing community, 'climbers develop a risk libido, a drive toward risktaking.' Credibility leading to 'consecration' within the community can only be established in a delicate balance of skill, risk and recognition.¹³

There is something liberating and counter-culturally 'freeing' about Honnold in the context of our Western juridified and mollycoddled society. We've never been so safe but never been so scared. Ulrich Beck famously called this a *Risk Society*¹⁴ and I recognise my place in it. It's pathetically ironic that leading up to my son and I being exhilarated by *Free Solo* from the comfort of our North London sofas, we had had a 'difference of opinion' over my decision to take public transport rather than the short drive to a cinema I had not attended before. I don't like driving in London, don't like not knowing where I'm going, anxious about parking our van and the possibility of getting stuck or pranging something – that's the pioneer spirit of adventure for you. Compare that to Honnold in talking about his girlfriend:

For Sanni, the point of life is happiness and to have a good time. For me it's all about performance. Nothing good happens in the world by being happy and cosy. Nobody achieves anything great because they're happy and cosy.... This is your path and you will pursue it with excellence. You face your fear because your goal demands it, that is the goddamn warrior spirit. You give something 100 per cent focus because your life depends on it.

The late and celebrated French psychoanalyst and philosopher Anne Dufourmantelle, was known for her work on risk, in particular her 2011 *Éloge du Risque*¹⁵ (*In Praise of Risk*). In an interview for *La Liberation* in 2015, Dufourmantelle notes that, 'The idea of absolute security – like 'zero risk' – is a fantasy.' 'When there really is a danger that must be faced in order to survive, as for example during the Blitz in London, there is a strong incentive for action, dedication, and surpassing oneself.' For Dufourmantelle, to refuse to risk is to refuse to live:

It is said in French, 'risking one's life', but perhaps one should say 'risk' 'life'. Being fully alive is a risk. Few are. There are many zombies, undead, lives mitigated by the '*disease of death*' as Kierkegaard called it. This risk is one that another philosopher who died under torture, Jan Patocka, called '*life in amplitude*.'¹⁶

¹³ Tommy Langseth and Øyvind Salvesen, 'Rock Climbing, Risk, and Recognition' *Frontiers in Psychology*, 24 September 2018, <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2018.01793>.

¹⁴ Ulrich Beck, *Risk Society: Towards a New Modernity* (London: Sage, 1992).

¹⁵ Anne Dufourmantelle, *Éloge du Risque* (Paris: Payot, 2011). An English translation by Steven Miller published by Fordham University Press will be available later this year.

¹⁶ Anne Dufourmantelle "La sécurité engendre plus la peur que l'inverse", *Liberation*, 14 September 2015, <http://tinyurl.com/yxkl7rz4>. An English translation of the interview can be found here: <https://www.idiosophy.com/2017/08/anne-dufourmantelle/>.

In an earlier lecture, she notes:

The spell of risk is really about what is being in life. Is being in life just being born? Probably not. To me, risking your life is not dying yet, it's integrating that you *could* be dying in your own life. Being completely alive is a task, it's not at all a given thing. It's not just about being present to the world, it's being present to yourself, reaching an intensity that is in itself a way of being reborn.¹⁷

On July 21, 2017, at age 53, Dufourmantelle died attempting to rescue two children struggling to swim off the coast of Pampelonne near St-Tropez. The author Tatiana de Rosnay quoted from *In Praise of Risk* at the time: "Risking one's life" is one of the most beautiful expressions of our language. Is it necessary to face death – and to survive ... or is there, housed in life itself, a secret device, a music alone capable of moving existence on this front line, we call desire?¹⁸

Moving from French philosophical self-actualisation theorists and back onto more familiar soil, *Themelios* readers may well have only encountered 'risk' in Paul Helm's widely read introduction to the doctrine of God's providence in which treatments of the doctrine are put into two categories, 'risky' or 'risk free'.¹⁹ Tim Keller has addressed the topic of risk in a recent address to Christian entrepreneurs but admits not being able to find much evangelical material from which to draw.²⁰ There has been some popular work on the theology of risk albeit coming out of somewhat 'different' evangelical stables. Michael Frost and Allen Hirsch's *The Faith of Leap*²¹ and John Piper's *Risk is Right*²² are strange bedfellows, but both (in *very* different ways) attempt to tackle our risk-averse culture, and more particularly, church culture. Notwithstanding these works, a much more significant and sophisticated theological and cross-disciplinary conversation is needed both within the classical evangelical community but also as an apologetic to the wider Christian community and beyond. The murder of John Allen Chau in November 2018 and the global public furore that followed has put discussions of risk within missiology front and centre, making for a poignant juxtaposition with the release of *Free Solo*.²³

¹⁷ Anne Dufourmantelle, 'The Ideology of Security', *European Graduate School Lecture Series*, 24 November 2011, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8SMwkpRWZ0Y>.

¹⁸ See 'French Philosopher Anne Dufourmantelle, Who Advocated "Risk-Taking", Drowns Rescuing Children', *ABC News*, 24 July 2017, <http://tinyurl.com/yxabcfls>.

¹⁹ Paul Helm, *The Providence of God* (Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press, 1994). The doctrine of God and risk were also important parts of 'The Openness of God' debate. See John Sanders, *The God Who Risks: A Theology of Divine Providence*, rev. ed. (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2007).

²⁰ Tim Keller, 'A Biblical Perspective on Risk', *Ei Forum*, April 2013, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ki7w_29pYsg

²¹ Michael Frost and Allen Hirsch, *The Faith of Leap: Embracing a Theology of Risk, Adventure and Courage* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2011).

²² John Piper, *Risk is Right: Better to Lose Your Life than to Waste It* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012).

²³ Comment on Chau's death has been voluminous. For a helpful place to start, see Ed Stetzer, 'John Chau, Missions, and Fools', *Christianity Today*, 28 November 2018, <http://tinyurl.com/yyo4yx5u>.

For a different perspective and using climbing analogies see Todd Whitmore, 'John Allen Chau's Evangelical Errors', *The Martin Marty Center for Public Understanding of Religion*, 6 December 2018, <http://tinyurl.com/ybw8xptz>. Whitmore is extremely critical of Chau, concluding:

The lesson here is that the persons most in need of evangelization are perhaps not the unevangelized in remote corners of the world, but Christians themselves. I do not know if they are 'Satan's last stronghold,'

In conclusion, I would like to ask a perverse and definitely provocative question: Could it be that Alex Honnold is, after all, risk-averse? The more I have reflected on the film and tried to distil its meaning, the more I have come back to one theme: not risk, but *control*. *Free Solo* is a study in control and Honnold is a 'control freak', but not in the way we might usually use that expression. Honnold's extra-ordinariness is that he appears to have complete control of his body and his faculties. Honnold is not an adrenaline junkie, 'there is no adrenaline rush. If I get an adrenaline rush, something's gone wrong. The whole thing should be slow and controlled. I mean ... it's mellow!²⁴ Not only is there control of body and mind, but Honnold appears to have mastery over his environment. Years of painstaking study means that he knows every nook and cranny in that slab of rock and so has rehearsed all variables, and yes there are thousands, maybe hundreds of thousands, but that's why Honnold has prepared all his life for this ultimate challenge. He will only climb when he is ready, in his own time. Control of yourself is one thing, control over your environment is another. However, control in relationship with other 'someones' is something else again. This seems a little trickier for Honnold. Are relationships too much of a risk for Honnold because he fears a loss of control? Relationships are messy and bring with them entanglements and responsibilities that constrain freedom. Compare and contrast this to the example of Duformantelle who was seemingly willing to relinquish control in order to save. Who takes the greater risk?

The film starts with Honnold living in a van, something he's done for nine years (six in a car park). He notes that he is 'trending' toward having a girlfriend, but that 'he will always choose climbing over a lady'. Later on in the film, there is poignant exchange in the van between McCandless and Honnold:

McCandless: 'Would putting me into the equation ever actually change anything? Would you actually make decisions differently?'

Honnold: 'If I had some kind of obligation to maximize my lifespan, then yeah, obviously I'd have to give up soloing.'

McCandless: 'Is me asking you – do you see that as an obligation?'

Honnold: 'No, no, but I appreciate your concerns.... I respect that, but I in no way feel obligated, no.'

McCandless: 'To maximize lifetime?'

to use Chau's language, but many of the Christian associations in the United States are teaching an ersatz gospel. The evidence from Chau's case is that an individualistic gospel is being preached: he refused the offer of a team going with him; he did not factor in the virtual certainty that if he was successful others who did not take his minimal medical precautions would follow. The emphasis is on the lone believer before God. When it comes to evangelization, then, this error and its sources are the places to start.

See also his earlier 'If They Kill Us at Least the Others Will Have More Time to Get Away': The Ethics of Risk in Ethnographic Practice" *Practical Matters* 3 (2010): 1–28, <http://practicalmattersjournal.org/2010/03/01/if-they-kill-us/>. Compare this with the recent Gregory E. Lamb, 'The Art of Dying Well: Missions and the Reality of Martyrdom' *Evangelical Missions Quarterly* 55.1 (2019), 43–44. Finally, I would note that Chau's death was featured and ridiculed in an incredibly obscene way by a well-known British comedian in the conclusion of his 'End of 2018' TV show.

²⁴ Mary Wakefield, "If I Get an Adrenaline Rush, Something's Gone Wrong": An Interview with Free Solo's Alex Honnold, *The Spectator*, 9 February 2019, <http://tinyurl.com/y3ve94dn>.

Honnold: ‘No, no. But you saying, “Be safer.” I’m kind of like, “Well, I’m already doing my best.” So, I could just not do certain things, but then you have weird simmering resentment because the things you love most in life have now been squashed. Do you know what I mean?’

On the thought of him dying, Honnold states matter of factly, ‘If I perish, you’ll find someone else. Not a big deal.’ Tommy Caldwell worries that you need mental armour to climb El Cap without a rope: ‘romantic relationship is detrimental to that armour. You can’t have both at the same time.’

Yes, I can see that Honnold’s relationship with McCandless is as stable as anything he’s known and it appears genuine. Yes, I know that there is the close-knit climbing fraternity and filming team providing ‘family’ to Alex for many years. Yes, I know the brief mention in the film of the Honnold Foundation, which ‘reduces environmental impact and addresses inequality by supporting solar energy initiatives worldwide’²⁵ and in Honnold’s words exists to ‘balance the cosmic scales.’ I know all this, and yet, the overriding picture I get of Honnold is someone alone, someone solo. It’s all in the title.

And so, over time, the lingering feeling I have is one of sadness. Sadness of Alex being solo. Sadness because we’re not meant to be alone. We are built for relationship. Sadness for the intrinsic self-ishness of his quest. Sadness that I don’t believe Alex is free. The passion and performance drive for perfection is no doubt intoxicating, but at what cost physically and relationally? Is this not an extreme but textbook example of a deep control idolatry, ‘Life only has meaning / I only have worth if – I am able to get mastery over my life in the area of _____.’²⁶ (The blank is filled here with ‘free soloing very high rocks.’) And it will kill him.

In recent interviews, Honnold has described himself as ‘quite the atheist.’²⁷

.... I’m very anti-religion. I think it’s all just medieval superstition. Religion relies on some desire for a spiritual connection and I do get that from just being out in Yosemite. I get that feeling of grandeur and awe in the world sitting on a cliff at sunset, watching the mountains glow pink, that a lot of people get through religious faith... I’ve certainly thought about my mortality more than most. I think some people turn to faith as a crutch, to avoid thinking about mortality — you know, ‘Well, I’ll carry on forever in some eternal kingdom.’ But the harder thing is to stare into the abyss and understand that when it’s over, it’s over.²⁸

But wait a minute, Alex, is this really the ‘harder thing’? Might it actually be easier and more convenient for you that ‘The Captain’ doesn’t speak or talk back to you? Might you be ‘happier and cosier’ *not* to open yourself up to the possibility that you are in a relationship with the One who created both you and El Capitan, the One who has given you such amazing gifts and yes, other human relationships? The One to whom you are accountable and should rightly fear? The One who will show you that in comparison you are finite and can never be perfect? The One who reveals that you are responsible, but not in control? The One who is in control but who loves his creation so much that he enters into the

²⁵ <http://www.honnoldfoundation.org/>

²⁶ Tim Keller, *Counterfeit Gods* (London: Hodder, 2009), 204.

²⁷ Simon Worrall, ‘Alex Honnold Isn’t Fearless—He Just Accepts Death,’ *National Geographic*, 3 January 2016, <http://tinyurl.com/y49okkc8>.

²⁸ Joe McGovern, ‘Climber Alex Honnold on Filming “Free Solo,” Facing Death and Rejecting Religion,’ *Rolling Stone*, 26 September 2018, <http://tinyurl.com/ybx7jrwb>.

mess of our world and sacrifices himself for it. The One in whom you no longer have to be driven by the need to be in control or have the gnawing fear of failure. A relationship with One that will mean loving constraint but will lead to flourishing and true freedom. A relationship with One that means when you do fall metaphorically and literally, that you don't face oblivion, or the fantasy of a Vulcan in white astro-boots holding you up, but the reality and security of falling into the everlasting arms.

In *Free Solo*, Honnold's mother states, 'I think when he's free-soloing, he feels the most alive, the most everything. How could you even think about taking that away from somebody?' I can, if there's something better. Jean Danielou puts it beautifully:

I recall a meeting where once upon a time an eminent professor of the Sorbonne told us: 'What puts me off about the faith is a certain comfortableness, something a thought middle-class, something a shade like having arrived as regards one's thinking.' Is it absolutely sure that what kept the man from being a Christian was the fear of comfort? Is it an absolutely sure thing that it is more comfortable to be a Christian than to be not Christian? As for me, I am not persuaded of that at all. What I am convinced of, in contrast, is that the condition of a Christian, to the extent that being a Christian means agreeing to be at the disposition of someone else, is something extraordinarily uncomfortable! And you know it very well. When it comes right down to it, what puts you off is that once you set the wheels rolling you don't know how far you're liable to go. No, this, we know very well is what keeps those without faith from having more faith. We know as Riviere put it so well, that 'love involves staggering complications.' We are always taking something upon ourselves when we introduce somebody else into our life, even from the human point of view. We know that no longer shall we be together our own man. Therein lies the adventuresomeness of human love as well as the self-sacrifice involved in it. When it comes down to it, if a man wished to be undisturbed, he just has to give up the notion of marrying. Well, then! To allow Christ to enter our life is a terrible, terrible risk. What will it lead to? And faith - is precisely that. So, no one will ever bring me to believe that faith is some kind of comfort. To take Christ seriously means allowing the irruption into one's life of Absolute Love, and allowing one's self to be led on to heaven knows what point. And this very risk is at the same time a deliverance, for, when all is said and done, we know very well that we ultimately desire just one thing - absolute love - and in the final tally, if it despoils us of ourselves, it leads us to what is better than ourselves.... Faith is not an end. It is a beginning. It introduces our intelligence into the most marvellous of adventures, into what is its real destiny, namely, one day to contemplate the Trinity. It is a magnificent act in which, sensing the limits of our own understanding, we allow the uncreated Word of God to seize our intelligence and elevate itself to enable it to breast its highest hills.²⁹

Now that's what I call an adventure! Alex, how do you fancy a climb?

²⁹Jean Danielou, *The Scandal of Truth*, trans. W. J. Kerrigan (Baltimore: Helicon, 1962), 94-95.

The Continuation of the Charismata

— Andrew Wilson —

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Abstract: This article first defines the scope of the debate over whether or not Christians today should earnestly desire spiritual gifts, especially prophecy. The author then offers three key arguments for the charismatic position and concludes by raising and responding to the strongest argument for cessationism.

It is a huge privilege to open this discussion on spiritual gifts, with Tom Schreiner and other individuals from whom I have learned so much in so many areas.¹ “The first to present his case *seems* right, until the other comes and examines him” (Prov 18:17 ESV).

Because this exchange is based on two books, rather than one, and because Tom’s book and mine come to different conclusions on the continuation of the *charismata*, it would be easy for a discussion like this to become repetitive.² To try and avoid that, in this article I plan to do three things. First, I will try to define the scope of the debate as simply as possible, so we don’t end up talking past each other. Second, I will lay out the charismatic case in a positive way, with what seem to me the three key arguments for it. Third, I will summarise the strongest argument for cessationism, and then challenge it, before concluding. I will leave a discussion of the other cessationist arguments until we engage with Tom’s book later on.

1. The Scope of the Debate

To crystallise the debate in one sentence, I suggest this: *Are disciples today intended to earnestly desire spiritual gifts, especially prophecy?* I’m pretty sure that Tom Schreiner and Ligon Duncan would say no, and that Sam Storms and I would say yes. Prophecy, that is, is the most helpful focus for a concentrated discussion. We are not primarily debating the continuation of the ἀπόστολοι, since we would all agree that eyewitnesses of the resurrection have ceased (the sense of ἀπόστολος in Acts 1:21–26 and 1 Cor 9:1; 15:1–9), and that itinerant missionaries or messengers have not (the sense of ἀπόστολος in 2 Cor 8:23 and probably Rom 16:7). It is also noteworthy that in those passages where

¹An earlier version of this article was delivered at the Annual Meeting of the Evangelical Theological Society (Denver, CO, 13 November 2018) in the Perspectives on the Spiritual Gifts session, moderated by Patrick Schreiner, with responses from Tom Schreiner and Ligon Duncan.

²Thomas R. Schreiner, *Spiritual Gifts: What They Are and Why They Matter* (Nashville: B&H, 2018); Andrew Wilson, *Spirit and Sacrament: An Invitation to Eucharismatic Worship* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2019).

Paul urges believers to pursue the gifts, he does not include apostleship as one of them. And although we may disagree about the continuation of the gifts of languages, interpretation, healings, miracles, and discerning spirits—although maybe not so much, as we will see!—I think we would all agree that the key question concerns the continuation of prophecy. Should disciples ‘earnestly desire the spiritual gifts, especially that you may prophesy’? Clarifying that might keep us from getting lost in the weeds.

2. *The Charismatic Case*

For the charismatic, the first reason to say yes is a *hermeneutical* one—namely, that Paul says so. This sounds like a facile remark, and certainly not worthy of such a sophisticated audience, but it is actually very important. Sometimes the exegetical debate over the pursuit of the gifts can look like a no-score-draw, with continuationists pointing out that the New Testament never says the gifts will cease, and cessationists responding that it never says they won’t, either. But this is to reason as if Paul’s instructions to pursue the gifts were not relevant, which they clearly are. ‘Earnestly desire the higher gifts’ (1 Cor 12:27). ‘Earnestly desire the spiritual gifts, especially that you may prophesy’ (14:1). ‘Earnestly desire to prophesy, and do not forbid speaking in tongues’ (14:39). ‘Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, in proportion to our faith’ (Rom 12:6). ‘Do not quench the Spirit. Do not despise prophecies, but test everything; hold fast what is good’ (1 Thess 5:21). Given the clarity and frequency of this apostolic instruction, and given that we would normally assume that New Testament imperatives apply to us unless it is clear from the context that they don’t, charismatics believe that the burden of proof rests with those who say Paul’s instructions don’t apply to us, rather than to those who say they do. (I tend to call this the Presumption Of Obedience, although I’m not wild about the acronym.)

Sometimes, of course, this burden of proof can be met. When we read the whole of Matthew’s Gospel, we recognise that “go nowhere among the Gentiles” (10:5) is not applicable to Christians living this side of the command to “go and make disciples of all nations” (28:19). Nor have there been any Christians in history who have made it their business to go to Troas and look for Paul’s coat; it is obvious from Paul’s letter that his request applied only to Timothy. But if an instruction appears frequently, to multiple different churches, at some length in one case, and there is no clear indication in the text that the instruction has since been superseded or relativised, we should assume it also applies to us, and require a significant burden of proof from those who say it does not. (We will look at the attempts to meet this burden of proof, or even to argue that the burden of proof lies elsewhere, in due course.) That is the hermeneutical argument for the charismatic gifts.

The second argument, to the surprise of some, is *historical*. That is, one of the best reasons to think the miraculous gifts continued beyond the deaths of the apostles is the fact that, according to many of the Church fathers, they did. In the context of contemporary debates this point is often lost, not least because the gift which has proved the most divisive in the last hundred years or so, namely the gift of languages, is the one over which the patristic evidence is least clear. But I am not aware of any writer before Chrysostom or Augustine making a cessationist argument about any of the gifts—and Augustine’s argument, famously, refers only to the gift of languages, and needs to be set alongside his extended treatment of miracles and healings in the *City of God*.

Justin Martyr claimed, ‘The prophetic gifts remain with us, even to the present time.’³ Irenaeus said, ‘Those who are in truth his disciples’ performed miracles according to the gift given them, including driving out demons, seeing visions, uttering prophetic expressions, healing the sick, raising the dead, speaking in other languages, and declaring the mysteries of God.⁴ (Eusebius uses this excerpt to demonstrate that ‘various gifts remained among those who were worthy even until that time.’⁵) Tertullian trash-talks Marcion, like Elijah on Mount Carmel, by daring his god to predict things to come, make manifest the secrets of the heart, interpret tongues or prophesy, before claiming that ‘all these signs are forthcoming from my side without any difficulty.’⁶ Origen regarded the scope of the gifts as having diminished but certainly not disappeared: ‘there are still preserved among Christians traces of that Holy Spirit which appeared in the form of a dove. They expel evil spirits, and perform many cures, and foresee certain events, according to the will of the Logos.’⁷ Basil the Great said, ‘The Spirit enlightens all, inspires prophets, gives wisdom to lawmakers, consecrates priests, empowers kings, perfects the just, exalts the prudent, is active in gifts of healing, gives life to the dead, frees those in bondage, turns foreigners into adopted sons.’⁸ Cyril of Jerusalem explained, ‘He employs the tongue of one man for wisdom; the soul of another he enlightens by prophecy; to another he gives power to drive away devils.’⁹ And Augustine, as we know, lists an extraordinary range of healings from blindness, rectal fistula, breast cancer, gout, paralysis, hernia, demonization and even death.¹⁰

From a purely historical perspective, then, the idea that the miraculous gifts suddenly stopped when the last apostle died is simply untenable. There are of course cessationists (like Tom) who grant this point, and see the cessation of prophecy and the other miraculous gifts as happening gradually across the first four centuries. But this concession is crucial, because it shows that there is no necessary conflict between foundational, infallible, apostolic teaching, and ongoing prophetic insight. That is the point that charismatics have been making for decades.

The third argument is *eschatological*. The gifts of the Spirit, and prophecy in particular, are seen by the apostles as characterising the entire era between Pentecost and the parousia, the coming of the Spirit and the return of Christ. So as long as we still live between the inauguration and the consummation of the kingdom—between D-day and VE-day, in Cullmann’s famous analogy—we should continue to expect, and pursue, all the spiritual gifts.¹¹

³Justin Martyr, *Dialogue with Trypho* 82.

⁴Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* 2.32.4; 5.6.1.

⁵Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History* 5.7.1–6; cf. also 5.17.4, quoting Apollinaris: ‘for the apostle thought it necessary that the prophetic gift should continue in all the Church until the final coming.’

⁶Tertullian, *Against Marcion*, 5.8.

⁷Origen, *Against Celsus* 1.2, 46, 67; cf. also 2:8; 3:3; 7.8; 8:58. Origen is sometimes quoted in support of cessationism, but it seems clear from *Against Celsus* that he regarded miraculous signs and gifts, including prophecy, healings, and the casting out of demons, to have diminished since the time of the apostles, but not to have ceased.

⁸Basil, *Homily* 3, translated in Mark DelCogliano, *St Basil the Great: On Christian Doctrine and Practice* (Yonkers, NY: St Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 2013), 238.

⁹Cyril of Jerusalem, *Catechetical Lectures* 16.12.

¹⁰Augustine, *City of God* 22.8.

¹¹Oscar Cullmann, *Christ and Time: The Primitive Christian Conception of Time and History*, trans. Floyd V. Filson, rev. ed. (London: SCM, 1962).

This expectation is clear on the day of Pentecost itself. At the start of the first sermon ever preached by a Christian, Peter explicitly connects the last days, the pouring out of the Spirit on all nations, and the gift of prophecy, with the latter a clear demonstration of the former. (As charismatics are fond of pointing out, Peter doesn't say, 'In the last days I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh, and they will prophesy—but after that I won't, and they won't.')

When Paul thanks God for the Corinthians, he reminds them that 'the testimony about Christ was confirmed among you, so that you are not lacking in any *charismata*, as you wait for the revealing of our Lord Jesus Christ, who will sustain you to the end, guiltless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ' (1 Cor 1:7–8). In other words, the *charismata* are theirs while they wait for Jesus to be revealed. Similar things are true of the famous ending to 1 Corinthians 13, verses 8–10: 'As for prophecies, they will pass away; as for tongues, they will cease; as for knowledge, it will pass away. For we know in part and we prophesy in part, but when the perfect comes, the partial will pass away.' Paul believes in the cessation of the gifts, but he believes it will happen 'when the perfect comes,' and expresses the contrast in four ways: the partial versus the perfect, childhood versus maturity, dimness of sight versus clarity, and partial knowledge versus fullness. Despite occasional exegetical gymnastics to try and prove the contrary, this can only really refer to the return of Christ, as Tom (another spoiler alert) rightly points out in his book.¹²

When we read Paul with this eschatological framework in mind—recognising that believers live in the 'last days,' between Pentecost and Parousia, characterised both by the gift of the Spirit and the gifts of the Spirit until the return of Christ—we see it everywhere. We observe that Paul's exhortation to 'be filled with the Spirit,' characterised by (among other things) singing 'spiritual songs,' is given as long as 'the days are evil.' We notice that the exhortation to use spiritual gifts (including prophecy) in Romans applies to the period between Jesus's resurrection and return: the time during which believers need not to be conformed to the pattern of this world, as their salvation gets ever nearer. We see that the command not to quench the Spirit or despise prophecy, in 1 Thessalonians, appears in the context of living godly lives as we wait for Jesus to return. Some of these texts are more explicit than others. But it seems clear that Paul anticipates the charismatic gifts, including prophecy and languages, remaining with the Church until the coming of Christ—at which point they will no longer be needed.

That, in a very, very small nutshell, is the charismatic argument for the continuation of the *charismata*. Eschatologically, we would expect them to continue; historically, they did; and hermeneutically, we would expect to eagerly desire them, especially prophecy, since Paul says so.

3. The Strongest Cessationist Criticism

The strongest criticism of this position, and the best way of attempting to meet the burden of proof I have mentioned, is the argument from the infallibility of New Testament prophecy, as expressed in writers like Richard Gaffin and Tom Schreiner. If New Testament prophecy is infallible and foundational, and associated with the infallible and foundational witness of the apostles, then claims to fallible prophecy today—'I think the Lord is saying this, but I may be wrong, so my words need to be weighed and tested,' or whatever—cannot be sustained as biblical. So whatever we think of that phenomenon, and whatever else we call it (impressions, insights, intuitions, insanity!), it is not what the New Testament means by προφητεύω. Plenty of other cessationist arguments are made, of course, but as I said at the start, we will leave those for later.

¹²Schreiner, *Spiritual Gifts*, 147–53

The logical shape of the argument goes like this:

- (1) Prophesying in the Old Testament was infallible divine revelation. Aside from the numerous ‘thus says the LORD’ statements, the key texts here are Deuteronomy 13 and 18, especially 18:22: ‘When a prophet speaks in the name of the LORD, if the word does not come to pass or come true, that is a word that the LORD has not spoken; the prophet has spoken it presumptuously. You shall not be afraid of him.’
- (2) There is no indication of a change between Old and New Testaments on this point. Therefore, we should assume that prophesying in the New Testament is also infallible divine revelation.
- (3) Paul describes the church as “built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets” (Eph 2:20), which indicates that New Testament prophecy is not just infallible but also foundational.
- (4) Therefore, the Pauline exhortations to pursue spiritual gifts, especially prophecy, should be considered as unique to the first century (or the first four centuries), and no longer binding on the church today.

If the first three steps are all true, then the fourth one follows. But there are good exegetical reasons to challenge all three of them.

(1) Is prophesying in the Old Testament always infallible divine revelation? Iain Duguid, in the *Festschrift* for Vern Poythress, demonstrates that in all sorts of instances where the word ‘prophet’ or ‘prophesying’ is used in the Hebrew Bible, ‘there is no suggestion of anyone listening to or being instructed by authoritative pronouncements’ (e.g. Gen 20:7; Num 11:25–29; 1 Sam 10:6; 19:20–23; 1 Kgs 18:4; 2 Kgs 2:3; 4:38; 6:1; 9:1; 17:13; 1 Chr 25:1–3; 29:29; 2 Chr 9:29; 12:15; 13:22).¹³ Rather, the person in view may be engaged in prayer, or ecstatic speech, or leading worship, or writing court history, or none of the above. In such cases, Duguid argues, ‘prophecy functions not to convey divinely inspired information but to identify divinely indwelt individuals.’ It is therefore possible—we might even say common—for Old Testament prophesying not to involve infallible divine revelation, but to mark out those in whom the Spirit of God is at work. It is this, rather than the demand for further infallible divine revelation, that is behind Moses’s famous challenge in Numbers 11:29: ‘Are you jealous for my sake? Would that all the LORD’s people were prophets, that the LORD would put his Spirit on them!’

(2) That, of course, is exactly what the Lord does at Pentecost. And that is the sense in which there *is* a substantial change between Old and New Testaments when it comes to the gift of prophecy: not that prophecy suddenly becomes fallible, but that its scope is dramatically widened (‘I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy’, Acts 2:17), and its purpose explicitly connected with the new age of the Spirit, in which the Lord will put his Spirit on all believers, as Moses had asked all those years before. We can argue the toss about whether Agabus was mistaken in certain details in Acts 21:10–11, and there are plenty of interpreters on both sides. But the key point in Acts is that lots of prophesying does not look at all like Deuteronomy 18, in which we either get the new prophet like Moses, or an impostor who speaks in the name of other gods. The term is used far more broadly than that: it might refer to declaring the mighty works of God to others, extolling God, encouraging and strengthening the brothers, or simply speaking in ways that reveal the individual to be filled with the Spirit (2:11; 15:32; 19:6; 21:9). That same polyvalence is present in 1 Corinthians 12–14, as we will see.

¹³ Iain M. Duguid, ‘What Kind of Prophecy Continues? Defining the Differences Between Continuationism and Cessationism’, in *Redeeming the Life of the Mind: Essays in Honor of Vern Poythress*, ed. John Frame, Wayne Grudem and John Hughes (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2017), 112–28.

(3) We also have to ask: Does Ephesians 2:20 show that all prophecy in the New Testament is infallible, divine, foundational revelation? Clearly, this is the role of the prophets to which Paul is referring in this text (and in 3:5), whether or not we agree with Grudem on the grammatical point (which Tom doesn't, and nor do I).¹⁴ But is it the only purpose of prophecy, such that anything which does not qualify as 'foundational' does not qualify as 'prophecy'? Richard Gaffin, interestingly, comes clean about which texts have interpretive primacy in his view: 'As a general guideline for interpretation, the decisive, controlling significance of Eph 2:20 (in its context) needs to be appreciated. It and the other passages that bear on prophecy, like 1 Cor 14, are not of the same order of magnitude exegetically.... Eph 2:20 makes a generalisation that covers all the other New Testament statements on prophecy.'¹⁵ To which we should ask: really? One mention in Ephesians—in a subclause of a sentence that is primarily about the unity of the church—counts for more than three chapters on the gifts in 1 Corinthians? Why?

If we suspend judgment on that for a moment, and look at 1 Corinthians on its own terms, we get a far more varied perspective on the purpose of prophecy. It is given to encourage, console and edify other believers in the local church (14:3). It brings unbelievers under conviction (14:24), witnesses to the presence of the Holy Spirit in the assembly (14:25), and enables the congregation to learn and be encouraged (14:31). If we add 1 Timothy into the mix, prophecy also provides personal guidance for ministry (1:18), and is associated with appointment to eldership (4:14). Consequently, several of the major commentaries on 1 Corinthians now include Anthony Thiselton's definition as standard:

Prophecy, as a gift of the Holy Spirit, combines pastoral insight into the needs of persons, communities, and situations with the ability to address these with a God-given utterance or longer discourse (whether unprompted or prepared with judgment, decision and rational reflection) leading to challenge or comfort, judgment, or consolation, but ultimately building up the addressees.... While the speaker believes that such utterances or discourses come from the Holy Spirit, mistakes can be made, and since believers, including ministers or prophets, remain humanly fallible, claims to prophecy must be weighed and tested.¹⁶

None of this is to deny that Ephesians 2:20 and 3:5 are speaking of foundational divine revelation. It is simply to deny that those texts provide a Procrustean bed onto which every other use of the word should be forced to fit. The reason we sometimes talk about capital-A and small-a apostles, or capital-T and small-t teachers, or capital-E and small-e evangelists, is that we recognise such gifts come in different ways and for different purposes. We know there is a difference between the kinds of ἀπόστολοι in Acts 1 and 2 Corinthians 8. We assume there is a difference between the διδάσκαλοι that Hebrews 5:12 says we should all aspire to be, and the διδάσκαλοι that James 3:1 says we should *not* aspire to be. There may even be a difference between the sort of εὐαγγελιστής Philip was and the sort Timothy was told to be (Acts 21:8; 2 Tim 4:5). So yes, the προφήται in Ephesians 2–3 were foundational for the entire subsequent church. Whether those in 1 Corinthians 12–14 were as well—and I have deliberately

¹⁴ Wayne Grudem, *The Gift of Prophecy in the New Testament and Today*, 2nd ed. (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2000), 329–46.

¹⁵ Richard Gaffin, *Perspectives on Pentecost: New Testament Teaching on the Gifts of the Holy Spirit* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1979), 96.

¹⁶ Anthony Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, NIGTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), 965.

omitted the references in Romans and 1 Thessalonians, of which similar things are true—needs to be shown, not assumed.

4. Conclusion

Thus, I think there are good hermeneutical, historical and eschatological arguments for the charismatic position, and that the strongest argument against it ultimately falls. But I want to finish with a story from a fellow pastor of a London Baptist megachurch. Charles Spurgeon, as far as I know, never uses the word ‘prophecy’ to refer to this sort of phenomenon, although he does talk about revelation, God speaking, and the moving of the Spirit. But this gives a historical snapshot of the kind of thing I Paul may have been talking about, and perhaps also the various church fathers I quoted earlier. He writes:

While preaching in the hall, on one occasion, I deliberately pointed to a man in the midst of the crowd, and said, ‘There is a man sitting there, who is a shoemaker; he keeps his shop open on Sundays, it was open last Sabbath morning, he took ninepence, and there was fourpence profit out of it; his soul is sold to Satan for fourpence!’

The man explains:

I did take ninepence that day, and fourpence was just the profit; but how he should know that, I could not tell. Then it struck me that it was God who had spoken to my soul through him, so I shut up my shop the next Sunday. At first, I was afraid to go again to hear him, lest he should tell the people more about me; but afterwards I went, and the Lord met with me, and saved my soul.

Spurgeon again:

I could tell as many as a dozen similar cases in which I pointed at somebody in the hall without having the slightest knowledge of the person, or any idea that what I said was right, except that I believed I was moved by the Spirit to say it; and so striking has been my description, that the persons have gone away, and said to their friends, ‘Come, see a man that told me all things that ever I did.’¹⁷

Earnestly desire spiritual gifts, especially that you may prophesy.

¹⁷ Charles Spurgeon, *The Autobiography of Charles H. Spurgeon* (Cincinnati: Curts & Jennings, 1898–1900), 2:226–27. Spurgeon was steeped in Scripture, of course, so it is not surprising that there are echoes of a number of biblical texts in this paragraph, some of which explicitly refer to prophecy (John 4:29; 1 Cor 14:25; compare his remarks on being moved by the Spirit with Acts 13:2; 19:21; 20:22; 21:4).

A Response to Andrew Wilson

— Thomas R. Schreiner —

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Let me begin by saying that I really enjoyed reading Andrew Wilson's book, *Spirit and Sacrament*.¹ I wouldn't endorse every detail of his work, but I think Andrew's thesis is generally on target. Let me respond from my own background as a Baptist. As Baptists we have something to learn from charismatics and from those who are more liturgical. We need as Baptists the power of the Spirit in our churches, and we may stifle or quench the Spirit so that our churches become lifeless, dead, and boring. We need the joy and power that Andrew writes so eloquently about it, and we need to pray that the Spirit will enliven us, awaken us, and transform us. Charimatics have taught us: don't forget about the Holy Spirit! We desperately need him every day and every hour. Still, we don't want to overemphasize matters, for John Calvin was known as the theologian of the Holy Spirit, and John Owen was also known for his work on the Spirit.

Andrew is also right in saying that Spirit and sacrament should not be polarized. Again, I want to apply this to Baptist Churches. We should be open to celebrating communion more often or even weekly. Nor should we think that prayers composed in advance quench the Spirit. Many spontaneous prayers sound the same every week and are not marked by theological profundity, and sometimes they go astray doctrinally. We should recite the great Nicene and Chalcedonian creeds and other catechetical instruction in our services. The Spirit and the word are not enemies but friends. Paul says to be filled with the Spirit (Eph 5:18) and to let the word of Christ dwell in us richly (Col 3:16). Andrew reminds us of those truths in this wonderful book.

I would want to nuance differently a number of things said in the book, but my task is to respond to what Andrew says about the continuation of charismatic gifts. Actually, the argument in the book on this matter is quite brief (just a few pages), and so I will respond to Andrew but also interact with an online article Sam Storms wrote about Ephesians 2:20.²

1. The Argument from History

Andrew points to the continuation of prophecy in the early church as an argument in favor of continuationism. My initial response is that the matter of whether the gifts continue is complex. We have to consider exegesis, history, and theology. Simply citing biblical texts doesn't prove one's case, for

¹ Andrew Wilson, *Spirit and Sacrament: An Invitation to Eucharismatic Worship* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2019).

² Sam Storms, "Ephesians 2:20—The Cessationist's 'Go-To' Text," *Enjoying God*, 24 October 2013, <https://tinyurl.com/y73l3979>.

we need to consider the entire canonical context in applying scripture today. In other words, we have to engage in exegesis, biblical theology, and systematic theology. The argument from the continuation of the gifts in early church history isn't decisive since it took time for the canon of scripture to be established and accepted—even hundreds of years. The gift of prophecy and presumably other gifts helped secure churches in the truth in the intervening period before the canon was accepted. We can't draw a bright red line between the era when prophecy ceased and the canon was fully established. The transition was gradual and slow and probably imperceptible to those who lived during those times. Thus, we can't pinpoint the exact date prophecy ended; it faded away gradually as churches in different locales received the full canon of the NT. Thus, instances of prophecy in early church history don't demonstrate that the gift is present today.

2. Considering the Canon

It is true that the NT nowhere says the gifts will come to an end, and we can see why Andrew argues from 1 Corinthians 13 and Ephesians 4 that the gifts will continue to the second coming. But it should give us pause that the NT nowhere tells us that there will be a canon of collected writings that will function as authoritative scripture. We have no direct word in the NT on the matter of the canon, and we rightly engage in exegetical, historical, and theological reasoning in support of the NT canon. In the same way, the wording of 1 Corinthians 13 isn't conclusive for the continuation of gifts since it would make no sense for the Holy Spirit to inspire Paul to say the gifts would cease to the Corinthians since they had no need to know about the cessation of gifts and the establishment of the canon. Similarly, there was no need for Paul to know about these matters since he would not live long enough to see the canon established. If God revealed such a matter to Paul, he would have known that Jesus would not come for hundreds of years. The scriptures do not engage in these kinds of abstractions since they address the circumstances facing the original readers. We must reflect theologically upon what the word meant for the first readers and how we are to appropriate the same word today. It is not at all surprising, then, that the cessation of gifts wasn't specifically revealed to Paul or the other apostles since such a revelation would be irrelevant during the lifetime of the apostles and of the original readers of the Pauline letters.

3. The Problem with the Gifts Not Being the Same as in Apostolic Times

Andrew says that we should be zealous and eager to obey what scripture commands. Of course. But that's just the question. What should we be seeking? He acknowledges that the gifts and healings are not what they were in the apostolic times, but says we aren't as successful as the apostles in evangelism, church planting, leadership, and missions either. I don't find this argument persuasive, and I think it involves equivocation as to the nature of the gifts, for evangelism is still evangelism even if we are not as successful as the apostles. But the differences between the gifts exercised in the NT period and the gifts as they are exercised today raise questions about whether we are talking about the same gifts. I remember when the Vineyard movement was popular that they contended that the signs and wonders of the apostles were still available today. But now the argument seems to be as follows. Well, they were getting the full river of the Spirit and we are just getting trickle. So, I guess that means that gifts of healing rarely work for the blind, those who are unable to walk, and those who have terminal cancer. I

have already said we all agree that God can and does heal miraculously in some situations. The question, however, is whether people have the gift of healing, which means it would be exercised with some regularity. It seems that charismatics in effect end up saying that the gifts are dumbed down for us. They end up saying the following: Yes, God heals but not dramatically or often like in the NT. Yes, there is prophecy but now there are mistakes. Yes, there are tongues, but it isn't speaking in unknown languages but in a prayer language or ecstatic utterances. Such views are hard to falsify, but it is a far cry from what we find in the NT. It seems as if the gifts are redefined to fit current experiences. Most of the "prophecies" uttered are rather general words of comfort and exhortation. When we hear such "prophecies," it seems that anyone who knows the scriptures could offer the same advice without claiming to have the gift of prophecy.

4. Sam Storms on Ephesians 2:20

I turn here to an article by Sam Storms where he argues that Ephesians 2:20 is wrongly adduced as signifying the end of prophecy since the church is "built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets."³ The cessationist appeal to Ephesians 2:20 is flawed, according to Storms, because it assumes that all the prophecies uttered in the churches were part of the apostolic foundation of the church, but that can't be right, says Storms, since there were virtually hundreds and thousands of prophecies uttered, and many of them were addressed to individuals. How could all these prophecies be part of the once-for-all foundation for the church? Storms says the prophecies of the Ephesian twelve in Acts 19 can't be part of the foundation of the church, nor the prophecies of Philip's daughters (Acts 21:9), nor the prophecies of the sons and daughters mentioned in Acts 2, nor the prophecies that reveal a person's sins in 1 Corinthians 14:24–25.

4.1. Ephesians 2:20 in Its Original Context

Storms makes a very interesting argument, but I remain unconvinced. The problem is one of slippage when speaking of the apostles and prophets as the foundation of the church. Storms reads that foundation as the once-for-all foundation for the *universal* church. He reads it as if Paul writes about the canon of scriptures—the foundation we have *today*. But I note in my other article appearing in this same issue of *Themelios* that Paul, though he believed his writings were authoritative, had no concept of a canon. We must make a distinction here between Paul's *original* meaning and its *theological reception*. We rightly appropriate and apply Ephesians 2:20 theologically in terms of the canon, but we need to think more about the original Pauline intention.

Let me explain further. When Paul says that the church is "built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets" (Eph 2:20), it is legitimate to deduce theologically from this verse that the NT canon comprises the foundational teaching of the apostles and the prophets. Still, Paul wasn't thinking about the canon when writing this verse, nor does it follow logically that we have preserved today *everything* the apostles and prophets ever said and taught, and yet the teaching of all the apostles and all the prophets was still foundational—even the teaching that isn't inscripturated.

³Storms, "Ephesians 2:20."

4.2. Example of the Apostle Andrew

Perhaps an example will help unpack what I mean. Let's think about the apostles for a moment and consider the apostle Andrew. We have no written word from Andrew preserved in the scriptures, but we have every reason to believe that as an apostle he faithfully communicated to his hearers what was necessary for their salvation and sanctification. It would be quite presumptuous to say that Andrew's words aren't included in the NT because they contained errors. Nor should we conclude that his oral teaching wasn't foundational since it is not recorded. When Paul wrote Ephesians 2:20 he viewed the ministry of Andrew and all the apostles as foundational, even though there is not a single word in the NT from some of the apostles.

Let me state this still another way. The teaching of Andrew as an apostle and the words of the prophets which are not preserved today were part of the foundation in the churches they established, even if those words aren't preserved *for us* today in the scriptures. The Lord has preserved *for us* all the foundational teaching *we need* in what has come down to us in the canon of the scriptures. On the other hand, in churches which did not have the completed canon of the NT, the words of the prophets helped supplement the teaching of the apostles until the canon was consolidated and accepted by all. The early churches needed orally transmitted infallible apostolic and prophetic teaching before the canon was established so that they didn't stray from the gospel. Not all of that teaching was recorded and preserved for the universal church, but all of that teaching was foundational for particular local churches.

4.3. All the Teaching by the Apostles and Prophets Was Foundational

Sam contends that the words of the prophets are only foundational if they are written down and preserved for all time. But I am arguing that those early apostolic and prophetic words, which aren't in the canon today, were infallible and part of the foundation of the various churches established. Every local church needed such foundational apostolic and prophetic teaching before the canon was accepted and recognized and received by all the churches.

What about Sam's objection that prophecy often deals with personal matters that can't be part of foundational teaching? We need to be careful, however, about segregating too rigidly the personal and the corporate. Everything prophets revealed in local churches contributed to the upbuilding of churches because churches grow as individuals grow. If someone was saved through a prophetic word, adding a person to the church through a prophetic word is one way the church grows. Words that bring people to salvation and which aid in sanctification are foundational! In other words, prophets helped their churches because everything they said when prophesying was completely true, and if it edifies and helps a believer, then it contributed to the growth of the church.

Prophets, of course, did much more than address concerns and stresses facing particular individuals. Still, just as the NT in its foundational and authoritative role strengthens and comforts and builds up individuals today, so too the authoritative and prophetic words granted in the early Christian era strengthened and edified early believers, even if these words aren't preserved today.

Let me also say, however, that we must beware of individualism. NT prophecy typically related to the mission of the church and to the expansion of the gospel, even if individuals were addressed. One of the curious things about how the alleged gift of prophecy operates today is that it is often limited to individual or privatistic concerns, and issues of mission and doctrine and truth may never surface relative to prophecy. Such individual concerns should not be scorned and mocked, but we need to be

careful because evangelical Christianity tends to be privatistic and individualistically focused to a fault, and we wonder again if what is called prophecy truly matches the NT.

To sum up, Sam in his exposition of Ephesians 2:20 restricts the verse to the canon of scripture we have now, to the once-for-all foundation for the universal church. In doing so, he confuses what the verse means for us, as we apply it to our circumstances, and what it meant to Paul's original readers. Everything the prophets and apostles taught was foundational for the churches established, even if they are not preserved for the church today.

5. The Role of Impressions

Before I conclude two matters should be addressed. First, what should we think about impressions, and second, does the word prophecy always have the same meaning? The discussion here must be brief. Some people have amazing experiences that they call prophecy, but I would argue that what is called prophecy today is better identified as impressions, and God can use such impressions—sometimes in remarkable and helpful ways, but impressions aren't the same as prophecy since they reflect human insight, hunches, and desires, which may or may not be from God. Both Jonathan Edwards and C. H. Spurgeon were cessationists, but they also believed God would sometimes impress something on a person's heart. Spurgeon had some remarkable experiences where the Lord gave him an impression about someone or something that could not be known apart from the Lord's work. Andrew cites some of Spurgeon's amazing experiences, and I believe the Lord used those experiences, and he can use such today. Still, it is interesting that Spurgeon didn't think he had the gift of prophecy but identified his experience as impressions. Spurgeon was wise and didn't rely on receiving impressions, and Edwards warns that those who base their life on impressions will become unstable and may be led into wild fantasies.⁴ The story of Thomas Müntzer, where he thought God was leading him to fight against civil authority, reminds us all about the danger of thinking God is speaking to us. God can use impressions, and we should not rule them out, but they are not the same thing as the gift of prophesy, and we need to be careful about relying on them.

We find an example of an impression in 1 Corinthians 16:12 where Paul thinks Apollos should come to Corinth immediately, but Apollos disagrees! Paul does not claim to be prophesying in this instance. He urged Apollos to go—he had a sense and a conviction that Apollos should visit—but Apollos did not think the time was right, and Paul grants Apollos freedom to make his own decision. What Andrew and Sam call prophecy is better identified as the reception and transmission of impressions.

6. Variability of the Word Prophecy

One final matter should be addressed, and it is helpful for the sake of clarification. I am not saying that every use of the words “prophecy” and “prophesy” in the scriptures has the same meaning, but that doesn't lead to the conclusion that I am embracing the continuationist view of prophecy, nor do I think it is correct to say that prophecies are ever mixed with errors. We have to beware of “illegitimate totality transfer” in using the word prophecy, just as with any other word in the scriptures.⁵ Context is

⁴Jonathan Edwards, “Distinguishing Marks of a Work of the Spirit of God,” in *The Great Awakening*, ed. C. C. Goen, *The Works of Jonathan Edwards* 4 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1972), 282.

⁵See James Barr, *The Semantics of Biblical Language*, repr. ed. (Eugene: Wipf and Stock, 2004), 218–19.

king. For instance, we are told in Revelation 11 that the two witnesses prophesy, and I take that to mean that the church testifies to the gospel from the time of the resurrection and ascension of Jesus to the second coming.⁶ The prophesying of the two witnesses should not be equated with the gift of prophecy where people receive spontaneous revelations from God. John uses the word prophesy loosely in terms of the proclamation of the gospel. When John speaks of the two witnesses prophesying, he has in mind the preaching of the gospel by the church until the end of the world. He doesn't refer to the experience of receiving spontaneous revelations from God. Even though the notion of prophecy in Revelation 11 differs from what Paul has in mind when he speaks of the spiritual gift of prophecy, one constant remains. There isn't any notion in Revelation 11 that the prophetic proclamation of the gospel contains both truth and error. The church truly testifies to the gospel. If someone were to say that the church consists of humans and we also make mistakes, such an objection introduces a concern that strays outside of John's intention. John's purpose wasn't to say that the message of the church is partly flawed! His point is that the church truly proclaims the gospel.

7. Conclusion

I have argued that all NT prophecy functioned (along with apostolic teaching) as the foundation for churches in early church history, and all authoritative teaching needed for us today is preserved in the canon of scripture. We must distinguish between what Ephesians 2:20 meant in its original context and how we appropriate and apply the verse to our circumstances today. References to prophecy in early church history don't prove prophecy exists today since the gift slowly faded away. It took a considerable amount of time for the canon to be recognized and utilized in various locales. A significant problem for continuationists is that the gifts as they are exercised today don't match NT descriptions, which supports the claim that the sign gifts don't exist today. Of course, God still heals and does miracles, but people don't have the gifts of miracles and healing. The miraculous gifts were given in the early church to provide a foundation for the church's doctrine and practice (Ephesians 2:20) and to accredit the ministry, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Thus, what continuationists call prophecy should be identified as impressions instead.⁷

⁶ Thomas R. Schreiner, *Revelation*, ESV Bible Expository Commentary 12 (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2018), 651–56.

⁷ Some appeal to 1 Corinthians 12:8 to defend the notion that we have a word of knowledge in these instances, but the reference to wisdom and knowledge here more likely refer to the gift of teaching. See Thomas R. Schreiner, *1 Corinthians*, TNTC (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2018), 256–57.

It All Depends Upon Prophecy: A Brief Case for Nuanced Cessationism

— Thomas R. Schreiner —

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Abstract: Nuanced cessationism can be defended from a number of angles, but one of the most significant is from the nature of prophecy. The argument defended here is that NT prophecy is infallible and inerrant just like OT prophecy. Various arguments are given by some continuationists to establish the fallibility of NT prophecy, but it is argued here that they are unconvincing. Since NT prophecy is infallible and inerrant like OT prophecy and since the church is established upon the foundation of the apostles and the prophets (Eph. 2:20), we have significant evidence that NT prophets no longer exist today inasmuch as the doctrinal foundation of the church has been laid once for all. First Corinthians 13:8–13 is a good argument for all the gifts lasting until the second coming, but this text does not demand that all the gifts continue until the second coming.

It is important to set the context for our discussion on spiritual gifts.¹ We are considering a matter on which evangelicals who believe in the inspired and authoritative word of God disagree. I celebrate the biblical faithfulness of continuationist friends like John Piper, Wayne Grudem, Sam Storms, and Andrew Wilson, even though I dissent from their understanding in some respects. I also acknowledge that they may be right and that I may see things wrongly, though I don't think I am wrong as I will endeavor to point out in the discussion. Furthermore, as a cessationist I believe God still heals and does miracles today, though I think such events are relatively rare. Still, I pray for the healing of the sick and believe God can do so miraculously. My argument isn't that miracles and healings never occur. Instead, I am claiming that believers today don't have the gifts of doing miracles and healing. It is possible in cutting-edge missionary situations that the Lord may be pleased to do the signs and wonders granted during the apostolic era. I call myself a nuanced cessationist since I don't believe such experiences and events are what ordinarily takes place in the life of the church.

¹An earlier version of this article was delivered at the Annual Meeting of the Evangelical Theological Society (Denver, CO, 13 November 2018) in the Perspectives on the Spiritual Gifts session, moderated by Patrick Schreiner, with responses from Andrew Wilson and Sam Storms.

The heart and soul of my case for the cessation of some gifts depends upon prophecy. Richard Blaylock's definition of prophecy in his *Themelios* article is helpful.² "New Testament prophecy can be defined as (1) a miraculous act of intelligible communication, (2) rooted in spontaneous, divine revelation and (3) empowered by the Holy Spirit, which (4) results in words that can be attributed to any and all members of the Godhead and which therefore (5) must be received by those who hear or read them as absolutely binding and true." I argue that there are compelling reasons to think that the spiritual gift of prophecy no longer exists today. And if that is true, questions are raised about the continuation of some other gifts as well, but there is not time to pursue the latter issue here. The argument from prophecy has two elements. First—and most important—there is no basis for saying prophecy is mixed with error. So, those who contend that the gift of prophecy exists today should argue that such prophets speak infallibly and inerrantly, but such a prospect threatens the sole and final authority of scripture. The second argument is that the church is built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, as Ephesians 2:20 says, and that foundation has been deposited for us in the canonical scriptures, and the canon was closed with the writing of the NT.

1. Old Testament Prophecy and New Testament Prophecy Are Inerrant

Several arguments support my contention.³ First, the burden of proof is on those who say that NT prophecy differs from OT prophecy. We see in Deuteronomy 18 that the mark of true prophets is that their prophecies come true. If their prophecies contain errors, they are to be rejected as false prophets (Deut 18:20–22). The infallibility of OT prophecy is confirmed in the case of Samuel when we read that "none of Samuel's words [fell] to the ground" (1 Sam 3:19 NIV). In other words, Samuel was confirmed as a prophet because his prophecies were always fulfilled. We have no evidence in the OT that the prophecies of OT prophets were mixed with error. In fact, errors in prophecies indicated that one was a false prophet, and we see this clearly in the dramatic story of Hananiah in Jeremiah 28. Hananiah prophesies that the articles of the temple will be restored in two years, but Jeremiah is vindicated as a true prophet and Hananiah is exposed as a sham when Jeremiah prophesies Hananiah's death, and Hananiah died that same year. As Jeremiah says false prophets prophesy "a lie in my name" and "a false vision" (Jer 14:14).⁴ Ezekiel indicts prophets "who see false visions and speak lying divinations" (Ezek 13:9). It is clear, then, that OT prophecy was infallible and flawless, but that leads me to reiterate the main point: we expect NT prophecy to be infallible like OT prophecy, unless the NT makes it abundantly clear that NT prophecy diverges from OT prophecy. I suggest we don't have such clear evidence.

2. Prophets Judged by Prophecies

Second, those who support the notion that NT prophecies are mixed with error, either in the reception or transmission of the prophecies, say that in 1 Thessalonians 5:19–20 and 1 Corinthians 14:29–32 it is the prophecies that are judged, not the prophets. The prophets, according to this reading, are not excluded as false prophets if they err. The prophecies are sifted and the errors in the prophecy

²Richard Blaylock, "Towards a Definition of New Testament Prophecy," *Them* 44 (2019): 41–60.

³Some of the content and even exact wording in the following comes from my book *Spiritual Gifts: What They Are and Why They Matter* (Nashville: B&H, 2018). B&H granted permission to use this material.

⁴All citations are from the CSB unless noted otherwise.

are rejected, not the prophets themselves. This attempt to distinguish NT from OT prophecy doesn't persuade because the only way to determine whether one is true prophet, both in the OT and the NT, is by assessing their prophecies. The standard in the OT and the NT is the same. We know that Hananiah was a false prophet because his prophecy was mistaken. So too, Paul tells the church to evaluate prophecies because the church distinguished between true and false prophets by assessing their prophecies.

3. Beware of False Prophets

Third, Jesus warns about the danger of “false prophets who come to you in sheep’s clothing but inwardly are ravaging wolves” (Matt 7:15). He says that “many false prophets will rise up and deceive many” (Matt 24:11). Peter admonishes the church to be on guard against “false prophets” and “false teachers” (2 Pet 2:1). John tells us not to “believe every spirit” but to “test the spirits to see if they are from God” (1 John 4:1). The testing of the spirits in 1 John 4 and the evaluating and assessing of prophecies in 1 Thessalonians 5 and 1 Corinthians 14 have the same function and work in exactly the same way. In every instance, the church must discern what is false and what is true, and such an activity is crucial because there were as John tells us *many* false prophets in the world. Discerning who the false prophets are, if NT prophets make mistakes, ends up being a nightmare. Those who prophesy falsely could protest that they are genuine prophets since true prophets make mistakes. It is instructive that many of those who talk about prophecy today say very little about false prophets, but there is a great concern about the danger of false prophets in the NT.

4. All Genuine New Testament Prophets Prophecy Infallibly

Fourth, we have no credible example in the NT of true prophets making mistakes. When Agabus prophesies that there will be a famine in Acts 11:27–28, his prophecy comes true. In the same way, Agabus’s prophecy about Paul being bound and delivered over to the Gentiles in Acts 21:11 was not mistaken. Those who see errors in NT prophecies say that the events didn’t turn out as Agabus prophesied since Paul was *rescued* from the Jews, not *handed* over by them. But when Paul recounts to the Jews in Rome how he “was delivered [παρεδόθη] as a prisoner from Jerusalem into the hands of the Romans” (Acts 28:17), he uses the very word *παράδωμι* that Agabus used in making the prophecy (21:11). We should conclude from this that Luke believed Agabus wasn’t mistaken.

Agabus also demonstrates that he is a prophet by using prophetic symbolism, which was typical of OT prophets. Agabus takes Paul’s belt and ties his hands and feet. We are reminded of Isaiah walking naked to signify the judgment that would come on Israel (Isa 20) or the miniature siege works that Ezekiel built against Jerusalem (Ezek 4). It is quite unlikely that Luke pauses to emphasize the binding action taken by Agabus to tell us that Agabus got it wrong. The OT background suggests otherwise. Agabus used prophetic signs just like OT prophets. Indeed, we have to ask what role it would play in Luke’s narrative in Acts to note that Agabus made a mistake. The whole purpose of the story is to explain how Paul got to Rome just as the Holy Spirit said he would (Acts 19:21; 23:11), and seeing an aside about Agabus’s alleged mistake diverges from the Lukan intention.

Agabus’s genuineness as a prophet is also attested by the prophetic formula he uses, when he declares, “This is what the Holy Spirit says.” The word *τάδε* translated “this” is used hundreds of times in

the OT for the authoritative words of the prophets. We find the same pattern in Revelation (2:1, 8, 12, 18; 3:1, 17, 14) where the authoritative words of Jesus are introduced with the word *τάδε*. Luke uses this formula to underscore that Agabus speaks by the Holy Spirit, just as Jesus does in Revelation and just as the OT prophets did. He is not telling us that Agabus made a mistake.

The fulfillment of Agabus's prophecy raises another issue that should be addressed briefly, and it relates to those of us who believe Scripture is inerrant. Modern Western conceptions of accuracy must not be applied to the Scriptures when we speak of accuracy. The Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy introduces the kind of qualifications that are needed in defining the term.⁵ The careful work of Craig Blomberg also demonstrates that inerrancy must be nuanced properly so that we don't impose upon the Scriptures the kind of computer accuracy we have in our culture today.⁶ What I am saying here is that if Agabus is said to be in error, the same kind of judgment could be used to assess other texts which some claim have errors. To avoid misunderstanding, I am not saying that those who think NT prophecy is mixed with errors in any way deny inerrancy. The point is that a restrictive definition of what constitutes error could also apply in principle to the doctrine of inerrancy. Those who think that Agabus erred define error too narrowly and rigidly.

5. 1 Corinthians 13 Doesn't Demand Continuationism

Scholars debate whether prophecy continues because we have no text that says directly that prophecy has come to an end. In fact, we would expect from reading the last part of 1 Corinthians 13, as continuationists point out, that prophecy would last until the second coming. Certainly 1 Corinthians 13 *permits* such a reading, and I understand why some continuationists think it *demand*s such a reading. If we look at the context of 1 Corinthians 13:8–12, the coming of “the perfect” brings what is “partial” to an end (13:10). Paul says that now we “know in part, but then I will know fully, as I am fully known” (13:12). Presently, our knowledge is incomplete, and “we see only a reflection as in a mirror,” but then we will see “face to face” (13:12). It is clear, therefore, that “the perfect” is another way of describing “face to face,” and seeing “face to face” most naturally refers to Christ's second coming. Understanding “the perfect” to refer to Jesus' coming is something the Corinthians would clearly understand, and also fits with the emphasis on Jesus' second coming in Paul's theology. Still, when we do theology, we have to consider every text and see how each text fits into the fabric of divine revelation. The NT doesn't explicitly teach that a canon of scripture would be established either since none of the apostles or early Christians anticipated such, nor did they envision history lasting for thousands of years. One of the reasons the issue is debated is that we live in a time period that the NT doesn't specifically address. We need to remember that 1 Corinthians was addressed to the Corinthian church in the first century, and it would mean nothing to them to be told that gifts would cease after the canon was established.

⁵International Council on Biblical Inerrancy, “The Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy,” *JETS* 21 (1978): 289–96.

⁶Craig Blomberg, *The Historical Reliability of the Gospels* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1987); Blomberg, *The Historical Reliability of John's Gospel: Issues and Commentary* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2001); Blomberg, *Can We Still Believe the Bible? An Evangelical Assessment with Contemporary Questions* (Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2014); Blomberg, *The Historical Reliability of the New Testament: Countering the Challenges to Evangelical Christian Beliefs* (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2016).

6. *The Interpretation of Acts 21:4*

Perhaps the most difficult text for those who think prophecy in the NT is infallible is Acts 21:4 and 21:12–13. Paul’s friends tell him not to go to Jerusalem “through the Spirit” since it is predicted that he will suffer there, but Paul insists on going to Jerusalem and claims that he is led by the Spirit in his decision (19:21–22). Those who think NT prophecy is mixed with error say we have a clear example here of an error in prophecy. This interpretation is certainly possible. There wouldn’t even be a debate if this matter were easy to resolve! But another reading of the evidence is more compelling, and this reading supports the notion that NT prophecies are infallible.

In Acts 21:4 the prophecy is correct (Paul would suffer), but the inference drawn from the prophecy (Paul shouldn’t go to Jerusalem) is mistaken. Otherwise, if we follow the wording of the text and there is an error in the prophecy, Luke is attributing the error to the Holy Spirit! For he says that they spoke “through the Spirit” (Acts 21:4). Even charismatics don’t want to say (at least I hope so) that the error in speaking is from the Spirit himself. A better solution is to say that the inference drawn from the prophecy was not part of the prophecy itself. Thus, the prophecy that Paul would face suffering in Jerusalem was accurate and Spirit-inspired; the conclusion that people drew from the prophecy—that Paul should not travel to Jerusalem—was mistaken. It did not derive from the Spirit. C. K. Barrett gets it right when he says, “Luke does not express himself clearly. His words taken strictly would mean either that Paul was deliberately disobedient to the will of God or that the Spirit was mistaken in the guidance given. It is unthinkable that Luke intended either of these.”⁷ Barrett goes on to propose the same solution offered above. By the way, what Barrett says should not be construed as a criticism of Luke. It wasn’t Luke’s purpose to be precise about the nature of prophecy here, and he assumed that his readers would realize that prophecy is never in error. We have to recall again that the purpose of the story was not to reflect on the nature of prophecy. We can’t demand more of the account than is warranted, as if Luke was writing a treatise on prophecy.

7. *The Import of Ephesians 2:20*

We see implicit support for the cessation of NT prophecy in Ephesians 2:20 where the church is “built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets.” The canon of the NT contains the authoritative apostolic and prophetic teaching, and thus apostles and prophets are no longer needed. Recognizing the foundational role of apostles and prophets doesn’t necessarily lead to the conclusion that apostles and prophets ceased to function at exactly the same time. Apostolic teaching was preserved in apostolic writings, but prophets may have continued to exist for hundreds of years since it took a long time for the NT canon to be established and recognized. We can’t pinpoint the exact date prophecy ended; it faded away slowly as the canon was established in various locales.

Sam Storms thinks the view of prophecy defended by me can’t be correct because there are hundreds, yes thousands of prophecies, that are not preserved in the scriptures.⁸ He says that if prophecies were entirely true and authoritative they would need to be written down and preserved in the Scriptures.

⁷C. K. Barrett, *Acts 15–28*, ICC (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1998), 990.

⁸See e.g., Sam Storms, “Why NT Prophecy Does NOT Result in ‘Scripture-quality Revelatory Words,’” in Michael L. Brown, *Authentic Fire: A Response to John McArthur’s Strange Fire* (Lake Mary, FL: Creation House, 2015), 379–81.

Actually, such an objection is baseless and says nothing about the nature of NT prophecy. Even OT prophecies didn't have to be written down and preserved to be true and authoritative. In fact, many prophecies—indeed most OT prophecies—aren't part of the Scriptures, but such a state of affairs doesn't indicate that prophecies that weren't written down contained errors. Everything Elijah and Elisha said when they were speaking in the name of the Lord was true, but most of what they prophesied hasn't been preserved in the Scriptures.⁹ We have no record of what the fifty prophets hidden by Obadiah prophesied (1 Kings 18:4). Nor do we know the prophecies of the sons of the prophets who were associated especially with Elisha (2 Kings 2:3, 5, 7, 15; 4:1, 38; 5:22; 6:1; 9:1). Both of these groups must have prophesied since they are called prophets. But nothing that the sons of the prophets prophesied is contained in Scripture. Still, everything they prophesied was true! They didn't make mistakes in their prophecies even if their words haven't been preserved for all time. Notice that we have the words of at least sixty prophets in these two examples that were not written down or saved for posterity, showing that prophecies don't have to be included in Scripture to be completely true.

Andrew Wilson hints in his book that some of the OT prophets might have erred as well.¹⁰ But this should be rejected, for then how could they discern who was a true prophet? The texts cited earlier show that genuine OT prophets spoke infallibly. Furthermore, we don't have any examples of OT prophets whose prophecies were mixed with error. Let's think about what could be assessed as a relatively trivial example of prophecy. We read about "Gedaliah, Zeri, Jeshaiiah, Shimei, Hashabiah, and Mattithiah—six—under the authority of their father Jeduthun, prophesying to the accompaniment of lyres, giving thanks and praise to the LORD" (1 Chron 25:3). What they prophesied is not written down, but there is no suggestion whatsoever that what they said contained errors. So too, Saul prophesies when the Spirit rushes upon him (1 Sam 10:10–13; 19:23–24), and even though Saul isn't a godly man, there is no hint that there were mistakes in what he said. The author doesn't reflect any interest in the content of what Saul said; the point is that the Spirit came upon him. Still, there is no basis for suggesting that the words he uttered were untrue, even if the main purpose was not to instruct those present.

What I am arguing, then, is this: Since prophecy is without error, there are not prophets today. Both apostles and prophets have ceased. The foundation has been laid once-for-all in the teaching of the apostles and prophets (Eph 2:20). God has spoken to us in the last days finally and definitively in his Son (Heb 1:2). The faith has been handed down once-for-all time to the saints (Jude 3). The completion of revelation in the NT era makes sense since the climatic fulfillment of redemptive history was accomplished in the ministry, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. We don't have any new revelation because the final and definitive revelation has been given in Jesus Christ. The next event in redemptive history is the second coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. No more apostles or prophets will arise. The work of laying the foundation, which culminated in the canon of the scripture, is finished. No further word of God is needed or sought. What we need is the illuminating work of the Spirit and prayer to understand the word that has been vouchsafed to us.

⁹We should not understand the prophets to be without error in everything they said during their lives. They were ordinary human beings. But when they spoke in the Lord's name, their words were without error.

¹⁰Andrew Wilson, *Spirit and Sacrament: An Invitation to Eucharistic Worship* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2019), 111–12.

8. Conclusion

A nuanced cessationist position is established since the church is built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets (Eph. 2:20), and that foundation has been laid once for all, as the apostles and prophets unpacked the significance of the ministry, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. We have no need for apostles and prophets today because we don't need any further revelation now that we have the canon of the NT. The case for cessationism is established further by the nature of NT prophecy, for there is no evidence that NT prophets erred when they prophesied, and we don't have among us today any prophets who declare to us the word of the Lord. If anyone claims to be such a prophet, they threaten the sole and final authority of scripture, and their claim to be a prophet should be rejected.

A Response to Tom Schreiner

— Andrew Wilson —

Andrew Wilson is teaching pastor at King's Church London and is the author of Spirit and Sacrament: An Invitation to Eucharistic Worship.

Tom Schreiner's book *Spiritual Gifts* is a masterclass in disagreeing well. In a debate which is frequently characterised by misrepresentations, accusations and inflammatory distortions on both sides, Tom has written something completely different: fair and balanced, generous and wise. The book is clear, but not partisan; it builds its case in such a way as to embrace the strengths of some charismatic arguments, and recognise the weaknesses of some cessationist ones. Obviously I still disagree on a number of key points, and on the conclusion of the book, but we share far more common ground than you would know from hearing many people on both sides of the aisle, and this is the book I would recommend to any charismatic who wants to wrestle with a 'nuanced cessationism'. Bravo.

I agree with virtually everything Tom says in seven of his eleven chapters. My disagreements with him boil down to just three things:

(1) Whether all NT prophecy is authoritative, infallible, and foundational revelation, and as such should be clearly distinguished from impressions, whereby 'someone senses that God is leading them to speak to someone or to make some kind of statement about a situation'. This is the argument he makes in chapter 7, and as we have already heard, it is crucial to the discussion.

(2) Whether the gift of tongues, for Paul, is about the speaking of human languages, as it is for Luke, rather than that which is usually practised by charismatics today. He makes this argument in chapters 8–9.

(3) Whether the case for 'nuanced cessationism' in his final chapter actually holds up. His argument, in outline, is that the church is built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, and in particular on the authoritative and infallible revelation they communicated. Both of these have ceased, whether with the death of the last apostle or, in an intriguing aside, with the agreement on the final canon of Scripture after a few hundred years. (This concession, incidentally, seems to me to undermine some of the arguments he has made previously: if an ante-Nicene father could prophesy, yet without in any way undermining the final authority of Scripture, why couldn't someone today? And how would anyone in the late fourth century know that Paul's exhortations to prophesy had recently ceased to apply?) Tom then explains his position on the other gifts—tongues, interpretation, miracles and healings—which is essentially that they might exist today, but he is doubtful, and if they do, they are very rare. I disagree, unsurprisingly, but we seem to agree that there is no *biblical* reason for claiming that the gifts of healing and miracles have ceased. In that sense, Tom's cessationism is nuanced indeed!

To begin with this last point, which in some ways is the most peripheral to Tom's argument: it seems to me that many cessationists apply a somewhat unfair standard when it comes to miraculous events like healings, or the speaking of unlearned human languages. Yes, the apostles were more successful at these things than we are. There is, indeed, a discrepancy between our experience and what is described in the NT. But the apostles were also far more successful at evangelism. And church planting. And leadership.

And cross-cultural mission. And church discipline (unless the Southern Baptists have figured out the Ananias and Sapphira thing). And teaching. And standing firm under persecution. And selling their possessions and giving to the poor. And handling disappointment in ministry. Yet in none of these cases do we conclude that the gulf is so wide, their 'success' so much greater than ours, that to tell people how to share the gospel, or teach, or lead more effectively, is to encourage people to be satisfied with sub-biblical Christianity. Rather, we acknowledge the disparity and seek to learn from it. What did they do? How did they do it? What can we learn? What are we missing? Which contemporaries of ours is God using in this area at the moment? What can we learn from them? As such, it looks like a standard is being used with respect to the 'miraculous' gifts (where charismatics claim more 'success' than cessationists) that is not applied to those areas in which conservatives typically pride themselves.

Cards on the table: I have personally witnessed a large number of miracles like this. Blindness, deafness, paralysis, unlearned earthly languages being spoken (in one recent case, a Rwandan tribal language that was being spoken by a white British girl in our prayer meeting, and understood by a native speaker of that language standing a few feet away), life-long conditions, the whole kit and caboodle—not third-hand stories from Majority World countries, but in front of me in the UK—and many of the healings have subsequently been verified by medical staff, which is something we always encourage. (In my favourite story, which was featured in the national press in the UK, the government continued paying disability benefits to a wheelchair bound lady even after she had been completely healed. When she rang to say she no longer needed the money because she could walk again, the bureaucrat at the government department said, 'We haven't got a button to push that says "miracle".') I agree with Tom that such things are rarer than they were in Acts—but then so are sermons that see 3,000 people saved, and so are missionaries who plant churches from Jerusalem round to Illyricum. That is not a reason to seek those things less; it is a reason to seek them more.

Working backwards, my second disagreement with Tom concerns the gifts of tongues and interpretation. Tom argues that the tongues in 1 Corinthians are all unlearned, human languages, a la Acts 2; I think there are several reasons to suggest they are not (whether or not we see Paul as alluding to the difference in his famous comment about 'the tongues of men, and of angels', 1 Cor 13:1). Tongues in Acts were immediately understood by those who heard; tongues in 1 Corinthians required interpretation. The former demonstrated blessing, as those who speak other languages understand, in reversal of the curse of Babel; the latter demonstrated judgment, as those who speak other languages do not understand, in fulfilment of Isaiah. The former is assumed to function like prophecy by Peter; the latter is explicitly differentiated from prophecy by Paul. The former is aimed at people with a declarative, even evangelistic, purpose: 'We hear them telling in our own tongues the mighty works of God.' The latter is described in terms of prayer, song, and thanksgiving, and is aimed at God. The purpose of the former is the edification of the hearer; the purpose of the latter, if there is no interpreter, is the edification of the speaker. If tongues were all comprehensible, earthly languages, it would be extremely strange for Paul use the gift so much in private, yet be so cautious in public.

The tongue-speaking at Pentecost is understood because the hearer already knows the language; for anyone to understand Corinthian tongue-speaking requires the speaker to 'pray that they may interpret what is said', which would be a strange remark to make of earthly languages in a polyglot city like Corinth (unless we are to imagine that the Spirit prompted people to speak only in earthly languages that nobody in the congregation understood, which would be thoroughly bizarre). As David Garland points out, it is also hard to understand Paul's rhetorical question in 14:6—'if I come to you speaking

in tongues [γλώσσαις λαλῶν], how will I benefit you?’—if γλώσσα here refers to *xenoglossia* rather than *glossolalia*. For Garland, ‘this rules out the view that tongues refer to the miraculous ability to speak in unlearned languages.’¹ I am inclined to the view, as articulated by a variety of scholars, that there are ‘various kinds of tongues’, that some of them are human languages and some of them are not, that they are used primarily in prayer and praise rather than for prophetic speech, and that there is no biblical reason to believe they have ceased (although, clearly, they should always be used within the parameters Paul identifies in 1 Corinthians). Call it a nuanced continuationism, if you will.

The third area of disagreement—and, we would all agree, the main one for this discussion—concerns prophecy, and this takes me back to my previous paper. I argued there that the burden of proof rests with the person who says we should *not* follow a particular apostolic instruction, rather than with the person who says we *should*, and gives hermeneutical, historical and eschatological reasons in support of the charismatic position. Tom’s argument, as we have heard, is that (1) all OT prophecy is authoritative, infallible divine revelation, (2) there is no indication of a change between the Old and New Testaments on this point, (3) NT prophecy also represents infallible, authoritative, foundational, divine revelation, as per Ephesians 2:20, and therefore that (4) since the closure of the canon, it has ceased. I gave reasons to disagree with each of these three steps in the argument.

Deuteronomy 18, certainly, draws a very sharp line between the new prophet like Moses, who will speak all that Yahweh commands him, and the presumptuous prophet who speaks words God has not spoken and/or speaks for other gods. But it is far from clear that this proves all OT prophecy is authoritative, infallible divine revelation. In a number of examples of OT prophecy, not only is prophesying not about conveying authoritative and infallible divine revelation, it doesn’t seem to be about conveying *any* information; its purpose, rather, is more to identify divinely indwelt individuals than to communicate divinely inspired content, and I mentioned a number of examples in my earlier article.²

The kingship of Saul, for example, is bookended by parallel stories in which groups of people prophesy, including Saul himself. We simply have no idea what sorts of things they were saying, whether it purported to be infallible, and whether anyone subsequently appraised their accuracy as per Deuteronomy 18 and even killed them accordingly (although it seems very unlikely). We must also reckon with the fact that Saul’s prophesying in 1 Samuel 19:23–24 is prompted by the Spirit, but looks remarkably like madness: ‘he stripped off his clothes, and he too prophesied [שָׁרַח] before Samuel and lay naked all that day and all that night’ (some translators render שָׁרַח as ‘raved’ or ‘went into ecstasy’ here). This is not to say that we should pursue such prophecy, of course! But it is to say that the first premise of Tom’s argument, namely that all OT prophecy is authoritative, infallible revelation on the basis of Deuteronomy 18, is not necessarily true.

The purpose of NT prophecy, similarly, is far broader than the foundational, authoritative revelation that Paul refers to in Ephesians 2. NT prophecy can serve to declare the mighty works of God (Acts 2), extol God (Acts 19), encourage, edify and console other believers (Acts 15; 1 Corinthians 14), bring unbelievers under conviction, witness to the presence of God in the assembly, enable the congregation to learn and be encouraged (1 Cor 14), redirect Christian funds (Acts 11) and/or missionaries (Acts 13;

¹David E. Garland, *1 Corinthians*, BECNT (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2003), 584.

²Gen 20:7; Num 11:25–29; 1 Sam 10:6; 19:20–23; 1 Kgs 18:4; 2 Kgs 2:3; 4:38; 6:1; 9:1; 17:13; 1 Chr 25:1–3; 29:29; 2 Chr 9:29; 12:15; 13:22.

21), direct particular individuals to exercise their ministry in a particular way (1 Tim 1), impart gifts of leadership to newly ordained elders (1 Tim 4), and/or provide foundations for the church for all time (Eph 2–3)—and that’s without mentioning the prophesying that is mentioned in passing, without any clear description of what was said or why.

In that sense, it seems to me, the cessationist position depends on a far narrower definition of NT prophecy than is supported by the texts we have. (This is also true of some charismatic definitions, by the way; there are some church circles in which prophesying is defined in equally narrow terms, like ‘predicting the future,’ or ‘challenging the status quo,’ or even ‘saying Christian-ish things with your eyes closed and your arms outstretched!’) Many of the spiritual gifts Paul describes simply cannot be delineated in such narrow, specific ways. A word of παράκλησις can mean anything from the decision of the Jerusalem council (Acts 15:31), to Paul’s sermon in Pisidian Antioch (Acts 13:15), to the epistle to the Hebrews (Heb 13:22). ἀπόστολοι can be anything from a messenger carrying a financial gift (2 Cor 8:23), to an eyewitness of the resurrection (Acts 4:33). Teaching, as Tom has rightly written in other contexts, can vary from ‘informal mutual instruction’ through to ‘authoritative transmission of tradition.’ Showing mercy overlaps with giving. Shepherding overlaps with leadership. Nobody really knows what the difference is between words of wisdom and words of knowledge. What we know of the other gifts tells against the idea that all NT prophecy must be of the same purpose and weight as that mentioned in Ephesians 2.

Far more representative of 1 Corinthians, from a practical as well as a scholarly point of view, is the definition from Thiselton I quoted earlier:

Prophecy, as a gift of the Holy Spirit, combines pastoral insight into the needs of persons, communities, and situations with the ability to address these with a God-given utterance or longer discourse (whether unprompted or prepared with judgment, decision and rational reflection) leading to challenge or comfort, judgment, or consolation, but ultimately building up the addressees.... While the speaker believes that such utterances or discourses come from the Holy Spirit, mistakes can be made, and since believers, including ministers or prophets, remain humanly fallible, claims to prophecy must be weighed and tested.³

I agree.

The example of Acts 21:4, in which the disciples ‘were telling Paul through the Spirit not to go to Jerusalem,’ also raises the question of what exactly Tom *means* when he talks about all NT prophecy being infallible. If he means simply that what the Spirit has revealed is all true, then of course Sam and I would agree—that is a key part of the charismatic argument, not an objection to it. But to put this in the form of a question: is there ever a difference between what is revealed through the Spirit, and what is spoken by the prophet? Tom and I agree that what the Holy Spirit said in this case (as in every case!) was true. And we agree that what the disciples said to him—not to go to Jerusalem—was at least partly false. In other words, as Tom argues, what the disciples actually said ‘though the Spirit’ was a mixture of what God had revealed (which was true) and what they mistakenly concluded from it (which was false). Quite so. But that sounds to me like exactly the sort of thing that responsible charismatics would say about prophecy today: what God says is always perfectly true, but what disciples who are prophesying say may contain a mixture of true and false (which is why prophecies need to be ‘weighed’ and ‘tested’).

³Anthony Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, NIGTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), 965.

As such I basically agree with Tom's exegesis of the passage, but I think it confirms a continuationist view of prophecy, not a cessationist one.

I began my opening paper by defining the question before us today as this: *Are disciples today intended to earnestly desire spiritual gifts, especially prophecy?* I think Tom Schreiner has made just about the best case you can make that the answer is no, and he has done so clearly, graciously and well. I also think his case is ultimately unconvincing in three crucial areas—on healing and miracles, on the gift of tongues and especially on the definition of NT prophecy—and that as such, it fails to meet the burden of proof which is (and in my view should be) required to disregard a clear and repeated apostolic instruction. Nevertheless, it is exemplary both in its representation of the opposing view, and in the clarity with which it expresses its own. With enemies like this, who needs friends?

Towards a Definition of New Testament Prophecy

— Richard M. Blaylock —

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Abstract: Despite a number of recent proposals, scholars have yet to reach a consensus regarding what the New Testament prophets were actually doing when they prophesied. In this essay, I attempt to make a contribution to New Testament studies by working towards a definition of New Testament prophecy. I proceed in three steps. First, I survey five different views on the nature of New Testament prophecy. Second, I analyze relevant texts from the New Testament to answer the question: what kind of an activity was New Testament prophecy? Third, I evaluate the arguments made for both limited prophetic authority and full prophetic authority. On the basis of the study, I conclude that prophetic activity in the New testament (1) is a human act of intelligible communication that (2) is rooted in spontaneous, divine revelation and (3) is empowered by the Holy Spirit, so that prophecy (4) consists in human speech or writing that can be attributed to the members of the Godhead and (5) that always carries complete divine authority.

Many evangelicals might be surprised to discover that prophecy remains an elusive concept among academics.¹ Despite a number of recent proposals, scholars have yet to reach a consensus regarding what the New Testament prophets were actually doing when they were prophesying. I attempt to address this problem by seeking to answer two questions. First, what kind of an activity was NT prophecy? Second, what kind of authority did NT prophecy involve?

1. The Activity of NT Prophecy: Recent Proposals

In the past fifty years, various attempts have been made to define NT prophecy. Of these, five suggestions stand out for their influence or their originality. While much of the work behind these studies is stimulating and judicious, I hope to demonstrate that each of these proposals is ultimately found wanting.

¹I'd like to express my deepest thanks to both Tom Schreiner and Jarrett Ford for their feedback on an earlier draft of this article. I am also grateful to Brian Tabb for his helpful suggestions and for his generosity in providing me with an early manuscript of his book *All Things New: Revelation as Canonical Capstone*.

1.1. Prophecy as Inspired Exegesis

Earle E. Ellis has contributed to the discussion of prophecy by hypothesizing that the interpretation of Scripture is a key feature of prophetic activity.² He argues that there is OT precedent for this view in the work of Daniel and in other instances of OT prophets making use of OT texts. He notes that the evidence from Qumran should caution scholars from distinguishing too sharply between prophetic functions and teaching functions, thus undermining the argument that biblical interpretation belongs to the latter. He suggests that Jesus's common practice of expositing Scripture in the synagogue reflects his role not only as teacher, but also as prophet. Ellis also understands James to be prophesying at the Jerusalem council, and he thus concludes that the decree of Acts 15 serves as evidence that prophecy involves biblical interpretation.³ Lastly, Ellis contends that the many instances of NT interpretation of the OT are prophetic because (1) NT prophets would have had similar hermeneutical convictions to the teachers at Qumran and (2) introductory formulas like λέγει κύριος (“the Lord says”) functioned to mark prophecy.⁴

Though carefully argued, Ellis's proposal falls short of being persuasive. An examination of the verb προφητεύω (“to prophesy”) in the NT reveals no clear references to charismatic exegesis.⁵ In fact, Ellis does not provide a NT example wherein the exposition of Scripture is *explicitly* tied to the act of prophecy.⁶ While Ellis has shown that prophets do interpret the Scriptures, he has not demonstrated that they do so specifically as an expression of their prophetic role. As he himself is aware, many leaders of the early church wore multiple hats. To prove that prophecy can be synonymous with biblical interpretation, he would have to demonstrate that Paul, Barnabas, Peter, James, and others expounded the Scripture *as an expression of their prophetic office*; needless to say, Ellis does not prove this point.⁷ Lastly, Aune and others have rightly argued that λέγει κύριος often marks a simple reference to Scripture.⁸ Thus, it seems unwarranted to call charismatic exegesis (in-and-of itself) prophecy.

² Though charismatic interpretation does not exhaust prophecy in his view, Ellis's inclusion of inspired exegesis within the umbrella of prophetic activity separates his perspective from that of other scholars. For a more complete account of his understanding of prophecy, see E. Earle Ellis, *Prophecy and Hermeneutics in Early Christianity: New Testament Essays*, WUNT 18 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1978), 130–44.

³ See Ellis, *Prophecy and Hermeneutics*, 134–38.

⁴ Ellis, *Prophecy and Hermeneutics*, 148–50, 172, 184.

⁵ The verb occurs 28 times in the NT and in only one of these occurrences is it possible that the verb refers to the interpretation of Scripture: Luke 1:67–79. However, it is more likely that Zechariah was demonstrating that his prophetic word regarding John was the fulfillment of God's promises of old; it does not seem to be the case that the prophecy itself consisted of the interpretation of the OT.

⁶ As Forbes states, “The weakness in Ellis' position is that he can find no cases in Acts (his chosen field) in which anyone both functions as an expositor of Scripture and is described as a prophet. Nor, for that matter, is the role of biblical exposition ever directly linked with a person being described as a prophet in Acts.” For his full critique, see Christopher Forbes, *Prophecy and Inspired Speech in Early Christianity and Its Hellenistic Environment*, WUNT 2/75 (Tübingen: Mohr, 1995), 232–36.

⁷ So also Forbes, *Prophecy and Inspired Speech*, 233.

⁸ David E. Aune, *Prophecy in Early Christianity and the Ancient Mediterranean World* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983), 343–45; David Hill, *New Testament Prophecy* (Atlanta: John Knox, 1979), 106–7; D. A. Carson, *Showing the Spirit: A Theological Exposition of 1 Corinthians 12–14* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1987), 92; Wayne Grudem, *The Gift of Prophecy in the New Testament and Today*, rev. ed. (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2000), 135–36.

1.2. Prophecy as Pastoral Preaching

David Hill has argued that NT prophecy should fundamentally be understood as pastoral preaching.⁹ Hill begins by explaining that a functional approach to the question is most likely to bear fruit.¹⁰ He therefore focuses on the activities of those he identifies as NT prophets in order to determine their essential function.¹¹ First, he looks at the book of Revelation and concludes that *paraenesis* is basic to John's understanding of prophetic activity.¹² Second, Hill argues that, in the book of Acts, prophetic ministry always involves pastoral encouragement.¹³ Third, Hill reads 1 Corinthians 14:3 to equate prophecy and exhortation.¹⁴ On this basis, Hill explores the use of παρακαλέω ("to exhort") and παρακλήσις ("encouragement") in Paul's letters and posits that these have a special connection with prophecy.¹⁵ Lastly, Hill cites the book of Hebrews itself as an example of prophecy because it is called "the word of exhortation" (τοῦ λόγου τῆς παρακλήσεως, Heb 13:22).¹⁶ These sorts of arguments lead Hill to conclude that "as *pastoral* preachers the New Testament prophets teach and give instruction on what the Christian way requires of individual believers and of the community as a whole."¹⁷

As others have noted, Hill's definition of prophecy is not without problems. First of all, much of his case is built upon what Moo calls "argument by association."¹⁸ That is to say, Hill assumes that the mention of phenomena associated with the prophets or with prophetic activity (like the Holy Spirit for

⁹ See Hill, *New Testament Prophecy*, 128. Both Martin and Garland basically adopt Hill's views; see Ralph P. Martin, *The Spirit and the Congregation: Studies in 1 Corinthians 12–15* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1984), 14; David E. Garland, *1 Corinthians*, BECNT (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2003), 632. For a more recent defense of this position, see Chris Knights, "Prophecy and Preaching: Does What Paul Calls 'Prophecy' in 1 Corinthians 14 Include What We Would Today Call 'Preaching'?", *ExpTim* 130 (2018): 72–79.

¹⁰ For the full discussion regarding his adopted method, see Hill, *New Testament Prophecy*, 2–9.

¹¹ Hill is aware of one weakness of his own approach: namely, that it allows one to confuse a prophet's activities with prophetic activity. After all, not everything a prophet does should be called prophecy. Thus, Hill rightly notes that researchers themselves must decide how they are to identify what is fundamental to prophetic activity. For his part, Hill believes that he can overcome this difficulty by comparing prophets to see which activities distinguish them from other functionaries. See Hill, *New Testament Prophecy*, 4–5.

¹² Hill also says that in Revelation at least, prophecy involves (1) the interpretation of history in light of redemptive history and (2) pronouncements of divine judgment. See *New Testament Prophecy*, 85–87.

¹³ According to Hill, Acts depicts Stephen, Philip, Paul, Barnabas, and Agabus as prophets. Both Stephen and Philip are included because each is said to be full of the Holy Spirit. In addition, like the prophets of old, Philip experienced the "sudden and dramatic interventions of the Spirit's action." For the full discussion, see Hill, *New Testament Prophecy*, 99–109.

¹⁴ Hill, *New Testament Prophecy*, 122–23.

¹⁵ This connection leads Hill (*New Testament Prophecy*, 128) to claim that 1 Thessalonians 2:12 bears witness to Paul's prophetic ministry in Thessalonica. At this point, Hill seems to build upon Ellis's prior work on παρακλήσις and prophecy. See Ellis, *Prophecy and Hermeneutics*, 130–32; Hill, *New Testament Prophecy*, 101–3, 122–29.

¹⁶ Hill also suggests that Barnabas, the son of encouragement (ὁ υἱὸς παρακλήσεως, Acts 4:36) could have been the author of the book. Thus, if Hill is correct about Barnabas's prophetic ministry in Acts, it becomes more likely that Hebrews is an act of prophecy. See Hill, *New Testament Prophecy*, 141–46. The problem with his suggestion of course is that it is unlikely that the debate regarding the authorship of Hebrews will ever be resolved.

¹⁷ Hill, *New Testament Prophecy*, 129 (Emphasis original).

¹⁸ Douglas J. Moo, "New Testament Prophecy," *JETS* 23 (1980): 164.

example) also implies the presence of prophecy; the conclusion however does not necessarily follow.¹⁹ Second, his definition does not account for all the data.²⁰ In fact, several prophetic activities in the NT call his definition into question. To provide just two examples, it is hard to see how Agabus's famine prediction (Acts 11:28) or his foretelling of what would befall Paul (Acts 21:11) could be thought of as pastoral preaching.²¹ Lastly, Hill's argumentation seems circular at a few points. So for instance, Hill cites Acts 13:17–41 as part of his argument for characterizing prophecy as exhortatory preaching. He notes that nothing about the form of the homily suggests a prophetic character and yet, based solely on "the presence of the exhortation to repentance and obedience," he says that "we can discern the utterance of a prophetic spirit." This is hardly convincing in my estimation.²² These shortcomings make it unlikely that Hill is correct to define prophecy as exhortatory preaching.

1.3. Prophecy as Exposition of the Kerygma

A third approach to the problem is espoused by Thomas W. Gillespie.²³ He believes that prophecy (at least in Paul) must be understood as the inspired exposition of the ethical and theological implications of the kerygma.²⁴ Gillespie argues that Paul sets the gospel itself as the criterion for judging prophecy, which then implies that prophecy must itself be gospel proclamation.²⁵ He reads 1 Corinthians 12:1–3

¹⁹ So for instance, Hill (*New Testament Prophecy*, 99–100) uses the link between prophecy and the Holy Spirit to demonstrate that Stephen and Philip are prophets since they are both filled with the Spirit. But this does not follow, for the Spirit in Luke-Acts empowers different kinds of activities (see Max Turner, "The Spirit of Prophecy and the Power of Authoritative Preaching in Luke-Acts: A Question of Origins," *NTS* 38 [1992]: 72–76). A similar critique can be made regarding Hill's use of παρακαλέω and παρακλήσις to define prophecy. As Godet (*Commentary on First Corinthians* [Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1977], 695–96) says of arguments of this sort, "This reasoning is as just as it would be to say: he who runs, moves his legs; therefore whoever moves his legs, runs."

²⁰ Unfortunately, Hill seems to commit the fallacy of selective and prejudicial use of evidence. See D. A. Carson, *Exegetical Fallacies*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 1996), 54–55.

²¹ Furthermore, neither the Sanhedrin nor the chief priests (Matt 26:68; Mark 14:65; Luke 22:64) were asking for an exhortation when they mockingly commanded Christ to prophesy.

²² See Hill, *New Testament Prophecy*, 121. For a similar critique, see also M. Eugene Boring, "New Testament Prophecy," *JBL* 100 (1981): 301.

²³ Though sharing some similarities with the previous proposals, Gillespie still charts an original course. Unlike Ellis, Gillespie posits the kerygma itself as the object of the prophet's interpretation, not the Scriptures. And Gillespie distances himself from Hill when he says, "prophetic proclamation, at least according to Paul, was related to the gospel materially in a way that escapes attention when it is defined as pastoral preaching, and is thus tilted in the direction of moral exhortation that merely presupposes the basic kerygma of the early church." See Thomas W. Gillespie, *The First Theologians: A Study in Early Christian Prophecy* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994), 28.

²⁴ As he states, "According to the apostle Paul, the early Christian prophets were interpreting theologically the inherent implications of the kerygma when they were prophesying." See Gillespie, *The First Theologians*, 32.

²⁵ Gillespie believes that both Romans 12:6 and 1 Thessalonians 5:21 set content-restrictions on prophecy. Romans 12:6 is especially important to Gillespie's argument. He interprets the phrase κατὰ τὴν ἀναλογίαν τῆς πίστεως as a reference to the standard regarding what must be believed ("according to the analogy of faith"). The content of this "faith" is then drawn from Galatians 1:23, Romans 10:8, and Philippians 1:27, leading Gillespie to conclude that "when Paul uses *hē pistis* to denote the content of Christian belief, he has in mind the substance and structure of the gospel." See Gillespie, *The First Theologians*, 56–61.

as teaching that the gospel-confession “Jesus is Lord” is what marks all true prophecy.²⁶ Additionally, Gillespie believes that in both Romans 1:2 and 3:21, Paul closely associates OT prophecy with gospel proclamation.²⁷ Lastly, Gillespie relies on 1 Corinthians 14:3 to further his case, as he states that edification (οἰκοδομή), exhortation (παρακλήσις), and comfort (παραμυθία) name “the action of the Spirit that is grounded materially in the gospel and mediated through its proclamation.”²⁸

Though Gillespie’s case is appealing, it too faces difficulties. To begin with, Gillespie defines prophecy in a way that would imply that Paul was at odds with other OT and NT writers. After all, both the OT and the NT recount prophetic activities which would be difficult to describe as gospel proclamation.²⁹ Second, Gillespie’s argument from Paul’s references to the OT prophets in Romans 1:2 and 3:21 is unconvincing because in both texts, Paul likely speaks of the OT canon as a whole.³⁰ Lastly, the premise that the kerygma is the criterion by which one identifies true prophecy does not logically necessitate the conclusion that prophecy is itself kerygmatic proclamation. A criterion may limit a concept without necessarily defining that concept. So for instance, the author of the *Didache* distinguished between true and false prophets by claiming that the former never received payment. However, it would be a mistake to conclude on the basis of this criterion that prophetic ministry is to be equated with unpaid ministry. Unfortunately, Gillespie’s construal of prophecy is the result of this kind of misstep.³¹ These points lead me to reject Gillespie’s definition of prophecy despite its initial appeal.

²⁶ Gillespie presents a novel historical reconstruction to explain 1 Corinthians 12:1–3. In sum, he believes that the Corinthians did not distinguish between tongues and prophecy. Even more, they assumed that unintelligible, inspired speech served to validate prophetic declarations. This resulted in much confusion when a prophet cursed Jesus and confirmed his prophetic word with glossolalia. As a result, Paul had to write a letter to convince them that tongues and prophecy were separate, that the former did not validate the latter, and that the gospel was the criterion by which they could determine who was speaking from the Spirit. See Gillespie, *The First Theologians*, 78–96.

²⁷ Gillespie, *The First Theologians*, 134–36.

²⁸ Gillespie (*The First Theologians*, 142–50) reasons that prophecy must involve the proclamation of the gospel since edification is tied closely to the gospel (Rom 15:20; cf 1:15) and prophecy must produce edification.

²⁹ The OT for instance refers to predictions and to announcements of judgment as prophecies (examples include 1 Kgs 22:12; Jer 14:14–15, 19:1–20:1, 25:30–38, 26:9–11; Ezek 20:45–48, 21:2–17; Amos 7:10–17). Deuteronomy 18:22 asserts that, at least part of the time, prophecy will involve foretelling; the activity of several OT prophets confirms this reading (see 1 Kgs 13:1–25, 21:17–24, 22:17–18). In the NT, Luke described Agabus as a prophet though his prophecies in Acts 11:28 and 21:10–11 did not seem to include gospel explication. In Matthew 13:14–15, Jesus cites Isaiah 6:9–10 as a prophecy, though it would be difficult to read the latter text as an explication of the gospel.

³⁰ Thomas Schreiner says that Romans 1:2 “should not be limited to only a portion of the OT Scriptures. The intention here is to designate all of the OT as prophetic in nature” (*Romans*, 2nd ed., BECNT [Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2018], 42n29). That Paul believed that the prophetic writings as a whole (i.e. the OT) testified to the gospel does not imply that he also thought every occurrence of prophecy involved an explication of the gospel. See also Douglas J. Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 43–44.

³¹ Another clarifying example can be found in Deuteronomy 18:21–22, where Moses makes future fulfillment a criterion of true prophecy. It would be wrong to conclude from this that prophecy is prediction. The *Didache* also includes various criteria for true prophets (*Did.* 11:8–12).

1.4. Prophecy as Interpretation of Inspired Thoughts

Terrence Callan describes prophetic activity by saying, “Prophecy was the result of inspiration in the form of an inner, divine ‘voice,’ comparable to one’s ordinary thoughts and differing from them mainly in being sent by God rather than arising in the usual way. The prophet then interprets these inner promptings, chiefly by expressing them in speech.”³² Wayne Grudem explains NT prophecy similarly. He argues that 1 Corinthians 13:9 implies that the prophet had to interpret the revelations he received, and that he in fact did so with great difficulty.³³ Thus, with respect to Acts 21:10–11, Grudem says “Agabus had a ‘revelation’ from the Holy Spirit concerning what would happen to Paul in Jerusalem, and gave a prophecy which included his own interpretation of this revelation (and therefore some mistakes in the exact details).”³⁴ Reports by charismatics of their own experiences of prophecy reveal similar ideas regarding prophetic activity.³⁵

The view that prophecy refers to interpreted divine revelation is intriguing but speculative. While Callan and Grudem are right to tie prophecy and revelation together, the NT itself does not disclose the “psychological” relationship between the two. Furthermore, the few glimpses we have into the inner-workings of prophecy (like Acts 21:11 and Rev 2–3) run counter to their suggestion that prophecy involves the fallible human interpretation of divine revelation. In addition, Grudem’s proposal regarding 1 Corinthians 13:9–12 is problematic because, if it is correct, then Paul indicts his own prophetic ministry: in these verses, Paul uses first-person plural verbs (γινώσκομεν: “we know”; προφητεύομεν: “we prophesy”; βλέπομεν: “we see”) and a first-person singular verb (γινώσκω: “I know”). Significantly, 2 Peter 1:20–21 explicitly states that “no prophecy of Scripture ever came about by someone’s own interpretation; for *no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man*, but men spoke from God as they were moved by the Holy Spirit.”³⁶ For these reasons, I have little confidence that prophecy should be defined as the human interpretation of divinely inspired thoughts.³⁷

³² Terrance Callan, “Prophecy and Ecstasy in Greco-Roman Religion and in 1 Corinthians,” *NovT* 27 (1985): 138.

³³ Wayne A. Grudem, *The Gift of Prophecy in 1 Corinthians* (Washington, DC: University Press of America, 1982), 149–50. It is important to note that Grudem’s description of prophetic activity is closely related to his perspective on the authority of NT prophecy. He argues that it is theoretically possible for prophecy to carry an “authority of general content,” which refers to an authority limited by the fact that “only the general content of [the prophet’s] prophecy was of divine origin.” This would mean that the prophet may misunderstand what was revealed to him and that his prophecies could be errant. See *The Gift of Prophecy in 1 Corinthians*, 9–10.

³⁴ Grudem, *The Gift of Prophecy*, 81; see also Grudem, *The Gift of Prophecy in 1 Corinthians*, 135; Carson, *Showing the Spirit*, 97–98.

³⁵ Mark J. Cartledge, “Charismatic Prophecy: A Definition and Description,” *Journal of Pentecostal Theology* 2.5 (1994): 82–88.

³⁶ All translations of texts are my own.

³⁷ Grudem (*The Gift of Prophecy in 1 Corinthians*, 175) argues that 2 Peter 1:20–21 has no bearing on the question of NT prophecy, because it speaks of OT prophets. Though Peter undoubtedly had OT prophets in mind, it is unwarranted to limit the import of his statement since he says “no prophecy *was ever produced* (ἠνέχθη ... ποτέ) by the will of man.” Furthermore, to adopt Grudem’s explanation, one must already be convinced that either (1) a disjunction as to the nature of prophecy exists between the OT and NT, or (2) that essentially different kinds of activities were called prophecy in the OT and NT. I find neither proposal promising. So also F. David Farnell, “The Gift of Prophecy in the New Testament,” *Master’s Seminary Journal* 25.2 (2014): 61–62; Kenneth L. Gentry, *The Charismatic Gift of Prophecy: A Reformed Response to Wayne Grudem*, 2nd ed. (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 1999),

1.5. Prophecy as Mediation

Perhaps the most provocative proposal comes from Clint Tibbs, who defines prophecy as “the gift of becoming a medium through whom spirits can speak the mother tongue of the spectators.”³⁸ Tibbs regrets that 1 Corinthians has been read through 4th century Trinitarian lenses;³⁹ as a result, interpreters blind themselves to the “spiritism” which characterizes Paul’s teaching in 1 Corinthians 12–14.⁴⁰ According to Tibbs, anarthrous occurrences of πνεῦμα must mean “a spirit” rather than “the Spirit.”⁴¹ Even when “spirit” is accompanied by the article in fact, no reference to “the Holy Spirit” is intended;⁴² instead, Paul must be speaking of “the spirit world” because “in the NT, the world of good spirits was frequently denoted as a corporate plurality.”⁴³ Tibbs also points to 1 Corinthians 14:12 and 32 for corroboration, arguing that πνεύματα cannot be understood as anything but “spirits.”⁴⁴ Further evidence comes from first-century figures like Plutarch, Josephus, Philo, and Pseudo-Philo, who all testify to spirits speaking through human mediums.⁴⁵ Tibbs concludes therefore that prophecy is the work of various holy spirits who possess mediums in order to proclaim Christ.

Tibbs refers to his own work as a “maverick interpretation.”⁴⁶ It most certainly is maverick, but it is also untenable. His grammatical arguments fail because anarthrous nouns are regularly definite, especially when they occur in prepositional phrases or when they are modified by a genitive noun.⁴⁷ He provides little-to-no evidence for his claim that τὸ πνεῦμα should be read as a collective noun referring to the spirit world.⁴⁸ Despite his best efforts, Tibbs cannot account for the fact that Paul speaks

48–50; O. Palmer Robertson, *The Final Word: A Biblical Response to the Case for Tongues and Prophecy Today* (Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth, 2011), 98–126.

³⁸ Clint Tibbs, *Religious Experience of the Pneuma*, WUNT 2/230 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2007), 207.

³⁹ Tibbs, *Religious Experience*, 70.

⁴⁰ According to Tibbs, Paul did not use πνεῦμα not to refer to “the Holy Spirit,” but to speak of a “spirit world.” The spirit world was inhabited by both good and evil spirits, which could take possession of a medium’s vocal chords to deliver messages. Tongues were messages spoken by a spirit in a foreign language, while prophecy referred to spirit-messages delivered in the congregation’s mother tongue. See Tibbs, *Religious Experience*, 182–84, 219–27.

⁴¹ So for instance, Tibbs translates 1 Corinthians 12:3, “For this reason, I want you to know that nobody through whom a spirit of God is speaking can say, ‘Jesus is accursed,’ and only a holy spirit speaking through someone can say ‘Jesus is Lord.’” For his defense of this translation, see *Religious Experience*, 170–74.

⁴² Tibbs (*Religious Experience*, 272) goes so far as to say that “πνεῦμα in the texts of the NT reflects little, if any, of the fourth-century theology on the Deity and Personhood of the Holy Spirit.”

⁴³ Tibbs, *Religious Experience*, 14; unfortunately, no references to biblical texts are provided.

⁴⁴ Tibbs, *Religious Experience*, 53.

⁴⁵ Tibbs, *Religious Experience*, 115.

⁴⁶ Tibbs, *Religious Experience*, 23.

⁴⁷ As a result, Tibbs’s translation of 1 Corinthians 12:3 is at best unlikely. See Daniel B. Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics: An Exegetical Syntax of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 245–54; A. T. Robertson, *A Grammar of the Greek New Testament in the Light of Historical Research*, 3rd ed. (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1914), 790–96; Herbert Weir Smyth, *Greek Grammar* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1920), 288–89.

⁴⁸ His treatment relies on speculation and bare assertions. To provide just one example: even after acknowledging that in 1 Corinthians 12:8–10, πνεῦμα is “active and personal,” he concludes that “this source [of spiritual

of “the same Spirit” and “one and the same Spirit” in 1 Corinthians 12:4–11.⁴⁹ He does not take into account the OT testimony to the unique Spirit of God.⁵⁰ He simply assumes that Paul would conceive of prophecy similarly to Plutarch, Josephus, Philo and Pseudo-Philo, when in fact, Paul demonstrates vast differences from the four on the topic of prophecy.⁵¹ Lastly, Tibbs flounders to explain how the early church fell upon the idea of “the Holy Spirit” if in fact “a unique, uncreated Holy Spirit ... is neither a tenable prospect for πνεῦμα in the NT nor indigenous to the NT period.”⁵² For all these reasons, Tibbs’s treatment of prophecy has little to commend it in my estimation.

2. *The Activity of NT Prophecy: Analysis of Biblical Evidence*

As I have shown, several attempts have recently been made to define NT prophecy. However, my survey of these proposals suggests that a truly satisfying definition has yet to be formulated. Thus, there remains a need to revisit the NT afresh in order to answer the question, “what kind of an activity was NT prophecy?”

In order to maintain a proper focus on prophetic activity, I have considered two kinds of NT texts: those which refer to prophecy explicitly and those which do so implicitly. On the one hand, texts in which either the verb προφήτεω or the noun προφήτεια occur are obviously crucial to exploring the meaning of prophecy in the NT. On the other hand, some passages without the words προφήτεω or προφήτεια may still involve prophetic activity. In order to determine when this is the case, I have employed two criteria: (1) the text must refer to an activity performed by a person designated a “prophet” (προφήτης or προφήτις), and (2) the activity reported must share significant similarities with the kinds of activities referred to by the verb προφήτεω or the noun προφήτεια. The first condition provides an objective, lexical basis for narrowing the scope of potentially relevant passages. However, since prophets presumably engaged in prophetic as well as non-prophetic activity, the first condition is not sufficient by itself to ensure that a passage involves prophecy. Therefore, the second condition must be added. By using these two criteria, I hope to include implicit references to prophecy while also guarding the study from the taint of false positives.⁵³

gifts] may be construed as a spiritual ‘realm’ of spirit beings.” I fail to see how a ‘realm of spirit beings’ can actively and personally distribute endowments to Christians. See Tibbs, *Religious Experience*, 181–84.

⁴⁹ Tibbs (*Religious Experience*, 188–95) claims that the expressions refer to the unity of the spirit world.

⁵⁰ Wilf Hildebrandt counts 107 references to the Spirit of God in the OT. See “Spirit of Yahweh,” in *Dictionary of the Old Testament Prophets*, ed. Mark J. Boda and J. Gordon McConville (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2012), 747–48.

⁵¹ For instance, Pseudo-Philo (LAB 28:10) claims that inspiration leads to the mind’s departure so that one does not remember what was said or seen during that state; no such notions are found in Paul. Philo celebrates Bacchic frenzy and commends the abandonment of reason (see *Her.* 69–71); Paul does no such thing. Josephus (*Ant.* 4.6.5) claims that a man inspired by “a spirit of God” is no longer conscious of what he says or does; Paul expects prophets to remain orderly and in control (1 Cor 14:29–33). For the many differences between NT prophecy and the Greco-Roman perspective, see especially Forbes, *Prophecy and Inspired Speech*, 288–315.

⁵² Amazingly, Tibbs claims both that (1) no NT support for the idea of the Holy Spirit exists, and that (2) the fourth-century church came to this “theological invention” through exegesis. See Tibbs, *Religious Experience*, 70–71.

⁵³ The inclusion of extraneous materials is no benign matter, but could unduly influence one’s understanding of prophecy. In fact, I would argue that studies on prophecy which take a purely functional approach have been

2.1. Prophetic Activity in the Synoptics and Acts

The synoptic writers refer to prophetic activity several times in their works.⁵⁴ Each of them indicate that prophecy involves a miraculous element.⁵⁵ The events after Christ's trial testify to this point, as Jesus was asked to demonstrate his prophetic abilities by identifying his assailants without the normal means of doing so.⁵⁶ Matthew 7:22 associates prophecy with casting out demons and performing miracles, while Acts 2:17–18 links it with the reception of dreams and visions. In addition, Luke highlights the involvement of the Spirit of God in the act of prophesying.⁵⁷ Thus, the gospel writers seem to agree that prophecy is supernatural.

These writers also concur that prophecy was an act of communication. Matthew (13:14, 15:7) and Mark (7:6) refer to Isaiah's speech as prophecy. In Matthew 26:68 and Luke 22:64, Christ's abusers imply that prophecy involves communication when they ask him to prophesy by identifying who hit him. In Luke 1:67, Zechariah prophesies by announcing the meaning and significance of his son's birth. If Judas and Silas are prophesying in Acts 15, they do so with "many words."⁵⁸ Furthermore, there is some evidence that the Holy Spirit is ultimately responsible for the words of prophetic communication. So for example, provided that Acts 13:2 refers to prophecy,⁵⁹ Luke says that "when they were worshipping the Lord and fasting, *the Holy Spirit said*, 'Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul....' And again, in Acts 21:11, Agabus introduces his prophecy with the formula, "*The Holy Spirit says this*" (τάδε λέγει τὸ πνεῦμα τὸ ἅγιον).⁶⁰ And though the Holy Spirit is not explicitly credited with the prophetic words in both Luke 1:67 and Acts 11:28, he is depicted as closely involved in both prophecies. Lastly, Luke intimates

particularly prone to making this mistake. For a similar perspective, see Ulrich Luz, "Stages of Early Christian Prophetism," in *Prophets and Prophecy in Jewish and Early Christian Literature*, ed. Joseph Verheyden, Korinna Zamfir, and Tobias Nicklas, WUNT 2/286 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2010), 60.

⁵⁴In keeping with my adopted method, I include in my purview Matthew 7:22, 11:13, 13:14, 15:7, 26:68; Mark 7:6, 14:65; Luke 1:67, 22:64; Acts 2:17–18, 13:2, 15:32, 19:6, 21:9–11.

⁵⁵Other texts in the gospels and Acts associate prophets with miracles (see Mark 6:14–15; Luke 7:12–16, 24:19). Furthermore, Luke 7:39 suggests that prophets were expected to have access to supernatural knowledge. For a defense of the miraculous nature of prophecy, see F. David Farnell, "When Will the Gift of Prophecy Cease?," *BSac* 150 (1993): 171; Farnell, "The Gift of Prophecy in the New Testament," 45–55.

⁵⁶For a similar reading, see Donald A. Hagner, *Matthew 14–28*, WBC (Dallas: Word, 1995), 802.

⁵⁷Examples of this connection would include Luke 1:67, Acts 2:17–18, 11:27–28, 13:1–2, 19:6, 21:10–11.

⁵⁸While there is not enough data to be certain, two observations suggest that Judas and Silas were prophesying. First, Luke explicitly designates them to be prophets before describing their actions. Second, Paul ties the work of encouragement closely to the act of prophecy in 1 Corinthians 14:3. The matter is not crucial however, as Acts 15:32 does not contribute anything original to the discussion.

⁵⁹There are two reasons this statement should probably be understood as a prophecy: (1) Luke explicitly designates the five men involved in this episode as prophets in verse 1, and (2) Luke has already established a close relationship between prophecy and the Holy Spirit (see Acts 2:17–18, 11:27–28, 13:1–2, 19:6, 21:10–11). See Gentry, *Charismatic Gift*, 46; Thomas R. Schreiner, *Paul, Apostle of God's Glory in Christ: A Pauline Theology* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2001), 361; Aune, *Prophecy in Early Christianity*, 265; Hill, *New Testament Prophecy*, 105; Craig Keener, *Acts: An Exegetical Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2012–2015), 2:1993–94; John B. Polhill, *Acts*, NAC (Nashville: Broadman, 1992), 289–90; James D. G. Dunn, *The Acts of the Apostles*, Narrative Commentaries (Valley Forge, PA: Trinity Press, 1996), 173.

⁶⁰Almost all scholars acknowledge that Acts 21:11 depicts a prophetic word. There are at least four reasons that this assessment is correct: (1) Agabus is explicitly identified by Luke as a prophet, (2) Agabus models himself

that prophecy could be delivered spontaneously. So for instance, Zechariah's prophetic speech in Luke 1:67 was clearly unprepared and unrehearsed. The prophecies in Acts 19:6 were delivered suddenly, through a dramatic work of the Spirit. And while we cannot be sure, it is certainly possible that Agabus prophesied spontaneously in Acts 11:28 and 21:10–11.⁶¹

This overview provides enough information to make three broad statements regarding prophecy according to the synoptic writers. First, prophecy is miraculous and could be spontaneous. Second, prophecy is an act of communication. Third, prophecy involves the work of the Holy Spirit, which may extend to the actual words spoken by the prophet.

2.2. Prophetic Activity in Pauline Literature

Paul provides much information regarding prophetic activity. To begin with, he clearly views prophecy as an act of communication. The apostle makes this explicit when he says in 1 Corinthians 14:3, "The one who prophesies speaks to men." Several other Pauline texts serve as further evidence: (1) as seen in 1 Corinthians 14:1–6, Paul prized prophecy above tongues because the former was intelligible while the latter was not; (2) according to 1 Corinthians 14:20–25, unbelievers who enter the assembly may comprehend prophecies, but they may see tongues as evidence of insanity;⁶² (3) in 1 Corinthians 14:31, prophecy results in learning and in encouragement; (4) prophecy can be "weighed" by "others" (1 Cor 14:29), which probably implies a judgment based on content; and (5) the prophecies received previously by Timothy could be recalled and were *about* him (1 Tim 1:18–19).⁶³ Prophecy according to Paul therefore undoubtedly referred to the communication of intelligible content.

Like the Synoptic writers, Paul also ascribes prophecy to the power of the Holy Spirit. Prophecy is among the χαρίσματα ("gifts"), which are distributed by "one and the same Spirit." It is included among the πνευματικά ("spiritual gifts"; cf. 1 Cor 14:1), indicating a close connection with the Spirit. Furthermore, Paul's instructions in 1 Thessalonians 5:19–20 seem to link quenching the Spirit with despising prophecy.⁶⁴ Paul teaches in 1 Corinthians 12:7–11 that prophecy is one manifestation of the Spirit's power for the common good. This link between prophecy and the Holy Spirit need not imply a

after the OT prophets by performing the symbolic act of tying his hands and feet, (3) Luke associates the Holy Spirit closely with the gift of prophecy, and (4) OT and NT literature include predictions within prophetic activity.

⁶¹ Contra Turner, "Spirit of Prophecy," 74. It is noteworthy that prophecy in the Synoptics and in Acts never occurs as a result of preparation or study. For similar conclusions, see Schreiner, *Paul*, 361.

⁶² It seems likely that Paul's use of μαίνεσθε in 1 Corinthians 14:23 refers to insanity. For those who take this position, see Forbes, *Prophecy and Inspired Speech*, 173n52; Richard B. Gaffin, Jr., *Perspectives on Pentecost: New Testament Teaching on the Gifts of the Holy Spirit* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 1979), 104; Schreiner, *Paul*, 365; Laura Nasrallah, *An Ecstasy of Folly: Prophecy and Authority in Early Christianity*, HTS 52 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003), 73; Tibbs, *Religious Experience*, 255; Garland, *1 Corinthians*, 651–52; Roy E. Ciampa and Brian S. Rosner, *The First Letter to the Corinthians*, PNTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010), 704–6; Grudem, *The Gift of Prophecy in 1 Corinthians*, 133, 155.

⁶³ I understand 1 Timothy 1:18b to read, "according to the previously delivered prophecies *concerning you*" (ἐπὶ σέ). BDAG notes that when ἐπί takes an accusative, it can indicate "the one to whom, for whom, or *about whom* something is done" (emphasis mine). Smyth agrees as he lists "reference" as a category for ἐπί with the accusative; see *Greek Grammar*, 379. This is significant as it shows that the content of prophecy was not limited to the interpretation of Scripture or the exposition of the gospel.

⁶⁴ So also F. F. Bruce, *1 & 2 Thessalonians*, WBC (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1982), 125.

“possession trance,”⁶⁵ or a state of ecstasy;⁶⁶ prophets still had full control of their faculties, which is why Paul expects them to maintain order when the church gathers together (1 Cor 14:29–33).

In several texts, Paul also ties prophecy to divine revelation (ἀποκάλυψις). For example, 1 Corinthians 14:29–30 says, “Now let two or three prophets speak and let the others distinguish. If [something] is revealed to another while he is sitting, let the first be silent.”⁶⁷ This text also suggests that the revelation is spontaneous: it is not the direct result of preparation or study.⁶⁸ The connection between prophecy and revelation is also indicated in 1 Corinthians 14:6, where an *abab* pattern links revelation with prophecy and knowledge with teaching.⁶⁹ And despite being hyperbolic, 1 Corinthians 13:2 also suggests that prophecy involves receiving revelation. However, given the dominant characterization of prophecy as communication, it seems safe to conclude that revelation by itself is not prophetic: prophecy always involves the communication of said revelation.

On the basis of this overview, I suggest that the activity of prophesying according to Paul (1) involved the communication of intelligible content, (2) was empowered by the Holy Spirit, and (3) was done in conjunction with the spontaneous reception of divine revelation. Paul, therefore, presents prophetic activity similarly to the Synoptic writers.

2.3. Prophetic Activity in Johannine Literature

The beloved apostle is a unique source of information on the nature of NT prophecy.⁷⁰ In fact, John has bequeathed to the church its only *sure* and *lengthy* example of prophecy from the NT period: the book of Revelation.⁷¹ Given its significance for the topic at hand, I will begin my study of John’s writings with his Apocalypse.

Let us begin with the obvious: according to John, prophecy originates in divine revelation. The opening of the book makes this crystal clear: “The revelation of Jesus Christ which God gave him in

⁶⁵ For a discussions of “possession trance,” see Aune, *Prophecy in Early Christianity*, 86; Robert R. Wilson, “Prophecy and Ecstasy: A Reexamination,” *JBL* 98 (1979): 325–28.

⁶⁶ See Grudem’s excellent discussion in *The Gift of Prophecy*, 103–8.

⁶⁷ Paul is not explicit regarding the object and the import of διακρίνω (“I distinguish”). Unsurprisingly, commentators disagree over how to understand the apostle’s statement. For my discussion of this issue, see page 18.

⁶⁸ See James D. G. Dunn, *Jesus and the Spirit* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975), 228; Grudem, *The Gift of Prophecy in 1 Corinthians*, 117; Forbes, *Prophecy and Inspired Speech*, 228; Schreiner, *Paul*, 261. Strangely, Knights overlooks 1 Corinthians 14:30 in his study; as a result, he mistakenly downplays the importance of spontaneous revelation with respect to prophecy in “Prophecy and Preaching,” 76.

⁶⁹ So also Tibbs, *Religious Experience*, 224; Schreiner, *Paul*, 360–61; Gentry, *Charismatic Gift*, 47; John Calvin, *Commentary on the Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Corinthians*, trans. John Pringle, Calvin’s Commentaries 20 (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2009), 438.

⁷⁰ I am assuming the traditional position on the authorship of Revelation. For a defense of this position, see Donald Guthrie, *New Testament Introduction: Hebrews to Revelation* (Chicago, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1962), 254–69. For alternative views, see Raymond E. Brown, *An Introduction to the New Testament*, ABRL (New York: Doubleday, 1997), 802–5; David A. deSilva, *An Introduction to the New Testament: Contexts, Methods and Ministry Formation* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2004), 893–96.

⁷¹ Texts like Revelation 1:3 indicate that the book as a whole is prophetic. It reads, “Blessed is the one who reads and who hears *the words of the prophecy* and who keeps the things written in it, for the time is near.” See Richard Bauckham, *The Theology of the Book of Revelation*, NTT (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 1–5.

order to show his servants the things which necessarily will come to pass soon.” This verse establishes that the entire work, which John calls a prophecy (see Rev 1:3, 22:7, 22:10, 22:18–19), is based on divine revelation.⁷² Like Paul, John indicates that God is the ultimate source of the revelation (Rev 1:1). Uniquely however, John tells the recipients of the letter that Christ mediated the revelation to the church. Thus, both God (presumably the Father) and the risen Lord act in revealing these mysteries to John.⁷³ In addition, John also hints at the involvement of the Spirit in the revelation; for he says in 1:10, “I was in the Spirit on the Lord’s day and I heard a loud voice behind me like a trumpet.”⁷⁴ Revelation 1:10–20 also implies that the revelation came spontaneously: John did not come to the disclosure little by little, but it came to him suddenly and unexpectedly. John therefore agrees with other NT writers that prophecy includes a spontaneous element (i.e. the ἀποκάλυψις), but he uniquely emphasizes the Trinitarian character of the prophetic act.

To state a second self-evident observation: the book of Revelation as a whole demonstrates that prophecy is an act of communication. According to Revelation 1:3, prophecy consists of words which can be read, heard, or written down.⁷⁵ John’s statements in 22:7 and 22:10 have a similar import. Revelation 10:11 implies that prophecy has communicable content because John is to prophesy “concerning many peoples and nations and tongues and kings.”⁷⁶ Prophecy in John however is not just any communication; it is sacred communication. In 22:18–19, John sternly warns the recipients of the book not to treat the words of this prophecy with contempt or with apathy.⁷⁷ John demands that this book be revered because he is not Revelation’s ultimate author; John’s prophecy is simultaneously his message (Rev 1:4), “the word of God” (Rev 1:2), “the testimony of Jesus Christ” (Rev 1:2; cf. 19:10), and “what the Holy Spirit says to the churches” (Rev 2:11, et al.). This tells us two things: (1) prophecy is Trinitarian at heart, and (2) prophecy embraces the actual words used by a prophet.⁷⁸

⁷² As Boring states, “The prophet is one who speaks because he or she has been given his or her message directly from God. The prophet speaks on the basis of revelation.” See M. Eugene Boring, *Revelation*, Interpretation (Louisville: John Knox, 1989), 24–25.

⁷³ See Craig R. Koester, *Revelation*, AB (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014), 211. The fact that other mediators are involved does not detract from the divine disclosure. Even though Christ sends his angel to bring the message to John (Rev 1:1), the prophecy is still “the word of God” and “the testimony of Jesus Christ” (Rev 1:2). Revelation 10:8–11 may reflect similar ideas, although the identities of the different persons involved are debated.

⁷⁴ See also Revelation 4:2, 17:3, and 21:10. Brian J. Tabb helpfully argues that the phrase “in the Spirit” (ἐν πνεύματι) functions to reinforce John’s status as a true prophet. See *All Things New: Revelation as Canonical Capstone*, NSBT 48 (London: Apollos, 2019), 70–72.

⁷⁵ I tend to agree with Wallace and Aune that the construction τῶν λόγων τῆς προφητείας (“the words of the prophecy”) employs a genitive of apposition. Thus, the written words of the book of Revelation are an example of NT prophecy. For substantiation, see David E. Aune, *Revelation 1–5*, WBC (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1997), 7; Wallace, *Greek Grammar*, 95–100.

⁷⁶ I agree with BDAG that ἐπί in this instance is referential. Though it is possible that John was to prophesy “against many peoples and nations and tongues and kings,” the allusion to Revelation 5:9 and God’s overall attitude towards these groups keep me from adopting this interpretation. See also Koester, *Revelation*, 493–94.

⁷⁷ I agree with commentators who view the warning as directed both towards readers and towards scribes. See Koester, *Revelation*, 845; G. K. Beale and David H. Campbell, *Revelation: A Shorter Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2015), 524–27; David E. Aune, *Revelation 17–22*, WBC (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1998), 1231.

⁷⁸ As Revelation 1:1–3 and 22:18–20a indicate, the very words of the book were divinely authored. See also Aune, *Revelation 17–22*, 1230; G. B. Caird, *The Revelation of St John the Divine*, 2nd ed., Black’s New Testament Commentary Series (London: A & C Black, 1984), 288; Boring, *Revelation*, 225; Beale and Campbell, *Revelation: A*

Up until this point, John's testimony has closely resembled what we've seen in other NT writings. The beloved apostle does however make two idiosyncratic statements regarding NT prophecy. First, he seems to call the universal church's testimony to Christ prophecy. He does this in Revelation 11:3–13, where the church is depicted as two witnesses prophesying for the duration between Christ's resurrection and his return.⁷⁹ In all likelihood, this text should not be understood to refer to the spiritual gift of prophecy.⁸⁰ After all, John speaks of the prophets as though they were a distinct group within the church (Rev 11:18, 16:6, 18:20, 18:24, 22:9),⁸¹ while Paul explicitly asserts that the gift of prophecy is not given to all Christians (Rom 12:3–8; 1 Cor 12:27–31). Thus, in Revelation 11:3, John is probably using the language of prophecy in a figurative or expanded sense in order to describe the church's role as Christ's spirit-empowered witness in the world.⁸² The second example of John's unique testimony is found in John 11:51. Here he records the curious case of Caiaphas, who unwittingly "prophesied" regarding Christ's substitutionary death. I have not found any other cases of inadvertent prophecy in the canon. This seems to be another example of analogical language; John uses the word "prophecy" to claim that, through divine providence, Caiaphas spoke better than he knew.⁸³

In sum, John confirms much of what we have already seen while adding his own nuance to our study of prophetic activity. First, he affirms that prophecy originates in spontaneous revelation. Second, he agrees that it is an act of communication. Third, he posits the Trinity to be ultimately behind the prophetic act. Lastly, he credits God with responsibility for the very words of the prophecy.⁸⁴

2.4. Prophetic Activity in the Rest of the NT

Of the remaining NT materials, only 1 Peter 1:10, 2 Peter 1:20–21, and Jude 14–15 directly describe or report prophetic activity. Though none of these verses focus specifically on NT prophecy, they may still provide information relevant to the topic at hand. For this reason, I will deal with each text briefly.

Shorter Commentary, 527. Bauckham also perceptively notes that John models his own accounts of his prophetic experience after the OT prophets; by doing so, John seems to portray the entirety of his work as being inspired by God's Spirit (*The Theology of the Book of Revelation*, 4–5, 116–17).

⁷⁹ See Bauckham, *The Theology of the Book of Revelation*, 113–15; Tabb, *All Things New*, 72; Koester, *Revelation*, 496–97; Beale and Campbell, *Revelation: A Shorter Commentary*, 220–22; Caird, *Revelation*, 134.

⁸⁰ Contra Hill, *New Testament Prophecy*, 89–90.

⁸¹ See Bauckham, *The Theology of the Book of Revelation*, 119–20.

⁸² Such figurative language would be in keeping with the highly symbolic nature of the section (see Bauckham, *The Theology of the Book of Revelation*, 84–88).

⁸³ I agree with John Calvin, who says of this verse, "[Caiaphas] spoke what was his own opinion. But the Evangelist means that a higher impulse guided his tongue, because God intended that he should make known, by his mouth, something higher than what occurred to his mind. ... God turned his tongue to a different purpose, so that, under ambiguous words, he likewise uttered a prediction." See John Calvin, *Commentary on the Gospel according to John*, trans. William Pringle, Calvin's Commentaries 17 (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2009), 453. Keener claims that he has found other cases of unwitting prophecy in other first century sources. For his discussion, see Craig S. Keener, *Gospel of John: A Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2003), 2:856–57.

⁸⁴ Revelation also suggests that the spontaneous element within prophetic activity refers to the divine revelation and not necessarily to the delivery of the prophecy. Since the book of Revelation is a literary work, it seems reasonable to conclude that reflection and forethought were required to write it. At the same time, Revelation is rightly called prophecy because it is rooted in spontaneous divine revelation and because the very words written by John could be attributed to God. See Richard Bauckham, *The Theology of the Book of Revelation*, 2–5.

First Peter 1:10–11 provides a fascinating glimpse into OT prophecy. Peter notes that the Holy Spirit was directly involved in revealing a message to the prophet, even as the prophecy’s most intriguing details remained obscure. He also claims that prophecy had cognitive content, as it concerned “the grace which was for you” (περὶ εἰς ὑμᾶς χάριτος) and “the sufferings of Christ and glories which come after these things” (τὰ εἰς Χριστὸν παθήματα καὶ τὰς μετὰ ταῦτα δόξας). A complementary picture emerges from 2 Peter 1:20–21. Peter explicitly denounces the notion that prophecies are the result of human will or interpretation. Instead, the Holy Spirit controls the prophetic activity so that those prophesying “spoke from God.” Jude meanwhile provides less information regarding prophecy. Nevertheless, we can deduce from Jude 14 that it involved supernatural communication, as he believes words spoken hundreds of years before were being fulfilled in his present day.⁸⁵ Thus, Peter and Jude describe prophecy in a similar manner as the other NT writers.

2.5. Summary of Findings

Thus far, my study has shown that the NT writers understood prophetic activity similarly. In fact, enough unity exists to posit a working definition for NT prophecy. NT prophecy can be defined as (1) a miraculous act of intelligible communication, (2) rooted in spontaneous, divine revelation and (3) empowered by the Holy Spirit, so that (4) the prophetic words spoken (or written) could be attributed to any and all members of the Godhead. However, in order to round out this definition, there is one more key issue that must be examined.

3. *The Authority of NT Prophecy*

Scholars do not only debate the nature of prophetic activity; they also disagree with respect to the extent of prophetic authority. On the one hand, some propose that NT prophecy was a mixed phenomenon that carried different degrees of authority.⁸⁶ On the other hand, several scholars contend that NT prophecy was always entirely authoritative.⁸⁷ If my analysis of prophetic activity is accurate, the

⁸⁵ Space does not permit the discussion of the problems created by Jude’s citation of 1 Enoch. Bauckham is insightful when he says, “While this word indicates that Jude regarded the prophecies in 1 Enoch as inspired by God, it need not imply that he regarded the book as canonical Scripture.” See his discussion in Richard J. Bauckham, *Jude, 2 Peter*, WBC (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1983), 96. For early evidence that Christian scribes did not believe 1 Enoch to be canonical, see Charles E. Hill, “‘The Truth Above All Demonstration’: Scripture in the Patristic Period to Augustine,” in *The Enduring Authority of the Christian Scriptures*, ed. D. A. Carson (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2016), 68–69.

⁸⁶ See Carson, *Showing the Spirit*, 94–100; Grudem, *The Gift of Prophecy in 1 Corinthians*, 55–113; Hill, *New Testament Prophecy*, 135; John Penney, “The Testing of New Testament Prophecy,” *Journal of Pentecostal Theology* 5.10 (1997): 36; Gerhard Friedrich, “προφήτης,” *TDNT* 6:849; Martin, *The Spirit and the Congregation*, 80; Cartledge, “Charismatic Prophecy,” 19; Garland, *1 Corinthians*, 662; Fee, *God’s Empowering Presence*, 252.

⁸⁷ See Gaffin, *Perspectives on Pentecost*, 59; Robertson, *Final Word*, 14–18; Gentry, *Charismatic Gift*, 2; Schreiner, *Paul*, 362–63; Farnell, “The Gift of Prophecy in the New Testament,” 45–46; R. Fowler White, “Gaffin and Grudem on Eph 2:20: In Defense of Gaffin’s Cessationist Exegesis,” *WTJ* 54 (1992): 313–15; Calvin, *First Corinthians*, 461; Robert L. Thomas, *Understanding Spiritual Gifts: A Verse-by-Verse Study of 1 Corinthians 12–14*, rev. ed. (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1999), 133–42.

NT data would seem to support the latter position. But before a conclusion can be reached, it will be necessary to examine the arguments made on both sides.⁸⁸

3.1. NT Prophecy with Limited Authority

Proponents of the limited authority view regularly put forward the following arguments to make their case. First, they claim that prophecy throughout biblical times has always functioned with different levels of authority.⁸⁹ Some who make this argument claim that the OT texts themselves reflect different levels of authority;⁹⁰ others disagree, asserting that the canonical OT writers always prophesied with divine authority.⁹¹ Nevertheless, these scholars all argue that OT prophecy was not always authoritative and that NT prophecy should be understood similarly. Unfortunately, little evidence has been mounted to demonstrate the existence of non-authoritative OT prophets. The OT passages put forward as proof of non-authoritative prophecy are inconclusive at best (e.g. Num 11:24–30, 12:6; 1 Sam 10:5–13, 18:10–11, 19:20–23; 1 Chr 25:1–7). Since none of these verses actually mention downgraded authority, appeals to such texts are not compelling.⁹² Additionally, no biblical author acknowledges the existence of genuine OT prophecies that lacked authority.⁹³ Thus, I suggest that more evidence would be required for this argument gain traction.

As a second argument, some have suggested that the NT counterparts for the authoritative OT prophets were the apostles rather than the prophets.⁹⁴ On the one hand, Grudem appeals to Luke 11:49 and 2 Peter 3:2 in order to argue this point.⁹⁵ On the other hand, Carson describes the NT prophets as being afforded less respect than NT apostles; this is taken to mean that the former enjoyed less authority than the latter.⁹⁶ The problem with this line of argumentation is similar to the last: greater evidence is needed to warrant such a conclusion. The burden of proof weighs heavily as the very choice of the term *προφήτης* strongly suggests that NT prophets were the counterparts of the OT prophets. Luke 11:49 may not even be referring to OT prophets (the use of the future tense suggests a reference

⁸⁸ It goes without saying that others deny the legitimacy of any claims of prophetic authority. For a representative of this perspective, see Nasrallah, *Ecstasy of Folly*, 1–26.

⁸⁹ See Penney, “Testing,” 38–46; Carson, *Showing the Spirit*, 98; Grudem, *The Gift of Prophecy in 1 Corinthians*, 33–38.

⁹⁰ See Penney, “Testing,” 38–46.

⁹¹ Grudem, *The Gift of Prophecy*, 21–26; Carson, *Showing the Spirit*, 98–99.

⁹² Additionally, there is some question as to whether Numbers 11:25–26 and the sections from 1 Samuel are portraying prophetic activity at all. In these verses, the verb **נבא** is used in the *hithpaal* stem. Wilson (“Prophecy and Ecstasy,” 330–37) has argued that in the *hithpaal*, verbs with nominal counterparts (like **נבא**) often mean “to act like” something; in this instance, “to act like a prophet.” If he is correct, then most of these verses just mentioned would not even be relevant to the discussion of prophetic authority.

⁹³ Likewise, I do not know of any examples in the OT of Israelites refusing to heed prophecy without negative consequences. Additionally, Jesus and the apostles give no indication that they saw differing levels of authority in the prophets of old.

⁹⁴ See Grudem, *The Gift of Prophecy*, 27–49; Carson, *Showing the Spirit*, 94.

⁹⁵ See Grudem, *The Gift of Prophecy*, 28–29.

⁹⁶ Citing 1 Thessalonians 5:20, Carson infers that the prophets possessed such a low profile that Paul actually had to instruct the church not to treat their prophecies with contempt. He sees a similar reality behind 1 Corinthians 14 (*Showing the Spirit*, 96–97).

to NT prophets; see also Matt 23:34–36) and 2 Peter 3:2 does not actually speak to the relationship between OT prophets, NT prophets, and the apostles. In addition, even if the apostles were presented as counterparts to the OT prophets, that would not require the conclusion that NT prophets did not prophesy with divine authority. The positive statement that apostolic ministry corresponded with OT prophetic ministry need not imply the negative statement that NT prophetic ministry did not.⁹⁷ As for Carson’s suggestion that NT prophets were not afforded respect, Paul himself had to defend his authority on numerous occasions (1 Cor 4:1–5; 9; 2 Cor 10–12; Gal 1–2). Thus, even if Carson is correct in his reconstruction of the setting behind 1 Thessalonians 5:20, it would not prove his point.⁹⁸

Third, several proponents of the limited authority view find support in texts that teach the church to test prophecies.⁹⁹ According to their reading, these verses (especially 1 Corinthians 14:29) instruct the congregation to discern which parts of each prophecy were true and which parts were false. However, 1 Corinthians 14:29 probably refers to making distinctions *between* prophecies rather than *within* prophecies.¹⁰⁰ This type of instruction would be expected given the dangers of false prophets.¹⁰¹ And in light of the repeated warnings regarding this threat, it is telling that the apostles never provide explicit indications that true prophets may be dangerous as well.¹⁰² Moreover, when the Bereans sifted the apostles’ message in Acts 17:11, their authority was not thereby called into question.¹⁰³ In fact, Paul himself admits that his proclamations needed to be consistent with the gospel if they were to be received (Gal 1:8–9).¹⁰⁴ On analogy then, the testing of prophecies does not necessarily imply the existence of non-authoritative prophets.

Fourth, Grudem argues that the silencing of prophets in 1 Corinthians 14:30 would be deeply troubling if they spoke God’s actual words. He believes it more likely that Paul’s willingness to lose these prophecies evinces their limited authority. As Grudem says, “If prophets had been thought to speak the very words of God, we should have expected Paul to show more concern for the preservation of these

⁹⁷ In fact, NT prophets are reported doing the same things that OT prophets did. They predict the future (Acts 11:27–30), speak the words of God (Acts 21:10–11, Rev 22:18–20), and they write canonical books (i.e., Revelation).

⁹⁸ For a different historical reconstruction, see Gentry, *Charismatic Gift*, 65–66.

⁹⁹ Grudem, *The Gift of Prophecy in 1 Corinthians*, 58–67; Hill, *New Testament Prophecy*, 135; Martin, *The Spirit and the Congregation*, 80; Anthony C. Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, NIGNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 1140; Penney, “Testing,” 60–61; Fee, *God’s Empowering Presence*, 252; Garland, *1 Corinthians*, 632.

¹⁰⁰ See Gaffin, *Perspectives on Pentecost*, 70; Robertson, *Final Word*, 101; Gentry, *Charismatic Gift*, 68–69; Campbell, “Charismata,” 9; Luz, “Stages,” 67; Gene L. Green, “‘As for Prophecies, They Will Come to an End’: 2 Peter, Paul and Plutarch on ‘The Obsolescence of Oracles,’” *JSNT* 82 (2001): 121; Hays, *First Corinthians*, 242; Calvin, *First Corinthians*, 461; Dunn, *Jesus and the Spirit*, 235.

¹⁰¹ See Matt 7:15; 24:11, 24; Mark 13:22; Acts 20:28–30; 2 Pet 2:1; 1 John 4:1; Rev 16:13.

¹⁰² I would also point out that warnings against false prophets continue in the post-apostolic church; I am unaware however of any instructions given that the proclamations of true prophets are to be sifted as well. In fact, the *Didache* explicitly forbids judging a prophet while he was prophesying (*Did.* 11:11). For a discussion of the evaluation of prophets in the early church, see Aune, *Prophecy in Early Christianity*, 225–29.

¹⁰³ Gaffin, *Perspectives on Pentecost*, 71.

¹⁰⁴ As others have noted, OT prophecy was also subject to testing. See Gentry, *Charismatic Gift*, 68–69; Schreiner, *Paul*, 363.

words and their proclamation.”¹⁰⁵ But if this argument holds, it would prove too much because the vast majority of Jesus’s words have not been kept either. Furthermore, it seems undeniable that the apostles made decisions as to which of Christ’s discourses to relay and which ones to omit. Thus, one cannot argue that Paul’s instruction necessarily implies a low view of NT prophecy. Instead, the instruction in 14:30 reflects Paul’s desire that no prophet dominate the congregation and that the church remain sensitive to the stirring of the Spirit.¹⁰⁶

Fifth, several scholars believe that the prophecy of Agabus in Acts 21:11 confirms the limited view. They claim that the prophet was wrong to predict that Paul would be bound by the Jews and handed over to the Gentiles; according to their reading, the apostle was in fact bound by Romans who rescued him from the Jews. It is argued that such inaccuracy must exemplify fallible NT prophecy.¹⁰⁷ Several problems plague this line of argumentation. First of all, the prophet explicitly claims that he spoke the words of the Holy Spirit (τάδε λέγει τὸ πνεῦμα). If Agabus prophesied falsely, it becomes difficult to avoid the conclusion that the Holy Spirit was also culpable.¹⁰⁸ Second, Luke seems to portray Agabus in light of the OT prophets by reporting the sign act that he performed. If this is true, it is highly unlikely that Luke thought of his prophecies as being inaccurate. Third, as Robertson points out, there is no guarantee that Paul was not in fact bound by the Jews and handed over to the Romans.¹⁰⁹ Paul’s words in Acts 28:17 may echo Agabus’s prediction, indicating that the apostle was satisfied with the prophet’s accuracy.¹¹⁰ Finally, as many have noted, this interpretation is in danger of resulting in a kind of pedantry that would also call into question canonical prophecies. As Gentry warns, “if [Grudem’s] argument were

¹⁰⁵ Grudem *The Gift of Prophecy*, 62–63.

¹⁰⁶ As Dunn helpfully states, “The authority of the prophet was authority to prophesy under inspiration; his authority was the authority of his inspiration and did not extend beyond his inspiration.... Hence, too, one prophet must give way to the inspiration of another – the individual prophet as prophet was subject to the charisma of prophecy.” See *Jesus and the Spirit*, 281.

¹⁰⁷ Carson (*Showing the Spirit*, 97–98) goes so far as to state, “I can think of no reported Old Testament prophet whose prophecies are so wrong on the details.” See also Penney, “Testing,” 67; Hill, *New Testament Prophecy*, 107–8; Grudem, *The Gift of Prophecy*, 77–83.

¹⁰⁸ Grudem’s treatment of this passage is unpersuasive. In his dissertation, he argued that Agabus falsely portrayed himself as carrying the authority of OT prophets (*The Gift of Prophecy in 1 Corinthians*, 81–82). Nothing in the book of Acts however hints at a criticism of Agabus’s character. In a later work, Grudem speculates that the phrase τάδε λέγει τὸ πνεῦμα τὸ ἅγιον may mean “this is generally (or approximately) what the Holy Spirit is saying to us” (*The Gift of Prophecy*, 81–83). This is unlikely since, as Wallace (*Greek Grammar*, 328) notes, “The pronoun [i.e. ὃδε] is used to add solemnity to the prophetic utterance that follows.” In fact, in the LXX, the expression commonly introduces the very words of God. Grudem’s argument that the phrase τάδε λέγει also is used to quote human speech is irrelevant; what he must demonstrate is that the phrase occurs without its solemn tone and without the expectation of complete accuracy in the reported speech. Grudem provides no evidence of the sort. Furthermore, every other occurrence of τάδε λέγει in the NT involves the disclosure of divine words (Rev 2:1, 8, 12, 18; 3:1, 7, and 14). Thus, to import a sense of vagueness into Agabus’s speech can only be described as special pleading. For more convincing readings of Acts 21:10–11, see Darrell L. Bock, *Acts*, BECNT (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007), 638; Schreiner, *Paul*, 361–63; Gaffin, *Perspectives on Pentecost*, 65; Gentry, *Charismatic Gift*, 41–43; Thomas, *Understanding Spiritual Gifts*, 137–38; Mikeal C. Parsons, *Acts*, Paideia (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008), 297; Eckhard J. Schnabel, *Acts*, ZECNT (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012), 857.

¹⁰⁹ Robertson, *Final Word*, 113.

¹¹⁰ Gaffin, *Perspectives on Pentecost*, 65–66.

valid, then much of predictive prophecy from the Old Testament could be discounted (and has been discounted by liberal theologies) on this basis.”¹¹¹

The final argument put forward for the limited authority of NT prophecy involves Acts 21:4. Some see Paul’s response in this verse as a deliberate repudiation of a prophetic word.¹¹² At this point, Luke reports that some disciples told Paul “through the Spirit” (διὰ τοῦ πνεύματος) not to proceed to Jerusalem. Paul however decides not to heed their warning, which suggests to some that NT prophecy is not always authoritative.¹¹³ This is perhaps the strongest argument in favor of this view. However, it is not altogether clear that this verse refers to prophecy at all. The speakers are identified as disciples, not prophets. The phrase “through the Spirit” is used only four times in Acts, making it difficult to claim a technical function for the construction.¹¹⁴ Furthermore, Acts 21:11–14 seems to report a similar situation, thereby illuminating the circumstances of 21:4.¹¹⁵ In Acts 21:11, Agabus predicts the suffering that will befall Paul in Jerusalem. In response to the Holy Spirit’s words, the disciples plead with Paul to remain. And when they see his resolve to proceed, they submit to God’s purpose saying “Let the will of the Lord be done.” It is likely that a similar scenario was playing out in Acts 21:4. Perhaps a prophet among the disciples prophesied that suffering awaited Paul. Because of their love for him, the disciples responded to this divine disclosure by imploring him to avoid the road to Jerusalem. If this reading is faithful to Luke’s intention, then these verses do not in fact report Paul disobeying a prophetic word. At the very least, Acts 21:4 cannot be said to provide a clear example of prophecy with limited authority.

Despite the popularity of the position, the evidence in favor of NT prophecy with limited authority is slim. At the end of the day, the case rests too heavily on arguments from silence, on an over-reading of texts, and on a selective use of data. But can a better defense be mounted for the full authority of NT prophecy? I believe this question can be answered in the affirmative.

3.2. NT Prophecy with Full Authority

There are at least four reasons to believe that NT prophecy should be viewed as fully authoritative. First, the book of Revelation stands as an argument for authoritative NT prophecy. Revelation should not be treated as a “special case.”¹¹⁶ It is significant that John, though an apostle, did not appeal to his

¹¹¹Gentry, *Charismatic Gift*, 42; see also Schreiner, *Paul*, 361–63; Robertson, *Final Word*, 114; Gaffin, *Perspectives on Pentecost*, 65–66.

¹¹²See for instance Carson, *Showing the Spirit*, 97; Grudem, *The Gift of Prophecy*, 75–77.

¹¹³See Grudem, *The Gift of Prophecy*, 75–77.

¹¹⁴As Longenecker points out, διὰ could be functioning to indicate that the disciples were responding to the Holy Spirit’s unction regarding the suffering that awaited Paul. See Richard N. Longenecker, *The Ministry and Message of Paul*, Contemporary Evangelical Perspectives (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1971), 78.

¹¹⁵So also Thomas R. Schreiner, *New Testament Theology: Magnifying God in Christ* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008), 447; Gentry, *Charismatic Gift*, 39–41; Robertson, *Final Word*, 111; Gaffin, *Perspectives on Pentecost*, 66.

¹¹⁶Grudem for instance says, “Because its author was an apostle, and because it is unique, it does not provide information directly relevant to the gift of prophecy as it functioned among ordinary Christians in first-century churches.” This casual dismissal of Revelation is unwarranted and unfortunate. Aune has in fact persuasively shown that the Apocalypse is a representative example of NT prophecy. See David E. Aune, “The Social Matrix of the Apocalypse of John,” in *Apocalypticism, Prophecy and Magic in Early Christianity*, WUNT 199 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2006), 180–82.

apostolic office to assert the authority of his words; instead, he emphasized their prophetic character.¹¹⁷ The best explanation for this is that the NT church understood genuine prophecy to be entirely authoritative. Furthermore, as Aune and others have noted, the distance between John and the rest of the NT on the matter of prophecy has been greatly exaggerated.¹¹⁸ The book of Revelation functions to exhort, encourage, and comfort saints under persecution, which is precisely what we would expect given Paul's description of prophecy in 1 Corinthians 14:3.¹¹⁹ The fact that some churches were slow to accept Revelation into the canon may suggest that it too was tested, which would be consistent with Paul's instructions in 1 Corinthians 14:29 and 1 Thessalonians 5:20–21.¹²⁰ Also, since other NT prophets spoke the words of the Spirit (Acts 13:1–2, 21:10–11), we cannot assume that this was unique to John. I thus conclude that Revelation is representative of NT prophecy, which should therefore be understood as authoritative.

Second, some scholars argue that Peter's announcement of the fulfillment of Joel 2:28–29 strongly suggests the divine authority of NT prophecy.¹²¹ They rightly point out the unlikelihood that Joel had in mind the kind of prophecy described by Grudem and others. Ironically in fact, Grudem himself makes this point when he says, "The distinguishing characteristic of a true [OT] prophet was said to be this: he did not speak his own words or 'words of his own heart,' but words which God had sent him to deliver."¹²² If this is true (and I believe it is), could it really be the case that Joel was predicting that God's people would be provided with prophets who would at times misinterpret divine revelation? It is more likely that the fulfillment of Joel's prophecy involved authoritative NT prophets.

Third, in addition to the book of Revelation, the other examples of NT prophecy recorded in the Scriptures also attest to divine authority. Agabus's prediction of the famine in Acts 11:28 is said to have come to pass in the days of Claudius. The words of the Holy Spirit for Barnabas and Saul are relayed by prophets in Acts 13:1–2. Agabus is recorded as speaking the words of the Holy Spirit in Acts 21:11. Since the NT does not present these as special cases, it seems best to view them as representative of NT prophecy.¹²³

¹¹⁷ I assume the traditional position that the apostle John penned Revelation. However, it is worth pointing out that the authorship of Revelation is disputed, even among evangelicals. Those who deny the apostolic character of Revelation have even less reason to distance the work from NT prophecy in general.

¹¹⁸ See Aune, "Social Matrix," 182; Luz, "Stages," 65.

¹¹⁹ See Thomas R. Schreiner, *The King in His Beauty: A Biblical Theology of the Old and New Testaments* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2013), 617–29; G. K. Beale and Sean M. McDonough, "Revelation," in *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*, ed. G. K. Beale and D. A. Carson (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007), 32–34.

¹²⁰ See Aune, "Social Matrix," 181–82.

¹²¹ Robertson, *Final Word*, 11–12; Gentry, *Charismatic Gift*, 8; F. David Farnell, "Fallible New Testament Prophecy/Prophets: A Critique of Wayne Grudem's Hypothesis," *Master's Seminary Journal* 2.2 (1991): 170–71; see also Dunn, *Jesus and the Spirit*, 170–74.

¹²² Grudem, *The Gift of Prophecy in 1 Corinthians*, 15.

¹²³ It is gratuitous to suggest (as Grudem does in *The Gift of Prophecy*, 47–49) that there were at least two kinds of prophets in the NT: authoritative prophets and non-authoritative prophets. Since every example of prophetic ministry recorded in the NT fits nicely with the former group, the latter group seems to be superfluous.

Lastly, the foundational role assigned to the NT prophets in Ephesians 2:20 suggests prophecy with divine authority.¹²⁴ Ephesians 2:19–20 says, “Therefore then, you are no longer strangers and aliens but you are fellow citizens of the saints and members of the household of God, because you have been built upon *the foundation of the apostles and prophets*, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone.” It seems unlikely that the prophets would be afforded such a crucial ministry in the life of the church if their prophecies could be mixed with error.¹²⁵

3.3. Refining the Definition

It seems then that we can add one more nuance to our definition of NT prophecy. NT prophecy can be defined as (1) a miraculous act of intelligible communication, (2) rooted in spontaneous, divine revelation and (3) empowered by the Holy Spirit, which (4) results in words that can be attributed to any and all members of the Godhead and which therefore (5) must be received by those who hear or read them as absolutely binding and true.

4. Conclusion

In this study, I have attempted to define NT prophecy by answering two fundamental questions: (1) what kind of an activity was it? and (2) what kind of authority did it involve? After interacting with recent scholarship and exploring the data afresh, I believe I have arrived at a definition that better captures what prophetic activity consisted of during NT times. If my proposal is correct, then NT prophecy should be understood to refer to the authoritative disclosure of God’s words. This in turn has ramifications for other discussions related to the matter of prophecy.¹²⁶

¹²⁴ Schreiner, *Paul*, 362.

¹²⁵ Grudem (*The Gift of Prophecy in 1 Corinthians*, 97–105) famously argues that the construction τῶν ἀποστόλων καὶ προφητῶν (“the apostles and prophets”) should be rendered “the apostle who are also prophets.” Wallace however has shown that Grudem’s grammatical argument is flawed. See Wallace, *Greek Grammar*, 284–86.

¹²⁶ For instance, the conclusion raises questions for those who argue that the continuation of NT prophecy throughout the church age does not threaten the unique authority of the Scriptures. If my work is on target, continuationists will have to reassess how the existence of authoritative prophecy does not undermine the place of the Bible. For arguments against the continuation of the gift of prophecy, see Thomas R. Schreiner, *Spiritual Gifts: What They Are and Why They Matter* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2018), 155–69; Gaffin, *Perspectives on Pentecost*, 93–102; Gentry, *Charismatic Gift*, 26–35; Robertson, *Final Word*, 115–16; White, “Gaffin and Grudem on Eph 2:20”; Farnell, “When Will the Gift of Prophecy Cease?,” 171; Luz, “Stages,” 74.

The Boundaries of the Gift of Tongues: With Implications for Cessationism and Continuationism

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Abstract: Speaking in tongues potentially includes three subcategories: (1) known language; (2) unknown language; and (3) language-like utterance—an utterance consists of language-like sounds but does not belong to any actual human language. Category (3) occurs today in charismatic circles. Given that the church in Corinth was permissive, it can be inferred that category (3) may have occurred at Corinth. Moreover, each of the three categories can occur either in inspired, infallible form or noninspired, fallible form. Thus, it is possible to hold a cessationist view of inspiration (no more *infallible* utterances) and a continuationist view with respect to noninspired forms.

1. Preliminary Observations

The issue of tongues is sometimes a matter of controversy and heat.¹ As a result, let me state my intent at the beginning. I want to put forward an argument for the *scope* of speaking in tongues in the first-century church. But I do so in a tentative way. I hope not to stir up heat.

1.1. Tongues in Acts

Let us start with Acts 2. There are several interpretive views.² For simplicity, we follow the majority view. It says that Acts 2 involves distinct languages, mutually unintelligible, rather than merely distinct

¹An earlier version of this article was delivered at the Annual Meeting of the Evangelical Theological Society (Denver, CO, 13 November 2018).

²Some commentators have proposed that what we have here is a miracle of *hearing*. The audience *heard* in their own languages, but the speakers were speaking in their own native language—Greek or Aramaic. But this proposal seems implausible, because Acts 2:4 indicates that the Spirit empowered the speakers, not the listeners. The same verse indicates that the speakers *spoke* in other languages, not that the hearers *heard* in other languages.

A second proposal says that we have merely different dialects of Greek, belonging to different regions of the Roman Empire. This interpretation is possible, since the key word *διάλεκτος* can designate either a dialect or a

dialects. But even if they were just dialects, the main point is that the utterances in Acts 2 were in natural human languages. We know that because hearers competent in the various languages were able to identify them.³

1.2. Tongues at Corinth

Now we proceed to 1 Corinthians 12–14. For illustrative purposes, we may imagine ourselves sitting in the place of a member of the Corinthian church. What would we hear when other members spoke in tongues? Perhaps on occasion someone was present who recognized the utterance as belonging to a language that he already understood. Then he was able to interpret. That kind of case leads us back to the instances in Acts 2. The language in question was identifiable.

But the letter of 1 Corinthians seems to indicate that at Corinth such an identification of the language was the exception rather than the rule. Most interpretation of tongues seems to have taken place not because a listener confidently understood the language, but because of a special spiritual *gift* for interpreting tongues (12:10, 30; 14:13). The ordinary listener at Corinth heard utterances that sounded like a communication in language. But he did not know the meaning (14:2). Even the speaker did not know the meaning (14:13–14). For practical purposes, from the point of view of a naive listener, anything that sounded like speaking in tongues *was* speaking in tongues. “Speaking in tongues” is a loose category that easily covers every kind of language-like utterance in the church service that does not belong to any of the major languages spoken in the church.

It might seem natural to infer that every instance at Corinth belonged to some natural human language.⁴ But that inference does not reckon fully with the flexibility that belongs to ordinary human use of terms. What happens when people are forced to develop a kind of standard designation for comparatively new phenomena in their midst? Anything that sounds like language will for convenience be loosely designated as an utterance in “language.” The ordinary person does not get fussy with a technical analysis such as a trained linguist might propose. He needs a short, convenient term, and “speaking in tongues” will do.⁵

language (BDAG). But this proposal weakens the theological significance of the event. The day of Pentecost represents a reversal of Babel. The separation of people by languages is being overcome by the unity of renewed humanity in Christ, through the Spirit. See Craig S. Keener, *Acts: An Exegetical Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2012–2015), 1:821–23.

³ Tongues are also mentioned in Acts 10:46 and 19:6. There is no detailed information in either case about the *linguistic* nature of the phenomena. But one can see how both verses fit into larger purposes in the book of Acts. Acts has as a major theme the spread of the gospel to broader geographical areas and diverse ethnic groups (Acts 1:8). Acts 10:46 serves to confirm that the Gentile God-fearers are included when they believe. Acts 19:6 deals with disciples of John the Baptist. Both passages have links backward to the tongues on the day of Pentecost. “Extolling God” in 10:46 has a tie with 2:11, while “prophesying” in 19:6 has a tie with prophecy in 2:17–18.

⁴ Some interpreters have claimed to find a clue to the nature of speaking in tongues in 1 Corinthians 13:1, which mentions “tongues ... of *angels*.” But we can only speculate about what angelic languages might be. See Vern S. Poythress, “Linguistic and Sociological Analyses of Modern Tongues-Speaking: Their Contributions and Limitations,” *WTJ* 42 (1980): 367–88 [374–75], reprinted in *Speaking in Tongues: A Guide to Research on Glossolalia*, 469–89, ed. Watson E. Mills (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1986). In this article we therefore confine ourselves to the question of human languages.

⁵ See D. A. Carson, *Showing the Spirit: A Theological Exposition of 1 Corinthians 12–14* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 1987), 80, citing Cyril G. Williams, *Tongues of the Spirit: A Study of Pentecostal Glossolalia and Related Phenomena* (Cardiff: University of Wales, 1981), 26.

The upshot is that we do not know exactly what happened at Corinth. Maybe all the instances belonged to natural human languages. Maybe only some did. Maybe almost none did. What we do know is that they were all “language-like” in some fairly flexible sense. The naive listener thought to himself, “It sounds like a foreign language.”⁶

2. Types of Language-Like Communication

So now the situation has become complicated. We have three possibilities when a speaker makes utterances without having first learned the language. (1) A known language: the utterance is identified by a listener as belonging to a language that he knows. (2) An unknown language: the utterance is in some human language, but not identified. (3) Language-like utterance: the utterance is language-like, but not belonging to any extant human language. Case (1) corresponds to what happened in Acts 2. Case (2) is what many biblical interpreters have seen in the Corinthian church. What about case (3)? My previous argument about the flexibility of common use of terms supports the conclusion that we cannot *a priori* exclude case (3) from the instances at Corinth.

Within each of these three categories it is possible to subdivide, and distinguish between two subcategories: (a) utterances inspired by the Spirit and therefore infallible; and (b) utterances not inspired by the Spirit, and therefore fallible. Subcategory (b) might still include utterances *influenced* by the Spirit. What kind of influence? Consider a modern Christian preacher who wants to be faithful to the Lord. He hopes and prays that the Spirit would fill him and guide his utterances when he preaches. But he does not claim to be inspired and infallible. He hopes for the Spirit’s *influence*.

Let us look more carefully at category (1) (known language). For someone to make utterances in a language that he has not learned is supernatural. Conceivably it might happen through a counterfeit miracle of demonic origin. But we are talking about instances where Christians are empowered by the Holy Spirit.⁷ It is easy to assume that such an utterance must be inspired and infallible. But this conclusion does not necessarily follow. The Holy Spirit might supernaturally *empower* an utterance without necessarily guaranteeing and authenticating every detail of its content. Suppose, for example, that a missionary wants to share the gospel with someone, and finds no common language. He prays for help. He suddenly bursts out in an utterance that carries the content (not infallible) of what he already wants to say, conveyed in a language unknown to him. For our purposes, it does not matter whether this kind of event has ever happened. What matters is the possibility of it happening. Supernaturalism is not always identical with inspiration.

By similar reasoning, we can see that categories (2) and (3) can each be subdivided into (a) and (b), infallible and fallible forms (see the table below).

⁶ See Vern S. Poythress, “The Nature of Corinthian Glossolalia: Possible Options,” *WTJ* 40 (1977): 130–35. Close to this is Max Turner, *The Holy Spirit and Spiritual Gifts: Then and Now* (Carlisle, UK: Paternoster, 1996), 314. In 1 Corinthians 14:21–22, Paul cites Isaiah 28:11, which in context prophesies conquest by a people of “foreign tongue,” an actual human language.

⁷ There may be a third category, where a Christian produces utterances from fleshly motives. See below.

Table 1: Categories of Tongues

Categories	(a) Inspired, Infallible Tongues	(b) Noninspired, Fallible Tongues
1. Known language	1a. Known language, infallible message	1b. Known language, fallible message
2. Unknown language	2a. Unknown language, infallible message	2b. Unknown language, fallible message
3. Language-like utterance	3a. Language-like, infallible message	3b. Language-like, fallible message or no message

When we take everything into account, there is quite a range of possibilities concerning the details of what might be taking place in the first century church under the broad label of “speaking in tongues.” But, so far, some of these are no more than *possibilities*. We know in the case of Acts 2 that we are dealing with either 1a (known language, infallible) or 1b (known language, fallible) or both, because the languages were recognized. In the case of the Corinthian church, we seem to have mainly some combination of 2a (unknown language, infallible), 2b (unknown language, fallible), 3a (language-like, infallible), and 3b (language-like, fallible). But without further information than what 1 Corinthians 12–14 supplies on the surface, we cannot easily discriminate between the four possibilities.

3. Modern Free Vocalization

Let us now attempt to advance our understanding by looking at modern instances of speaking in tongues. Our first challenge is to find an adequate label for the phenomena. To call the modern phenomena “speaking in tongues” could easily be seen as a question-begging move—does such a label already assume commonality between modern phenomena and the phenomena in the NT? Are the modern phenomena really the same, from a theological point of view or from a linguistic point of view? In order not to appear to prejudge the question, let us temporarily use the label “free vocalization.” As a rough definition, we could say that “free vocalization” designates the human act of producing a stream of vocal sounds, subject to two conditions: (1) to a naive listener the stream sounds something like a foreign language; and (2) the speaker himself cannot identify or understand words or larger linguistic units within the stream.⁸

Free vocalization is attested outside the bounds of the Christian faith,⁹ as well as within it. What we are focusing on are those instances where Christians produce free vocalization in the context of an intention to worship or to speak to God or for God. The label “free vocalization” is not meant to prejudge the spiritual meaning or value of the act. The label itself does not specify whether or in what way the Holy Spirit is involved. The label is compatible with instances in which people may be exercising a genuine gift of the Holy Spirit. It is also compatible with instances where people may be merely playing vocally in a certain psychological state, or where there may be a demonic source. (Again, we reject the demonic option when Christians are the participants.)

⁸For additional features, see Poythress, “Linguistic and Sociological Analyses,” 369–70; D. A. Carson, *Showing the Spirit*, 77–88; Turner, *The Holy Spirit*, 303–14.

⁹L. C. May, “A Survey of Glossolalia and Related Phenomena in Non-Christian Religions,” *American Anthropologist* 58 (1956) 75–96; Keener, *Acts*, 1:817.

When we survey instances of modern Christian free vocalization, what do we find? In a few instances, people claim to have spoken in a language that they did not learn, but which was recognized by a listener. Such instances, if true, would fall under category 1b (known language, fallible message). For theological reasons, we exclude 1a (known language, infallible message). There are good arguments that the canon of Scripture is complete, and that there are no more instances of infallible verbal special revelation. Some prominent continuationists agree with this restriction.¹⁰ (For the same reason, in the modern context we exclude the other options involving infallibility, namely 2a [unknown language, infallible message] and 3a [language-like, infallible message].)

Surveys of modern free vocalization show that instances of a recognized foreign language, if they exist, are rare.¹¹ Most instances are not readily identified. So that leaves us with possibilities 2b (unknown language, fallible) and 3b (language-like, fallible). Careful analysis by linguists has persuaded them that most instances do not have all the features belonging to natural human languages, so they fall into category 3b (language-like, fallible).¹² But we should note that confident discrimination between unknown languages (2b) and language-like utterances (3b) can take place only on the basis of technical linguistic expertise. To naive listeners, instances in category 3b (language-like, fallible) still “sound like” a foreign language.

Further analysis by linguists and psychologists has convinced many that free vocalization is fairly easy to produce. The capability is widespread in the human race. And in some cases it can serve as a kind of help.¹³

4. Expectations for the First Century Church

With these points in hand, we now can return to the situation of the first century church. What was happening there? The descriptions in Acts 2 and in 1 Corinthians 12–14, which are the instances with the fullest information, suggest that instances of speaking in tongues in the first century church consisted in acts of free vocalization. Speaking in tongues was more, of course, because it was an exercise of a gift of the Spirit. But not less. That does not by itself imply that speaking in tongues in the first century should be equated with free vocalization in the context of the modern church. We deliberately crafted the label “free vocalization” to be a broad category. It appears to be broad enough to cover *both* the early church *and* the modern church. But that is in principle compatible with two diverse conclusions: (1) the phenomena are the same; or (2) the phenomena are at a theological level completely different, because only in the first century was speaking in tongues a genuine gift of the Spirit.

But now our survey of the modern situation has some bearing. In particular, it is noteworthy that free vocalization is fairly easy. And it has some value at a psychological level. These features seem to be features that belong to human nature in general. It is not something peculiar about modern times that has made free vocalization what it is—though certainly a particular theological interpretation of

¹⁰E.g., Wayne A. Grudem, *The Gift of Prophecy in the New Testament and Today* (Westchester, IL: Crossway, 1988), especially 64–65.

¹¹Poythress, “Linguistic and Sociological Analyses,” 374.

¹²David Hilborn, “Glossolalia as Communication: A Linguistic-Pragmatic Perspective,” in *Speaking in Tongues: Multi-Disciplinary Perspectives*, ed. Mark J. Cartledge (Milton Keynes, UK: Paternoster, 2006), 112–17; William J. Samarin, *Tongues of Men and Angels* (New York: Macmillan, 1972), 118–28.

¹³Poythress, “Linguistic and Sociological Analyses,” 370; Keener, *Acts*, 1:818.

tongues within the charismatic movement comes in and overlays free vocalization by giving to it a theological interpretation. It would seem plausible, therefore, that free vocalization was a possibility for human nature in the first century just as much as it is today. It would be possible for people to engage in free vocalization in the first century, with much the same contribution of psychological, neurological, and muscular factors that analysts observe today.

Now we can combine that possibility or capability with the situation in the Corinthian church. The Corinthian church was by no means an exemplary church. It was disorderly and unruly and immature in several respects. It was confused doctrinally. But it was even more confused in its practice. Given that situation, it seems likely that, if free vocalization of a modern kind occurred anywhere, it might have occurred at Corinth. Of course we cannot *know* that it occurred. But it might have occurred.

Since the Apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians was giving general principles for guiding the practice of corporate fellowship and worship at Corinth, we can infer that his principles were intended to cover not only what actually happened before he wrote, but in principle anything that might occur in church *after* he wrote. In other words, his principles covered instances of modern-type free vocalization in category 3b (language-like, fallible), because such instances were possible.

If instances in category 3b (language-like, fallible) cropped up at Corinth, the Corinthian Christians would immediately have classified them as instances of speaking in tongues. So Paul's instructions about speaking in tongues cover these instances. Therefore, free vocalization in category 3b (language-like, fallible) is a form of speaking in tongues, in the way that the expression is used in 1 Corinthians. Therefore it is a gift of the Spirit. Therefore it is a gift of the Spirit today. Therefore the continuationists are right and the cessationists are wrong, with respect to speaking in tongues within category 3b (language-like, fallible).

5. Objections

We should be careful about this train of reasoning. It is not airtight. At several points, it might get derailed. Let us consider some objections.

5.1. Tongues Are No Longer a Spiritual Gift

First, we might wonder whether making free vocalization a gift of the Spirit in the first century automatically makes it a gift now. It continues now, but perhaps it belongs to a different category now. Perhaps now it merely offers a form of psychological release. The trouble with this argument is that it appears to make speaking in tongues an exceptional case, in comparison with other gifts of the Spirit mentioned in the relevant passages, namely in Romans 12, 1 Corinthians 12–14, and Ephesians 4:11–16. As examples, let us consider the gift of teaching, the gift of administration, and the gift of help. All three are mentioned in at least one of the passages. Surely these functions are still here today, and we still regard them as gifts of the Spirit.

Here we touch on the disputed question as to which gifts continue beyond the era of the apostles. What about the apostles themselves? The gift of apostles appears in two lists of gifts (1 Corinthians 12:28; Ephesians 4:11). Both times it occurs first, showing its prominence. Apostles are indeed an exception, as cessationists and some continuationists have argued.¹⁴ The original apostles still speak to us through

¹⁴Grudem, *Gift of Prophecy*, 25–65.

their writings in the New Testament. But we have no new apostles with direct divine authority in their speech.

Is the gift of tongues also an exception? But with the apostles we are saying there are no new apostles. With tongues, we cannot say that. Free vocalization is still here today. We are considering whether it makes sense to say that free vocalization was a spiritual gift in the first century, but even though it is still around today, it is no longer a spiritual gift today, but something else—a mere psychological help, perhaps. So, by parallel reasoning, could we not conclude that teaching, administration, and helps are still around today, but that today they are mere psychological helps? No. It simply will not work. We may suspect that an argument that treats tongues differently is singling them out merely because some people have already decided that they do not *want* tongues to occupy an integral role in the church today.

5.2. The First Century Was Highly Supernatural, Different from Today

A second way of avoiding a close relation between the first century and now would be to heighten the emphasis on the supernaturalism in the first century church. This emphasis on the supernatural might also be combined with an emphasis on the fact that for most of the first century the church was in an “open-canon” situation. Canonical writings were still being produced. Infallible oral teaching was being given by the apostles.

How would this situation look with respect to speaking in tongues? We might picture the church in our minds as filled with spectacular miracles, miraculous healings, infallible prophecies, and beautiful, infallible messages in tongues. We idealize it. We erase from our minds the possibility of confronting anything so lowly and so uncomfortable to respectable people as unintelligible utterances from unsanctified people with mixed motivations. It takes a case like the Corinthian church to dispel the illusion by showing that the first century church was not always a model church. In my opinion, the strong presence of supernaturalism does not erase the possibility of more prosaic forms of free vocalization.

In other words, though we grant that there may have been infallible messages in tongues, within an open-canon situation, we may also allow that there may have been fallible messages. Moreover, the presence of spiritual gifts may be combined with instances of misuse. Tongues, like the gifts of administration or teaching, may be used in a fleshly way, or with mixed motives.

5.3. Paul Had a Special Conception of Tongues

A third possibility for separating out the first century tongues is to focus not on the Corinthian church but on Paul’s conceptions of spiritual gifts. We might observe that Paul conceives of tongues as functionally equivalent to prophecy (e.g., 1 Corinthians 14:5, 12–13). So we might argue that this equivalence implies that for Paul the category of “speaking in tongues” has built into it the feature of infallible divine authority.¹⁵

That is plausible. But there are difficulties.

First, in the context of 1 Corinthians 14, Paul also observes differences between tongues and prophecy. The tongue-speaker does not understand with the mind (verse 14). His speech does not edify others unless it is supplemented with interpretation (verses 4–5). It produces a different reaction from

¹⁵ We cannot within the scope of this article take up the debated question of whether all “prophecies” in the first century church were either infallible or utterances of false prophets.

unbelievers (verses 22–24). The partial equivalence between prophecy and tongues is for the purpose of building up the body of Christ. An infallible message can build up the body of Christ, and so can a fallible message if it is in fact true to biblical doctrine. The point of the comparison between prophecy and tongues in 1 Corinthians 14 is not to develop a detailed theology of the *nature* of tongues, in terms of its intrinsic divine or human qualities, but to instruct the Corinthian church in a practical way concerning the unity of the body and the importance of serving one another by edifying communication. Tongues that are interpreted can serve; uninterpreted tongues cannot.

Second, even if we read a detailed theology into Paul's conception of tongues, it does not help us on the level of what Paul actually *communicates* to the saints at Corinth. Paul's communication is designed to help the saints. Let us hypothetically suppose that, according to Paul's theology, *true* tongues as a gift of the Spirit are always infallible and inspired and are always instances of human languages. Anything else is not real. It is bogus. In this case, you would suppose that Paul would have to instruct the Corinthians on how to distinguish the true kind from the false kind.

But Paul does not do that. By not doing that, his words confirm the Corinthians in the naive assumption that anything that sounds like tongues is tongues. So Paul is instructing the Corinthians on a practical level that actually has no contact with his alleged neatly crafted theological conception. The theological conception does not actually get expressed in a practical way in 1 Corinthians 12–14. If we are Christians, it is the canonical document, the expression in 1 Corinthians 12–14, that governs us, not a hypothetical conception in Paul's mind that does *not* get expressed.¹⁶

5.4: The Gift of Discerning Spirits Saves the Corinthian Church

A fourth route points to the gift of “the ability to distinguish spirits” in 1 Corinthians 12:10. Commentators discuss the meaning of this gift. There is some uncertainty. But it appears to be a gift for discerning between good and bad spiritual sources—the Holy Spirit and angels on the one side, and demons and the human spirits of false teachers on the other. We might think of the case in Acts 16:18 where Paul recognizes the spirit of divination in the slave girl. Conceivably the functioning of this one key gift could enable the Corinthians quickly to sort out and suppress anything that was not a “true” gift. And in some people's minds that might include anything in the category 3b (language-like, fallible).

In my opinion, among the four objections this one is the most appealing. But there are some difficulties.

¹⁶ We may profit much by considering the idea of speaking in tongues and 1 Corinthians 12–14 in the larger contexts: Paul's theology of spiritual gifts, of the church, of the kingdom of God, and of salvation. When we do so, it is natural to consider Paul's thinking from our own angle. It becomes easy to color Paul according to our unconscious preferences. If we care for sound doctrine and prefer precise terms (e.g., terms for “inspiration,” or for “speaking in tongues”), we imagine such precision in him. If we care for the distinction between canon and human fallibility, we imagine Paul as naturally paying close attention to it in his instruction to the churches. If, on the other hand, we incline to liberal or neoorthodox theological ways, we may feel suspicion toward “propositional” precision in past orthodoxy. We imagine Paul caring about spiritual vitality but not propositional doctrine.

I find myself between these two approaches because I care deeply for sound doctrine, but see it as built on a complex web of teaching in the whole Bible, rather than on a match between modern technically precise terms and the more ordinary and flexible modes of communication in Scripture. Scriptural communication is based ultimately on the mystery of trinitarian communication (Vern S. Poythress, *In the Beginning Was the Word: Language—A God-Centered Approach* [Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2009]).

First, the presence of this gift does not seem to have enabled the Corinthians to have sorted out very serious problems that are addressed earlier in the letter and in 1 Corinthians 15. So it seems overoptimistic to assume that it would be the answer to the difficulties with discerning kinds of tongues.

Second, categories 1b and 2b seem undeniably to represent cases of positive activity of the Holy Spirit, because speech in another human language needs the power of the Holy Spirit. It is unclear why *everything* in category 3b would be automatically excluded as unspiritual, since, in content, it might be just as “spiritual” as the content in the form 2b. The exclusion of everything in category 3b seems arbitrary, except as a move deliberately designed to cut the connection with modern tongues.

Now, if *some* instances in category 3b are fleshly or unsanctified, it does not follow that they *all* are. And that is exactly the approach taken by some modern continuationists, who recognize that some instances of modern free vocalization are fleshly in motive. There remain some instances in category 3b that may not be fleshly. And then we must recognize the presence of a spiritual gift in the modern situation.

6. Implications

The arguments in this article are tentative. But, granted this tentative status, we can still explore possible implications. If, in the end, we decide that free vocalization in the 3b category is still a gift of the Spirit—or that some instances are, while some are fleshly—what do we do?

It would seem that the further instructions about tongues within 1 Corinthians 12–14 are still relevant. First, 1 Corinthians 14:39b may be relevant to our own time: “do not forbid speaking in tongues.” But of course the same guidelines would hold today as we find in 1 Corinthians 14. Tongues-speaking in public should be accompanied by interpretation (v. 27). If we maintain that the gift of interpretation has ceased, then only private tongues-speaking should take place. Whether the gift of interpretation continues today is a topic that needs its own discussion. But some of the discussion of tongues might be suggestive by analogy.

Second, we may consider whether the debate about the nature of prophecy runs in some ways parallel to the debate about the nature of tongues. If tongues potentially come in an infallible form (type [a]) and a fallible form (type [b]), perhaps the same is true for prophecy. Does the naive listener at Corinth consider “prophecy” to be anything that *sounds like* prophecy?

That discussion is for another day.

Biblical Words and Theological Meanings: Sanctification as Consecration for Transformation

— Ben C. Dunson —

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Abstract: Protestants have traditionally understood sanctification as God’s work of gradual spiritual transformation over the entire life of every believer. Recent biblical scholarship has argued that such a definition does not actually correspond with the meaning of biblical terminology for sanctification, which refers to a single and definitive setting apart of believers at conversion. Some have also insisted that this calls into question the wisdom of using the word “sanctification” to describe how God transforms Christians throughout their lives. This article examines these competing perspectives, concluding that biblical terminology for sanctification, while indeed definitive in nature (indicating a once-for-all action occurring at conversion), is also integrally connected in the Bible with the process of spiritual transformation begun at conversion. The article then provides some reflections on how definitive and progressive dimensions of sanctification can (and should) be held together in a doctrine of sanctification.

Protestant Evangelical theology has traditionally explained sanctification along the lines of Louis Berkhof’s definition: it is “fundamentally and primarily ... a divine operation in the soul, whereby the holy disposition born in regeneration is strengthened and its holy exercises are increased.”¹ Theologians along a wide denominational spectrum hold similar views. That sanctification is most fundamentally about moral transformation is a view held by Reformed theologians, like Michael Horton, who defines sanctification as “an ongoing work within believers that renews them inwardly and con-

¹Louis Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*, rev. ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 532. The following survey is by no means meant to be exhaustive. These examples are merely illustrative of a widely held, and commonly acknowledged, articulation of the doctrine of sanctification among Protestant theologians and confessional statements. For a more in-depth historical overview see Michael Allen, “Sanctification, Perseverance, and Assurance,” in *Reformation Theology: A Systematic Summary*, ed. Matthew Barrett (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2017), 549–75. Furthermore, these quotes should not be read as implying a denial that Reformed, Baptist, Lutheran, and Methodist theologians differ on the details of sanctification theology, or even that theologians in each tradition are uniform.

forms them gradually to the image of God in Christ.”² It is a view held by Baptist theologians such as Millard Erickson: “Sanctification is the continuing work of God in the life of the believer, making him or her actually holy.”³ It is also understood in this way by Lutherans such as Francis Pieper: “Sanctification designates the internal spiritual transformation of the believer or the holiness of life which follows upon justification.”⁴ The Methodist Thomas Oden writes similarly: “Through sanctifying grace the moral disposition is being gradually transformed so that one spontaneously loves good and resists evil.”⁵

Such an understanding of sanctification as the progressive transformation of the believer by God has a long pedigree in Protestant theology. The 1647 Westminster Shorter Catechism (Answer 35) defines sanctification as “the work of God’s free grace, whereby we are renewed in the whole man after the image of God, and are enabled more and more to die unto sin, and live unto righteousness.”⁶ Francis Turretin (in 1679) writes that sanctification is the “real and internal renovation of man by which God delivers the man planted in Christ by faith and justified ... more and more from his native depravity and transforms him into his own image.”⁷ The article on sanctification in the 1833 New Hampshire Baptist Confession states that sanctification is “a progressive work,” namely “the process by which, according to the will of God, we are made partakers of his holiness.”⁸ John Wesley insists that “by sanctification we are saved from the power and root of sin, and restored to the image of God” and that this is a process that “gradually increases” until the very end of the believer’s life.⁹ In sum, whatever differences there might be in parsing out the details of the doctrine, Protestant and Evangelical theologians in the past have consistently maintained that sanctification is the gradual, Spirit-worked transformation of believers into the image of Christ.

This basic definition of sanctification, however, has more recently been challenged, particularly among biblical scholars. The debate is not over whether God in fact transforms believers throughout their lives, but rather, whether this process should be called sanctification. D. A. Carson is representative: while he notes that sanctification in the NT can refer to “the progressive purifying of the believer, the process by which he becomes increasingly holy ... it is a commonplace among Pauline scholars that ... it commonly refers to the initial setting aside of an individual for God at his conversion.”¹⁰

²Michael Horton, *The Christian Faith: A Systematic Theology for Pilgrims on the Way* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2011), 653.

³Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998), 980.

⁴Francis Pieper, *Christian Dogmatics*, vol. 3 (Saint Louis: Concordia, 1953), 4.

⁵Thomas Oden, *Systematic Theology, vol. 3: Life in the Spirit* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2006), 212.

⁶“Westminster Shorter Catechism,” in *Westminster Confession of Faith* (Glasgow: Free Presbyterian Publications, 1997), 297.

⁷Francis Turretin, *Institutes of Elenctic Theology*, ed. James T. Dennison, Jr., trans. George Musgrave Giger (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 1994), XVII.1.2; cf. the historical definitions collected in Heinrich Heppe, *Reformed Dogmatics: A Compendium of Reformed Theology*, rev. and ed. Ernst Bizer, trans. G. T. Thomson (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1950), 565–80.

⁸Cited by Oden, *Life in the Spirit*, 216.

⁹John Wesley, *The Works of John Wesley*, 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1978), 6:509. The date of this sermon is not listed in Wesley’s collected works.

¹⁰D. A. Carson, *Exegetical Fallacies*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 1996), 45.

David Peterson goes even further, insisting that in “systematic theology, sanctification has” wrongly “become the basket into which every theme related to Christian life and growth has been placed.”¹¹ Peterson insists that such a view of sanctification is premised on “an inadequate definition” which “obscures the distinctive meaning and value of the terminology in the New Testament, confusing sanctification with renewal and transformation.”¹² In short, sanctification words do not connote progress, growth, or the like. Sanctification, biblically speaking, is “a once-for-all, definitive act and primarily has to do with the holy status or position of those who are in Christ.”¹³ For Peterson this fact is not merely a matter of defining words correctly. If biblical *words* for sanctification do not refer to transformation, he insists, one should not use the word sanctification for a *doctrine* of the moral transformation of believers either.

The purpose of this article, then, is twofold. First, I hope to shed light on the relationship between biblical terminology for sanctification and the classic Protestant doctrine of sanctification by examining whether it is biblically faithful to speak of sanctification in progressive and definitive senses, and if so, how they should be related. Second, I hope that in fulfilling this aim I might also contribute toward clarifying in general how biblical words should be related to doctrinal formulations, an issue that is a source of confusion and difficulty in many theological discussions.¹⁴ It is my contention that there is an integral connection between the definitive facet of sanctification terms (highlighted by Peterson) in the NT and God’s spiritual transformation of the believer (highlighted in the classic doctrine of progressive sanctification). If one only attends to the meaning of sanctification *words* then this vital connection will be obscured.

1. Sanctification as a Biblical Word

To assess competing claims about sanctification we must first attend to the biblical language of sanctification. Then, the biblical terminology for sanctification must also be related to ways of articulating a doctrine of sanctification, which we will examine in the next major section.

¹¹ David Peterson, *Possessed by God: A New Testament Theology of Sanctification and Holiness*, NSBT 1 (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1995), 13.

¹² Peterson, *Possessed*, 13.

¹³ Peterson, *Possessed*, 24. John Murray is the first author (to my knowledge) to employ the phrase “definitive sanctification.” He defines it as the “decisive and irreversible breach with the world and with its defilement and power” that is brought about by the Holy Spirit through union with Jesus Christ (John Murray, “Definitive Sanctification,” in *Collected Writings of John Murray* [Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth], 2:283–84). Murray’s articulation of definitive sanctification has been adopted by many. See e.g., Anthony Hoekema, *Saved by Grace* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989), 202–9; Sinclair Ferguson, “The Reformed View,” in *Christian Spirituality: Five Views on Sanctification*, ed. Donald L. Alexander (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1988), 52–58; John M. Frame, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Christian Belief* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2013), 986–87; Marcus Peter Johnson, *One with Christ: An Evangelical Theology of Salvation* (Wheaton, IL, Crossway: 2013), 128–31. David Peterson makes use of Murray’s terminology of definitive sanctification, but as we will see below, employs it in a different way than Murray. It should be noted that Murray also argues in support of the doctrine of progressive sanctification.

¹⁴ This second purpose continues my previous work in Ben C. Dunson, “Do Bible Words Have Bible Meaning? Distinguishing Between Imputation as Word and Doctrine,” *WTJ* 75 (2013): 239–60.

1.1. Old Testament Background

Before examining NT usage, a brief statement of OT sanctification terminology will be useful. In this section I am simply summarizing Peterson's own work since it nicely captures the main thrust of OT teaching.¹⁵

The central reality in any discussion of sanctification is the holiness of God himself. One of the most common epithets for God in the OT is "the Holy One."¹⁶ God is holy, which means that he is morally pure, separate from all sin and defilement, but also separate (transcendent) from all created things in his "majesty, sovereignty and awesome power."¹⁷

Because God is holy, all that is unholy must be cast out his presence. "Nevertheless, many Old Testament passages indicate that holiness can be attributed or imparted to people or objects because they are cleansed and consecrated to the Lord and his service."¹⁸ When one is sanctified one is set apart for God's special use. However (and just as importantly), the consecration of God's people is rooted in God's election and work of redemption. Sinful people cannot be consecrated for service to God unless they are first purified and cleansed of their sinful defilements. God is the one who takes the initiative in sanctifying his people. Israel is specifically set apart by God as his "possession" (סְגֻלָּה), a "holy nation" (גֹּי קְדוֹשׁ). This consecration, however, is only possible because of the mediation and atonement that is worked by God in and through the priestly system, encapsulated above all in the Day of Atonement (Lev 16). In other words, Israel is called to be holy, but must first be cleansed by God and thereby *granted* a holy status.¹⁹ If it were not for this latter fact, God's awesome holiness would have annihilated Israel (see e.g., Exod 19:22–24).²⁰

Finally, because God is holy and has set his people apart as holy, He "demand[s] holiness of living as a response," which is best summed up in the first half of Leviticus 11:44: "For I am the LORD your God. Consecrate yourselves therefore, and be holy, for I am holy."²¹ Peterson summarizes OT teaching about the sanctification of God's people like this: "holiness means being set apart for a relationship with the Holy One, to display his character in every sphere of life."²²

¹⁵ See Peterson, *Possessed*, 16–25.

¹⁶ Peterson, *Possessed*, 16. Peterson lists several examples (Job 6:10; Isa 40:25; 43:15; Ezek 39:7; Hos 11:9; Hab 1:12; 3:3), but there are many more.

¹⁷ Peterson, *Possessed*, 17.

¹⁸ Peterson, *Possessed*, 19. Peterson notes that the most common Hebrew verb used to indicate this consecration is קָדַשׁ. This verb in the LXX is normally translated as ἁγιάζω.

¹⁹ On this see L. Michael Morales, *Who Shall Ascend the Mountain of the Lord: A Biblical Theology of the Book of Leviticus*, NSBT 37 (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2015), 29–32, and chs. 4–6.

²⁰ Peterson, *Possessed*, 19–20.

²¹ כִּי אֲנִי יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵיכֶם וְהִתְקַדְּשֶׁתֶם וְהִיִּתֶם קְדוֹשִׁים כִּי קְדוֹשׁ אֲנִי. Peterson, *Possessed*, 21. All English translations are from the ESV, unless otherwise noted (my own translations are indicated by AT).

²² Peterson, *Possessed*, 24 (emphasis removed). Peterson emphasizes the definitive nature of this sanctification in the OT. However, despite Peterson's argument against seeing sanctification as "a process of moral and spiritual transformation" (*Possessed*, 15 [emphasis removed]), Peterson himself recognizes that the definitive, objective sanctification of Israel had "to be demonstrated in the moral and social sphere and in breaking with every form of idolatry and false religion" (*Possessed*, 24). While it is true that sanctification terms by themselves do not denote transformation, I do not see much difference *doctrinally speaking* between sanctification understood as transfor-

1.2. New Testament Sanctification Terminology

Four main words must be attended to in a discussion of sanctification terminology in the NT: the verb ἀγιάζω, the adjective ἅγιος, and the nouns ἁγιασμός and ἁγιωσύνη.²³

1.2.1. Ἀγιάζω

The verb ἀγιάζω appears 28 times in the NT. Often it has an obviously “consecrational” (and thus definitive/positional) sense, as can be seen, for example, in Matthew 23:17: “You blind fools! For which is greater, the gold or the temple that has made the gold sacred [ἀγιάσας]?” In this instance, the participial form of ἀγιάζω conveys the idea of ritual consecration; the temple is a place set apart for God’s special use, and because of this fact, the gold in the temple is also specially set apart, or consecrated. It is, as the ESV translates it, “sacred.”²⁴ Ultimately, objects consecrated by God are “holy,” because God himself is holy (Matt 6:9 par; cf. 1 Tim 4:5). The idea that God and objects he sets apart are holy is a commonplace notion carried over directly from the OT.

As in the OT, people are also said in the NT to be consecrated to God. For this reason, these texts are the most obviously relevant when discussing the doctrine of sanctification. In the prayer of Jesus recorded in John 17 Jesus asks the Father to “sanctify [ἀγιάσον] them in the truth; your word is truth” (17:17). God’s word sets Jesus’s disciples apart as specially consecrated for God’s own use. In context, this means that Jesus’s disciples, although still physically present in the world, are at the same time to be separate from the sin and defilement of the world (17:14–16). They are consecrated by God for this task, just as Jesus is (17:19).²⁵ This act of consecration is not a process. It is something that happens “definitively” at the very inception of the believing life. This definitive consecration is evident in many NT texts, such as Acts 20:32: “And now I commend you to God and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up and to give you the inheritance among all those who are sanctified [τοῖς ἡγιασμένοις].” This participle indicates a state of existence, namely the “status [believers] have received”²⁶ in Christ rather than to the fact that they are being progressively “made holy.”²⁷ This kind of sanctification is something that happens at the moment someone believes the gospel, as is particularly clear in the linkage between conversion and sanctification in Acts 26:18, which also uses a perfect participle when referring to “those who are sanctified [τοῖς ἡγιασμένοις] by faith in me.”

Old Testament cultic overtones reveal the “definitive” nature of sanctification words in texts like Romans 15:16, which speaks of Paul as “a minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles in the priestly service of the gospel of God,” who labors tirelessly in his ministry “so that the offering of the Gentiles may be

mation and sanctification that must be demonstrated in concrete actions. Defending this claim is the purpose of Part 2 of this article.

²³ Other related words in the ἀγ- word group do appear in the NT, but only infrequently, and not in contexts that significantly touch upon the topic of this article.

²⁴ The following additional instances should also be classified in this way: Matt 6:5; 23:19; Luke 11:2; John 10:36; 1 Pet 3:15.

²⁵ Cf. F. L. Godet, *Commentary on the Gospel of John*, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1893), 1:336–37; C. K. Barrett, *The Gospel According to St. John*, 2nd ed. (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1978), 510.

²⁶ Eckhard J. Schnabel, *Acts*, ZECNT 5 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012), 850n97; on the stative force of the perfect in general see e.g., Stanley E. Porter, *Idioms of the Greek New Testament*, 2nd ed. (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1994), 38–39.

²⁷ J. A. Alexander, *Acts* (Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth, 1963), 254.

acceptable, sanctified [ἡγιασμένη] by the Holy Spirit.” Like the consecration of OT sacrifices, Gentiles who believed the gospel under Paul’s preaching were specially consecrated by the Holy Spirit when they came to faith (15:17–21). In 2 Timothy 2:21 Paul also evokes OT notions of holiness as consecration when he states that “if anyone cleanses himself from what is dishonorable, he will be a vessel for honorable use, set apart as holy [ἡγιασμένον], useful to the master of the house, ready for every good work.” Vessels that are holy are “instruments” set apart for “special purposes” (as the NIV translates σκεῦος εἰς τιμὴν).

This sense of definitive, positional sanctification is particularly evident in Hebrews. Hebrews 9:13 is perhaps the most obvious text in the letter where ἀγιάζω refers to consecration at a single moment in time. This verse speaks of the way in which the blood of OT sacrifices sanctifies (ἀγιάζω) “defiled persons” (priests in particular) creating an external “purification of the flesh.” At the moment blood was sprinkled on them they became ritually pure and were thereby consecrated for their priestly duties. In 9:14 this outward purification is contrasted with the spiritual, inward cleansing of the hearts of believers that comes through the blood of Jesus Christ. His blood purifies (καθαρίζω) the consciences of believers from their sinful (“dead”) works, which means that the crippling sense of standing under God’s condemnation has been dealt with once-and-for-all.²⁸

There is a close connection in 9:13–14 between sanctification and purification, which is further fleshed out in chapter 10. In 10:1–4 we read that the OT sacrifices could not “perfect” (τελειόω) the worshippers of God who drew near to Him in the tabernacle (10:1). Perfection in Hebrews does not refer to flawless moral uprightness, but rather to God’s people having their sense of standing under His condemnation (their “consciousness of sins” [συνείδησιν ἀμαρτιῶν]) washed away, or cleansed (10:2). Perfection essentially means “wholeness” with regard to one’s sense of their standing before God.²⁹ Animal sacrifices in and of themselves could not perfect, or cleanse, anyone, or else they would have ceased once they had done so (10:2). Instead, they remind God’s people that their sins have yet to be fully and finally dealt with (10:3).

In contrast, the death of Jesus Christ has sanctified (ἀγιάζω) all believers (10:10). The action of ἡγιασμένοι (a stative participle) in 10:10 takes place when the redemption accomplished through the cross is applied to the believer. It is a definitive, once-for-all action, in contrast with the repeated sacrifices of the Old Covenant (10:11). Christ’s death, as seen in 10:14, is the means through which he “has perfected” (perfect tense of τελειόω) “those who are being sanctified” (τοὺς ἀγιαζομένους). This text is the one text in Hebrews which, on the surface, seems most amenable to being read as indicating progressive transformation, rather than a once-for-all action.³⁰ However, this is more a result of common English renderings than what the author is actually saying. In context 10:14 is seen to retain the definitive sense that obtains for the rest of the instances of ἀγιάζω in Hebrews, as is especially evident in 10:10, which explains that believers “have been sanctified” (ἡγιασμένοι ἔσμεν) “once-for-all” (ἐφάπαξ) through Christ’s death.³¹

²⁸ Συνείδησις in Hebrews indicates whether one has a consciousness of condemnation because of sin, or a consciousness of forgiveness because atonement has been enacted. Rightly Harold W. Attridge, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, Herm (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1989), 242.

²⁹ See BDAG 996, s.v. τελειόω §2.

³⁰ See e.g., William L. Lane, *Hebrews 9–13*, WBC 47B (Dallas: Word, 1991), 256: “The force of τοὺς ἀγιαζομένους is purely durative, ‘those who are in the process of sanctification.’”

³¹ See further Peterson, *Possessed*, 34–36.

Although ἀγιάζω is imperfective in aspect in 10:14, this does not by itself indicate that sanctification is a process. It could just as easily be read as indicating that Jesus's "single offering" is the basis for the sanctification that *will* occur every time someone turns in faith to Jesus Christ. In other words, the perfection mentioned in 10:14 was brought about once-and-for-all through the death of Christ, and is then applied to each and every believer at the moment of conversion, which constitutes their sanctification, or consecration unto God.³² Just like the priests of the Old Covenant, believers have had their "hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience" and their "bodies washed with pure water," both phrases in Hebrews indicating the true, spiritual cleansing that became theirs when Christ's blood washed away their sins (10:19–20). The language of sprinkling and washing is OT sanctification language, even though it does not use words in the ἀγ- word group. It is clear in 10:19–22 that this consecrational/ sanctificational cleansing is a definitive action that occurred in the past, just like the sanctification described in 10:10 and 10:14. The last instance of ἀγιάζω in Hebrews makes much the same point: "Jesus also suffered outside the gate in order to sanctify [ἵνα ἀγιάσῃ] the people through his own blood" (13:12).

In sum, in Hebrews, the verb ἀγιάζω, in line with OT usage, refers to a once-for-all cleansing of believers through the blood of Jesus Christ. The one thus sanctified has been cleansed and consecrated so that he (like the priests of the OT) can "draw near to God" (Heb 4:16; 7:19, 25; 10:1; 11:6; cf. Lev 9:7; 21:18; Num 16:40; Ezek 43:19).³³

Returning to Paul's letters we find many instances of ἀγιάζω being applied to believers, several of which have been very influential in the development of the doctrine of definitive sanctification. In 1 Corinthians 1:2 Paul describes the church in Corinth as "those sanctified in Christ Jesus" (ἡγιασμένοις ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ). Just as in Acts 20:32, the stative force of this participle indicates the state of existence into which these believers have been brought rather than progressive spiritual growth in their lives. "Those sanctified in Christ Jesus" is simply another designation for "the saints" (ἅγιοις), a designation Paul also uses in this verse. A saint is someone who has been sanctified. One does not become a saint through a long travail in personal faithfulness. Rather, one is "called" (κλήτος) a saint at the moment he or she is converted. It is a status that comes to the believer through union with Christ.³⁴

1 Corinthians 6:11 is another important example of the definitive use of the verb ἀγιάζω. In context Paul warns the Corinthians that those who persist in unrepentant unrighteousness "will not inherit the kingdom of God" (1 Cor 6:9), going on to list a variety of offenses that will exclude one from the kingdom (6:9–10). In 6:11 Paul sharply contrasts these unrepentant sinners with the believers in Corinth: "such were some of you." This radical change in their spiritual conditions took place when "you were

³² This is further confirmed in 10:29 which speaks of the apostate who nonetheless "was sanctified" (ἡγιασθη) in the past through the consecrating blood of Christ. It would be impossible to take this as a reference to the progressive spiritual transformation of such a person. But it can be read as a reference to one being set apart through inclusion within the covenant community.

³³ Hebrews 2:11, which on its own, might seem unclear as to whether it describes ongoing, transformative sanctification, should be read in light of these later instances in the letter, where the definitiveness of the action is obvious. In and through his saving death Jesus is said to "sanctify" (ἀγιάζω) those whom he died to save, that is, "those who are sanctified [ἀγιάζόμενοι]" (2:11). In other words, the application of Jesus's death to believers consecrates them to God's service once-and-for-all. Cf. Paul Ellingworth, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, NIGTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993), 163–64.

³⁴ See Anthony C. Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, NIGTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 76, who also notes that ἅγιος focuses on the believer's status, while ἀγιάζω focuses on the consecrating act of God.

washed” (ἀπελούσασθε), “you were sanctified” (ἡγιασθητε), and “you were justified [ἐδικαιώθητε] in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.” As Murray notes, Paul here coordinates believers’ “sanctification with effectual calling, with their identity as saints, with regeneration, and with justification.”³⁵ These are all aspects of the salvation accomplished by Christ and applied at the moment of conversion by the Spirit.³⁶ Sanctification, here, does not indicate a process, any more than does justification or washing.

The definitiveness of this sanctification perhaps can be seen no more clearly than in Ephesians 5:26, which like 1 Corinthians 6:11, places sanctification at the beginning of the Christian life. In this verse Paul writes of Jesus having given himself up for the church so “that he might sanctify [ἀγιασῆ] her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word.” Evoking the language of priestly consecration, this sanctification is said to be brought about through the cleansing that occurs in the “washing of water with the word,” a phrase which (whatever else it invokes) refers to the moment of conversion, and the instrumentality of the preached word in that conversion.

1.2.2. Ἅγιος

Ἅγιος appears 233 times in the NT. Most foundationally, as in the OT, God is the “holy one” (see Rev 15:4). In the NT this manifests itself in a Trinitarian fashion: God the Father is ἅγιος (e.g., Luke 1:49; John 17:11), God the Son is ἅγιος (e.g., Mark 1:24; Acts 4:30), and God the Spirit is ἅγιος (e.g., Matthew 1:18; Acts 1:8). Because God is holy, he calls his people to be holy. While the word is sometimes applied to people who manifest especially great degrees of righteous living (e.g., Mark 6:20; Luke 1:70; 1 Peter 3:5), it is much more frequently used (especially in the NT letters) simply to designate believers as such. To be a believer is to be a “holy one,” one set apart by God for his special use.³⁷ In fact, this is one of Paul’s most common appellations for believers (e.g., Rom 1:7; 2 Cor 1:1; Eph 1:1; Phil 1:1; Col 1:2; cf. Heb 3:1). Being holy in this sense is not about acquired righteousness but is simply the result of union with Christ. The definitive, or positional, nature of holiness is also seen in a text like 1 Corinthians 7:14, which employs both ἀγιαζῶ and ἅγιος: “For the unbelieving husband is made holy [ἡγιασται] because of his wife, and the unbelieving wife is made holy [ἡγιασται] because of her husband. Otherwise your children would be unclean, but as it is, they are holy [ἅγιά].” The unbelieving spouse is holy because he or she is married to a believer. For this reason, their children are also holy. This is an objective status, which is the normal way the word is used in the NT.

³⁵ Murray, “Definitive Sanctification,” 277.

³⁶ Rightly Peterson, *Possessed*, 44–47. J. V. Fesko (“Sanctification and Union with Christ: a Reformed Perspective,” *EvQ* 82.3 [2010]: 208, emphasis original) argues against a definitive sense for ἀγιαζῶ in 1 Corinthians 1:2 and 6:11: “The *ordo salutis* deals with the application of redemption to the *individual*, but 1 Cor 1:2 is addressed to the *church* as a corporate body.” This seems to me to be a false dichotomy: if the whole church is “sanctified” in Christ that surely includes each individual member, does it not? See further Cunningham’s interaction with Fesko on this point (Ralph Cunningham, “Definitive Sanctification: a response to John Fesko,” *EvQ* 84 [2012]: 235–40; cf. Thiselton, *First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 78–79).

³⁷ Like ἀγιαζῶ, this usage has roots in the OT (see e.g., Deut 7:6; 14:2; 33:3; Ps 16:3; 33:10; Dan 7:18; 8:24; all of which use שִׁיטָה [MT] and ἅγιος [LXX] to refer to the objective status of God’s people as “saints,” or “holy ones”). Ἅγιος (as in the OT) also describes objects, places, buildings, etc., that are consecrated for special use (e.g., Matt 24:15; 27:53; Luke 1:72; Acts 6:13; 1 Cor 3:17).

1.2.3. Ἁγιασμός *and* Ἁγιωσύνη

Ἁγιασμός and Ἁγιωσύνη are two different ways of referring in nominal form to the state of existence that believers enter into when they are converted, a status they must maintain throughout their lives.³⁸ This is the state that is verbally indicated using ἀγιάζω.

Ἁγιωσύνη only occurs three times in the NT, and two of the occurrences refer to believers.³⁹ In 2 Corinthians 6:14–7:1 Paul calls the corporate body of Christ “the temple of the living God” (6:16). To support this claim, in 6:16–18, he stitches together wording from Leviticus 26:11–12, Isaiah 52:11, and 2 Samuel 7:14, verses which promise that God will dwell with his people and bless them with his fatherly, saving love.⁴⁰ In 2 Corinthians 7:1 Paul exhorts the Corinthians to recognize that these promises should lead them to “cleanse” (καθαρίζω) themselves “from every defilement of body and spirit,” a cleansing he defines as “completing holiness in the fear of God” (AT; ἐπιτελοῦντες Ἁγιωσύνην ἐν φόβῳ θεοῦ). In this verse Ἁγιωσύνη can still be understood in its normal positional sense of consecration. Holiness is the quality, or status, of separation from defilement. However, the way in which this status is connected to transformation is obvious: one must *complete* one’s Ἁγιωσύνη in the sense of bringing it to its intended goal, which means maintaining one’s holy status over time. While the *word* Ἁγιωσύνη by itself does not indicate this transformation, transformation *is* seen in the use of Ἁγιωσύνη in conjunction with the verb ἐπιτελέω. Another way to put this is that Paul is commanding the Corinthians to constantly strive to put into practice what is true of them in Christ: if they have been set apart from sinful use for God’s own special (sanctified) use, then they must live this out in the concrete realities of life by actually striving to *remain* separate from sin. This holiness will not be complete until the end of one’s life, and, in fact, will not be manifest in its fullness until the return of Christ. This dimension of holiness is described in 1 Thessalonians 3:13, where we read Paul’s prayer for the hearts of believers to be established (στηρίζω) “blameless in holiness” (ἀμέμπτους ἐν Ἁγιωσύνη) on the day of Christ’s return. Although Ἁγιωσύνη means separateness from sin (a separation that began at conversion [see Ἁγιασμός in 2 Thess 2:13]), a connection with Christian growth is evident in 3:13 too: the very means of believers’ hearts being established blameless in holiness is the Lord causing them to “increase [πλεονάζω] and abound [περισεύω] in love for one another and for all” (3:13).⁴¹ An increase in love, in other words, is necessary for holy blamelessness to be established.⁴² It is the surrounding context of Ἁγιωσύνη in Thessalonians

³⁸ If there is any difference between Ἁγιωσύνη and Ἁγιασμός, it is that the former denotes the quality (normal significance of -σύνη endings) of moral separateness, while the latter denotes the action (normal significance of -μός endings) of having been separated (or, more precisely, the resultant state). See Bruce M. Metzger, *Lexical Aids for Students of New Testament Greek*, 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998), 42–43. However, in actual NT usage of these words this distinction is not pronounced.

³⁹ For a discussion of the much-debated Romans 1:4 see Richard N. Longenecker, *The Epistle to the Romans*, NIGTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2016), 63–77.

⁴⁰ Paul may cite portions of other OT texts here as well. On this see Peter Balla, “Second Corinthians,” in *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*, ed. G. K. Beale and D. A. Carson (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007): 770–73.

⁴¹ The phrase εἰς τὸ στηρίζαι at the beginning of 3:13 shows the causal link between their increasing love (3:12) and the strengthening of their hearts (3:13).

⁴² Cf. Abraham J. Malherbe, *The Letters to the Thessalonians*, AB 32B (New York: Doubleday, 2000), 215–16; G. K. Beale, *1–2 Thessalonians*, IVPNTC 13 (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2003), 110–12.

3:13 rather than the meaning of the noun itself, however, that shows that Paul has spiritual growth in mind.

Given the centrality of Romans 6 in defenses of the doctrine of definitive sanctification, it is interesting that most defenders of the doctrine do not actually spend substantial time discussing the two actual uses of explicit sanctification terminology in that chapter (Rom 6:19, 22). Both of these verses employ the noun ἁγιασμός in order to indicate the status of the believer who pursues righteousness (6:19), a status that must be maintained until such a person enters into eternal, heavenly life (6:22). In both verses, ἁγιασμός is not the objective status one receives when one is first united to Christ, although it should not be disconnected from that initial consecration. Instead, ἁγιασμός in this chapter is the status that can be said to apply to the person who is obeying God more and more. In other words, righteousness (6:19), or good fruit (6:22), is how one continues to reflect his or her sanctification/consecration.⁴³

First Corinthians 1:30, in distinction from Romans 6:19 and 6:22, places ἁγιασμός at the very beginning of the Christian life. When a person is united to Jesus Christ (placed by God ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ) Christ “becomes” (γίνομαι) for that person “wisdom from God, righteousness and sanctification [ἁγιασμός] and redemption.” In this verse the central reality depicted is Christ becoming wisdom for the believer, with each of the three subsequent nouns describing what it means for Christ to be our wisdom, rather than introducing three additional things that Christ “becomes.”⁴⁴ ἁγιασμός comes to the believer through union with Christ; it is an objective possession of the believer from the very inception of the Christian life. In this verse Paul is talking neither about progressive transformation, nor about a definitive break with the power of sin. Instead, as Herman Bavinck puts it:

Christ is their righteousness (δικαιοσύνη, *dikaïosynē*) but in the same sense also their sanctification (ἁγιασμος, *hagiasmos*; 1 Cor 1:30)... Christ, that is, by his suffering and death has not only accomplished the righteousness on the basis of which believers can be acquitted by God; he has similarly secured the holiness by which he can consecrate them to God and purify them from the stains of sin (John 17:19).⁴⁵

⁴³ Although Paul says in 6:22 that the “end” (τέλος) of “sanctification” (ἁγιασμός) is eternal life, this should not be understood as introducing a ground of final acceptance before God other than Christ’s perfect righteousness, but rather as showing the path that the believer must necessarily walk during his or her pilgrimage to heaven. In other words, no one will receive eternal life from God in the end who has not produced fruit that leads to sanctification, although this fruit itself is not the grounds of that person receiving eternal life. For a helpful discussion of how this distinction was employed by a variety of post-Reformation Reformed theologians see Joel R. Beeke and Mark Jones, *A Puritan Theology: Doctrine for Life* (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage, 2012), 312–15. This distinction also applies to texts like 1 Thess 4 and Heb 12:14, discussed below.

⁴⁴ See e.g., David E. Garland, *1 Corinthians*, BECNT (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2003), 79; Thiselton, *First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 191–92.

⁴⁵ Herman Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, ed. John Bolt, trans. John Vriend, (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008), 4:250. On this aspect of Bavinck’s doctrine of sanctification see James Eglinton, “On Bavinck’s Theology of Sanctification-as-Ethics,” in *Sanctification: Explorations in Theology and Practice*, ed. Kelly M. Kapic (Grand Rapids: IVP Academic, 2014), 180–83. One of the most important dimensions of Michael Allen’s recent treatment of sanctification is the way in which he highlights how the Bible anchors the transformation of the believer in the holiness he or she possesses through union with Christ. See Michael Allen, *Sanctification*, New Studies in Dogmatics (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2017), 141–68; cf. Johnson, *One with Christ*, 115–26.

Sanctification, in the sense of 1 Corinthians 1:30, is the objective possession of the believer, just like righteousness (δικαιοσύνη) and redemption (ἀπολύτρωσις) are.⁴⁶ Or put differently: the believer possesses sanctification, righteousness, and redemption, because he or she possesses Christ, who, as God's wisdom, has brought all of these realities into the world through his death and resurrection. Michael Allen puts it well: "holiness is not only a task but also a gift. It is not only a calling but also a reality evoked by God's declaration."⁴⁷

First Peter 1:2 also places ἁγιασμός at the moment of conversion, but in a slightly different way than 1 Corinthians 1:30: rather than indicating an "imputation" of holiness, Peter writes of the consecrating work of the Holy Spirit at the moment of conversion. When believers are united to Christ they are once-and-for all set apart for God's special use, making them "elect exiles" in this age. Thus, 1 Peter 1:2 can be said to have a definitive sense. However, the link with spiritual and ethical growth is also seen in this verse: believers are sanctified by the Spirit "for obedience to Jesus Christ" (εἰς ὑπακοήν ... Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ). Obedience must follow sanctification.

2. Sanctification as a Doctrine

Toward the end of his book Peterson provides a helpful summary of the meaning of biblical sanctification terminology: Sanctification "is primarily another way of describing what it means to be converted or brought to God in Christ and kept in that relationship."⁴⁸ This definition captures the two aspects of sanctification that we have seen above: first, that sanctification is a status entered into at conversion, and second, that sanctification is a status that must be preserved. Peterson is also correct to argue that (on the level of terminology) "instead of speaking in terms of progressive sanctification, the NT more regularly employs the language of renewal, transformation and growth, to describe what God is doing with us here and now."⁴⁹ Sanctification *words* do not denote transformation. On the surface, this would seem to be a decisive argument against using the language of "progressive sanctification."

It is, however, also true that definitive sanctification understood (by Murray, Hoekema, etc.) as a decisive break with enslavement to sin is a theological category that does not correspond precisely with the use of sanctification terminology in the NT. Sanctification words (by themselves) do not denote spiritual release and freedom. On the surface of things this too might seem to be a decisive argument against using the language of sanctification to refer to transformation, even if one restricts this to transformation at conversion.

Does this mean that the doctrines of definitive and progressive sanctification are unbiblical? Peterson (representing a dominant trend in biblical scholarship) is not only opposed to defining biblical sanctification words in a way that denotes spiritual growth but is also leery of applying the word sanctification to a doctrine of Christian moral development. Nor does he use the term like Murray does to describe definitive sanctification as a "once-for-all definitive and irreversible breach with the realm in

⁴⁶ With δικαιοσύνη focusing on (definitive) legal status, ἀπολύτρωσις focusing on (definitive) divine rescue, and ἁγιασμός focusing on (definitive) moral status.

⁴⁷ Allen, *Sanctification*, 29.

⁴⁸ Peterson, *Possessed*, 136.

⁴⁹ Peterson, *Possessed*, 136.

which sin reigns in and unto death.”⁵⁰ Although Peterson (like Murray) does focus on the *definitiveness* of sanctification terminology, unlike Murray he does not see sanctification words as having reference to spiritual transformation at the moment of conversion.

For Peterson, the test of the biblical fidelity of a doctrine is whether it corresponds with the biblical terminology from which it derives its name. When theologians use the word sanctification to refer to the whole process of Christian spiritual growth, he insists, the word has “become such a broad concept that its particular New Testament meaning has been obscured.”⁵¹ We should not speak of the “process of moral and spiritual transformation following conversion” as sanctification at all.⁵² On the one hand, the doctrine of sanctification should be restricted to expressing the believer’s consecration and separateness from sin. On the other hand, when speaking of the spiritual and moral development of believers the biblical terminology of transformation, glorification, regeneration, and renewal should be used.⁵³

It is this dimension of Peterson’s argumentation that can be questioned. Must biblically faithful doctrines correspond in a one-to-one way with the biblical words from which they are derived? It is my contention that it is illegitimate to insist that they must. The remainder of this article will attempt to show why arguing that they must is not theologically helpful. What matters when assessing the faithfulness of a doctrine is whether its concepts are biblical, not whether or not it uses biblical words only in the ways in which they are employed in scripture.⁵⁴ If one were to follow Peterson’s logic with complete consistency, one’s systematic theology would not merely be altered, but in fact, systematic theology would become impossible. A Christian could know what individual words mean in their individual contexts but could never move beyond this to synthesizing the Bible’s teaching on a given topic. The reason for this is simple: words do not *mean* doctrines; words like sanctify or sanctification could only be defined as they are found in each concrete instance in the Bible. Nothing more could be said about sanctification. The question to ask is not: “Do biblical words correspond with doctrines that use the same word?” Instead, the questions to ask are these: “Are the doctrines of definitive and progressive sanctification biblical in their content? Do they accurately summarize and synthesize biblical teaching?” The answer on both accounts is “Yes.”⁵⁵

First, let us consider definitive sanctification, understood as the “once-for-all definitive and irreversible breach with the realm in which sin reigns in and unto death” (Murray). The central text used to support this doctrine is Romans 6.⁵⁶ As has been noted above, Romans 6 only employs sanctification terminology in verses 19 and 22. Neither of those instances of sanctification words has anything to do

⁵⁰ Murray, “Definitive Sanctification,” 279.

⁵¹ Peterson, *Possessed*, 16. Cf. *Possessed*, 13: Speaking of sanctification in this way “obscures the distinctive meaning and value of the terminology in the New Testament, confusing sanctification with renewal and transformation.”

⁵² Peterson, *Possessed*, 27.

⁵³ See Peterson, *Possessed*, 115–37.

⁵⁴ On which see David S. Yeago, “The New Testament and the Nicene Dogma: A Contribution to the Recovery of Theological Exegesis,” *ProEccl* 3 (1994): 159–63.

⁵⁵ On the point made in this paragraph, see Michael Allen and Scott R. Swain, *Reformed Catholicity: The Promise of Retrieval for Theology and Biblical Interpretation* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2015), 127–28; cf. Vern S. Poythress, *Reading the Word of God in the Presence of God: A Handbook for Biblical Interpretation* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2016), 183–95.

⁵⁶ See e.g., Murray, “Definitive Sanctification,” 278–80, 286–92; Hoekema, *Saved by Grace*, 194, 202–6.

with definitive sanctification in Murray's sense. Conceptually speaking, however, Romans 6 does speak of a "once-for-all definitive and irreversible breach with the realm in which sin reigns in and unto death." In Romans 5:20 Paul makes a claim that was bound to shock his Jewish contemporaries: God's "law came in to increase the trespass." God's intention in this, however, was not simply that humans would sin more. Instead, God gave his law to stir up the sin already lying dormant in every human heart (cf. 4:15; 7:7–11). However, he did this with a more ultimate aim in view, namely, that grace might abound all the more, and that sinners would be led to seek salvation in Jesus Christ (5:21). In light of Paul's claim in 5:20 that the increase of sin brought about an increase of grace, he anticipates that some might respond by thinking that they should "continue in sin that grace may abound" (6:1). Paul emphatically rules this conclusion out in 6:2. Why? Because "we who died to sin" (οἵτινες ἀπεθάνομεν τῇ ἁμαρτίᾳ) simply cannot continue to "live in it" (6:2). Death to sin's mastery comes about by being baptized into Christ and his death (6:3). The divinely directed outcome (ἵνα) of death with Christ is resurrection to "newness of life" with Christ (6:4).⁵⁷

Given that there are no sanctification terms in Romans 6 that refer to the spiritual freedom for the believer that is brought about through death and resurrection with Christ, why do Murray and others call this definitive sanctification?⁵⁸ Here I must speculate slightly, but the overall gist of Murray's article "Definitive Sanctification" appears to supply an answer. Murray, like Peterson, highlights the punctiliar, definitive sense of sanctification in numerous texts in the NT (e.g., 1 Cor 1:1; 6:11). Murray therefore concludes that sanctification words refer to definitive, once-for-all, realities that occur at conversion. This conclusion is correct, as we saw above. Murray also (rightly) recognizes that death and resurrection with Christ in Romans 6 (and elsewhere) is a punctiliar, definitive event. The final step in his reasoning, then, appears to be a combination of these two notions: if sanctification is a definitive event, and death and resurrection with Christ is a definitive event, and both of these events occur simultaneously at conversion, then it makes sense to say that believers are definitively sanctified

⁵⁷ Fesko ("Sanctification and Union," 209, emphasis added) maintains that "no Reformed confessional document has a doctrine formally *or materially* like definitive sanctification." The answer to Westminster Larger Catechism Question 75 would seem to cast some doubt on this claim:

Sanctification is a work of God's grace, whereby they whom God hath, before the foundation of the world, chosen to be holy, are in time, through the powerful operation of his Spirit applying the death and resurrection of Christ unto them, renewed in their whole man after the image of God; having the seeds of repentance unto life, and all other saving graces, put into their hearts, and those graces so stirred up, increased, and strengthened, as that they more and more die unto sin, and rise unto newness of life.

Christ's death and resurrection are applied to believers by the Spirit, which definitively renews them in their whole man after the image of God and implants in them the seeds of repentance. In other words, at the moment of conversion believers die and rise to newness of life in Christ, which is the definitive, foundational basis for all subsequent spiritual growth. It is hard to see how this is not materially (even if not formally) similar to Murray's definition of definitive sanctification. While it is true that the *phrase* "definitive sanctification" is a recent coinage, the substance of the doctrine of definitive sanctification has roots in historic Protestant theology. Ferguson's discussion of Westminster Confession of Faith 13.1 on this matter is helpful ("The Reformed View," 52; cf. Robert Letham, *The Westminster Assembly: Reading Its Theology in Historical Context* [Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2009], 279). For one response to Fesko's critique of the definitive/positional nature of sanctification see Cunningham, "Definitive Sanctification," 234–52.

⁵⁸ None of the other texts Murray ("Definitive Sanctification," 2:280–81, 283–84) appeals to in defense of the *concept* of definitive sanctification use sanctification terms either: see 2 Cor 5:14–15; Eph 2:1–6; Col 2:20–3:4; 1 Pet 2:24; 4:1, 2; 1 John 2:3–6, 29; 3:6–9; 4:7, 20, 21; 5:2, 3.

at conversion. Murray appears to conflate the definitiveness of sanctification (on the level of word meaning) with the definitiveness of death and resurrection with Christ (on the conceptual level). One could, therefore, dispute the appropriateness of using the *word* sanctification to describe death and resurrection with Christ (and its results for the believer), but this would in no way invalidate the *concept* Murray articulates.⁵⁹ A recognition that Murray's doctrine of definitive sanctification is not a mere unpacking of the meaning of sanctification terminology does not overturn the doctrine itself.⁶⁰ If one desires (as Peterson and others do) to dispute the appropriateness of calling this reality sanctification, an alternative conceptual "tag" would be necessary to describe the reality at work in Romans 6. Even so, it is hard to imagine a single word, derived from Romans 6 itself, that could capture the entire theological dynamic of Romans 6. What word or phrase would be better? The doctrine of death and resurrection with Christ? Even that phrase is not found verbatim in Romans 6. Regeneration? Renewal? Those words are not found in Romans 6 either.

When we examine the doctrine of progressive sanctification we face an issue similar to the one faced regarding definitive sanctification: as we have seen above, the vast majority (if not all) sanctification terms in the NT do not describe a process at all; they describe a consecration of the believer by God for his special use. And yet theologians appeal to a variety of texts that use no sanctification wording to defend the doctrine of progressive sanctification.⁶¹ One could quibble with employing the word sanctification to describe this reality, but it is indisputable that the NT portrays the Christian life as one of progressive growth and advancement in righteousness. Even Peterson willingly grants this. For example, he states that "Scripture certainly envisages a process of spiritual maturation (e.g. 1 Cor. 3:1–4; Heb. 5:11–6:2) and urges progress in godliness (e.g. 1 Tim. 4:7–10, 15). There are also indications that we should increase and abound in love and holiness (e.g. 1 Thes. 4:1, 9–10)."⁶²

If one is not going to call this idea of Christian spiritual growth progressive sanctification, what should it be called? As we saw above, Peterson makes a persuasive case for employing the language of transformation, glorification, regeneration, and renewal to describe this process. But none of these words by themselves can capture the entirety of the concept of the believer's spiritual development. Thus, each of these words runs into the same issues as sanctification. No matter which word is chosen,

⁵⁹ Cf. G. C. Berkouwer, *Faith and Sanctification*, Studies in Dogmatics, trans. John Vriend (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1952), 80–81: "Theological terms, like any other, must indeed be serviceable to the truths they are designed to convey. But let the critics rather search for the writer's intent than peck away at his words."

⁶⁰ In Murray's earlier work, *Redemption Accomplished and Applied* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1955), he does not use the language of definitive sanctification at all (see e.g., pp. 141–43). Nonetheless, he describes the same conceptual dynamic of the believer's death and resurrection with Christ and roots it in texts like Romans 6. He labels this regeneration, which, he insists, brings about "freedom from the dominion of sin" and "victory over the power of sin," both of which are "not achieved by a process, nor by our striving or working to that end.... [They are] achieved once for all by union with Christ and the regenerating grace of the Holy Spirit" (*Redemption Accomplished and Applied*, 142–43). Cf. Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*, 532.

⁶¹ E.g., John 15:1–7; Rom 8; Gal 5:23–24; Eph 4:20–24 (cited in Fesko, "Sanctification and Union," 201–3). The list of texts that could be cited in further support is vast: any biblical text that talks about spiritual growth could be placed in some way under the doctrinal heading of progressive sanctification. Perhaps the most concise example in the NT that captures the biblical picture of progressive spiritual growth is Phil 2:11–12: "Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now, not only as in my presence but much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure."

⁶² Peterson, *Possessed*, 70. On p. 62 Peterson writes that the Spirit sustains believers "in a life that expresses their holy status and calling."

the most important thing is whether or not the concepts described and placed under that doctrinal heading are biblical concepts. Again, unless one is willing to jettison systematic theology altogether, words are *always* going to be used as doctrinal headings that do not correspond in a simple one-to-one way with the concepts they serve as placeholders for.

Despite all that has been said about the way in which the doctrines of definitive and progressive sanctification do not correspond exactly with the lexical meaning of sanctification terms, there are very good reasons for maintaining the language (conceptually or doctrinally speaking) of definitive and progressive sanctification. To this we now turn our attention.

First, consider the definitiveness of sanctification language. As was noted above, in recent years biblical scholars and theologians alike have come to recognize that sanctification words in the Bible have a definitive sense to them: being sanctified means being set apart by God for his own special use. It means being holy in the sense of devoted to God. Sanctification is consecration. And yet it cannot be denied that sanctification also has a moral component. Being set apart is not merely an issue of objects used for special purposes. Being holy means reflecting the moral purity of God in righteous living (Lev 11:44–45; 19:2; 1 Pet 1:13–16).⁶³ Thus, we could say that the biblical picture is this: to be sanctified means being set apart as holy in order that one might reflect the holiness of God himself. This holiness is a status received definitively at the outset of the Christian life, but it is also something that must be maintained throughout the entirety of a believer's life.

How can this holy status be maintained and preserved? Here, the doctrine of definitive sanctification as elaborated by Murray and others is vital. There is no possibility of the believer preserving his or her holy status apart from the radical, renewing grace of God received at the moment of conversion that is described in Romans 6.⁶⁴ When believers are united to Jesus Christ by faith they move from being “dead in the trespasses and sins in which you once walked” to being made “alive together with Christ” and “raised ... up with him and seated ... with him in the heavenly places” (Eph 2:1, 5, 6). This movement out of radical spiritual inability into a state of spiritual life, along with the ongoing work of the Spirit, is the basis for any subsequent Christian growth (see Eph 4:20–24). Paul concisely captures this dynamic in Colossians 3:1 (NIV): “Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God.”⁶⁵ While the key supporting texts for the doctrine of definitive sanctification do not use sanctification words, it is nonetheless true that this definitive break with the power of sin occurs simultaneously with the definitive consecration that *is* indicated by sanctification words in the NT.⁶⁶

⁶³ See in particular 1 Pet 1:15b (emphasis added): “but as he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct.” On this see further Allen, *Sanctification*, 47–69.

⁶⁴ Many other NT texts also describe this decisive break with sin's enslaving power. See e.g., 2 Cor 5:14–15; Eph 2:1–6; Col 2:20–3:4; 1 Pet 2:24; 4:1–2; 1 John 3:6–9.

⁶⁵ The NIV captures the dynamic of this verse better than the ESV, which translates εἰ as “if” rather than the NIV's “since.” The form of the verse is conditional, but the thought being expressed is not (as is common in “first class conditional” sentences): believers *have* been raised with Christ; therefore, they must seek the things that are above, and in fact could not do so *unless* they had been raised with Christ to newness of life.

⁶⁶ Although Fesko is critical of the doctrine of definitive sanctification, it would appear that his criticism has more to do with disputing Murray's framing of the order of salvation (*ordo salutis*), than it does with the possibility that a definitive breach with the power of sin occurs at conversion. Fesko insists that it is justification, not union with Christ, that is the operative power in the believer's moral transformation, or progressive sanctification. See e.g., Fesko, “Sanctification and Union,” 200 (cf. 209, 211): “We are sanctified because we are justified...”

Second, consider the connection between death and resurrection with Christ and ongoing spiritual development. The appropriateness of using the word sanctification to describe both definitive and progressive aspects of Christian transformation becomes evident when one examines several NT texts that explicitly connect definitive consecration at conversion and subsequent Christian growth.

In Revelation 21:11 John records one of the final admonitions of the angel who has been speaking with John throughout the book. It comes immediately after he tells John not to seal up the prophecy, since it is soon to be fulfilled (22:10): “Let the evildoer still do evil, and the filthy still be filthy, and the righteous still do right, and the holy [ὁ ἅγιος] still be holy [ἀγιασθήτω]” (22:11).⁶⁷ For our purposes, the key lies in this: being holy is a definitive status one possesses (indicated by the substantive ὁ ἅγιος), but it is also a status that must be maintained (indicated by the passive verbal form of ἀγιάζω). Even here, the verb ἀγιάζω itself does not refer to a process. It still means “to consecrate” or “to set apart for special use.” However, a person who is holy could lose that status through doing evil, or being filthy, to use the language of the first half of the verse. The angel’s command is that a person who is set apart (sanctified) by God must actively work to ensure that he or she does not become defiled. Such a person must strive to continue (indicated by ἔτι) to be separate from sin, and in so doing to preserve his or her holy status.

In Romans 12:1 believers are called to act in accordance with their status as holy ones: “I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy [ἁγίαν] and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship.” Devoting one’s body completely to the Lord means vigorously and continuously striving to remain separate (holy) from the world and all its sinful entanglements. The act of presentation as a holy, living sacrifice does not end at conversion, which is why it is called a *living* sacrifice.

The unmarried woman is said in 1 Corinthians 7:34 to be able to devote herself fully to the “things of the Lord in order that she might be holy [ἁγία] in body and spirit” (AT). She must strive, in other words, to live in a manner suitable for a person consecrated to God’s service by seeking after things that please the Lord.

Peter, quoting Leviticus 11:44, tells his readers that “as he who called you is holy [ἅγιον], you also be holy [ἅγιοι] in all your conduct, since it is written, ‘You shall be holy [ἅγιοι], for I am holy [ἅγιός]’” (1 Peter 1:15). Despite the fact that ἅγιός does not *mean* transformation, the link with transformation is obvious in the command to *be* holy, that is, to maintain one’s consecrated status and position, to *keep* being holy.⁶⁸

In 1 Thessalonians 3:13 we see that only those who have striven constantly to maintain their separateness from sin throughout their lives will be confident (strengthened) in the end. Without the pursuit of lifelong holiness (*not* sinlessness), confidence in one’s acceptance by God will not be possible when Christ returns.

The close connection that ἁγιασμός has with moral transformation is also evident in 1 Thessalonians 4:1–8. In 4:1–12 Paul begins the final section of the letter by urging the believers in Thessalonica to remember what they have been taught, specifically with regard to “how you ought to walk and to please God,” which is something they currently “are doing” and something Paul exhorts them to do “more and more” (4:1). In this section he uses the word ἁγιασμός three times (vv. 3, 4, 7). God’s will for believers is their ἁγιασμός, primary aspects of which are abstinence from sexual immorality (4:3), and self-control in

⁶⁷ G. K. Beale, *The Book of Revelation*, NIGTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 1133, rightly notes that in the Bible, totally hardened sinners can even be *commanded* to do evil as “a punishment for their apostasy.”

⁶⁸ Many similar examples could be cited (e.g., Eph 1:4; 1 Thess 2:10; 2 Tim 1:9; Titus 1:8).

ἀγιασμός (4:4), which also manifests itself in sexual purity (4:5–6). The antithesis of ἀγιασμός is impurity (ἀκαθαρσία, 4:7). In each instance in this section, ἀγιασμός could be translated as holiness. The focus in each case is purity and separateness from that which is morally defiling. While ἀγιασμός is indeed a status of separateness from sin, what is especially noteworthy in this section is that it is a status that one must maintain. Ἀγιασμός is what God wills that each believer pursue (4:3). It is a status that will only be evident as they strive to please God “more and more” (4:1). It is a holiness that must be preserved through a constant striving after sexual purity (4:3–8).⁶⁹

Finally, the use of ἀγιασμός in Hebrews 12:14 should also be understood in the same way: if people do not “pursue” (διώκω) “holiness” (ἀγιασμός) throughout their lives they will not see the Lord (i.e., be saved) in the end. Even though ἀγιασμός means separateness from defilement and sin, this separateness must be continually manifest throughout the Christian life. Believers are set apart as holy, and they must strive to preserve that holy status until the final judgment. As Anthony Thiselton puts it, believers must be “*holy in life*, as a habituated pattern which has become reflected in settled character.”⁷⁰ Thus, even in Hebrews, where the definitiveness of sanctification is the most pronounced in the whole NT, it is seen that sanctification/holiness must be maintained over the entirety of a believer’s life.⁷¹

The connection between definitive consecration at conversion and subsequent Christian growth can also be seen in two final texts that show the necessity of believers living in accordance with the holy status they have received in Christ.

First Thessalonians 5:23, the first part of the blessing at the end of the letter, reads as follows: “Now may the God of peace himself sanctify you completely [ἀγιασσαι ὑμᾶς ὀλοτελεῖς], and may your whole spirit and soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.” This verse highlights the connection between sanctification and spiritual growth. In the first half of the verse Paul prays that God would sanctify believers “completely.” Despite the use of the word “completely” (ὀλοτελής) there is no reason to understand this instance of ἀγιαζω as if it does not fit into the positional/consecrational pattern seen in the rest of Scripture. God sets believers apart (he sanctifies them) when he unites them to Christ by faith, but he also will preserve all true believers in holiness/separateness from sin throughout their lives. This is what Paul prays to God for on behalf of the Thessalonian believers. However, the second half of the verse shows that this preservation in holiness is not complete until death or the return of Christ. Being sanctified completely, in other words, is manifested in being preserved in blamelessness until the very end. Being sanctified does not mean growth, but it is a status that must be preserved throughout life. The way believers preserve their holy status (or rather are preserved by God) is by avoiding everything that is defiling, namely, sin.

In 2 Timothy 2 Paul charges Timothy to remind the “faithful men” (2:2) set apart for ministry to “present [themselves] to God as one approved,” (2:15) and to “depart from iniquity” (2:19). As an illustration of the obedience necessary among the “Lord’s servant[s]” (2:24) Paul employs the analogy of a “great house” that has both “honorable” (that is, valuable [τιμῆ]) and “dishonorable” (that is, common [ἀτιμία]) objects in it. Ministers of the gospel are to recognize that they are ordained by God to be “honorable” vessels in God’s house, having been “set apart as holy” (passive participle of ἀγιαζω) by God. The only way to be a “vessel for honorable use, set apart as holy” is to cleanse oneself “from what is

⁶⁹ Ἀγιασμός as a status to be maintained is also evident in 1 Tim 2:15.

⁷⁰ Thiselton, *First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 76, emphasis original.

⁷¹ Peterson (*Possessed by God*, 73–76) himself recognizes this.

dishonorable” (2:21). The necessary outcome of this sanctification, or consecration, is that one would be “ready for every good work” (2:21). In other words, God sets ministers apart (sanctifies them) for his own use, but they are required to maintain this holy status constantly by avoiding that which is dishonorable. In all of their labors they must pursue “every good work,” which includes fleeing youthful passions, pursuing righteousness, faith, love, and peace (2:22), avoiding foolish controversies and quarrels, and being patient and gentle while enduring evil (2:23–25). Sanctification is definitive, but it must lead to transformation.

Thus, believers can be encouraged that the holiness God requires of them is grounded in the holiness they have received through union with Christ. Despite the necessity of striving to grow in grace and to preserve one’s holy status, Christ’s holiness is the only holiness that can in the end bring one into the presence of a perfectly holy God. This is the reality so gloriously laid out in 1 Corinthians 1:30, where we see that Christ himself is our sanctification.⁷²

3. Summary and Conclusions

The biblical word “sanctification” does not mean transformation, but it is clearly connected to transformation. The claim that linking sanctification with renewal and spiritual growth “obscures the distinctive meaning and value of the terminology in the New Testament” needs to be modified.⁷³ The NT pattern can be summarized like this: at conversion believers are definitively set apart (sanctified) for God’s own special use. Also, at conversion believers die with Christ and are raised up with him to newness of life (the doctrine of definitive sanctification). Finally, believers must strive, in reliance on the Holy Spirit, to preserve, and live in light of, their holy status until the end of their lives (the doctrine of progressive sanctification).⁷⁴ While neither the doctrines of definitive sanctification nor progressive sanctification are based narrowly on the meaning of sanctification words, both doctrines are integrally connected to the once-for-all setting apart of believers that *is* denoted by the biblical terminology of sanctification. Sanctification is consecration *for the purpose of* transformation. Thus, the argument that we should not speak (even doctrinally) of sanctification as transformation needs nuancing. Is there really a significant difference in arguing, as Peterson does, that “sanctification means having a new identity, with the obligation to live according to that identity,” rather than arguing that sanctification is a process?⁷⁵

⁷² See also the important reminder from Berkouwer (*Faith and Sanctification*, 77–78): “There is never a stretch along the way of salvation where justification drops out of sight. Genuine sanctification – let it be repeated – stands or falls with this continued orientation toward justification and the remission of sins.... Too often the bond between sanctification and Sola-fide was neglected and the impression was created that sanctification was the humanly operated successor to the divinely worked justification”

⁷³ Pace Peterson, *Possessed*, 13.

⁷⁴ Bavinck (*Reformed Dogmatics*, 4:249–54) links these three dimensions of sanctification together, although the phrase he uses for what Murray calls “definitive sanctification” is “passive sanctification.” See also Robert A. Peterson, *Salvation Applied by the Spirit: Union with Christ* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2015), 336, who notes that even at the level of terminology the Bible presents sanctification “as initial or definitive, progressive or lifelong, and final or complete.” “Lifelong,” however, is better than “progressive” when referring to the specific nuances of sanctification words: sanctification is a status of moral separateness that must be maintained over an entire lifetime.

⁷⁵ Peterson, *Possessed*, 64.

As we have seen, one could argue (like Peterson) that other terminology corresponds more closely with biblical usage. For example one could (as John Calvin does) use the word regeneration rather than sanctification.⁷⁶ This could be said to have the benefit of simplicity: believers are regenerated by God at conversion, and God continues to regenerate (renew) them until the end of their lives. This, however, would simply be using different words to convey the same theological reality that is conveyed in the doctrines of definitive and progressive sanctification. And it is very doubtful whether the lexicographical meaning of *any* single biblical word (including regeneration) can capture the entire picture of Christian development from conversion to final glorification.⁷⁷ What is of primary importance is the substance of the concept being described, not the specific word used as the doctrinal heading (sanctification, regeneration, etc.). Using the word sanctification to depict Spirit-wrought transformation of believers seems to have become so entrenched in theological discussion that employing a different term would probably introduce more confusion than clarity. And more significantly, we have seen that sanctification terminology does indeed have a close and vital link with transformation. *Most* importantly, the substance of the *doctrines* of definitive and progressive sanctification is indeed biblical.

⁷⁶ On this see Cornelis P. Venema, *Accepted and Renewed in Christ: The “Twofold Grace of God” and the Interpretation of Calvin’s Theology*, Reformed Historical Theology (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 2007), 9n1. For example, Venema (*Accepted*, 113) cites Calvin’s commentary on Acts 5:31 (CO 48.111): “For Christ imparts the Spirit of regeneration to us in order that he may renew us within ... and that a new life may then follow the renewal of mind and heart.” However, as Venema (*Accepted*, 112) notes, Calvin’s preference for the word regeneration marks a terminological, rather than a material, difference with later formulations of the doctrine of progressive sanctification: “Calvin uses the terms ‘regeneration,’ ‘repentance,’ and ‘sanctification’ synonymously.”

⁷⁷ On this, with specific reference to David Peterson’s argument, see Allen, *Sanctification*, 28: “Far too frequently, then, a doctrine of sanctification can be bound by those passages and portions of the Bible that employ the idioms of holiness and sanctification alone.”

Finessing Independent Attestation: A Study in Interdisciplinary Biblical Criticism

— Lydia McGrew —

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Hidden in Plain View: Undesigned Coincidences in the Gospels and Acts.*

Abstract: The claim that some incident or saying in the Gospels is multiply and independently attested is sometimes made in the wrong way by biblical scholars. Insights from formal epistemology can help to sharpen the requirements for alleging independent attestation to avoid such problems. In the course of this analysis it becomes clear that independent attestation is entangled with the connection between the documents and the facts, so that it is not possible simultaneously to theorize that the differences between accounts are due to the authors' embellishment while also arguing persuasively that the accounts have the relevant kind of independence for multiple attestation. I discuss three cases where independence has either been claimed inaccurately or has been claimed in such a way that the scholar's own theory blocks the route to arguing independence. This study illustrates the need for cross-disciplinary interaction in biblical criticism.

The criterion of multiple attestation is crucial in biblical studies, particularly in historical Jesus studies. While doubts are often conceded about the historicity of a singly-attested incident, when there is reason to believe that an event has been attested in multiple independent sources it is often accepted despite a hesitation to affirm the strong historical reliability of the individual documents.

A problem arises, however, when “independence” is either not defined clearly or not understood with sufficient rigor. Recent work in formal epistemology shows that the correct understanding of multiple independent attestation to an event involves independence of the testimonies given the negation of the hypothesis in question. For example, we should be able to argue that the accounts that affirm some core event would have had to affirm that core in some separate, independent fashion even if the core event did *not* occur. Moreover, the point of multiple attestation to events should be the argument that the accounts indicate independent access to what really happened, not merely independent access to some common tradition that may or may not correctly represent reality.

This realization makes it important not to confuse literary independence among accounts (e.g., that one account was not copied from another) with the relevant kind of causal and probabilistic independence. The former is helpful but not sufficient. If, for example, two accounts plausibly were derived from the same oral tradition or the same people, then, even if they were not copied from each other, they are not independent in the relevant sense for purposes of confirming the incident. This issue becomes acute when biblical scholars attempt to affirm the perspective of critical scholarship by conceding, even if only for the sake of the argument, that the differences between or among accounts are the result of imagination or invention on the part of the authors. Once that move has been made, those differences cannot confirm the relevant kind of independence.

I will discuss three examples taken from New Testament scholars in which independent, multiple attestation has been alleged without sufficient nuance. These problems in biblical studies illustrate two points. First, since multiple attestation cannot be invoked in the way that some biblical scholars have been in the habit of doing, there will be a need for a less concessive approach to the robust individual reliability of biblical documents if the incidents within them are to be adequately confirmed. Second, probability theory (or commonsense intuition that tracks probability-theoretic insights) should be permitted to inform biblical studies.

1. If the Theory Were False, Would the Accounts Be Dependent or Independent?

Suppose that two witnesses testify that they have seen a bank robbery. Their descriptions of the robbery and the robber have quite a bit of overlap. When detectives make use of their testimonies, they want to be able to argue that they are independent witnesses, so that they can say that they have two reports of the robbery rather than, in effect, only one. But what does “independent” mean in this context?

One explanation of “independent” that is often given is that the witnesses have not colluded or that one has not copied from one another. Either of those scenarios would certainly violate independence, but to say that those scenarios are false does not constitute a general account of the relevant type of independence.

Recently published probabilistic analysis shows that the type of independence needed, perhaps surprisingly, relates to the negation of the hypothesis.¹ Suppose that the salient hypothesis is “Jones robbed the bank,” where Jones is a person who closely meets the specific description given by the witnesses. Now suppose that it were *false* that Jones robbed the bank. To say that the witness testimonies are independent in the relevant sense for confirmation is to say that, given that Jones did *not* rob the bank and that we have one witness testimony describing the robber, we would have *no additional reason* to expect the specific content of the other witness’s testimony. One witness’s testimony would not help us to infer the content of the other witness’s testimony given that Jones didn’t rob the bank. If Jones didn’t rob the bank, and if the witnesses are *independent* in the relevant sense, then in the scenario just described they have both given an excellent and similar description of Jones by sheer coincidence. It is the implausibility of this coincidence that makes their agreement so powerful in the case against Jones.

Obviously, if one person was not even present at the time and copied his report from the other, this copying ruins that sort of independence. Even if Jones were completely innocent, given this theory we

¹Lydia McGrew, “Evidential Diversity and the Negation of H: A Probabilistic Account of the Value of Varied Evidence,” *Ergo* 3.10 (2016), <http://dx.doi.org/10.3998/ergo.12405314.0003.010>.

would expect the second report to resemble the first report. But that is not the only way for independence to fail. Suppose, instead, that both witnesses got their account of the appearance of the robber from the same *third* person. Then we would also expect their reports to resemble each other, even given Jones's innocence. The accuracy of the description, in that case, depends solely upon the reliability of the single source that lies behind *both* of the (supposed) witnesses we know about. In both of these cases (both copying from one another and copying from a common source) there are not really two sources of information but functionally only one. That is why these both illustrate a failure of the relevant kind of independence.

These are simplified scenarios. One could have partial dependence if both witnesses were really present but one overheard the testimony of the other and subconsciously manufactured some portion of his apparent memories because of that influence, despite trying to be purely factual about what he saw. Again, such partial dependence can be understood best by thinking about the negation of "Jones robbed the bank." If Witness B subconsciously manufactured a memory of a mole on the side of the robber's face because he overheard Witness A, then even if Jones (who has such a mole) is completely innocent, both witnesses would be expected to attest to a mole on the robber's face. One witness's testimony on that point would, *ex hypothesi*, give a clue to what the other witness would say.

Those evaluating different witnesses or written sources can use various arguments to try to support independence as opposed to dependence. They can argue that the different authors or witnesses were isolated and would have had no way to know of each other's statements. They can argue that there was no time or opportunity for a common traditional source to develop from which both could be drawing. They can argue on other grounds that the witnesses really were present, that they have been individually found to be right on other points, that their character as truth-tellers who do not collude is vouched for, and so forth. More interestingly, one can examine the specific contents of the reports themselves for signs of the relevant type of independence. Perhaps the kinds of details on which the reports differ are, as experience has shown, what we would expect from the casual variation found in the testimony of witnesses who are trying to tell the truth. Perhaps the kinds of differences are such as might naturally arise from a different physical vantage point or from entering the scene at different times. One very fruitful type of variation is what is known as an undesigned coincidence; in this type of case, the testimonies vary in such a way that the differences fit together explanatorily—a good indication of independent access to the events themselves.²

Philosophers of science have known for a long time that varied evidence is more valuable to confirmation than evidence that is identical. This is why witnesses who show some variation in their reports are preferable to those that are too similar. William Paley noted long ago that "the usual character of human testimony is substantial truth under circumstantial variety,"³ a fact that also has applicability

² See William Paley, *Horae Paulinae* (London: SPCK, 1877); J. J. Blunt, *Undesigned Coincidences in the Writings Both of the Old and New Testament: An Argument of Their Veracity* (Birmingham, UK: The Christadelphian, 1847); Lydia McGrew, *Hidden in Plain View: Undesigned Coincidences in the Gospels and Acts* (Chillicothe, OH: DeWard, 2017); Lydia McGrew, "Undesigned Coincidences and Coherence For an Hypothesis," *Erkenntnis* (2018), <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10670-018-0050-4>.

³ William Paley, *A View of the Evidences of Christianity, In Three Parts*, repr. ed. (Murfreesboro, TN: DeHoff, 1952), 336.

in courts of law. The understanding of independence as independence given the negation has helped, in recent years, to spell out the reason for the value of varied evidence.⁴

A more thorough understanding of independence helps us to avoid pitfalls in claiming independent attestation in all historical endeavors, including historical Jesus studies and historical apologetics.

2. *The Empty Tomb and 1 Corinthians 15*

William Lane Craig has argued in multiple places that Paul's "creed" in 1 Corinthians 15:3–8 constitutes an independent attestation to Jesus's empty tomb.

Jesus' empty tomb is also mentioned in the early sermons independently preserved in the Acts of the Apostles (2.29; 13.36), and it's implied by the very old tradition handed on by Paul in his first letter to the Corinthian church (I Cor. 15.4). Thus, we have multiple early attestation of the fact of the empty tomb in at least four independent sources.⁵

We have seen that in 1 Corinthians 15:3–5 Paul quotes from an extremely early tradition that refers to Christ's burial and resurrection. Although the empty tomb is not explicitly mentioned, a comparison of the four-line formula with the Gospel narratives on the one hand and the sermons in Acts on the other reveals that the third line is, in fact, a summary of the empty tomb narrative.... We have, then, extraordinarily early, independent evidence for the fact of Jesus' empty tomb.⁶

Elsewhere Craig says that this independent attestation is "both in the pre-Markan passion story and also in the pre-Pauline formula quoted in 1 Corinthians 15."⁷

If we assume that the Gospel of Mark had not yet been written by the time that Paul received the information expressed in these verses of 1 Corinthians, and perhaps not even by the time that 1 Corinthians was written, it is true to say that this credal affirmation is not literarily dependent upon Mark. If, moreover, we speak of a written "pre-Markan passion narrative," we might even argue that Paul's statements in 1 Corinthians 15 are not dependent upon such a written source, though that would be somewhat harder to support. In general, it is plausible that what Paul says in 1 Corinthians 15 is not *literarily* dependent upon any of the actual Gospel narratives.

But that is not all that is needed for the relevant kind of independence for the apologist's purposes. It's important to remember that Craig cannot merely be arguing that 1 Corinthians 15 provides independent attestation that this is *what the apostles affirmed*. Rather, this passage is supposed to be an independent attestation *to the fact of the empty tomb*. If it is merely independent attestation to the

⁴ Branden Fitelson, "A Bayesian Account of Independent Evidence with Applications," *Philosophy of Science* 68.3 (2001): S123–S140, <https://doi.org/10.1086/392903>; McGrew, "Evidential Diversity and the Negation of H"; Lydia McGrew, "Accounting for Dependence: Relative Consilience as a Correction Factor in Cumulative Case Arguments," *Australasian Journal of Philosophy* 95.3 (2017): 563–69.

⁵ William Lane Craig, "Independent Sources for Jesus' Burial and Empty Tomb," *Reasonable Faith*, 6 April 2009, <http://tinyurl.com/y4h6aftw>.

⁶ William Lane Craig, *Reasonable Faith: Christian Truth and Apologetics*, 3rd ed. (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2008), 365.

⁷ William Lane Craig, "The Doctrine of Christ," *Reasonable Faith*, 12 December 2017, <http://tinyurl.com/y3twl4k4>.

disciples' affirmation of the resurrection (and thus implicitly to the empty tomb), then our knowledge of the truth or falsehood of the empty tomb claim depends upon the reliability of the disciples that are the common source behind both the Gospel accounts and Paul's affirmation in 1 Corinthians 15.

Nor is there any strong reason to assume that the affirmation in Mark (or a "pre-Markan passion story") comes from a definitely distinct apostle from the affirmation on which Paul is depending in 1 Corinthians 15. We have no special reason to think, for example, that the account in Mark comes from Peter but the creedal affirmation in 1 Corinthians 15 comes from James instead.

Presumably Paul received information from the Christian community in Damascus (Acts 9) and eventually from the apostles in Jerusalem (Gal 1:18). In the end, Paul's information about the empty tomb was probably received directly or indirectly from the teaching of the apostles. Indeed, Paul's connection with the apostles is sometimes used to argue that the apostles themselves believed in a physical resurrection since Paul apparently did, and Paul's gospel was taken to be in harmony with theirs.⁸ Paul does not indicate that he spoke to one of the women who was present at the empty tomb and who is *not* a source behind any of the Gospel accounts. Nor is there sufficient detail in Paul's account to support such a conclusion, as there might be if he had given his own version of the discovery of the tomb. As Craig acknowledges, the empty tomb is not even mentioned explicitly by Paul.

The Gospel accounts of the empty tomb, in contrast, *do* provide such varying details. They mention different names of women present, which Richard Bauckham has argued may indicate differing human sources used by the authors.⁹ They give somewhat different accounts of the words of the angels. John's account gives the perspective of Mary Magdalene very particularly, whereas Matthew seems to follow some others who were with her. Only Luke mentions Joanna (Luke 24:10). These are the kinds of details that help us to make an argument that the authors of the accounts had independent lines of access *to the facts attested*, not merely to the existence of apostolic teaching that included the affirmation of an empty tomb.¹⁰

In short, if the *same people* lie behind Paul's affirmations in 1 Corinthians 15 and some or all of the Gospel accounts of the empty tomb (such as Mark's account), then Paul's implication of the empty tomb is not independent of those accounts in the relevant sense. It goes back to a common source, though plausibly a human rather than a written source. And nothing in the brief verses in 1 Corinthians 15 permits us to argue otherwise.

The attempt to use 1 Corinthians 15 as an independent attestation to the empty tomb may spring from a confusion between literary independence and the relevant kind of causal independent access to the facts.¹¹ If the tomb was *not* empty (that is, given the negation of the hypothesis under consideration),

⁸ E.g., Michael R. Licona, *The Resurrection: A New Historiographical Approach* (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity, 2010), 231–32, 437.

⁹ Richard Bauckham, *Jesus and the Eyewitnesses* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006), 48–51.

¹⁰ Craig does mention briefly such differences among the Gospel accounts of the empty tomb. *Reasonable Faith*, 365–66. As long as one does not concede that those differences are the result of invention (see later sections), they can function to support independence. Here I am evaluating *only* Craig's claim that 1 Corinthians 15 constitutes independent attestation to the empty tomb.

¹¹ While causal independence and probabilistic independence are not identical, in the case of testimony they are closely connected. See, for example, Gregory Wheeler and Richard Scheines, "Coherence and Confirmation Through Causation," *Mind* 122.485 (2013):135–70; McGrew, "Evidential Diversity and the Negation of H"; McGrew, "Accounting for Dependence," 567–69,

if Paul got his understanding of the empty tomb from the apostles who got their information from the women, and if the women's (in that case inaccurate) story lies behind (say) the Markan account, then we would expect *both* Paul and Mark to imply or state that the tomb was empty.

In contrast, if Luke's account of the empty tomb derives in whole or in part from Woman A and Mark's account derives in whole or in part from Woman B, and if A and B did not agree to collude upon a false tale or copy their claim about the empty tomb from some other source, then Luke's and Mark's accounts have a claim to be independent in the relevant sense. Moreover, the differing details of the accounts give us some purchase upon the probability that this is the case. We can attempt to argue that variations of the kind that we find are not likely to arise in accounts that are the result of collusion, copying from a common source, or imaginative variation upon the core of a common source. That is the sort of argument that needs to be made to claim multiple attestation, but it is not available in the case of the creed in 1 Corinthians.

3. The Infancy Narratives as "Midrash"

In a written debate with Bart Ehrman, Michael Licona brings up an hypothesis about the origin of the infancy narratives.

Bart provides the example of the differences between the infancy narratives in Matthew and Luke. In my opinion, those narratives include the most difficult and profound differences in the Gospels.... Here I must acknowledge that I don't know what's going on and have no detailed explanations for these differences. I think one can provide some plausible solutions. But I admit they are speculative.... However—even though, as I say, I don't know what's going on here to cause the differences—let's just speculate for a moment and consider the following scenario. Matthew and Luke both agree that a Jewish virgin named Mary who was engaged to a Jewish man named Joseph gave birth to Jesus in Bethlehem. The early Christians all knew this much. However, little else was remembered about this event. So, Matthew and Luke added details to their account to create a more interesting narrative of Jesus's birth, a type of midrash. I'm not saying this is what Matthew and Luke did. I don't know what's going on with the infancy narratives. However, if this occurred, we would have to take the matter of genre—midrash—into consideration and recognize that the historicity of the details outside of the story's core would be questionable, while the core itself could stand. After all, with such differences between the accounts in Matthew and Luke, one could reasonably argue that the core is attested by multiple independent sources.¹²

The precise degree of credibility Licona is giving to this suggestion is a little difficult to assess. He says that he can think of "solutions" that are both "plausible" and "speculative" to what he implies is a serious difficulty with harmonizing the infancy narratives, though he does not say in detail why he regards these differences as so particularly difficult. He then invites the reader to "speculate for a moment" and produces only one hypothesis, as just quoted. Though he carefully stipulates that he is not

¹²Michael R. Licona, "Licona Responds to Ehrman on New Testament Reliability," *The Best Schools*, <http://tinyurl.com/y4uonlya>.

saying that this *is* what Matthew and Luke did, it is not unreasonable to conclude that this is one of the plausible though speculative hypotheses to which he has just referred.

But I need not decide just how credible Licona considers this theory to be in order to note a problem with his use of “attested by multiple independent sources.” What Licona calls the “core” of the infancy narratives is understood as the overlap in express assertion or clear implication between them. This would be the conjunction of propositions such as, “Jesus was born in Bethlehem,” “The mother of Jesus was a Jewish virgin named Mary,” “Mary was engaged to a Jewish man named Joseph,” and so forth.

Licona’s use of phrases using success verbs such as “the early Christians all knew this much” and “little else was remembered” cannot be taken to mean by definition that this overlapping content is true, for that would be question-begging. We are trying to assess how Luke’s and Matthew’s narratives provide evidence for the truth of that overlap and whether, on Licona’s speculation, they constitute “multiple independent sources.” So the “core” cannot be *assumed* to be true as part of the theory put forward. Hence, “knew” and “remembered” should be taken to mean something like “commonly believed.” With that adjustment to avoid question-begging in favor of the truth of the overlap, Licona’s speculation amounts to the claim that Luke and Matthew both had access to a common, accepted tradition at the time they were writing their Gospels that included these propositions and “little else.”

On the hypothesis Licona raises, Luke and Matthew then took this commonly accepted set of traditions about Jesus’s birth and imaginatively embellished them to “create a more interesting narrative”; he refers to this embellishment as “midrash.”¹³ The differences between the two narratives, then, are the result of Luke’s and Matthew’s imaginations. They are not the result of Luke’s and Matthew’s having independent access to the events that actually happened, as would occur in a case where one witness saw or noticed the bank robber’s face while another saw or noticed his gait. If, in contrast, Luke had contact with the family of Mary (a suggestion made by Richard Bauckham¹⁴) whereas Matthew had contact with someone who had heard Joseph’s portions of the story, this could constitute genuinely independent access to *the events surrounding Jesus’s birth*. And if we leave open the possibility that the differences between the narratives are due to *that* sort of causal independence, with one source reporting some things that the other does not, then the stories might constitute multiple and relevantly independent access to the overlap.

But that is not the conjecture. The conjecture instead is that there was what we might call an epistemic “node” in the form of the accepted tradition and that the two evangelists diverged from that node by taking the content of tradition and elaborating upon it. In that case, there are not two independent sources attesting to the truth of the content of the overlap but rather only one source—the “node” representing the beliefs widely held, to which they both had access. The truth or falsity of the content of the overlap thus comes down to the reliability or otherwise of that tradition.

To return to the probabilistic analysis given earlier, consider the question of independence given the negation of the hypothesis in question. Suppose that some (or all) of the propositions in the overlap between Luke and Matthew were *false*. On the theory Licona puts forward, can we then say that it is a

¹³ This type of use of the term “midrash” is expressly rejected by N. T. Wright in *Who Was Jesus*, new ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2014), 92–97. However, the terminology or attempted genre classification does not affect my point about independence.

¹⁴ Richard Bauckham, “Luke’s Infancy Narrative as Oral History in Scriptural Form,” in *The Gospels: History and Christology: The Search of Joseph Ratzinger-Benedict XVI*, ed. Bernardo Estrada, Ermenegildo Manicardi, and Armand Puig i Tàrrach (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2013), 1:399–417.

remarkable coincidence that Luke and Matthew agree on the overlap? Not at all. For the hypothesis in question is that they both had access to that overlapping content in the form of tradition believed by Christians. If the Christians were wrong about that content, Luke and Matthew would not be agreeing on it by astonishing happenstance. Rather, *ex hypothesi*, they would be agreeing upon it because they were both getting it from the common (partially or wholly incorrect) tradition.

It would be useful if the differences between the narratives could help to solve this problem, and Licona implies that they are useful. When arguing for relevant independence, however, one needs to use the differences between narratives to argue that the different accounts go back, perhaps indirectly, to different sources with some claim to have known *what really happened*. I illustrated this earlier when discussing the possibility that different Gospel accounts of the discovery of the empty tomb might reflect the perspectives of different women who were there at the time. I illustrated that procedure in this section by raising the possibility that one of the Gospel authors had access to an account that came (perhaps indirectly) from Mary while the other had access to an account that came (perhaps indirectly) from Joseph and that their differences reflected this fact. This is an illustration in practice of the way that varied evidence is helpful to confirmation.

But Licona has blocked that sort of appeal to differences, given the hypothesis in question, by speculating that the differences are *not* the result of separate access to the real events (whatever those events might be) but rather of separate creative imaginations on the part of the authors in crafting their “midrash” narratives. This would be like having two authors read the same common historical source and then write up partially invented accounts that have some overlap (borrowed from the common source) but are different simply because they chose to invent different added material. There is, in that case, only *one source* behind both of them. I am not saying that Licona means that “what was remembered” about Jesus’s birth was written down by the time that Luke and Matthew wrote, but the same point applies to a common oral tradition on which each author expands. Their differences do not attest to independent access to what happened.

In short, independence of the authors’ creative personal imaginations is the wrong kind of independence for purposes of multiple attestation to events.

4. “I Thirst” and Synoptic Tradition

Both Daniel Wallace and, following him, Michael Licona have made a rather surprising suggestion about the saying “I thirst” from the cross. Here is Licona’s treatment:

In Jesus’s next-to-last statement on the cross, Mark // Matthew have Jesus say, “My God! My God! Why have you forsaken me?” But John appears to substitute “I am thirsty.” In Jesus’s final statement on the cross, Mark // Matthew report that Jesus then cried out loudly and died; Luke reports that Jesus cried out loudly, “Father, into your hands I entrust my spirit,” then died; and John reports that Jesus said, “It is finished,” then died.... Virtually all specialists of John’s Gospel acknowledge that the evangelist often adapted the traditions about Jesus. These two utterances of Jesus may be an instance when we can observe the extent to which John redacted existing tradition. For the next-to-last logion, it appears that John has redacted “My God! My God! Why have you forsaken me?” (Mark // Matthew) to say, “I am thirsty.” Daniel Wallace proposes that since every occurrence of “thirst” in John carries the meaning of being devoid of God’s Spirit, the

evangelist has reworked what Jesus said “into an entirely different form.” It is “a dynamic equivalent transformation” of what we read in Mark // Matthew. Accordingly, in John, Jesus is stating that God has abandoned him. In Mark 15:34, Jesus quotes Ps. 22:1: “My God! My God! Why have you forsaken me?” Thus, John can write, “Knowing that everything had now been accomplished, in order that the Scripture may be fulfilled..., Jesus said, “I am thirsty” (John 19:28, emphasis added). John has redacted Jesus’s words but has retained their meaning.¹⁵

Licona addresses independence in an endnote:

If John is independent of the Synoptic tradition as many scholars hold, we may have multiple independent sources pertaining to this logion with Mark’s version being closer to what Jesus may have uttered.¹⁶

Following a longer discussion of his theory that “I thirst” is a “dynamic equivalent transformation” of “My God, why have you forsaken me?” and other suggestions in the same vein, Wallace makes a similar comment about independence:

In my own thinking, the thesis put forth here gives fresh impetus to the importance of that question [of John’s relation to the Synoptics], for *if John is independent of the Synoptics, then his dominical transmutations still need to be counted as yet another vote in multiple attestation.*¹⁷

Wallace admits that “on the surface, the two utterances do not look *at all* alike”¹⁸ and calls his suggestions “radical repackaging of the dominical material so that it no longer looks like the original saying.”¹⁹ He believes, however, that John’s recorded saying “I thirst” bears the same meaning as “My God, why have you forsaken me?” at a deep, theological level, and he provides several pages of discussion to this effect. I find his arguments for the claim that John has made such a repackaging quite unconvincing, but in this essay I will confine myself to discussing the claim made by both Wallace and Licona concerning multiple independent attestation and the implications of their theories for the ability to make that claim.

A major issue that makes this claim of multiple attestation unusual is the alleged radical transformation itself, and there will be no way to avoid discussing the way that that aspect of the theory intersects with the statement that John attests to the same thing that the Synoptic Gospels attest to. Similar considerations apply to the Licona/Wallace suggestion concerning “It is finished.” In these cases both the use of “attestation” and the use of “independent” are problematic, and I will deal with both.

A further potential ambiguity *may* be present concerning the term “tradition” as used by Licona and Wallace. Licona’s usage appears clear:

¹⁵ Michael R. Licona, *Why Are There Differences in the Gospels?* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 165–66.

¹⁶ Licona, *Why Are There Differences*, 252n119.

¹⁷ Daniel B. Wallace, “*Ipsissima Vox* and the Seven Words from the Cross: A Test Case for John’s Use of the Tradition” (paper presented at the Regional Meeting of the Society for Biblical Literature, Dallas, TX, 5 March 2000), 12, emphasis in original.

¹⁸ Wallace, “*Ipsissima Vox*,” 4.

¹⁹ Wallace, “*Ipsissima Vox*,” 12.

Virtually all specialists of John's Gospel acknowledge that the evangelist often adapted the traditions about Jesus. These two utterances of Jesus may be an instance when we can observe the extent to which John redacted existing tradition.²⁰

The phrase "the traditions about Jesus" leads one to assume that, by "traditions" and "existing tradition" Licona does not mean to refer to what *actually happened* but rather means to refer to *what was believed later on* about what actually happened, as he does in the case of the infancy narratives.

Wallace says:

The doors that were closed on this issue with Dodd's *Historical Tradition in the Fourth Gospel* have been slowly pried open in the last two decades once again.... Thus, even though he is clearly giving a theological interpretation of the life of Jesus, a careful examination of the data gives sufficient evidence that John's representation is thoroughly grounded in the tradition.²¹

The reference to C. H. Dodd brings to mind a useful terminological point made by D. A. Carson—namely, that when Dodd says that John drew something out of the tradition, he means that it is historical.²² Sometimes the term "tradition" functions in New Testament scholarship in such a way that its meaning wavers between referring to reality itself and referring to the Christians' beliefs or teachings about reality. So it is possible that Wallace's statement that "John's representation is thoroughly grounded in the tradition" is meant to state that John is attesting to the events rather than only to the existence and content of a tradition (in the narrower sense) similar to that found in the Synoptic Gospels. However, evidence that Wallace as well as Licona is using "tradition" here to mean beliefs *about* what Jesus said (rather than simply reality) is found in this statement: "I take the last two words in John as this evangelist's version of two of the utterances found in the synoptic tradition."²³

We must ask what can be meant in these theories when it is said that John and the Synoptics constitute multiple attestation. Whether we take this alleged attestation by John to be to the contents of a tradition about Jesus's words or to the content of Jesus's actual words, in either case there is a rather serious problem with claiming that John is attesting to the same thing by "I thirst" that the Synoptic Gospels attest to by, "My God, why have you forsaken me?" Indeed, a question that immediately springs to mind upon reading Wallace's statement that John will need to be counted as "another vote in multiple attestation" is, "Attestation to *what?*" Wallace does not say. Licona says that it would be multiple attestation "pertaining to this *logion*," not addressing the fact that it is unclear what "this logion" is, given that the facial content of the two sayings is entirely different. Are Licona and Wallace saying that John actually *attests* that Jesus said (or attests to the existence of a tradition that Jesus said), "My God, why have you forsaken me?"

Again, the discipline of epistemology is helpful here, for epistemic analysis tells us that a crucial part of discussing the confirmational impact of testimony is getting quite clear on what the hypothesis

²⁰ Licona, *Why Are There Differences*, 165.

²¹ Wallace, "*Ipsissima Vox*," 12.

²² D. A. Carson, "Historical Tradition in the Fourth Gospel: After Dodd, What?," in *Gospel Perspectives: Studies of History and Tradition in the Four Gospels*, ed. R. T. France and David Wenham (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1981), 2:106.

²³ Wallace, "*Ipsissima Vox*," 2.

in question *is*.²⁴ If we want to ask about the epistemic impact of some evidence, we need to have clearly in view the proposition for which (or against which) it is supposed to be evidence. Neither Wallace nor Licona addresses this question. But they both indicate that the earlier tradition (or the reality) was that Jesus said something like, “My God, why have you forsaken me?” *instead of* “I thirst.” So let us take it that the hypothesis is “Jesus said something recognizably, facially similar to, ‘My God, why have you forsaken me?’ on the cross.” If we wish to loosen up the hypothesis a bit more, we could make it something like, “Jesus made a lament on the cross concerning a sense of spiritual abandonment or emptiness.” Or we could make the hypothesis something parallel to one of these for the contents of tradition: “There existed a tradition according to which...,” and so on.

Let us ask, then, whether John’s record that Jesus said, “I thirst” is an attestation to any of these hypotheses. In particular, we must ask whether it is an attestation to any of these hypotheses given that 1) the event of Jesus’ saying something recognizable as “I thirst” (either these words or something like, “Give me to drink,” etc.) did not occur, and 2) John has radically transformed whatever did occur or the tradition he had heard about what did occur into a form that *no longer looks at all like the original saying*.

Without those two premises, one might gain some slight indirect confirmation for one or more of the suggested hypotheses. For example, if Jesus really did express physical thirst on the cross as apparently recorded in John’s narrative, perhaps he would also not have been averse to expressing spiritual lament. There might be some weak force to that argument. But that, of course, is an argument that runs “through” the supposition that John is attesting fairly literally to what actually occurred, which is denied by the Wallace/Licona theory.²⁵ Once one has hypothesized that John has engaged in such a radical transformation, how can his record give added confirmation to the saying recorded in the Synoptics? The mere fact that Wallace and Licona *conjecture* that Jesus did not utter a cry of thirst and that John is metaphorically alluding to a (facially) completely different utterance does not produce *confirmation* from John of the completely different utterance.

A thought experiment is helpful here: If we knew only what John records and if we were told that it is a radical transformation of reality or tradition into a form that does not look on its face at all like the original, what would we thereby be able to affirm or even reasonably suggest about the *content* of the tradition or reality? *Perhaps* that Jesus spoke at all on the cross. *Perhaps* that he expressed *some sort of* anguish, though a wordless cry or some Aramaic interjection expressing undifferentiated pain would satisfy that description. It simply is incorrect to say that, on the theory in question, John’s Gospel attests to any *specific* content in the tradition, much less to the specific content that is also attested to by “My God, why have you forsaken me?” in the Synoptics.

Another thought experiment may make the same point clear: Suppose that we were told that the story of the raising of Lazarus was a radical transformation, into a form that looks completely different, of something that Jesus did or said or a tradition about what Jesus did or said. To what could we then say that it is an attestation? It certainly wouldn’t be an attestation to one *particular* story that we find in the Synoptic Gospels. It might have been inspired by some event or tradition that we don’t retain otherwise. Or it might have been inspired by a healing rather than a resurrection. Or it might have been inspired

²⁴ Lydia McGrew, “Bayes Factors All the Way: Toward a New View of Coherence and Truth,” *Theoria* 82 (2016): 329–33.

²⁵ For the concept of confirmation “through” another proposition, see Lydia McGrew and Timothy McGrew, “Foundationalism, Probability, and Mutual Support,” *Erkenntnis* 68 (2008): 55–77.

by either the raising of the widow's son at Nain or by the raising of Jairus's daughter. Or it might be a dramatization of the *general* proposition that Jesus raised the dead and healed the sick. Such a claim would make it impossible to say what John's record "attests" to at that particular point and would not single out any particular bit of synoptic content for John to "attest to" independently.

That is the problem with "attestation." What about independence? Here once again we run into the same issue discussed in the previous sections. Even if John is *literarily* independent of the Synoptic Gospels—that is, he did not have them available to him or did not literarily rely on them—it does not follow that his account represents independent access *to events*. Ultimately, of course, the hope is that multiple independent attestation will give us a stronger fix on what the historical Jesus actually said and did. But if John is at this point merely (radically) modifying a *tradition* to the effect that Jesus said, "My God, why have you forsaken me?" which the synoptic authors also knew of, then this conjecture does not tell us that he has independent access or provides independent testimony to what Jesus actually said on the cross.

This issue would be relevant even if John recognizably recorded, "My God, why have you forsaken me?" as, in fact, he does not. This problem exists therefore in addition to the problem with attestation just discussed. Even if John recorded a saying facially similar to "My God, why have you forsaken me?" one would have to argue for the *relevant* kind of independence from the Synoptics. If, *ex hypothesi*, he got his knowledge of that saying from a "synoptic tradition" (Wallace's phrase) or from "the traditions about Jesus" (Licona's phrase), and if the synoptic authors also knew those same traditions, then the relevant type of independence does not hold. On that hypothesis, John is not helpful (in addition to the Synoptics) concerning the conclusion that Jesus uttered that saying or something visibly like it. Here we have the "single node" problem discussed in a previous section.

Suppose that Licona and Wallace were to hypothesize instead that John is based upon separate access to the events themselves and is radically modifying the saying, "My God, why have you forsaken me?" as he knew of it in some way *other than* by a tradition known to the synoptic authors. Licona (perhaps differing a bit from Wallace at this point) actually says that John was "independent of the Synoptic tradition," which may tend in this direction—implying that John had an entirely separate tradition as his source.

But at this point, the problem of the radical transformation returns. How could Licona and/or Wallace go about arguing for a causal hypothesis of independent access to the events? As in the case of the infancy narratives, one would *like* to be able to use differences between the accounts to argue that they really represent separate access to the events—to what Jesus said and what occurred in his Passion. This is what one would do if one were arguing for the truth of some clear point of overlap, using other points of divergence to show independence. One might point to the fact that John records "I thirst" while the Synoptics do not and that they record sayings he doesn't have. One could then use these facts to support the conclusion that (plausibly) John and the Synoptics are based upon different human lines of information about the Passion. Perhaps either John or someone present at the cross *heard* Jesus say, "I thirst," while the human sources lying behind the Synoptic Gospels either did not hear or did not report this particular saying and reported others instead. In this way one would be using the differences between the accounts to argue for plausible different access to events, perhaps from different physical vantage points (one person might have been closer to the cross than another, for example), or for different reports from witnesses with direct access based upon differential memory or

saliency. Then one could use this independence to support something in the Passion narrative on which John and the Synoptics are clearly agreeing.

But that path is not open to Licona and Wallace. Their hypothesis is that John is *not* actually attesting to a different saying at all and that the different appearance of the saying in his Gospel is due *not* to the fact that he and the Synoptics report different aspects of reality but instead to processes taking place in the evangelist's own mind—his decision to make a theological metaphor in his narrative instead of recording something recognizably like what would have been literally heard by bystanders.

Wallace's and Licona's theories make it difficult even to use other differences between John's and the Synoptics' crucifixion stories to make an argument for true independence. The saying, "It is finished" in John, like "I thirst," is allegedly not the result of differential access, memory, or decision to report real events but rather the result of John's personal decision to make a radical transformation.²⁶ At that point it would seem arbitrary to argue that, since only John records that (e.g.) the soldiers cast lots because one of Jesus's garments was seamless (John 19:23–24), he probably has some independent access to real events and reports these varied details in an ordinary historical fashion. Perhaps the seamless garment was also a Johannine addition, crafted to create a rationale for the fulfillment of prophecy when the soldiers cast lots.

Wallace suggests that there are still more places where John, though appearing to record a different saying or even discourse, is actually making a radical transformation of something we find recorded in the Synoptics. For example, he suggests that the passage in which Jesus assures his disciples that in his Father's house are many dwelling places (John 14:1–3) may be a Johannine transformation of the tradition of the Olivet Discourse.²⁷

Licona has conjectured additional places for John to have altered material or added embellishments. For example, he theorizes that John may have added the incident in which Jesus breathes on the disciples and says, "Receive the Holy Spirit" in order to "allude to the event at Pentecost."²⁸ This would not even be an alleged transformation of some other words of Jesus on earth. He also suggests that John may have "relocated" the appearance to Mary Magdalene.²⁹ But if the appearance to Mary Magdalene really took place along with the appearance to the women recorded in Matthew 28, then the scene in John 20 must include quite a lot of invented dialogue and circumstances. The entire scene between Jesus and Mary Magdalene in John 20 presupposes that she did not already know he was risen and that she is staying near the tomb rather than running away from it. This is why she thinks that Jesus is the gardener and why she is able to look into the tomb while weeping and see the angels.

The point is not that Licona is alone in his various theories. (E.g., Craig Keener also seems to lean in the direction of thinking that John 20:22 is not historical.³⁰) The point is rather that, once unique Johannine material of different types is categorized repeatedly as a result *not* of differential access to actual events but rather as the evangelist's personal transformation or addition, John's unique material can no longer consistently be used to argue for the relevant kind of independence in John's narrative. John just isn't being portrayed as the kind of reporter whose unique material is of that sort. For all that

²⁶ Licona, *Why Are There Differences*, 166; Wallace, "Ipsissima Vox," 10–11.

²⁷ Wallace, "Ipsissima Vox," 12.

²⁸ Licona, *Why Are There Differences*, 181.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 175.

³⁰ Craig Keener, *The Gospel of John: A Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2003), 2:1196–1200.

such theories permit us to argue, he might be (at the points where there is some overlap) adding to a tradition that he has in common with the Synoptics. As with the infancy stories, so here: Independence of the author's imagination, transformation, or embellishment is the *wrong kind of independence* for confirmational purposes. Therefore, even when John does recognizably attest to the same content as the Synoptic Gospels, Licona's and Wallace's approach does not retain the epistemic resources to make a convincing case that he does so independently.

5. *Broader Implications*

A heavy reliance upon multiple attestation has tended to go hand in hand with what one might term apologetic minimalism. This approach is well illustrated by the quotation given earlier from Licona concerning the infancy narratives. There Licona insists that the overlap between the infancy narratives "could stand" *even if* the non-overlapping material were invented to make a more interesting story. This is a particularly striking claim since there is quite a bit of non-overlapping material between Luke's and Matthew's infancy narratives, including the star, the slaughter of the innocents, the shepherds, and so forth. Licona bases his methodological point on the alleged multiple independent attestation to the overlap, concluding, "After all, with such differences between the accounts in Matthew and Luke, one could reasonably argue that the core is attested by multiple independent sources."³¹

Claims of multiple attestation, then, serve the purpose of seeming to make it unnecessary to argue for the individual reliability of a particular account. They even are taken to mean that one could concede for the sake of the argument that the account contains a significant amount of non-factual material. William Lane Craig makes such a point in the introduction to the 3rd edition of *Reasonable Faith*:

Keeping the book at approximately the same length was made possible by the deletion of the chapter on the historical reliability of the New Testament, a chapter which a former editor had insisted, despite my protestations, be inserted into the second edition. The inclusion of this chapter (itself a solid piece of work written at my invitation by Craig Blomberg) perpetuated the misimpression, all too common among evangelicals, that a historical case for Jesus' radical self-understanding and resurrection depends upon showing that the Gospels are generally reliable historical documents. The overriding lesson of two centuries of biblical criticism is that such an assumption is false. Even documents which are generally unreliable may contain valuable historical nuggets, and it will be the historian's task to mine these documents in order to discover them. The Christian apologist seeking to establish, for example, the historicity of Jesus' empty tomb need not and should not be saddled with the task of first showing that the Gospels are, in general, historically reliable documents. You may be wondering how it can be shown that the Gospel accounts of the discovery of Jesus empty tomb can be shown to be, in their core, historically reliable without first showing that the Gospels are, in general, historically trustworthy. Read chapter 8 to find out.³²

Multiple attestation is then used in Chapter 8 as one of the ways in which the empty tomb can be established while setting aside the question of whether the Gospels are strongly historically reliable.

³¹ Licona, "Licona Responds to Ehrman."

³² William Lane Craig, *Reasonable Faith*, 11–12.

If multiple independent attestation is harder to establish than has been previously thought, those who wish to argue for the truth of some “core” or “overlap” in the Gospel narratives may have to shift their emphasis and argue for the reliability of the documents overall rather than merely for the truth of selected passages “mined out of” a document that might, for all we are willing to maintain, be generally unreliable.³³ In other words, scholars might need to reconsider the statements made by Craig in the above quotation. Perhaps we need to return to what Craig considers a “misimpression” concerning the interrelated nature of strong reliability and the defense of Christianity.³⁴

Moreover, the analysis here has shown that a certain kind of preemptive concession—namely, hypothesizing explicitly that unique material in a document is the result of the author’s imagination or radical transformation—blocks the road to supporting the relevant kind of independent attestation. At a minimum, the insights of probability theory discussed here show that New Testament scholars who wish to argue for the historical truth of some passage should not *build into* their theories these sorts of independence-blocking aspects. Nor should they say or imply that multiple independent attestation means that issues like provenance and factual reliability are unimportant. They need to be able to argue at least probabilistically that varied details indicate varied access to the events. Independent attestation must be established by way of a process that, at the same time, tends to support the thesis that the individual documents come from those who were knowledgeable about the facts. Multiple independent attestation does not *replace* strong, whole-document reliability and ultimate provenance in eyewitnesses; rather, the categories are probabilistically entangled. One cannot concede, even for the sake of argument, that such access and accuracy are *not* the case and simultaneously try to argue for independent attestation.

Once it is thoroughly understood that significant literary independence is a necessary but not a sufficient condition for multiple attestation, and once it is understood that variation of authors’ imagination or embellishment cannot help to establish independent attestation, New Testament scholars and apologists can see what paths they might explore if the historical claims of Christianity are indeed defensible. The lesson to be drawn is not that the Gospels do not contain real instances of multiple independent attestation. I would argue that they contain a great many, though that argument lies beyond the scope of this paper. The point, rather, is that multiple attestation must be alleged and supported *more carefully*.

This conclusion can be a constructive one for the defender of Christianity. An older generation of biblical scholars, from William Paley³⁵ to J. B. Lightfoot³⁶ to (in somewhat more recent decades)

³³ Although the probabilistic issues are too complex to enter into here, there are different possible meanings of “reliability.” In one sense of the term “reliable,” it is impossible *even by independent attestation* to get confirmation from multiple sources that are completely unreliable, considered individually. While on one probabilistic construal of “reliability” it is sometimes possible to get confirmation from the independent agreement of multiple sources that are not independently reliable, each source must still have some individual evidential value (in a specific technical sense) for what it attests. See Rodney D. Holder, “Hume on Miracles: Bayesian Interpretation, Multiple Testimony, and the Existence of God,” *The British Journal for the Philosophy of Science*, 49:52–53; John Earman, *Hume’s Abject Failure* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 55.

³⁴ Of course, independent attestation is only one of the criteria of authenticity, but it plays an important role among them.

³⁵ William Paley, *A View of the Evidences of Christianity*, Part I; Paley, *Horae Paulinae*.

³⁶ J. B. Lightfoot, “Internal Evidence for the Authenticity and Genuineness of Saint John’s Gospel,” in *The Fourth Gospel: Evidences External and Internal of Its Johannine Authorship*, ed. Ezra Abbot, Andrew P. Peabody,

Colin Hemer³⁷ and Leon Morris,³⁸ believed that it was possible to support the robust reliability of whole documents rather than confining oneself to gleaning a far more limited number of facts out of documents. If conclusions like those drawn in our own time by D. A. Carson,³⁹ Craig Blomberg,⁴⁰ and Richard Bauckham⁴¹ concerning eyewitness testimony and document reliability are a necessity for Christian apologetics rather than a luxury, evangelical scholars should not despair but would do well to see if there is even more evidence of the same kind to be found.

At the meta-level, the issues discussed here indicate the importance of cross-pollination between disciplines. Probability theorists and philosophers of science, not to mention lawyers and detectives, have been interested in the question of multiple independent attestation for a long time. Philosophers have kept working on the issue and making technical progress up to the present, and biblical scholars cannot afford to isolate themselves from these other disciplines. The present essay is offered in the hopes of encouraging such interdisciplinary study.

and J. B. Lightfoot (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1892), 131–71.

³⁷ Colin Hemer, *The Book of Acts in the Setting of Hellenistic History*, WUNT 49 (Tübingen: Mohr, 1989).

³⁸ Leon Morris, *Studies in the Fourth Gospel* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1969).

³⁹ For example, Carson, “Historical Tradition in the Fourth Gospel,” 83–145.

⁴⁰ Craig L. Blomberg, *The Historical Reliability of the New Testament* (Nashville, TN: B & H Academic, 2016); Craig L. Blomberg *The Historical Reliability of John’s Gospel* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2001).

⁴¹ Richard Bauckham, *Jesus and the Eyewitnesses*.

Disputation *for* Scholastic Theology: Engaging Luther’s 97 Theses

— Michael Allen —

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Abstract: The essay first seeks to unpack the anthropological and soteriology teaching of Martin Luther’s diatribe “against scholastic theology,” that is, against Semi-Pelagian or Pelagian moral anthropology in his 97 Theses of September 1517. Second, the essay turns to ways in which the theological task is located by Luther in the history of sin and grace, thus connecting his teaching against the anthropology of the scholastics with his methodology for studying theology academically, further clarifying the precise nature of the objections to scholasticism raised by Luther and other reformers (such as Calvin). Third, the essay concludes by charting a set of four protocols for systematic or scholastic theology today, so as to reconfigure the intellectual practice as an exercise in intellectual asceticism or discipleship that is part of the broader process of the sanctification of human reason.

In fall 1517, a German monk offered theses for disputation which would shake the faith and practice of the world around him.¹ They cut against the grain of ecclesiastical and theological practice and would set a course for ongoing reform and challenge according to God’s Word. We do well to consider afresh those principal concerns at the root of the Protestant Reformation. So we turn again to Wittenberg, to Luther, and to the 97 theses. That’s right. On September 4, 1517, Luther participated in a disputation regarding sin and the will, nature and the experience of Christian salvation. This academic disputation, (much) later dubbed the “Disputation against scholastic theology,” has not gained the level of acclaim garnered by the later “95 Theses or Disputation on the Power and Efficacy of Indulgences,” but they will capture our attention and prompt some thinking regarding what shape theological practice might take this side of Luther’s witness.²

¹This essay was delivered as an inaugural lecture for the John Dyer Trimble Chair of systematic theology at Reformed Theological Seminary in Orlando on 6 September 2017. Many thanks to Scott Swain and Ryan Peterson for feedback.

²Martin Luther, “Disputation Against Scholastic Theology, 1517,” in *Career of the Reformer 1*, Luther’s Works 31, ed. Harold J. Grimm, trans. Harold J. Grimm (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1957), 3–16 (citations of Luther’s Works are hereafter abbreviated *LW*); see *WA* 1:221–28 for the German original in the so-called Weimar Ausgabe. Num-

These theses actually cut right to the heart of so many of Luther's abiding concerns. Far more than the focus on indulgences to come two months later, these theses turn directly to issues of human nature and divine salvation. They forecast in many ways that great text which would so mark Luther's legacy, his 1525 response to Erasmus entitled *The Bondage of the Will*. They thread the needle of assaulting the latent tradition which he finds so marred by hubristic excess without shirking his abiding commitment to learn from Augustine, who had himself been a formative thread of that late medieval fabric.³ In many ways, these theses, like the Heidelberg Disputation of the following year, will do the hard work of beginning to connect the emerging Reformational vision of sin and grace with matters of intellectual authority and theological formation. Here we see the force and the tension of Luther's theology.

In this essay I want to argue with Luther seemingly against Luther. That is, by tracing Luther's anthropology and soteriology through, I will seek to show that today a scholastic theology with certain disciplined protocols in place prompts us to lean against our sinful proclivities and to linger longer before the life-giving Word of God. In so doing, however, I will seek to sketch an approach to scholastic theology which ties its task to the pursuit of theological discipleship and even intellectual asceticism. To do so means that the description offered here differs from some lingering assumptions about scholasticism and about the practice of systematic theology today and challenges the disciplinary *status quo* in some fundamental ways. As much as the argument seeks to argue for the ongoing need for the theological calling, then, it also aims to reorient the way in which that practice follows in much of its modern exercise by reorienting systematic theology as a form of intellectual asceticism.⁴ In so doing Luther is a genuine prompt, in as much as he not only reflected upon the stranglehold of sin (in the 97 theses) but also sought in multiple ways to orient theology around his account of sin and grace (in various texts). While arguing with Luther regarding our sinful proclivities and our dire need for God's gracious intervention even in the life of the mind, then, we will also turn beyond and, to some extent, against Luther to espouse an argument for a distinctly scholastic practice of theology so as to further those spiritual ends. Four specific aspects regarding the shape of a sanctifying approach to scholastic theology will conclude the proposal.

Unto those ends, the essay first seeks to unpack the anthropological and soteriology teaching of Luther's diatribe "against scholastic theology," that is, against Semi-Pelagian or Pelagian moral anthropology in his 97 theses. Second, the essay turns to ways in which the theological task is located by Luther in the history of sin and grace, thus connecting his teaching against the anthropology of the scholastics with his methodology for studying theology academically and clarifying the precise nature of the objections to scholasticism raised by Luther and other reformers (such as Calvin). Third, the essay concludes by charting a set of four protocols for systematic or scholastic theology today, so as to

bering varies in editions as Thesis 55 has been divided into two theses in the work of Vogelsang, leading to a total of 98 theses.

³On the complicated legacy of reading Augustine on all sides, see now Arnoud S. Q. Visser, *Reading Augustine in the Reformation: The Flexibility of Intellectual Authority in Europe, 1500–1620*, Oxford Studies in Historical Theology (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011).

⁴Sarah Coakley has also sought to reorient the discipline in an ascetic register, albeit in a very non-scholastic fashion (see her *God, Sexuality, and the Self: An Essay "On the Trinity"* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014]). For interaction with her proposal and an argument that a more focused scholastic protocol might more effectively serve her stated purgative-spiritual goals, see Michael Allen, "Dogmatics as Ascetics," in *The Task of Dogmatics: Explorations in Theological Method*, ed. Oliver Crisp and Fred Sanders (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Academic, 2017), 189–209.

reconfigure the intellectual practice as an exercise in intellectual asceticism or discipleship that is part of the broader process of the sanctification of human reason.

1. With Luther against Semi-Pelagian or Pelagian Moral Anthropology: Analysis of the 97 Theses of September 1517

Luther did not pull punches. Whether in woodcuts or theses, homilies or treatises, he was not hesitant to name names and give addresses. So here in his 97 theses from September 1517, he took many luminaries to task: Aristotle and Ockham, the Cardinal and Gabriel, Porphyry and the philosophers, the Scholastics and Scotus.⁵ Take Aristotle alone as an example. “Virtually the entire *Ethics* of Aristotle is the worst enemy of grace,” Luther claims “in opposition to the scholastics” (Thesis 41). He will specifically oppose the Philosopher’s contentions regarding happiness (Thesis 42), but more often ranges rather widely by saying, first, that “it is an error to say that no man can become a theologian without Aristotle” (Thesis 43); second, that “no one can become a theologian unless he becomes one without Aristotle” (Thesis 44); third, “briefly, the whole Aristotle is to theology as darkness is to light” (Thesis 50); and fourth, “even the more useful definitions of Aristotle seem to beg the question” (Thesis 53). He only comes up for air, as it were, to offer Porphyry similar, even if more abbreviated, treatment, saying that “it would have been better for the church if Porphyry with his universals had not been born for the use of theologians” (Thesis 52). Yet “in these statements,” he concludes, “we wanted to say and believe we have said nothing that is not in agreement with the Catholic church and the teachers of the church” (conclusion).⁶

Knowledge, lies, and exaggeration—these terms frame the beginning of Luther’s theses. “To say that Augustine exaggerates in speaking against heretics is to say that Augustine tells lies almost everywhere. This is contrary to common knowledge” (Thesis 1). To fall foul of this problem would grant victory to Pelagius and the heretics (Thesis 2) and make “sport of the authority of all doctors of theology” (Thesis 3). While Luther begins widely, using generalities such as “against heretics” or even employing the phrase “almost everywhere,” it becomes plain that his eye is upon the Pelagian controversy, for he shifts immediately and without comment to say, in Thesis 4, that “It is therefore true that man, being a bad tree, can only will and do evil.” Over against “common opinion,” he adds that “the inclination is not free, but captive” (Thesis 5). Nor can the will regulate or reform itself, as if its ill bent were merely a temporary conundrum, for “it is false to state that the will can by nature conform to common precept” (Thesis 6). “As a matter of fact,” Luther states, “without the grace of God the will produces an act that is perverse

⁵On the scholastic backdrop of the disputation, see especially Heiko Oberman, *The Harvest of Medieval Theology: Gabriel Biel and Late Medieval Nominalism* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1963); David C. Steinmetz, “Luther among the Anti-Thomists,” in *Luther in Context*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2002), 47–58; Brian Gerrish, “Luther Against Scholasticism,” in *Grace and Reason: A Study in the Theology of Luther* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1962), 114–37. Jared Wicks has addressed a “Wittenberg Augustinianism” evident in these early texts (*Man Yearning for Grace: Luther’s Early Spiritual Teaching* [Washington, DC: Corpus, 1968], 178, 197). Indeed, Luther spoke of a theology shared with Andreas von Karlstadt as “our theology” and of their community as “us Wittenberg theologians.” His first thesis given in this disputation was adapted from a line by Karlstadt (Lyndal Roper, *Martin Luther: Renegade and Prophet* [New York: Random House, 2017], 209).

⁶Unfortunately we do not possess further argumentation or qualification for these theses (as with either the famous 95 theses regarding indulgences or those prepared later for the Heidelberg Disputation in 1518), on which see the helpful assessment of Jared Wicks, *Man Yearning for Grace*, 372–73.

and evil” (Thesis 7). Long before Erasmus’s writings on freedom provoke Luther’s 1525 *Bondage of the Will*, he warns lest the church be tempted into giving any quarter to ideas of innate moral neutrality or goodness. Thus lies the path of Pelagius.

Luther walks a tightrope here in affirming the depravity of the human creature. Over against the Manicheans, he first states that “it does not, however, follow that the will is by nature evil, that is, essentially evil” (Thesis 8). “It is nevertheless innately and inevitably evil and corrupt” (Thesis 9).⁷ Somehow essential or natural evil is excluded, while innate and inevitable evil is affirmed. A good while later, Luther will speak “in opposition to the philosophers” by saying that “We are not masters of our actions, from beginning to end, but servants” (Thesis 39). He later gives a concrete example, speaking of anger and lust (cf. Matt 5:21–30). “Outside the grace of God it is indeed impossible not to become angry or lust” (Thesis 65), but “it is by the grace of God that one does not lust or become enraged” (Thesis 67). Luther offers a summative remark and then a further clarification. First, the summative remark: “Therefore it is impossible to fulfill the law in any way without the grace of God” (Thesis 68). Then the further clarification: “As a matter of fact, it is more accurate to say that the law is destroyed by nature without the grace of God” (Thesis 69). If Thesis 8 said that the will is not naturally, that is, essentially evil, then Thesis 69 plainly must speak of nature in a different vein, circumscribed by the fuller phrase “nature without the grace of God.” This depiction of graceless nature riffs not on that described in Thesis 8 (nature or essence) but on what appeared in Thesis 9 (the innate and inevitable evil and corruption of the will). Luther plainly wants to affirm the created goodness of the human will, as well as its utter derangement and degradation with the onset of evil and the loss of grace.

Where then comes hope? Can such a vivid depiction of sinfulness find its way beyond utter despair and misanthropic despondency? Luther gestures toward grace at this point as a way of pointing ultimately unto God. “The best and infallible preparation for grace and the sole disposition toward grace is the eternal election and predestination of God” (Thesis 29). Luther not only affirms the divine prevenience here but also goes on to deny certain assumed qualifications or supplements. First, “on the part of man, however, nothing precedes grace except indisposition and even rebellion against grace” (Thesis 30).⁸ Second, human struggle does not identify its own need or the divine remedy, for Luther goes on to say that “this is false, that doing all that one is able to do can remove the obstacles to grace” (Thesis 33).⁹ Our problem is twofold: “in brief, man by nature has neither correct precept nor good will” (Thesis 34). Humans not only walk in what he deems an “invincible ignorance” or perceptual darkness, but they are also disinclined to the true, the good, and the beautiful.

Grace does not come at the prompting of human ingenuity, nor does the human even incline themselves to its provision. But grace does provide. Indeed, over against all the language of inability and of darkness, one must cast Luther’s powerful affirmation of the reality of grace. “The grace of God is never present in such a way that it is inactive, but it is a living, active, and operative spirit; nor can

⁷ On the anti-Manichaeic and anti-Pelagian readings of Augustine’s corpus, see Steinmetz, “Luther and Augustine on Romans 9,” in *Luther in Context*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2002), 21.

⁸ Luther consistently reads Gregory of Rimini as the one scholastic theologian avoiding the error of Thomas, Scotus, and Ockham (as in his 1519 “Resolutions on Propositions debated at Leipzig”); see Steinmetz, “Luther among the Anti-Thomists,” 57. Cf. Risto Saarinen, “Weakness of Will: Reformation Anthropology between Aristotle and the Stoa,” in *Anthropological Reformations: Anthropology in the Era of Reformation*, ed. Anne Eusterschulte and Hannah Wälzholz, Refo500 28 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2015), 17–32.

⁹ Latin: *facere quod in se est*.

it happen that through the absolute power of God an act of friendship may be present without the presence of the grace of God” (Thesis 55).

Friendship proves to be a central term in the argument here. “An act of friendship is not the most perfect means for accomplishing that which is in one,” nor even “for obtaining the grace of God or turning toward and approaching God” (Thesis 26). Yet “an act of friendship is done,” though Luther is impelled to clarify “not according to nature, but according to prevenient grace” (Thesis 20). And this prevenient grace really affects the will. While “everyone’s natural will is iniquitous and bad” (Thesis 88), “grace as a mediator is necessary to reconcile the law with the will” (Thesis 89). “The grace of God is given for the purpose of directing the will, lest it err even in loving God” (Thesis 90). Luther here notes the shadow side of the bound will, namely, that human distortion can mar even that which is pious. Even love of God can be inflected in such a way that it ceases in so doing to follow the direction of the one whom it is thereby loving.¹⁰

Underneath all this talk of willing and of warfare, of friendship and of formation, Luther eventually comes to talk of loves. He does so by asking “what is the good law?” He offers two demurrals. First, “not only are the religious ceremonials not the good law and the precepts in which one does not live (in opposition to many teachers)” (Thesis 82), “but even,” second, “the Decalogue itself and all that can be taught and prescribed inwardly and outwardly is not good law either” (Thesis 83). Human custom nor even divine mandate does not in and of itself constitute the good law, not until one presses further to the true definition. “The good law and that in which one lives is the love of God, spread abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit” (Thesis 84). Love fulfills the law (Rom 13:8), yet law forms love (John 15:7, 10).

Indeed, the need for law from the outside matches disordered love. “Anyone’s will hates it that the law should be imposed upon it; if, however, the will desires imposition of the law it does so out of love of self” (Thesis 86). Indeed, “anyone’s will would prefer, if it were possible, that there would be no law and to be entirely free” (Thesis 85). The human desires to go their own way.¹¹ This waywardness takes a particularly disturbed tack when it comes time to reflect on human efforts to reform or revitalize our problematic proclivities. Even—perhaps especially—in our moral programs, our own self-direction becomes most apparent and harmful.

Luther accents this ironic fate when coming to the conclusion of the disputation where he offers his final two theses regarding the proper relation of our will and God’s own will. First, “we must make our will conform in every respect to the will of God” (Thesis 96, explicitly disagreeing with Cardinal Cajetan). Second, we conform our will unto God’s “so that we not only will what God wills, but also ought to will whatever God wills” (Thesis 97). In other words, it is not enough to bring our questions to the surface and to conform to God’s answers. We must do the difficult work of self-examination and of intellectual and moral repentance such that we trace God’s direction still further unto the very questions up for consideration. God not only answers the need, but God defines the need itself. Not only moral energy but also a distinctly Christian epistemology, swirling round the vocation of theological discernment, marks the dependent yearning of the sin-sick human. God does not merely give truthful answers, but he provides the life-giving questions.

Perhaps an analogy will help. Imagine struggling with a severe course of an auto-immune disease. Months of struggle did not go as one would have expected, for the normal rhythms of palliative and

¹⁰ The issue of hypocrisy arises regularly in the theses (see Theses 76–78 especially).

¹¹ See Theo Dieter, *Der junge Luther und Aristoteles. Eine historisch-systematische Untersuchung zum Verhältnis von Theologie und Philosophie*, Theologische Bibliothek Töpelmann 105 (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2001), 80–107.

medical care did not offer reprieve from ills. Typical remedies actually worsened the situation, and finally one was shipped to the emergency room in a truly dire situation. When clarity came, the takeaway was rather direct: the immune system is one's own worst enemy, for its efforts to protect and to strengthen are actually precisely what undercuts one's own flourishing. So ongoing care requires scaling down the strength of the immense system, a bombardment of force meant to weaken the defenses which themselves weaken the self. What might strike us is the way in which this is true spiritually as well. Not only our moments of utter disinterest in God or even of stick-necked insouciance, but also our pious and zealous attempts at reform actually further our sin-sick struggles. We demand the recalibration of our wills by God's own will, so that we no longer harm ourselves by inclining toward rhythms of evil excess or of moral malpractice. As Luther says, we need a mediator (Thesis 89). And as he insists, resting on that mediator will involve professing that "to love God is at the same time to hate oneself and to know nothing but God" (Thesis 95). We suffer inability not only in addressing but also in identifying the actual character of our plight.

With that finale in mind, we do well to turn to ask how Luther's theses might help prompt us to consider the task of academic, that is, scholastic theology today. Luther not only alerts us to the stranglehold of sin and the need for grace, but he gestures toward the way this must shape the practice of theological work also. Because the theologian is a moral agent before God—a sin-sick sinner panged by death, Devil, and the depravity within—his protest of Semi-Pelagian and Pelagian anthropology and his celebration of God's radical grace must impinge on the process of divine revelation and of God's sanctification of human reason.

2. With Luther for Scholastic Theology: Theological Parameters for Intellectual Discipline

Theology does not hold a monopoly on concerns regarding moral formation. In his 1911 Cambridge Inaugural Lecture as Kennedy Professor of Latin at the University of Cambridge, A. E. Housman addressed "The Confines of Criticism."¹² He began with survey, noting the ways in which British and German literary criticism had drifted into non-critical forms of analysis. "In short, while the English fault is to confuse this study with literature, the German fault is to pretend that it is mathematics."¹³ Each tendency marked a drift toward an extraneous mode of mental functioning, either that of literary creation or of sequential and numerical method. Both ruin literature in their own way by pressing it into another mission, whether of a socio-political, moral, or scientific tilt. When Housman probes the root of these tendencies, he says "there is a very formidable obstacle: nothing less than the nature of man himself."¹⁴ And "our first task is to get rid of them, and to acquire, if we can, by humility and self-repression, the tastes of the classics."¹⁵ To this anthropological diagnosis, Housman also offered a prescription: "we must be born again."¹⁶ But what hope or future expectation can be offered by this

¹² A. E. Housman, *The Confines of Criticism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969).

¹³ Housman, *The Confines of Criticism*, 37.

¹⁴ Housman, *The Confines of Criticism*, 40.

¹⁵ Housman, *The Confines of Criticism*, 34–35.

¹⁶ Housman, *The Confines of Criticism*, 35.

moral critic? Housman concludes only with this offering: “It is well enough to inculcate the duty of self-examination, but then we must also bear in mind its difficulty, and the easiness of self-deception.”¹⁷

Luther’s anthropology seems to agree with Housman regarding the “nature of man himself” and the fundamental need to be born again, lest we take up the task of theology and comport it toward the protocols of other fields, whether of the *politeia* or the *psyche*. But Luther and the Reformed Christian are not left with mere self-examination, not even primarily with self-examination. In the remainder of this essay, I want to explore the ways, first, in which the divine discipleship of our theological reason is necessitated by Luther’s anthropology and, second, the manner in which a particular form of scholastic theology may help channel such reform and maturation of the theologian.

Martin Luther knew that theological practice must be defined with distinctly theological categories. This could be his undoing, of course, as he sometimes reduced theology to the topics of the justifying God and the sinning human in his extrapolations on Psalm 51.¹⁸ In that kind of claim, he clearly locates the theological task within the orbit of sin and redemption; indeed, sufficiently and solely within such an orbit.¹⁹ His constriction there—tying theology notably and narrowly to justification—evidences a concern to think the theological task within the matrix of redemption from slothful or hubristic reason. In another notable text, the Heidelberg Disputation of 1518, he offered his perceptive vision of the difference between the theologian of glory and the theologian of the cross. Again, questions might be raised regarding whether or not this is an overly constricted breadth—with “cross” standing in for the posture of faith in its full range and perhaps with an overly lush antipathy to the full spectrum of revealed media for theological contemplation—but we can appropriate this approach without falling into any latent historicism. Michael Korthaus has shown this theme to be one that attains any methodological significance only in the twentieth century, as it appears only six times in this small portion of the early Luther’s corpus.²⁰ While it has been cherished by those who have sought to tether metaphysical contemplation rather constrictively to the historically immanent, it need not take such a parasitic approach to the classical tradition of Christian dogma. In a more chastened form focused on the question of the theological practitioner (rather than so much on the object of that theological practice), the theology of cross serves as yet another reminder that we deal here with the sanctification

¹⁷ Housman, *The Confines of Criticism*, 43.

¹⁸ Martin Luther, *LW* 12:305; see *WA* 40 II:319; see also Oswald Bayer, *Martin Luther’s Theology: A Contemporary Interpretation*, ed. Thomas H. Trapp (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008), 38–39.

¹⁹ Otto Hermann Pesch has argued that this approach to theology varies greatly from that of Thomas Aquinas. One need not affirm Pesch’s distinction to affirm that Luther rightly locates theology amidst the vagaries and valleys of the spiritual journey, the gifts and the grain of the economy of redemption. See Otto Hermann Pesch, “Existential and Sapiential Theology—The Theological Confrontation Between Luther and Thomas Aquinas,” in *Catholic Scholars Dialogue with Luther*, ed. Jared Wicks (Chicago: Loyola University Press, 1970), 61–81; see also Michael Root, “Continuing the Conversation: Deeper Agreement on Justification as Criterion and on the Christian as *simul iustus et peccator*,” in *The Gospel of Justification in Christ: Where Does the Church Stand Today?*, ed. Wayne Stumme (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006), 42–61.

²⁰ Michael Korthaus, *Kreuzestheologie: Geschichte und Gestalt eines Programmbegriffs in evangelischen Theologie* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2007), 405. See Martin Luther, “Heidelberg Disputation, 1518,” *LW* 31:35–70; cf. *Lectures on Genesis 1–5*, *LW* 1:11, 13, 14 (on 1:2), 45 (on 6:5–6), 72 (on 6:18).

of reason.²¹ In at least these two ways, then, Luther was committed to locating the practice of theology amidst the valleys of human sin and the vista of divine grace.

Luther sought to address the practice of theology in light of sin and grace in a still third frame. Luther identified three rules for theology in his comments on Psalm 119, where David heralds the law of the LORD as life-giving. Luther identified the call to *oratio*, first, wherein “you should immediately despair of your reason and understanding.... But kneel down in your little room and pray to God with real humility and earnestness, that he through his dear Son may give you His Holy Spirit, who will enlighten you, lead you, and give you understanding.”²² Luther next summoned us to *meditatio*, a second action wherein the theologian joins with David to “talk, meditate, speak, sing, hear, read, by day and night, and always about nothing except God’s Word and commandments.”²³ Oswald Bayer says here that “Luther swims against the tide of common opinion in not seeing the process of listening turned inwards but rather opened outwards.” Rather, “when we meditate,” he says, “we do not listen to our inner selves, we do not turn inwards, but we go outside ourselves. Our inner beings live outside themselves in God’s Word alone.”²⁴ Third, the monk calls us to *tentatio* that we might find suffering to be our teacher. Spiritual attack (*Anfechtung*) will come for the little Christian who meditates on God’s Word, for the one who meditates will say, with David in Psalm 119 and elsewhere, that the Word drew enemies of varying sorts. But the student will also be able to say of those enemies what Luther spoke of the papists and the fanatics, namely, that “they have made a fairly good theologian of me, which I would not have become otherwise.”²⁵

Prayer and suffering are worthy topics, yet we will focus our attention now upon meditation as Luther’s second concern for true theology.²⁶ In particular, we want to consider what it means to lead a life ordered to the external Word of God and in what ways this shapes the academic practice of theological contemplation or meditation. In his 1535 *Lectures on Galatians*, Luther would say: “And this is the reason why our theology is certain: it snatches us away from ourselves and places us outside ourselves, so that we do not depend on our own strength, conscience, experience, person, or works but depend on that which is outside ourselves, that is, on the promise and truth of God, which cannot deceive.”²⁷ How do we contemplate these promises and that truth such that we are taken out of ourselves and offered true certainty?

Before we conclude by suggesting four protocols of scholastic reflection and its attention to the external, life-giving Word of God, we do well to linger briefly over the adjective “scholastic.” In either the post-Reformation or the post-manualist moments, for Protestants and Roman Catholics respectively,

²¹ John Calvin also offers something of a *theologia crucis* in his reading of the Corinthians Epistles, on which see Michael Allen, “John Calvin’s Reading of the Corinthians Epistles,” in *Reformation Readings of Paul: Explorations in History and Exegesis*, ed. Michael Allen and Jonathan Linebaugh (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2015), 175–81.

²² LW 34:285–86. (translation altered by Oswald Bayer); WA 50:659, lines 5–21.

²³ LW 34:286; WA 50:659, lines 22–35.

²⁴ Bayer, *Theology the Lutheran Way*, 53.

²⁵ LW 34:286–87; WA 50:660, lines 1–16.

²⁶ See especially Ronald Rittgers, *The Reformation of Suffering: Pastoral Theology and Lay Piety in Late Medieval and Early Modern Germany*, Oxford Studies in Historical Theology (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), esp. 111–24.

²⁷ Luther, *Lectures on Galatians*, LW 27:387; WA 40 I: 589–90.

scholastic can sometimes be taken simply as a prompt for traditional or historic protocols. Along those lines, we do well to observe that the dominant tradition of the late medieval university and the *via moderna* (Gabriel Biel especially) were opposed ardently by Luther.²⁸ But we dare not read his opposition as a global dismissal of tradition or of medieval academic culture. In a letter penned to Johannes Lang on May 18, 1517, Luther had offered this assessment of changes afoot at the University of Wittenberg: “Our theology and St. Augustine are by God’s help prospering in our university, while Aristotle descends gradually toward a coming everlasting oblivion. The lectures on the *Sentences* are being despised, and no one can hope to have hearers unless he lectures on Scripture, on St. Augustine, or on some other ecclesiastical doctor.”²⁹

Luther was not assaulting tradition as tradition nor even the protocols of academic theology, but a specific set of anthropological judgments that he deemed to be out of step with Augustine and, more significantly, the soundings he had made in lecturing on Holy Scripture (especially on Romans, the Psalms, and Hebrews at this point). More significantly, though, scholasticism defines a method which is matched to and prompted by the material under examination. As L. M. de Rijk defined it, scholasticism in either its medieval or later Protestant forms is “a collective noun denoting all academic, especially philosophical and theological, activity that is carried out according to a certain method, which involves both in research and education the use of a recurring system of concepts, distinctions, proposition-analyses, argumentative strategies, and methods of disputation.”³⁰ Historiography of scholastic method has taken a markedly contextual turn in the last fifty years, observing ways in which the moniker “scholastic” related to protocols and methods rather than any particular ideological inflection. The methods were meant to vary by way of subject matter, so that the object delimits its approach and defines its analysis.

Particular protocols follow from this material-molded approach to theology. To take but one example: in his forays into assessing John Calvin’s relationship to the practice of scholastic thought, Richard Muller has identified four features of this sort of academic theology in the late medieval or early modern university context: scholastic theology identifies an order and mental pattern suitable to the debate at hand, uses the thesis or *questio* to frame discussion, orders theses to be discussed by way of thesis and standard objections, and then refutes objections and provides exposition of the correct answer.³¹ These protocols in varying ways belie a commitment to follow the organization of the

²⁸On the prevalence of Biel behind the disputation, see especially Leif Grane, *Contra Gabrielem: Luthers Auseinandersetzung mit Gabriel Biel in der Disputatio contra scholasticam theologiam, 1517*, Acta Theologica Danica 4 (Kopenhagen: Gyldendal, 1962), 371–85.

²⁹Letter to Johannes Lang, May 18, 1517, in *WA, Br 1*: no. 41.

³⁰L. M. de Rijk, *Middeleeuwse wijsbegeerte: Traditie en vernieuwing* (Assen: Van Gorcum, 1977), 25 (cited in Martin Bac and Theo Pleizier, “Reentering Sites of Truth: Teaching Reformed Scholasticism in the Contemporary Classroom,” in *Scholasticism Reformed: Essays in Honour of Willem J. Van Asselt*, ed. Maarten Wisse, Marcel Sarot, and Willemian Otten [Leiden: Brill, 2010], 36).

³¹Richard A. Muller, “Scholasticism in Calvin: A Question of Relation and Disjunction,” in *The Unaccommodated Calvin: Studies in the Foundation of a Theological Tradition*, Oxford Studies in Historical Theology (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 28. The literature on scholasticism in its medieval and post-Reformation settings has burgeoned in recent years; for introduction and survey, see especially Ulrich G. Leinsle, *Introduction to Scholastic Theology*, trans. Michael J. Miller (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2010); and Willem J. Van Asselt, with T. Theo J. Pleizier, Pieter L. Rouwendel, and Maarten Wisse, *Introduction to Reformed Scholasticism*, trans. Albert Gootjes (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage, 2011).

subject matter, not one's own predilections, and to remain alert to opposing viewpoints lest one drift into myopic narrowness or remain in unchallenged confusion. A look to other settings of a scholastic order would accent different protocols, and theological students will rejoice to learn that this need not involve reinstating the public disputation as the chief protocol for examining students of divinity.

A commitment to tradition will come only indirectly then, to the extent which tradition or traditions are themselves overt prompts from the subject of theology itself, namely, divine self-revelation. In the case of theological contemplation, the triune God upon whose face we seek to gaze and whose name alone we seek to exalt has given birth not only to our wisdom but to a whole host of heavenly confessors and a lively communion of saints, within whose chorus we take our part. So scholastic commitment is not inherently opposed to the textualism of humanistic studies in the sixteenth century, though it would come into conflict with iterations of literary study that refused to read those texts as apostolic scripture and insisted on orienting its focus upon them in the guise of comparative religious literature of the ancient world.³² A fully orbed Trinitarian theology of revelation will insist that the prophet ministry of the Risen Christ involves the unique instrumentality of the words of his prophets and apostles (Heb 4:12–13), as well as the realization that his “Word dwells richly” amidst the testimony of the whole company of the redeemed (Col 3:16–17). Any scholastic or tradition-marked characteristics of theology, then, ought to flow from the entailments of divine action and its promised forms, not from some presumption of the antique or exotic bearing intrinsic force. The rule of faith and rule of love govern the protocols of our intellectual life and the way in which we presently honor the past and look unto the future. In a sense, then, a scholastic bent to theology follows from a spiritual vision regarding the intellectual life. If we are to throw ourselves into the tasks of the academic life, then we want to do so out of an abiding commitment to the cause of intellectual asceticism.³³

Without suggesting that disputations or a question-and-answer format is necessary, a scholastic or academic study of theology helps frame and form our spiritual contemplation of the God who has revealed himself climactically in Jesus Christ and in his life-giving Word. While scholasticism defines the procedures and not necessarily any predetermined philosophical results of our academic inquiry, these methods are themselves motivated by certain anthropological and moral principles. Indeed, there are specifically theological reasons for accenting particular academic protocols as they help foster

³² On this adaptation of reading strategies, see Michael Legaspi, *The Death of Scripture and the Rise of Biblical Studies*, Oxford Studies in Historical Theology (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010); Jeffrey Morrow, “The Politics of Biblical Interpretation: A ‘Criticism of Criticism,’” *New Blackfriars* 91 (2010), 528–45; Morrow, “The Bible in Captivity: Hobbes, Spinoza and the Politics of Defining Religion,” *ProEccl* 19 (2010), 285–99. The significant shift here is the tilt toward historicism, on which see now Frederick Beiser, *The German Historicist Tradition* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015).

³³ Language of intellectual discipleship or asceticism has been helpfully unpacked in Fergus Kerr, “Tradition and Reason: Two Uses of Reason, Critical and Contemplative,” *International Journal of Systematic Theology* 6 (2004), 37–49; Frederick Christian Bauerschmidt, *Thomas Aquinas: Faith, Reason, and Following Christ*, Christian Theology in Context (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 36, 81, 140. Some parallel approaches in medieval literature are thoughtfully analyzed by Peter M. Candler, Jr., *Theology, Rhetoric, Manuduction, Or Reading Scripture Together on the Path to God*, Radical Traditions (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006), with regard to the use of the language of *ductus*, *skopos*, and an *itinerarium*, though his theological account fails to press on to offer much covenantal or Christological specificity in its broadly participationist metaphysics and also offers a severely mangled reading of early Protestant theology and the development of *sola Scriptura* (esp. 13–16); similarly inclined, though overly focused on categories of embodiment, is Nathan Jennings, *Theology as Ascetic Act: Disciplining Christian Discourse* (New York: Peter Lang, 2010).

theological virtues, habits, practices, and order that marks the well-equipped man or woman of God (2 Tim 3:16–17). Those working recently in intellectual history and the history of the university have rightly noted that scholasticism does not reduce to a particular philosophical, ethical, or theological commitment, over against some older suggestions in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries that scholastic method carried with it a full bore commitment to a particular set of material principles. While a scholastic method does not necessarily equate to a full bore philosophy, and while scholastic method is not homogenous, we do well to note nonetheless that intellectual protocols match anthropological and theological *principia*.

3. Scholastic Protocols for Sanctifying Systematic Theology: Four Practices for Theology Today Prompted by Luther's Reformational Teaching on Sin and Grace

If not *quodlibet* or recitations of catechisms, then what might scholastic protocols look like today? I conclude by suggesting four patterns of scholastic or systematic theological procedure for our consideration today.³⁴ These principles flow from two realities attested in Luther's theses: first, that human being is marked by a need for sustenance from beyond and further imprinted by a sinful distortion to close in upon itself and, second, that the triune God acts so as to give and to glorify life in Christ. These are meant to be protocols for theological practice in the land of the gospel and this time of God's patience, a time which the apostle Peter tells us is meant for intellectual repentance (2 Pet 3:15). Luther's theses may well fund certain scholastic disciplines, but these protocols and the theology espoused by Luther would summon much common description and practice of "systematic theology" to account. It is not the *status quo*, but a spiritual quest of intellectual asceticism and theological repentance before God's life-giving Word that we wish to describe here.

First, a scholastic approach to theological reflection will seek to draw our attention to the breadth of God's Word. Concern for order and scope matches the Pauline claim regarding the value of the "whole counsel of God" (Acts 20:27). The Marcionite challenge was the first threat to the Christian faith in the post-apostolic era, and it struck at the roots of the canonical form of the Christian way. In that second century challenge, Irenaeus and others had to manifestly demonstrate that the prophetic witness of the Old Testament and the scripturally-infused texts of the apostles were bound together with the witness of Paul and the other evangelists.³⁵ The early theologians commended the catholic faith by attesting the wholeness (lit. *kata holos*) of Scripture, namely, that the triune confession of one God in three persons was an achievement of a two testament canon and that, apart from the perduring pressure of the prophets of Israel, the doctrine of God would take quite different form.³⁶

³⁴ The concept of systematic theology is not without debate regarding definition either. For a survey of recent approaches and a proposal with which I am largely sympathetic, see John Webster, "Introduction: Systematic Theology," in *The Oxford Handbook of Systematic Theology*, ed. John Webster, Kathryn Tanner, and Iain Torrance (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 1–15.

³⁵ Irenaeus, *On the Apostolic Preaching*, trans. John Behr (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1997), 68.

³⁶ See esp. Brevard Childs, *Biblical Theology of the Old and New Testaments* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992), 376; C. Kavin Rowe, "Biblical Pressure and Trinitarian Hermeneutics," *ProEccl* 11 (2002), 295–312; Christopher

Biblical breadth may be lopped off or excised in a variety of ways. Canonical amputation can occur in other areas—anthropological and sexual matters being particularly obvious instances in contemporary discourse³⁷—but this matter of the being of God is surely the most salient and significant. Scholastic theology prompts us to read and then to read on, not to get snagged merely in the genre, corpus, or epoch that transfixes our curiosity or encourages our ecclesiastical niche or comports most with pertinent issues in our cultural moment. Rather, scholastic theology disciplines us to be alert to the whole counsel of God, for “*all* Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable” (2 Tim 3:16, emphasis mine). In so doing the scholastic prompt of exploring biblical breadth pushes against any parochialism (of the denominational tradition, of one’s socio-political formation, or of personal predilection) and pressures toward a catholic theology of the whole.

Second, a scholastic approach to theological reflection will summon us to fix anew our emphases and priorities in the places where God’s own Word draws our attention. The question of order and sequence, as well as the attendant concern for proportion, helps alert us to another area of biblical formation. Because even our love can go awry by perhaps willing with God though not, as Luther put it, willing “whatever God wills,” we must be reoriented to the north star of God’s own light. Invariably our experience raises questions and our reason sees connections, but our own forays into intellectual reflection must always be taken before the Word’s own self-presentation. What does the whole counsel of God commend? What bears “first importance” (1 Cor 15:3) over against its secondary and tertiary matters? We can go astray not only in misperceiving an element of the biblical tapestry but in failing to distinguish the foreground from the background. Only attention to the whole canonical canvas will bring into relief the relative emphasis and consequent prioritization that best conveys the elements of biblical doctrine.

An exercise in Luther reception can illustrate the point. How might priorities go haywire? One need only prioritize justification as the criterion of the gospel and treat it ahead of the person of Christ, that is, the whole Christ. In the approach of Gerhard Forde and the self-proclaimed “Radical Lutherans” we can see the kind of disorder caused by treating one crucial strand of Christology and soteriology as if it were the leading and lone article of that confession. Christ becomes functionally a cipher for the balm of the conscience. Such approaches may lay claim to following the (early) words of Philipp Melanchthon: “to know Christ is to know his benefits.”³⁸ But Melanchthon presumed a trinitarian and Christological

Seitz, *The Character of Christian Scripture: The Significance of a Two-Testament Bible*, Studies in Theological Interpretation (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2011).

³⁷ Luke Timothy Johnson, *Scripture and Discernment: Decision Making in the Church* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1996), 70–75; Stephen Fowl, *Engaging Scripture: A Model for Theological Interpretation* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1998), 97–127; Sylvia Keesmaat, “Welcoming in the Gentiles: A Biblical Model for Decision Making,” in *Living Together in the Church: Including Our Differences*, ed. Greig Dunn and Chris Ambidge (Toronto: Anglican Book Centre, 2004), 30–49, for a supposedly pneumatologically-prompted counter-argument to Israelite Scripture regarding same sex unions in Acts 10–15. For a critical reply, see Michael Allen and Scott Swain, *Reformed Catholicity: The Promise of Retrieval for Theology and Biblical Interpretation* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2015), 74–78. Such canonical reconfiguration began prior to debates regarding gender identity or same-sex unions, in discussions regarding gender and ecclesiastical office (see, e.g., Mark Husbands, “Reconciliation as the Dogmatic Location of Humanity: ‘Your Life is Hidden with Christ in God,’” in *Women, Ministry, and the Gospel: Exploring New Paradigms*, ed. Mark Husbands and Timothy Larsen [Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2007], 127–47).

³⁸ Philipp Melanchthon, *Loci Communes in Melanchthon and Bucer*, ed. Wilhelm Pauck, Library of Christian Classics (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1969), 21.

metaphysics—and a contemplative focus in liturgy and theology upon the triune God’s perfection—that his post-Kantian and post-Ritschlian heirs no longer embody. Failing to proclaim Christ in his fullness and eternity before Christ in his justifying capacity leads not only to a misprioritization but an outright distortion of the doctrine of justification.³⁹ The justifying word easily becomes the affirming conscience, rather distant from the concrete life, death, and resurrection of the Redeemer. A response to these “radical” readings of Luther that have flowed from the early twentieth century Luther renaissance need not in any way renege on the sufficiency of Christ or the peace that he brings, but it will take the form of always tethering peace and reconciliation to his concrete action and union with his person. By refusing to sever the person and work of Christ, theology can accent the whole Christ and insist that the gift of his person marks a higher priority than any single blessing found therein, whether justification or sanctification. Only by attending to priorities will we be alert to the manifold principles of divinity.

Third, a scholastic approach to theological practice provokes us to attend to the ways in which the Holy Scriptures take common terms and employ them to fundamentally singular purposes. Luther turned toward the way in which Aristotelian thought had been brought into the fold of Christian divinity in the late medieval period. After running the gauntlet of critical analysis in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries (with the input of Averroes and Avicenna, as well as Albert and Thomas), the philosopher’s categories were employed in Christian ethics and theology. Luther retorts: “It is an error to maintain that Aristotle’s statement concerning happiness does not contradict Christian doctrine” (Thesis 42). The notion of beatitude apparently suffered from definitional ambiguity and an overly pacific posture by the schoolmen toward the descriptions of the philosopher. Indeed, Luther says that “it is very doubtful whether the Latins comprehended the correct meaning of Aristotle” (Thesis 51). But the error was not only theirs, for “even the more useful definitions of Aristotle seem to beg the question” (Thesis 53). In challenging reason and its absorption by the contemplation of faith in recent Latin theology, Luther reminds us that terms do not come in self-explanatory, singular fashion. They must be defined, and Christian divinity must turn to the Word of God for such direction in discerning whether the language of the Gentiles can be employed in a given instance or whether there must be a distinction drawn.

Scholastic theology serves a crucial missiological purpose, therefore, in casting light upon the ways in which we have only human words to use in our testimony of God and our pointing to his own Word. Common terms are employed, to be sure, yet the divine communication through ordinary human language transfigures and puts the common to a sacred use, and our own witness must regularly return to reflect on the ways in which latent assumptions about the meaning of stock language can tempt or incline us to misperceptions. Our vocabulary draws on adoption and marriage to convey fellowship with God, though the divine family cannot be construed along sociological lines. We do know the love of God, so rich and full that Song of Songs can employ erotic imagery to convey it, and yet it is qualitatively distinguished from and analogically related to other experiences of love shown and love lost.⁴⁰ Particularly in a culture marked more and more by biblical illiteracy, we must observe how even colloquial engagement of the biblical writings is cross-cultural. We must be alerted to ways in which God cannot be constrained within the bounds of our terms as common construed. Systematic

³⁹ See the penetrating analysis of David Yeago, “Gnosticism, Antinomianism, and Reformation Theology: Reflections on the Costs of a Construal,” *ProEccl 2* (1993), 37–49.

⁴⁰ Similar concerns could be raised regarding so many other biblical and doctrinal terms, as, e.g., Richard Hays raises the now popular term “liberation” as another pertinent illustration (*The Moral Vision of the New Testament* [New York: Harper, 1995], 203–4).

theology's scholastic mode serves missiological purposes, in as much as we are increasingly alert to the fact that the claims of the gospel and the categories of the "whole counsel of God" are "foolishness to the Greeks."⁴¹

Fourth, a scholastic approach to theological practice demands of us an accounting for what manner of cohesion may be observed in our pilgrim state, lest we be satisfied with a fragmented witness to the way in which Christ speaks his Word (Heb 1:1–2). We can be tempted perhaps to itemize the themes and the idioms of scripture as an index of distinct topics to be accessed each in their own distinct manner. Perhaps the need to think coherently becomes most apparent when addressing the moral entailments of the way of Jesus. Whereas our contemporaries might be prone to assess the virtues of discipleship as nothing more than social mores or group preferences, these moral entailments extend from basic Christian confessions.⁴²

So Paul's words in Romans 4 manifest the way in which the posture of faith befits the human creature who has been created wholly by God's life-giving Word, resurrected in the Spirit's raising of Jesus from the dead, and now also justified and granted the full rights and privileges as an heir of Abraham. Faith ethically matches the metaphysical frame of these creational and covenantal actions by the triune God.⁴³ Apart from viewing the summons to trustful existence in such a doctrinal frame, the call to conversion becomes something without depth and meaning, a reduction to arbitrary moral posturing. Indeed, apart from a fit with the metaphysical and moral frame of elemental Christian doctrines, the summons to faith actually suggests a potentially misanthropic calling for the human. Such was Nietzsche's judgment. Yet we do not view the call of Jesus in a vacuum. The one who beckons us to follow is the one who made us, the one raised by the Father's power, and the one who names us as righteous and well-pleasing in union with him. Thus, his call that we submit our will unto his own and that with him we journey through the valley by faith *en route* to the paradise of the redeemed is no summons to slavish surrender and no manifesto for misanthropic misery. Rather, the call of Jesus—the morals of life in this one—are the most elemental and glorifying of any humanisms, because the human has been viewed first and only within a theological matrix marked by inflections across the scope and sequence of the divine economy. God gives life. Live by borrowed breath. God raises the dead. Live by his power. God justifies the ungodly and adopts the orphan. Live by his declaration. Appreciating the links between creation and new creation, as well as the delightful news of Jesus's resurrection that stitches them together, helps grant depth and beauty to his summons to us. Scholastic theology does not tuck items away in boxes, but it does prompt us always to ask how the varied divine works manifest God's being and pressure us to work by way of reduction (*reductio*), that is, of tracing all truths back unto God. Scholastic theology will demand of us questions of a metaphysical register, lest morality and the salvific economy flit around like disjointed phenomena.

⁴¹ See Lesslie Newbigin, *Foolishness to the Greeks: The Gospel and Western Culture* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988); John Webster, *Holiness* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), 4–5.

⁴² See especially Oliver O'Donovan's repeated argument that moral theology is neither an addendum to nor a mere repetition of Christian doctrine but is a thinking out or unfolding of the moral involvements of various doctrinal claims (e.g., "Sanctification and Ethics," in *Sanctification: Explorations and Proposals*, ed. Kelly M. Kopic [Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2014], 150–66).

⁴³ See the repeated emphasis on this connection as viewed through three doctrinal lenses (creational, Christological, and eschatological) in David Kelsey, *Eccentric Existence: A Theological Anthropology* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2009).

These comments are mere sketches of four principles for a scholastic theology today. Even when extended more fully, these four moves will not erase questions or remove quandaries. In each respect, these protocols of a scholastic or systematic theology call for us to remain alert and to stay vigilant—indeed, that is precisely the point of scholastic practice as a protocol for pilgrim theology. This attentiveness takes a particular form. We are neither emboldened to spiritual self-mastery nor to intellectual self-defense, as if fear of ignorance or incoherence calls for us to be on guard. Just the opposite. In these ways, we have been sketching how the “fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom” (Ps 111:10) and beginning to tease out protocols by which that fear might take disciplinary shape in our academic enterprises. Luther has reminded us of our terrible need for that formative discipline given our sin-sick and death-doused condition, where even our efforts at intellectual repentance remain hamstrung by self-direction. Affirming that kind of reformational or Augustinian anthropology has prompted an argument for the significance of theological practice taking scholastic shape as a means of turning outward and entrusting one’s intellectual journey unto the source of all wisdom. If we want our theology to be not only a practice of methodological competence and material conversation but ultimately a formation of Christian wisdom, then our alertness to the anthropological condition in Luther’s “Disputation *against* Scholastic Theology” should be paired with a concerted vision for theological contemplation by also offering a “Disputation *for* Scholastic Theology.”

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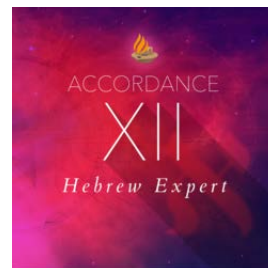
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— OLD TESTAMENT —

Accordance 12 Hebrew Expert Collection. Altamonte Springs, FL: Oaktree Software, Inc., 2017. \$1,999.00.

This package is one of three aimed at those specialising in the OT. Hebrew Pro (\$999) includes the main Hebrew and Dead Sea Scroll texts, and a number of major lexicons (BDB, HALOT, TLOT, and TWOT). Hebrew Expert (\$1999), the collection reviewed here, adds cognate languages and related texts, notably the Syriac Peshitta and the Aramaic Targum. It also adds Leningrad Codex images, along with the full version of DCH. Hebrew Master (\$3699) adds more Semitic resources, including Rabbinic resources, such as a tagged Mishna and an untagged Babylonian Talmud. It also adds DSS images, along with BHQ, NIDOTTE, and TDOT. All packages come with a clutch of English Bible translations, including ASV, ESV, KJV, NET, NRSV. All packages only ship with a few general Bible dictionaries (e.g., Easton's Dictionary and Eerdman's Bible Dictionary), and a couple of commentaries (abridged Matthew Henry and the New Bible Commentary).



To demonstrate some of the features and potential of this package, I will outline how a seminary or graduate student, or a scholar can use this collection to study Ruth 2:12. BHS and BHQ Ruth can be placed in parallel columns, with the apparatus displayed in a separate window at the bottom of the screen. The user can add the LXX, Dead Sea Scrolls Bible, Targum, and Peshitta as parallel panes. The BHQ commentary can be displayed in a separate window to the right. A text browser window below this can contain a selection of English (and other language) Bible translations. Hovering over a Hebrew word while depressing the command key will bring up the definition in a designated lexicon in another window. Clicking on a Hebrew word after selecting the “Live Click” option allows a user to bring up a research pane in which you can choose from all the hits related to that word in the lexicons. Clicking on an entry in one of these lexicons will bring up the full lexical entry. The bibliographic details for the lexical entry can be easily produced by using “copy as” > “bibliography.” A click on a Hebrew word in BHS-T can also bring up a window with all the hits of that word in the original language texts. Right clicking on a Hebrew word brings up different search options, based on the lexeme, inflected, root, tag, and letters. For instance, a search based on the lexeme of פֶּעַל produces a list of thirty-seven verses. The analysis graph of the search results will immediately reveal that these verses are mainly found in poetic texts of the OT. Observations such as this, along with other textual thoughts or comments can be jotted down in “User Notes” for later reference. Personal translations of verses can be added with “User Notes,” which can be configured as a scrollable parallel column. Although a little fiddly for basic phrase diagramming, analyzing the structure of a verse is possible with the diagram feature. Overall, these features, among others, makes performing text-critical work on the original texts, as well as referencing lexical resources using this software package convenient and efficient.

There are a few minor ways in which the Accordance Hebrew Expert Collection can be improved. First, an option to copy Hebrew as one SBL transliteration style or the other would be useful. As it is, Hebrew transliteration is closest to the academic, rather than general purpose style. For instance, וַתְּהִי מִשְׁכַּרְתֶּךָ is transliterated *ûṭ^hi maškurtēk* instead of *ûṭahî maškurtēk*. Second, add pagination for the BHQ Megilloth commentary, since copying bibliographical information produces a paragraph instead

of a page reference. A user needs to consult a hardcopy edition of the BHQ commentary to correctly cite pages for publication. Third, an option to “Copy As” > “References” in Concordance after a word search would improve efficiency. Fourth, the ability to edit in the diagram feature in full screen, not just when the window is small.

Some graduate students and scholars specializing in the OT will need to consider buying additional resources. These might include (additional cost in parentheses) BHQ (\$199), the Vulgate (available in Catholic Bibles and texts add-on bundle, \$199), NJPS (\$19.90), TDOT (\$699; surprisingly, the package includes TDNT but not TDOT), and NIDOTTE (\$179). Those considering this software package might need to keep the additional cost of items such as these in mind (total cost for Hebrew Expert and these add-ons is \$3294.90). Also, since all the Hebrew packages only ship with a limited number of English Bible translations, dictionaries, and commentaries, *Themelios* readers who want to move beyond text-critical work might want to add at least NIV-11 GKE (\$49.90) and HCSB (\$14.90), along with other Bible dictionaries and commentaries. A Hebrew collection in Accordance could be supplemented with English Pro (\$999.00) or English Expert (\$3999.00) to obtain these resources.

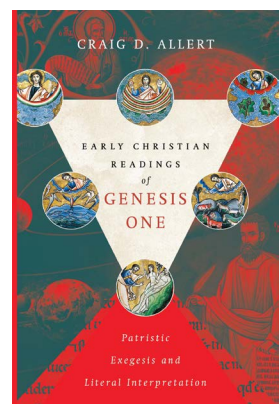
I’ve been trialling Accordance for six months after using BibleWorks for the previous eighteen years. The learning curve has been steep, but the gains in efficiency after learning to use the basic functions, along with resources of Accordance Hebrew Expert, has made the effort worthwhile. Since this collection is geared towards more scholarly use, those preparing Bible studies and sermons will need to add more resources to this collection.

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Craig Allert. *Early Christian Readings of Genesis One: Patristic Exegesis and Literal Interpretation*. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2018. 338 pp. £29.99/\$36.99.

This book is a call for responsible and accurate usage of the church fathers in contemporary engagement with the doctrine of creation. Allert notes how easy it is for modern readers to engage in superficial readings of the church fathers, driven by the concerns and needs of the contemporary debate. As he puts it, “we cannot simply parachute into the context of the Fathers and disregard it by plucking out quotations that appear to support our conclusion” (p. 158). Allert is particularly burdened by what he argues are misrepresentative appeals to the church fathers among creation science advocates. This concern frames the book (pp. 3–4). He draws particular attention to the dangers of proof-texting, selective quotation, eisegesis, and overgeneralization. In contrast to these approaches, Allert argues that we must seek to understand the church fathers in their own context and in relation to their own concerns, which he recognizes is a challenging and consuming task. But, as he emphasizes as well, it is a rewarding one.

Chapter 1 provides a broad introduction to the church fathers, and a case for their importance, drawing from others who have made this case, like Bryan Litfin, D. H. Williams, Robert Webber, and Christopher Hall. This is a helpful overview that readers may benefit from even if they have no interest in



the creation debate specifically. In this chapter Allert is especially helpful on the usage of the rule of faith in the early church, the slow development of the canon during the patristic age, and our indebtedness to the fathers in our understanding of Scripture.

Chapter 2 describes how creationist groups misuse the church fathers. Allert's language against this practice is sharp: he is "appalled" (p. 4); it is "shameful" (p. 109); one example is "glaring" (p. 55). Although at times it is perhaps debatable whether the strength of the argument justifies the strength of the language (e.g., the survey of young-earth and old-earth argumentation on pp. 55–59), Allert has identified a real problem and is right to push back against it.

Moreover, Allert's own engagement with the church fathers is detailed and informative. This is particularly seen in chapters 3–4, where he explores what the church fathers meant by the "literal" meaning of Scripture (focusing on Basil's *Hexaemeron* specifically in ch. 4). Here Allert demonstrates that the fathers' understanding of "literal" meaning is far more complicated than what contemporary young-earth creationists mean by this term. He rightly opposes the neat opposition of the church fathers into the Alexandrian and Antiochian schools of thought (e.g., pp. 123–24), as well as the overly simple breakdown of "literal" and "allegorical" hermeneutical approaches among the fathers. Essential to this point is the observation that the fathers' conception of the Bible's "literal" meaning was flexible enough to frequently embrace various "spiritual" and "allegorical" levels of meaning within it. Allert documents this well, with reference to Diodore of Tarsus's understanding of *historia* and *theoria* in the Psalms (pp. 137–38); or Eustathius of Antioch's criticism of Origen on the meaning of 1 Samuel 28:5–18 (pp. 142–52); or Basil's *Hexaemeron* (pp. 174–202). Noteworthy also is Allert's defense of allegorical interpretation, against some contemporary critiques, on the basis of the New Testament (pp. 115–23).

The latter half of the book (chs. 5–8) consists of commentary on various issues in the church fathers' views of creation, such as creation from nothing, or the creation days. Although it is not always clear how to correlate each chapter's contribution to the larger argument of the book (perhaps, for instance, some kind of summary at the start or conclusion of the chapters would have helped), readers will doubtless expand their understanding of the fathers on the issues they address.

Allert's book is especially informative about Basil's *Hexaemeron*, which is a key text for grasping the fathers' understanding of Genesis 1. Allert maintains that Basil was not opposed to allegory as such, but a particular kind of allegory; and that his opponent was not Origen but more excessive allegorists like the Manichaeans, who disregarded Scripture's spiritual interests (e.g., p. 197). He establishes this claim by exploring the context of Basil's appeal to the "common meaning," as well as Basil's own employment of allegorical interpretation in both the *Hexaemeron* and in other writings. Allert draws attention to how Basil's concern was the intended purpose of Scripture, not the "literalistic" meaning in the modern sense: "the exhortation by Basil to let Scripture 'be understood as it has been written' is not a call to attend a literalistic attachment to the text but rather a call to attend to the purpose of Scripture wherein God 'has ordained that all things be written for the edification and guidance of our souls'" (p. 198). Appeals to Basil by modern day creationist groups should display sensitivity to the danger of equivocation on the meaning of the word "literal" with reference to Genesis 1.

A strength of *Early Christian Readings of Genesis One* is the detail and sensitivity of its engagement with patristic sources. Readers will greatly enhance their knowledge of the fathers, especially Augustine and Basil. There are a few eccentricities of footnoting such as not locating an article (p. 56) or citing Wikipedia (p. 62); but these are minor points within an overall solid work of scholarship.

On the whole, *Early Christian Readings of Genesis One* is a welcome and needed call for more careful, rigorous use of the church fathers' views on creation. It is not intended so much as a work of fresh discovery or breakthrough—Allert draws from the work of other patristic scholars such as Paul Blowers (e.g., p. 94), Charles Hill (e.g., p. 88), Frances Young (e.g., pp. 127–37), and John McGuckin (e.g., pp. 194–98). The value of Allert's work is that he brings such scholarship into explicit and forceful opposition to contemporary young-earth creationist advocates. In this role, *Early Christian Readings of Genesis One* helpfully draws attention to the complexity of patristic exegesis of Genesis, and calls us out into deeper waters than most of us have yet waded.

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George Athas. *Deuteronomy: One Nation under God*. Reading the Bible Today Series. Sydney South: Aquila Press, 2016. x + 322 pp. \$24.95.

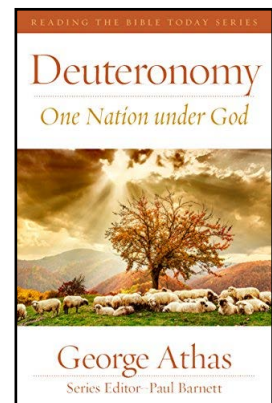
George Athas is Director of Research and lecturer in Old Testament at Moore Theological College, an Anglican minister, and author of numerous books and articles. His commentary enables a first-time reader of Deuteronomy to understand and begin to apply this much-neglected portion of God's word that he describes as the Old Testament's "theological backbone" or "theology central" (p. ix).

Athas divides Deuteronomy into thirteen sections. In each section he begins his discussion with the structure and meaning of the text, before looking at how it was applied and interpreted throughout the rest of the Old Testament. He then looks into the way the New Testament treats each passage. The discussion questions that follow open up the contemporary context.

In the general field of Bible commentaries, Athas's work is part of the beginning of a new sensitivity. Most Bible commentaries engage with other scholars, often dealing with fairly speculative agendas, or else with theological questions dating back to or beyond the Reformation. Athas notes that we are now speaking to a majority audience of people who are not even aware of those questions. He calls this "a post-Christendom era" (p. x).

The last decade in Western culture has seen a significant rise in hostility and mockery of the Christian faith, the Bible, and particularly the Old Testament. There is a widespread assumption that the books of the Old Testament, and Torah in particular, are not worth reading because they advocate a primitive and essentially immoral set of values. Athas wisely, and bravely, sets out to address this uninformed prejudice. It is our experience that this audience has proven to be open, interested, and very surprised by what the Bible has to say. Athas has produced a commentary that draws the interest and challenges the stereotypes of a biblically illiterate culture.

As an ancient text, Deuteronomy suffers from the tyranny of distance in time, geography and especially in culture. Athas's solid scholarship proves its value as he informs the reader of the historical and cultural background to God's instructions. This enables the reader to perceive the relevance of Deuteronomy for people today.



Athas is to be commended particularly for his willingness to engage explicitly with matters of sexuality. We speak to a generation that does not tolerate coy euphemisms when it comes to the painful and outrageous abuses of human sexuality. Such approaches resonate too closely with the attempts by notorious church leaders to cover up such crimes. Athas allows the text to speak to the present with its original explicit detail.

His discussion of passages dealing with virginity (pp. 261–64) clarify matters that many might prefer to avoid. Speaking to a multicultural community, this level of engagement is essential. His detailed exposition of laws pertaining to rape breaks down the cultural distance between the text and the present. Applying the case law of Deuteronomy, he acknowledges David's sin with Bathsheba as rape (p. 96). He notes, "the law does not see rape as a subcategory of adultery. Rather, 22:26 equates rape with murder. This acknowledges the profound impact that rape has: it imposes a kind of living death on the victim" (pp. 266–67).

His discussions of adultery (pp. 88–90, 264, 278–80, 286), and ritual uncleanness (p. 271) cut through to the heart of the issues. By reading the text within its original context he persuasively demonstrates how Yahweh instructed his people to protect the vulnerable, particularly women and children, bringing justice to bear wherever abuse occurred (see also pp. 240–43).

Athas also brings a particular precision and sensitivity to the discussion of images and the second commandment (pp. 64–68, 78). Speaking of the tabernacle, he explains, "At the heart of Israel's worship was revelation, not idolatry" (p. 167). Similarly, with respect to the third commandment, he states that "Honouring God's name is about knowing him ... and about how Christians live, speak, think and pray – not about how to pronounce a particular label" (p. 81).

Athas spends considerable energy clarifying the differences between the Old and New Covenants and the place of Old Covenant law in that transition. He explains Deuteronomy as a law for the nation of Israel, enabling that nation to maintain its relationship with Yahweh and the Promised Land. Given that the New Covenant people of God are not constituted as a geo-political state, and that Jesus has fulfilled the law, he states bluntly, "For Christians, then, the law is no longer binding as law." Rather, "it educates Christians on the kind of God they worship and the kinds of standards he has in mind for people" (p. 202).

In describing Old Covenant law as prophecy and wisdom (pp. 201–2) Athas begs a number of questions. He states that "The nature of this [Old Testament] revelation was law.... The proper response to it was loyalty, obedience and fear.... The nature of this [New Testament] revelation was grace and truth. The proper response is love, fellowship and joy" (p. 51). Given the strong emphasis on love for Yahweh, unity and generosity among the Old Covenant community, and the extensive celebrations of the festivals and songs in Deuteronomy alone, this dichotomy seems strained at best. It would have been helpful if Athas had more clearly explained how individual salvation (including justification by faith, the work of the Holy Spirit, and the role of personal faith) worked for people under the Old Covenant. One might conclude from Athas's commentary that these things didn't happen until after Jesus's resurrection (especially pp. 249–51).

Athas is careful in his discussion of the contributions of the editor, as distinct from the actual words of Moses. Controversially, he allows that the final form of Deuteronomy may not have been completed until the time of Ezra in 458 BC (pp. 3–4). Of greater concern is his suggestion that 10:14–22 may be "an editorial statement," or that "the editor has put the words onto the lips of Moses" (p. 151, n. 58; see also p. 46 on 4:38). He reads 32:15–27 as a reference back to the exile (p. 4), in spite of the text

stating that “Moses spoke the words of this song in the hearing of all the assembly of Israel” (31:30). He sees in references to covenant curses a likely editorial reading back, rather than an authentic prophetic prediction (pp. 4, 317–18; see also p. 315).

Overall, Athas’s commentary has opened up this foundational text for a wide audience. He challenges the assumptions and stereotypes of contemporary culture, and calls on Christians to come to grips with God’s character and instructions for life. He has shown us that Deuteronomy speaks to the issues of our times, and explains how Christ’s finished work can and will transform our lives and lifestyles, and free us from the destructive power of sin even here and now.

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C. John Collins. *Reading Genesis Well: Navigating History, Poetry, Science, and Truth in Genesis 1–11*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2018. 336 pp. £25.00/\$36.99.

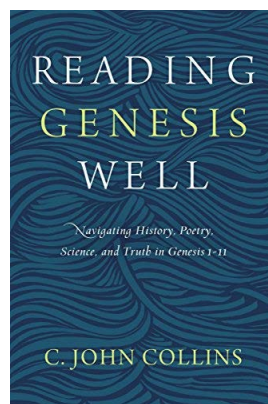
I have a very clever Catholic friend who once told me that an evangelical is someone who takes everything in the Bible literally—except when Jesus tells the crowd that unless they eat of his flesh and drink of his blood, they can have no life in themselves (John 6:53–58). The point is a fair one, and should stand as a reminder to all evangelicals that biblical inerrancy should not mean that every statement in the Bible must be taken in a narrowly literal, scientific way.

Along with many of my fellow conservative evangelicals, I prefer to define inerrancy to mean that “the Bible is true in what it affirms.” Such a definition allows the adherent of inerrancy to take the Bible historically when it is being historical, poetic when it is being poetic, and fictional when it is being fictional. Now, committed evangelicals will often disagree as to *when* a passage is being historical or poetic or fictional, but at least this definition of inerrancy allows for a common ground of discussion.

I myself believe in a historical Job, but I also believe that a good case can be made, from an orthodox, inerrant position, that Job is not history but a parable writ large. I also believe, despite my more literalist bent, that a strong case can be made, within the purview of inerrancy, that Genesis 1 is to be taken poetically, with the word “day” being used to connote eras of time. I am, in sharp contrast, unwilling to empty Genesis 2–3 of historical content, but more on that below.

Reading Genesis Well: Navigating History, Poetry, Science, and Truth in Genesis 1–11 is a provocative but carefully argued book. C. John Collins, professor of Old Testament at Covenant Theological Seminary in St. Louis and chair of the Old Testament translation committee for the ESV, does a masterful job sorting out, not only the literary genres of Genesis 1–11, but the specific kinds of language that it employs and the particular audience to which it is directed. Before he even touches on Genesis, Collins devotes a third of his book to surveying how language works, considering closely such elements as linguistics, rhetoric, and genre.

As I expected, Collins discusses different literary genres and how they should be read, but he goes much deeper than that. When reading passages in Scripture, whether Genesis 1–11 or the Sermon on the Mount, it is not enough merely to decide on the genre being employed. The careful reader must distinguish between the passage’s locution, “the actual form of words spoken,” and its illocution, “the



intended effect of those words (on beliefs, actions, attitudes)” (p. 51). Often, as is the case with rhetorical questions (“Do I have to tell you that again?”) the focus is not on the words themselves as a propositional statement (locution), but on a certain behavior the question is intended to provoke (illocution).

Collins suggests, convincingly, that “probably most questions in the Bible are of this sort: ‘For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the same?’ (Matt 5:46) is not a request for information but a device to shape the disciples’ way of leaning into their world, to define their community identity with a certain set of likes and dislikes” (p. 52). The same, he further suggests, is likely the case with most of the questions that God asks in Genesis: they “intend to offer the hearers an opportunity to do something, more than they express actual ignorance” (p. 52).

For communication to be carried out properly, whether face-to-face or through a book, speaker and hearer alike must be able to discern between locution and illocution. “To do this well requires both a social and cultural awareness ... and a cooperation between speaker and hearer. In this cooperation the speaker must provide enough clues to his intentions, and the audience should be willing to go beyond the mere form of words, and to do so with enough sympathy with the speaker to perceive what he or she wants—*compliance* with the speaker’s intentions, of course, is another matter” (p. 60).

Collins insists that the Bible provides those clues, then calls on us as readers to do the hard work of coming into sync with the linguistic intent of the passage being considered. Most of the Bible, he argues, is written in ordinary or phenomenological language—“in terms of what things look like, without making much of a claim about the inner workings of the referents” (p. 63). Ordinary language can be distinguished from scientific (analytical) language and poetic (imagistic) language. The former has gained much prestige because it seems to speak a universal language, but that universality is achieved by “abstracting away everything that makes for particular cases, that is, for real experiences” (p. 67).

Now, lest Collins seem to be taking us back to Rudolph Bultmann and the demythologizing of Scripture, he does make it clear that “the biblical material speaks largely in terms of historical matters and of a worldview and asserts that these are true” (p. 84). In no way does he empty Genesis 1–11 of all historical content; the point of his book is not to write off Adam and Eve as mere myths. Nevertheless, he argues that the biblical authors were not so much concerned with scientific language as “with shaping the worldview of the people of God and thus equipping the faithful to play their part in the unfolding story of God’s work in the world” (p. 89).

That last sentence gets to the heart of Collins’s thesis. The literary-rhetorical-illocutionary goal of the Bible, including and especially the opening chapters of Genesis, is not to supply scientific information but to shape the covenant people, most of whom were farmers who were already aware of the different kinds of animals and the basic laws of nature that they needed to be in tune with if they were to feed themselves and their families. What sets Genesis 1–11 apart from Genesis 12–50 is that the latter chapters focus on the covenant God of Israel while the former reveal that that covenant God is the God of *all* the nations and that Israel was meant to proclaim that message to the pagan world around them.

Whatever evangelical readers take away from Collins’s book, they should pay careful attention to the way Genesis 1–11 would have functioned in the life and ministry of the people of Israel. When Genesis 12–50 is read in the context of 1–11, Collins explains, it becomes clear that “God’s calling of Abram [was] not simply for his own benefit but also for the rest of the world” (p. 113).

Once we grant that argument, and any close reader of Genesis 12:3 cannot help but do so, we are compelled to take seriously what Collins goes on to argue:

One of the chief themes of Old Testament messianic hope is the expectation that under the leadership of the Messiah, the people of God will succeed in bringing God's light to the gentile world. The shape of this biblical story assumes that all human beings have a common origin, a common predicament, and a common need to know God and have God's image restored in them. This assumption comes from including Genesis 1–11 in the story with some version of the conventional reading of the fall of the whole human family. (p. 113)

Note that Collins does not here reject an actual, historical fall; he merely seeks to emphasize the core of what Genesis 3 is trying to teach its original audience: namely, that the redemption story that the Bible recounts concerns all people and not just the Jews.

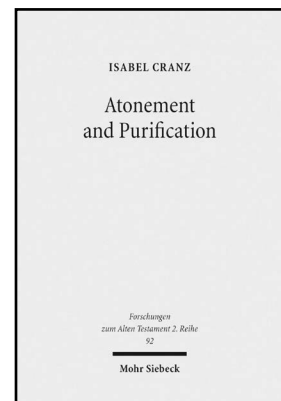
The various analyses that Collins performs in his book are too wide and diverse to summarize here; however, if the reader will (at least temporarily) concede to Collins his focus on illocution and on the kind of covenant history Genesis is trying to tell, he will learn much of value. He will likely disagree on many points, as I did myself with a number of Collins's conclusions, but he will have his understanding of Genesis 1–11 expanded in many ways.

Collins's style is, for the most part, lucid and accessible, though it bogs down at times and is a bit hard to slog through. I would have found it easier to slog through myself had Collins's editor not made repeated use of the word "humankind" as a euphemism for man. I found this quite distracting, especially given that the ESV correctly translates the Hebrew "adam" as "Man" in Genesis 5:2: "Male and female he created them, and he blessed them and named them Man." Still, Collins is to be commended for conveying his analysis with as little jargon as possible.

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Isabel Cranz. *Atonement and Purification: Priestly and Assyro-Babylonian Perspectives on Sin and its Consequences*. FAT 2/92. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2017. xiii + 178 pp. £65.46/\$84.00.

In this revised dissertation, Isabel Cranz approaches Priestly literature from a comparative perspective. She focuses her work on a comparison of Leviticus 4–5 with Šurpu, an Akkadian ritual text found and used throughout Mesopotamia. As a result of this comparison, Cranz concludes, "Priestly rituals of atonement and purification highlight how the Priestly writers addressed sin and human suffering from the perspective of sanctuary maintenance. This focus on the sanctuary was not the result of a conscious expression of monotheism or an attempt to challenge foreign rituals. Rather, the Priestly writers were defending the privileged position of the Aaronides against their critics and the encroachments of rival priestly groups such as the Levites" (p. 1). This concise summary highlights the three main results of Cranz's work: 1) Priestly ritual focuses on the maintenance of God's presence in the sanctuary; 2) Priestly ritual contains no polemic against foreign practices, nor does it advance a monotheistic agenda; 3)



Priestly ritual grants unique status and authority in the sanctuary to the Aaronide priests vis-à-vis other claimants to ritual privilege (especially Levites).

Cranz divides her argument into an introduction (ch. 1) and seven subsequent chapters. In Chapter 2, Cranz explains her focus on ritual elements (e.g., ritual contexts, participants, activities) in the comparison of Leviticus and Šurpu. In chapter 3, Cranz compares sin and its consequences in both Šurpu and Lev 4–5. She observes that both texts describe individuals undergoing divinely induced suffering for some hidden sin(s), which must be confessed to experience relief and restoration with the deity. Despite this overarching similarity, Cranz highlights the different literary settings of the rituals in Šurpu (an instruction manual for Mesopotamian ritual specialists) and Leviticus (a set of instructions communicated to both the priests [Lev 6:2, 18] and the people of Israel [Lev 1:2; 4:1–2; 7:22–23, 28–29]), as well as the very different nature of suffering in each text (demonic possession in Šurpu; physical and/or emotional distress expressed by the verb אָשַׁם [“to suffer guilt’s consequences”; for this translation, see p. 39] in Lev 4–5).

The following two chapters (4–5) focus on the ritual elements of Šurpu. In Chapter 4, Cranz observes that the exorcists who performed Šurpu were not tied to one specific institution, but could be hired by individuals (often the king). The exorcists assumed the identities of both the supplicant and deity (Marduk), thereby bringing the patient into the divine realm for intercession and bringing divine realities to bear in his or her life. In Chapter 5, Cranz explains that Mesopotamian exorcists had relatively little involvement in the maintenance of temples. Instead, Šurpu was performed outside the city in places where deities resided, such as riverbanks and the steppe.

In the last three chapters (chs. 6–8), Cranz focuses on sacrifice and purification in the Priestly material. Cranz begins this section (ch. 6) by demonstrating that the priests functioned as mediators between the divine and human realms. They fulfilled this role because they were bound to God’s sanctuary and thereby became holy. In chapter 7, Cranz demonstrates that the sacrificial practices of Lev 4–5 closely parallel ritual activities in Šurpu. Yet, while both Šurpu and Lev 4–5 contain rituals performed for the benefit of the individual, the biblical rituals also serve the community as they mitigate God’s wrath and preserve his habitation in the sanctuary. Finally, in chapter 8, Cranz applies the results of her work to the interpretation of Lev 14. Scholars regularly argue that the ritual for the restoration of one suffering צָרַעַת (“skin disease”) contains foreign elements hostile to the Priestly system and that the lack of any connection between sin and pollution in the chapter indicates the monotheistic agenda of the Priestly writer. Cranz rebuts both points, arguing instead that Lev 14 focuses on the role of the priests in preserving the sanctity of the sanctuary, without any clear agenda subverting foreign practices or advancing monotheism.

Cranz’s comparative project largely succeeds in advancing two of her three conclusions. She successfully argues that Priestly ritual emphasizes the role of Aaronide priests in maintaining God’s presence in the sanctuary. This claim is hardly controversial, since numerous other scholars agree with Cranz that the role of the priests was (among other things) to purge the sanctuary of impurity and sin so that Yahweh could continue to reside among his people (see, e.g., Jacob Milgrom, *Leviticus 1–16*, AB 3 [New York: Doubleday, 1991], 254–61; Tikva Frymer-Kensky, “Pollution, Purification, and Purgation in Biblical Israel,” in *The Word of the Lord Shall Go Forth*, ed. Carol Meyers and Michael O’Connor [Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1983], 399–414, esp. 406; Roy Gane, *Cult and Character* [Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2005], 324–33). Nonetheless, the comparison with Šurpu proves enlightening because it demonstrates that ritual professionals in Mesopotamia were not always attached to temples and

regularly performed rituals in the periphery. In other words, the Priestly text focuses on the sanctuary (and community), whereas Šurpu focuses on the individual. Cranz's second argument, that Priestly ritual does not polemicize against foreign practices or advance a monotheistic agenda, is considerably more controversial, but remains convincing. Cranz's comparison with Šurpu demonstrates that Priestly ritual shares a great deal in common with other ancient Near Eastern traditions. Further, Cranz shows that, instead of advancing a monotheistic agenda by separating suffering from sin (and thereby eviscerating the role of demons in human suffering), Leviticus 14 focuses on the priestly work of purification necessary to fulfilling their role of keeping the camp pure. Only when Cranz sees Priestly ritual advocating the claims of Aaronide priests against the Levites does her argument falter. Regardless of one's perspective on the existence of intra-Pentateuchal polemics between different priestly groups, Cranz's comparison of Priestly ritual with Šurpu fails to shed new light on the subject. Instead, Cranz depends entirely on evidence from within the Hebrew Bible to make the case for conflict between Aaronides and Levites.

This stimulating study should prove helpful to anyone interested in situating biblical ritual in its ancient Near Eastern context.

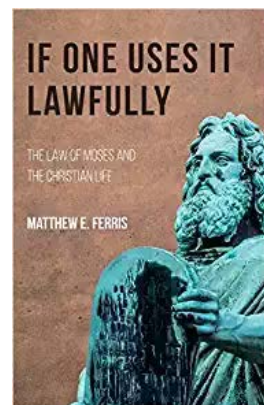
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Matthew E. Ferris. *If One Uses It Lawfully: The Law of Moses and the Christian Life*. Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2018. vi + 136 pp. £15.00/\$19.00.

Does the Mosaic law have a continuing role for Christians and, if it does, what is that role? These are important questions and yet the range of views, both ancient and contemporary, attests to the difficulty of reaching satisfactory answers. Matthew E. Ferris, cognizant of the wider debate, writes to critique the popular assumption that the Decalogue (or Ten Commandments) constitutes a “rule-of-life” for Christians. Against that understanding Ferris maintains, “the position of Christian freedom from the law is the only scripturally consistent one” (p. 4). Accordingly, the pattern for Christian living ought to be Jesus, not the law (p. 9).

In chapter 2 Ferris turns to defining “law” and establishing its extent. The need for this, as rightly recognized, is that “law” has many connotations in the Bible. Ferris argues (again, rightly in my view) that the law must be considered a whole. Hence, attempts to subdivide OT law into moral, ceremonial, and civil categories are regarded as untenable (pp. 14–18). On this basis, Ferris also criticizes notions of “trans-covenantal” law—that is, moral regulations, synonymous with the Decalogue, given to Adam by God. He concludes, “Despite confessional documents, there is no Scriptural support for placing the moral law in Eden” (p. 28). Ferris thus highlights discontinuity between old and new covenants to argue that the Mosaic law bound only Israel, not people generally.

This leads to consideration of the law's purpose in salvation history. The Decalogue is understood as a time-limited treaty document between Israel and God (pp. 37–38). Galatians and Romans underpin Ferris's conclusion: “in all of Paul's discussion of law, he presents an unfolding narrative of God's dealings with mankind that consigns the law to a prior age.” In this new era, however, “the Spirit's



indwelling of believers means that we pattern ourselves not after the law, but after the risen Christ as the Spirit enables” (p. 59). The law, therefore, including the Decalogue, cannot be the basis of Christian sanctification; nor can it define what doing good looks like for Christians (p. 41).

Chapter 4 surveys several important Protestant writers—Luther, Calvin, Wesley, Berkhof, and Cranfield—to evaluate their view that the law functions as guide to life for the regenerate (the so-called “third use of the law”). Ferris suggests this position is problematic because it removes consequence from command. Furthermore, he deems it a “redefinition of what the law is.... It is no longer the Ten Commandments, but the Ten Suggestions” (p. 65). However, Ferris here assumes a definition of law (as statutory regulations that must be obeyed) that he has not demonstrated. Indeed, lack of precision regarding the definition of “law” is a problem that runs through the volume. “Law” is equated with the Decalogue (p. 94), the Mosaic covenant (p. 28), the Pentateuch (p. 14), and even the OT as a whole (p. 118). While this might reflect the nuances of νόμος in the NT, it detracts from the clarity of Ferris’s presentation.

The impact on Christian living is explored in chapters five and six. Ferris posits a distinction between keeping the law and fulfilling it. Christians, he says, fulfil the law by living Spirit-filled, obedient-to-Christ, lives. Using a helpful analogy, Ferris suggests the difference is like that between native and non-native speakers: native speakers do intuitively what non-native speakers only approximate by following grammatical rules (p. 87). Based on Galatians 6:2, Ferris suggests that Christians should consider themselves “en-lawed” to Christ (p. 102); as presented with a person, not a code. Renewing the mind, learning Christ, walking in love, and in the Spirit do what the law could not: transform believers into Christlikeness (p. 103). The Epilogue asserts the book’s major contention sharply: “we are not under the Mosaic law in any way ... it has nothing to say to those in Christ” (p. 114).

This final statement (reminiscent of Luther) raises the question of how OT law functions for Christians as Spirit-inspired and Spirit-applied Scripture. This is a question, however, that Ferris leaves substantially unaddressed. Here also, the reader feels other limitations in the volume. Ferris’s discussion of the law’s purpose, for instance, is overwhelmingly shaped by Reformation categories. Thus, while the Reformers’ “three uses” are critiqued, the validity of the categories is simply assumed. In fact, one of the most striking features of the volume is its lack of scope. The biblical case is positioned on Romans and Galatians with occasional references to 1 Corinthians. While these important texts are handled well, the sample set is rather meagre considering the available data. What about the contribution of Hebrews? Or James? Or the Johannine literature? Thus, when Ferris concludes that, “The *New Testament* presents” (p. 113; emphasis mine), he is substantially overstating what has been demonstrated. Moreover, when it comes to OT texts, the silence is almost total. This is remarkable in a book that purports to define OT law (ch. 2), articulate its purpose (ch. 3), and consider its ongoing function (chs. 4–6). The resulting discussion thus pays no attention to recent developments which have clarified our understanding of OT law (including its literary artistry, rhetorical purposes, social function, and interrelationship with other ANE law codes). This lacuna is substantiated by the bibliography which contains only three treatments of the Decalogue (by Pink, Rooker, and Seitz) and one OT commentary (by John Wesley). One cannot avoid concluding that the argument has been based on a canon within the canon.

While *If One Uses It Lawfully* mounts an effective case against the “rule-of-life” position, and is commendable to that end, the volume is weakened by limited engagement with the Scriptures and by being out of touch with developments in the secondary literature.

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Ming Him Ko. *Leviticus*. Asia Bible Commentary. Carlisle, UK: Langham Global Library. 2018. xiv + 256 pp. £12.99/\$25.99.

In 2015 I reviewed the outstanding commentary by Jay Sklar on Leviticus for *Themelios* and made a passing comment that, then living in Asia, there were a few issues that Sklar glossed over because of the Western context of both the author and the series. So it was with some interest I read Ko’s new commentary in the Asia Bible Commentary series.

This series, originally a project of and published by the Asia Theological Association, is now published by Langham under the editorship of Rico Villanueva in the Philippines. The authors come from a wide range of Asian countries and the series is certainly adding weight and credibility to Asian scholarship. Ko’s contribution adds further to that.

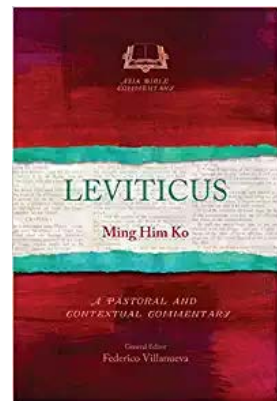
Ko’s handling of the text is not word for word but rather a comment on paragraphs of the text. He often cites others’ chiasms (calling them “inverted structures,” e.g., p. 220), but does not get bogged down in scholarly argument or different opinions.

At times a little more discussion of different opinions might have been useful. For example, there is surprisingly little emphasis on atonement. Yom Kippur is called the Day of Purgation (p. 147), and the main aim of the burnt offering is to “attract divine presence” (p. 21 and elsewhere throughout). I was unpersuaded by this latter understanding. He argued, without giving evidence, that the purificatory role of the burnt offering had been demoted behind its role as a gift offering (p. 18). I was unconvinced by this, and wonder whether overall he downplayed too much the idea of sacrifice as atonement. He dismisses the view that laying the hand on the animal denotes a transfer of sin, and instead thinks it denotes an acknowledgement of ownership of the animal (p. 17).

One of the weaknesses to my mind, in contrast to Sklar’s great strength, is the lack of a biblical theology or even a sense of biblical unity. Ko appeals at times to Chronicles, on which his doctorate was based, and implicitly seems to accept the JEDP reconstruction of the Pentateuch’s origins. He sees Priestly theology as building on a priestly creation theology (e.g., pp. 153, 161) and suggests Leviticus is in contest with Deuteronomy (e.g., p. 158 on Deuteronomy 12).

Having said this, Ko regularly links the text to the New Testament, often in helpful and thoughtful ways. He clearly sees Leviticus foreshadowing or leading us to Christ. Jesus is certainly the fulfilment of the rituals and sacrificial system in this commentary.

At times I would have preferred a more nuanced reflection of continuity or discontinuity between ancient Israel and Hong Kong (his main background for examples, e.g., p. 230 on land laws) and between ancient Israel and Christians. The priestly sections of the first half of Leviticus he often links



to Christians via the idea of a royal priesthood (e.g., pp. 82–85), but that idea was already in place in Exodus for all of God’s people. So more nuancing might be helpful. Another example is the discussion of foreigners and aliens (p. 186), where he doesn’t distinguish carefully enough between the two in the text and thus applies it too vaguely to Hong Kong and migrant issues.

This last issue exposes again a weakness of his biblical theology. The laws of ancient Israel were, in part, to shape Israelite society as the people of God. They cannot be simply transposed into a modern country. He doesn’t appear to see the role of ancient Israel to attract the nations to God’s blessing through their holiness.

Some language struck me as odd, such as Day of Purgation already mentioned, but he also prefers to use “adytum” for the central part of the Old Testament temple rather than Holy of Holies and Holy Place. The Lord’s Supper is called the “holy supper” (p. 207) and he refers to something “seeable” (p. 238) rather than visible.

The main issue glossed over in Sklar’s commentary that is more significant in Asian practice is eating blood. Ko addresses this, but unsatisfactorily to my mind. He doesn’t see the implication of the blood prohibition in Genesis 9 applying to all humanity, and that the blood prohibition in Leviticus and Deuteronomy are both separate from the food laws. So he considers that blood can now be eaten, as all foods are now clean, and that Acts 15 applied to the context of food offered to idols in the ancient Roman Empire. So he considers eating blood to be a cultural issue, not a theological one. Acts 15, linking the blood prohibition to fornication and idolatry, doesn’t allow such an interpretation. This issue remains important and contentious in many Asian contexts.

One of the comments on Asian society I did find helpful was on Leviticus 23. Chinese and I would add Burmese, often have superstitions attached to dates and numbers, and he wisely and explicitly excludes such superstitions when commenting on Israel’s festival calendar. However, another example failed to compel, when he used disrespect of a nation’s flag as a parallel to blaspheming God’s name (p. 215). There is surely something much more personal in blaspheming God’s name than showing disrespect to a flag.

Ko’s commentary is readable, consistently wanting to show the usefulness of Leviticus for the modern Christian, Asian or otherwise. The Asian context is refreshing and the examples from Hong Kong or China are thought-provoking. My quibbles and questions show that the commentary is stimulating and engaging.

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W. Dennis Tucker Jr. and Jamie A. Grant. *Psalms: Volume 2*. NIVAC. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2018. 1072 pp. \$64.99.

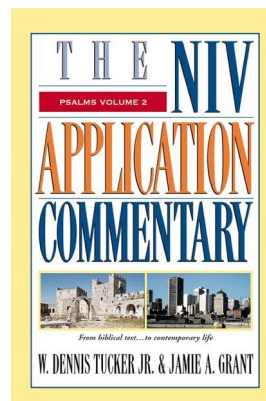
The NIV Application Commentary series is unique. Any student of the Psalms using this work will quickly find its accessibility a welcoming appetizer before being presented with the main course of world-class Psalms scholarship. This commentary is intentionally designed to be two-way—readers are not only guided backwards to what the text meant in its original contexts, but its meaning and implications are brought forward to bear on the readers’ present context.

In this volume, Grant covers Psalms 73–106, while Tucker covers Psalms 107–150. Individually, they have worked on the Psalms for many years. Besides bringing to the table up-to-date scholarship from both sides of the Atlantic, the combination of their strengths makes this second installation a formidable one. Tucker’s earlier work, *Constructing and Deconstructing Power in Psalms 107–150* (Atlanta: SBL, 2014), supplied the historical basis for his interpretation of these psalms. Likewise, Grant’s published dissertation, *The King as Exemplar: The Function of Deuteronomy’s Kingship Law in the Shaping of the Book of Psalms* (Atlanta: SBL, 2004), supplied the literary and theological frameworks for his interpretation of the exilic and Mosaic psalms in books three and four of the Psalter. In other words, they are suitably qualified for this mammoth task.

Those familiar with the first volume by Gerald Wilson will be happy to know that Tucker and Grant, who represent a younger generation of Psalms scholarship, have continued the tradition. Even more so, they have now supplied in their introduction what was left unsaid by Wilson (pp. 19–37): two important hermeneutical perspectives—the *editorial shape*, and the *theology* of the Psalter. The discussions on the editorial shape of the Psalter have gone somewhat beyond what Wilson had accomplished. For instance, Grant has linked the loss of Jerusalem depicted in Psalm 74 all the way through Psalm 79 and beyond by highlighting certain motifs like “remembrance” (pp. 80, 97, 110, 140, 168, 182). Clearly, the commentary has benefited also from the slew of studies on the canonical shaping of the Psalter since the 1990s.

Even though the selling point of the commentary is its focus on “application,” its biting-edge, in my opinion, is the section on the “Bridging Contexts.” The methodology adopted by the commentary in every psalm is developed in three stages, namely, (1) Original Meaning, (2) Bridging Contexts, and (3) Contemporary Significance. In (1), the authors give sense to the text in its original literary and historical contexts. Brief discussions on structure, superscription, translations issues or poetics are given, though this is not dissimilar to what other commentaries have achieved. In (3), readers will find the *application* of the text in the modern or postmodern contexts, and at times, written in the first-person voice of the authors. However, in the section on “Bridging Contexts” (2), the authors try to make sense of each psalm *intertextually*; that is, the connections of the texts are made and interpreted under the larger theological rubric of not just the Psalter but also the Old Testament (e.g., discussion on the “horn,” p. 107). Moreover, relevant links between each psalm and the New Testament, if they occur, are explored and bridged.

Several other peculiarities of the commentary deserve mention. While the commentary is based on the NIV translation (2011), it does not restrict the authors from addressing translational difficulties (e.g., the translation of ἄγαπή as “love” in the NIV is discussed, pp. 881–82). Psalms superscriptions are given an interesting numbering throughout (e.g., Pss “78:0,” “138:0,” pp. 140, 905). The commentary



uses transliteration of the Hebrew and avoids lengthy discussions on text-critical or form-critical issues, which are not uncommon in older Psalms commentaries. As a multi-author volume, the editors have also done a good job of preserving continuity without sacrificing individual voices of the authors. In my own reading, I have found Grant's application ("Contemporary Significance") more personal and helpful. Tucker, on the other hand, seems to give more expression to textual, poetic, and historical issues. They are somewhat even in their analyses of the editorial shape of the Psalms.

The strengths of this commentary are easy to list. It is easy to read and caters primarily to content, meaning, and application. In-depth issues (e.g., textual issues) or genre discussions are not absent altogether. The authors have tried to keep their comments concise without jettisoning important discussions on poetics or historicity (sometimes, expanded in the footnotes). As a whole, the comments are primarily *semantic* in thrust. As such, readers who are interested in the technical *details* may find it lacking. Consequently, this commentary is best used with others that forefront extended discussion on technicalities (e.g., Hossfeld and Zenger's three-volume *Hermeneia* commentary) for those who need them. To be sure, the lack of emphases in technicalities does not mean they have not been considered; they are simply in the background. Comments on each psalm are divided into structural units that are, unfortunately, not always explained. I find that discussions on the editorial shape of the Psalter are mostly incremental, primarily semantic, and usually pertain to near-distant or adjacent psalms. In my view, the commentary has not decisively advanced the macrostructural understanding of the shape of the Psalter. To be fair, it was not intended to.

Nonetheless, this work is probably one of the latest commentaries available that incorporates the shape of the Psalter in its treatment—a trend that we will continue to see. In the last two decades, the adoption of this approach is clearly visible in several English commentaries on the Psalms, particularly the works of McCann (NIB, 1996), Hossfeld and Zenger (*Hermeneia*, 2005, 2011), deClaissé-Walford et al. (NICOT, 2014), and less so, Bullock (*Teach the Text*, 2015, 2017). Content-wise, Tucker and Grant's volume reads most akin to the single-volume NICOT commentary. Length-wise, the complete NIVAC two-volume on the Psalms is similar to Goldingay's three-volume *Psalms*, BCOTWP (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2006–2008).

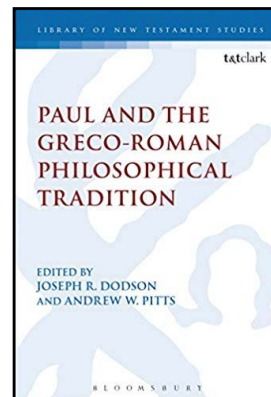
I think Tucker and Grant have succeeded with this NIVAC volume. It will be useful to those who minister on or off the pulpit, and will appeal to Bible study leaders, seminary students, and missionaries alike.

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— NEW TESTAMENT —

Joseph R. Dodson, Andrew W. Pitts, and Chris Keith, eds. *Paul and the Greco-Roman Philosophical Tradition*. LNTS 527. London: T&T Clark, 2017. xviii + 300 pp. £28.99/\$39.95.

The past fifty years have witnessed a revival of scholarly interest in the method of comparative analysis within biblical studies (generally) and Pauline studies (specifically). This trend—albeit, far from uniform or monolithic (p. xvii)—is evinced in seminal works such as E. P. Sanders’s *Paul and Palestinian Judaism* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1977), Jonathan Z. Smith’s *Drudgery Divine* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990), and more recently within the works of John M. G. Barclay (*Paul and the Gift* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2015]) and C. Kevin Rowe (*One True Life* [New Haven: Yale University Press, 2016]). Heretofore, the trend for those within the “New Perspective on Paul” movement (NPP) has been to compare Paul primarily with Second Temple Jewish sources, whereas Greco-Roman sources have been the favored lenses of comparisons within the Lutheran tradition. Essentially, *Paul and the Greco-Roman Philosophical Tradition* (*PGRPT*) is an edited anthology offering a myriad of thirteen comparative analyses between Paul and various Greco-Roman philosophical texts and traditions. What is interesting about *PGRPT* is the diversity of scholars (some within the NPP tradition), who each see the value of reading Paul through a Greco-Roman lens. The editors, Joseph R. Dodson (Associate Professor of Biblical Studies at Ouachita Baptist University) and Andrew W. Pitts (former Chair of the Biblical Studies Department and Assistant Professor of Biblical Studies at Arizona Christian University) are well-qualified to edit such an anthology in that they have served as authors/editors of numerous articles, anthologies, and monographs focused on Paul and his cultural milieu.



One of the primary goals of *PGRPT* is to “push beyond the Jewish/Hellenism divide by placing Paul in dialogue with other Hellenistic Jews and ancient philosophers” (p. xv). The purpose for such dialogue is not to commit the same methodological fallacies of the *Religionsgeschichtliche Schule* in finding surface-level similarities or genealogical dependence between these traditions and Paul, but, rather, “to discover similarities and differences in these sources [Paul’s *tertium quid*] that spark new interpretive questions and kindle fresh insights” (p. xv). Perhaps, the overarching thesis of *PGRPT* is that Paul is relatable/comparable to these philosophical traditions, and Paul’s appropriation of this material gives one a more full-orbed understanding of Paul’s “literary and missionary efforts” (p. 11).

Structurally, *PGRPT* consists of a preface (Dodson), foreword (Troels Engberg-Pedersen), introduction (Pitts), thirteen chapters, and indices of biblical and ancient sources, modern authors, and ancient figures (pp. vii–viii). In his foreword, Engberg-Pedersen suggests the “endemic” praxis of comparison within NT scholarship—presenting two primary founts/rules (“*lex Malherbe*” and “*lex Meeks*”) from which contemporary comparisons of Paul and Greco-Roman philosophy have flowed (pp. xvii–xviii). Engberg-Pedersen suggests a “further consideration” is needed: after having performed the analyses suggested by Malherbe and Meeks—studying each pole of comparison on “its own premises and from within its own perspective” and then “highlighting where *it* is similar and differs” (p. xvii, emphasis original)—one must discern “which of the two poles has the higher degree of forcefulness ... as an adequate description of the world” (p. xviii). In his introduction, Pitts succinctly sketches a

helpful reception history of Paul in relation to these philosophical traditions, then briefly introduces each article (pp. 1–11).

In the opening essay, “Paul and the *Militia Spiritualis* Topos in 1 Thessalonians,” Nijay K. Gupta argues (contra Malherbe) against Paul’s dependence on Dio and suggests that Paul appropriates the familiar warfare imagery of *Militia Spiritualis* (pp. 22–23). The aim of Dodson’s essay, “Elements of Apocalyptic Eschatology in Seneca’s Writings and Paul’s Letters,” is to offer a tripartite comparison between recurring apocalyptic eschatologies and those appearing in Paul and Seneca, to ignite, as it were, new lamps of illumination (p. 53). The thesis of David E. Briones’s article, “Paul and Aristotle on Friendship,” is that the inclusion and activity of God in Paul’s portrayal of friendship in Philippians departs from Aristotelian and other Greco-Roman models. Pitts and Bahij Ajluni co-author chapter four (“Bruce Winter and the Language of Benefaction in Romans 13.3”), and argue that Winter’s portrayal of benefaction, when considered against the backdrop of philosophical discussions of benefaction and alongside Paul’s portrayal in Romans 12, is left wanting (p. 77). Niko Huttunen pens chapter five (“Powers, Baptism and the Ethics of the Stronger: Paul among the Ancient Political Philosophers”)—suggesting that Paul’s words in Romans 13:1 resonate in important ways with a “general rule” of “the Stronger” that is pervasively present within the Greco-Roman tradition (pp. 101–02). Orrey McFarland’s essay, “Divine Causation and Prepositional Metaphysics in Philo of Alexandria and the Apostle Paul,” suggests that worries regarding Paul’s use of prepositions in divine causation are “unfounded” (pp. 118–19). Runnar M. Thorsteinsson’s “Paul and Pan(en)theism” compares Paul’s “potential pan(en)theistic passages ... in light of Stoic theology” (p. 136). In chapter eight, “The Wilderness Tradition in 1 Corinthians, Wisdom of Solomon and Hebrews,” Madison N. Pierce juxtaposes Wisdom of Solomon and Hebrews with 1 Corinthians (her main text)—comparing two components: the provision of divine gifts and divine punishment of human rebellion (p. 158). 1 Corinthians is again the focus of Timothy A. Brookins’s essay, “Natural Hair: A ‘New Rhetorical’ Assessment of 1 Cor. 11.14–15.” Brookins argues against Paul’s “conventional” usage of φύσις—considering the term’s ancient context (pp. 195–96). Jonathan Worthington (“Gendered Exegesis of Creation in Philo [*De Opificio Mundi*] and Paul [1 Corinthians]) argues that both Paul and Philo display asymmetrically gendered exegesis in these two texts. *De Opificio Mundi* is also the focus of Gitte Buch-Hansen’s article, “Early Conceptions of Original Sin: Reading Galatians through Philo’s *De Opificio Mundi*,” in which she answers the question, “Did Paul operate with a concept of original sin?” (pp. 222–23). Mathias Nygaard’s penultimate chapter, “Death as an Ethical Metaphor in Seneca’s Writings and in Paul’s Letter to the Romans,” posits that both positive and negative metaphors of death can be discerned in Paul and Seneca (pp. 246–47). Lastly, Seneca is highlighted again in Brian J. Tabb’s essay, “The Nature of True Worship: Reading Acts 17 with Seneca, *Epistle 95*.” Tabb argues that these texts, while displaying some resonances, “reveal notable divergences when they are situated in the authors’ respective biblical and Stoic traditions” (p. 278).

Numerous strengths mark *PGRPT*: it is generally well-written—albeit, with a handful of typos scattered throughout its pages (e.g., p. 29 “solider”). Many of the essays make important contributions to scholarship: Worthington’s discussion of gendered exegesis roots sex and ethics in the creation account rather than culture; Buch-Hansen’s discussion of the Epicurean “cradle argument” elucidates Paul’s anthropology; and Nygaard’s comparison between Paul’s and Seneca’s views on death as a positive and negative metaphor serves as a corrective to previous studies and paves the way forward for future discussion. However, the diversity of the contributors and their approaches to Paul, is, perhaps, the greatest strength of *PGRPT*.

As in any anthology, there are hits and misses. Perhaps the weakest link within *PGRPT* is Tabb's comparison between Paul and Seneca. Tabb's thesis inductively appears at the end of his essay with little supporting argumentation. Furthermore, Tabb's focus on Acts 17 seems misplaced in a study focused on Pauline (not Lukan) Christianity—though, to be fair, Pitts's introduction to the volume does commence with a discussion of Acts 17, and there are good reasons to take Luke seriously as a witness to the substance of Paul's preaching. The title of *PGRPT* is misleading also in that *PGRPT* focuses not on the entire *Corpus Paulinum*, but only on the *Hauptbriefe* and 1 Thessalonians. There are no chapters focused on Philemon, and Ephesians, 2 Thessalonians, and the Pastorals are not even referenced in the index (p. 283). There are also lacunae within the Greco-Roman sources, with preference given to Seneca and Philo (three chapters assigned to each—nearly half the book).

In sum, Pitts's introduction, and the chapters by Buch-Hansen and Nygaard are alone worth the price of admission. Despite its flaws and imbalanced coverage of the material, *PGRPT* is a must-have for scholars investigating Paul's complex thought world and *Sitz im Leben*.

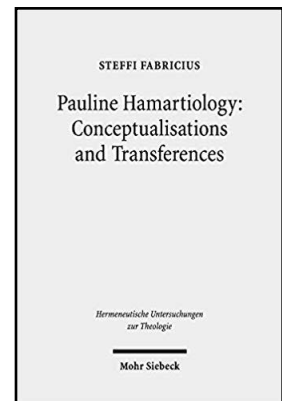
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Steffi Fabricius. *Pauline Hamartiology: Conceptualisation and Transferences*. HUT 74. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2018. xiv + 312 pp. £118.84/\$153.00.

This book is an edited form of Fabricius's doctoral dissertation, using the tools of cognitive linguistics to address Paul's understanding of sin. Is sin an action, or a slave master? As Paul speaks in both of these ways, which is real and which is metaphor? Or is it possible to speak of both as real, and if so, how do they relate?

Fabricius is not writing as a biblical scholar who reaches into the foreign field of cognitive linguistics, but as someone with expertise in linguistics (according to her bio), and is using that expertise to contribute to a long-contested debate in biblical scholarship. Her proficiency in cognitive linguistics is a strength, but her methodology, scholarly jargon, and the thought-world in which she operates will be foreign to most biblical students and scholars. Readers will need pre-requisite knowledge in the distinctions between *reality* and *actuality*, the *ontic* and the *ontological*, *rerum metaphora* and *verborum metaphora*, etc. Such concepts are used liberally throughout her work, generally without explanation or definition. This heavy use of the jargon of her own field is entirely appropriate for a PhD thesis, but the typical *Themelios* reader may be unfamiliar with such concepts and ought to be forewarned: This is not a light read, even by the standards of published PhDs.

On the other hand, Fabricius has very helpfully written in English, making her work far more accessible than if she had taken the easier route of writing in her native German. Even if there are occasional grammatical complexities in her writing, this decision should greatly increase the reach of her work.



After a short introduction, chapter 2 introduces the problem that scholars in the field of biblical studies have wrestled with: Is sin in Paul primarily or exclusively an action or a personified power? How do we reconcile these two ways of speaking?

Chapter 3 introduces cognitive linguistics, and Fabricius's approach of producing "conceptual metaphorical mappings and conceptual integration" (p. 78). That is, she seeks to understand how ideas fitted together in Paul's mind, and therefore describe a unified concept. This concept is strictly in Paul's mind (deduced from his writing), but since all humans encounter the world in a common "embodiment," we expect that people will have sufficiently common mental concepts, and can therefore understand each other.

Chapter 4 deals with an assumption associated with a "linguistic understanding of ontology": that God "does not have objective existence, is beyond human perception, and must, therefore, also be beyond human knowledge" (p. 82). Fabricius is alert to the way this foundational assumption of much cognitive linguistics could undermine her whole project, but denies that this assumption is necessary. By rejecting Aristotelian substance ontology, and introducing a relational ontology that is dependent on language (metaphorical ontology), she responds to those who claim that theological language is indirect and God is therefore unknowable: *all* language is indirect, so God is just as knowable as anyone or anything else.

Chapter 5 is the main body of Fabricius's research, constituting half of the book, as she methodically relates Pauline "sin" to fundamental cognitive linguistics categories such as "container," "event," and "state."

In chapter 6, Fabricius concludes that not only sin, but all things have a *metaphorical ontology*. This goes beyond a simple relational ontology by arguing that our existence is not constituted by *static* relationships, but by the constant movement or communication (*translatio*) between relational entities.

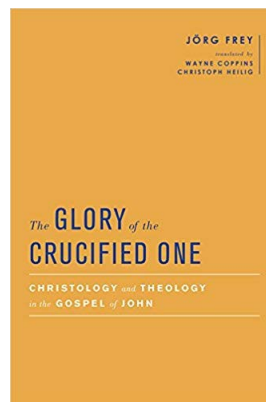
While I can see some merit in this conclusion, it is built upon her philosophical foundations and prior understanding of ontology (primarily expounded in ch. 4), rather than the results of her study of Paul *per se* (ch. 5), which are largely absent from her conclusions. She has read out of her study what she put into it. That does not invalidate her conclusions, but their basis is theoretical, not exegetical.

Fabricius's efforts to bring a new framework to a long running debate ought to be applauded. If simple exegetical approaches were sufficient, the debate would have faded long ago, so attempts to reshape our thinking to bring it into conformity with God's word are both welcome and necessary. Whether Fabricius's particular attempt will win widespread support remains to be seen, but I fear the impact of this book will be limited by the foreignness of its concepts to the typical biblical student.

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Jörg Frey. *The Glory of the Crucified One: Christology and Theology in the Gospel of John*. Translated by Wayne Coppins and Christoph Heilig. Baylor-Mohr Siebeck Studies in Early Christianity 6. Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2018. xxxii + 455 pp. £53.60/\$69.95.

Jörg Frey is well-known for his research on John over the last twenty-five years and is likely to be more widely known to Anglophone New Testament students as the editor of the WUNT series published by Mohr Siebeck. In 2013, he released a volume of essays entitled *Die Herrlichkeit des Gekreuzigten* (ed. Juliane Schlegel, WUNT 307 [Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck]). *The Glory of the Crucified One* translates seven essays that appeared in the 2013 collection and is a valuable addition to the Baylor-Mohr Siebeck Studies in Early Christianity series. The book is not a straightforward translation of the entire German tome. Three of the 2013 chapters already appeared in English and would be redundant in a translated volume. Eight additional chapters were excluded to make room for four others from Frey's most recent publications, along with a hefty introduction by Frey that is published here for the first time.



Frey's introduction contains an autobiographical account of how his studies of the Johannine writings began and notes three of his particular research interests: the history of research, John's context and background, and John's theological claims. The eleven other chapters are organized into five parts. Part 1 consists of an essay that maps how Frey sees recent Johannine scholarship. It outlines five models for interpreting John and highlights his own multi-faceted approach to the Gospel that emphasises literary, historical, and theological readings. Part 2 contains three essays on the character of the Gospel. Chapters consider "the Jews" in John as well as the parting of the ways, the way in which John's Gospel fuses the temporal horizons of the community's present with the historical story of Jesus's work in the past, and the background and function of dualistic imagery within the Johannine story. Part 3 follows with three essays on Jesus's death, resurrection, and glory. Frey argues that John depicts Jesus as raised bodily. Such a claim has implications for how the cross is viewed with respect to Jesus and how readers' eschatological hopes are to be framed. In particular, God's glory has been made visible in the crucified Christ.

Part 4 follows with further reflections on John's understanding of the incarnation, Jesus, and God. Frey points out that the image of the Word "dwelling among us" (John 1:14) taps into traditional discussions about God dwelling among his people, transfers eschatological imagery into Jesus's ministry, and enables readers to understand the meaning of the divine presence in Jesus. Frey also devotes attention to God in the Fourth Gospel, who has often been neglected in favour of discussions of John's Christology. The chapter concludes by arguing that for John God has revealed himself in Christ, has entered human history in Christ, demonstrates his love in the cross, overcomes human rejection in love, and transcends spatio-temporal limitations. John's theological articulations represent an important step toward the Trinitarian thought patterns that were later formalised in the creeds. The volume comes to a close with reflections on how Johannine theology might be seen as the climax of New Testament theology.

While each of the essays can stand alone, the entire volume is a model of high-level New Testament scholarship. The chapters draw on a wealth of historical and contextual knowledge that are brought to bear on the interpretation of the primary text—John's Gospel. The essays on incarnation, Christology,

and the doctrine of God are particularly worth reading in this regard. Frey's consistent attempts to locate his work alongside other researchers makes readers aware of where Frey sees himself in relation to other scholars and provides readers with a map of Johannine scholarship that is especially useful for English-speakers since it draws attention to German-language scholarship. Frey highlights the Farewell Discourses (John 14–17) as in many ways the apex of John and argues that the Gospel of John makes the story of Jesus present to its readers by fusing temporal horizons. The Jesus who meets the community in the present is the Jesus who is remembered in the Gospel. Although Frey raises questions about John's value to scholarship on the historical Jesus because John fuses Jesus's story in the past with the community in the present, it is worth pursuing this issue further to see whether and in what ways John may be used as a corroborating witness for research on the historical Jesus. The questions of scholarship are rarely exhausted, and Frey's volume is to be commended for answering many questions while simultaneously raising further questions to be explored by others.

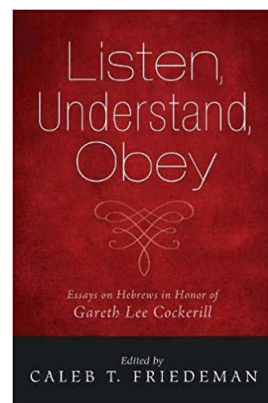
Two comments should be made in conclusion about the translation. First, the text is readable and accessible. The translation does not result in stilted prose but carries the reader smoothly along the paths of Frey's lively thought. Second, with regard to chapter 7—the only chapter for which the present reviewer has compared the translation with the original—the translation faithfully follows the German text without sacrificing readability in English. Frey's exegetical and theological comments are consistently worth engaging throughout the book, and the translation by Coppins and Heilig enables a broader audience of English-speakers to access these observations more easily than would be the case if readers instead had to read the text in a second language. This book is recommended for students and researchers of John as well as for the libraries that support research in biblical studies.

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Caleb T. Friedeman, ed. *Listen, Understand, Obey: Essays on Hebrews in Honor of Gareth Lee Cockerill*. Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2017. xx + 187 pp. £20.00/\$25.00.

How does one review a *Festschrift*? This book is a fitting compliment to Gary Cockerill, recently retired professor of New Testament at Wesley Biblical Seminary, insofar as it displays his own values: breadth of interest (the book has contributions from historians, exegetes, and systematicians) and pastoral heart (every essay is ultimately aimed at the church, despite varying degrees of technical interest along the way).

I focus here on a couple of the book's essays that are more significant, in my opinion. First, Jon Laansma reflects on Hebrews's emphasis on divine speech, and particularly God's speech in relation to his promises to Abraham, *en route* to a fascinating exploration of theological hermeneutics. Laansma parallels the possible backdrop to Hebrews (some denying that the new has come and affirming the ultimacy of the old) with those who want to ignore the coming of the Son in order to grasp the OT only in its "original context"—"to insist on [that] attempt might be tantamount to turning back to the shadows, against which this entire epistle warns, rather than holding fast to one's confession" (p. 67). In describing Hebrews's own hermeneutic, he says that since that hermeneutic "is not in fact a



product of human genius, no amount of [historical] exegesis will be able *finally* to retrace the exegetical path that led to [it]" (p. 65). But having constructed a theological rather than a merely historical account of Hebrews's interpretive methods, should we go and do likewise? "Not to do what [the NT writers] did hermeneutically would finally be disobedience to the gospel itself, to deny that it is the God *who is the Father* of the Son, who is known only in the Son, who speaks in these [OT] Scriptural texts" (p. 66). Much food for thought here!

Amy Peeler takes up the question of human priesthood in light of the surpassing priesthood of Christ in Hebrews. "If Jesus is truly our high priest, should anyone else play the role of priest on earth?" This becomes two questions: (1) "What should human priesthood look like in light of Jesus' sole, sufficient, and eternal priestly ministry?" and (2) "If all are priests then what is the biblical justification for the ordination of some?" With respect to the first question, Peeler surveys priestly language—applied to believers—in the NT and argues that it stems from their filial relationship to the Father. "Sacramental ministry," she suggests, is no less birthright-based than it was in Israel; the difference is that now the whole community are sons and daughters and therefore priests (p. 105). On the second topic, Peeler goes back through the NT and asks whether it offers any justification for "priests among priests" (p. 110)—an ordained sacramental set of believers as a subset within the priesthood of all. She answers in the affirmative, but hesitantly—all serve and worship as priests, and that is the dominant emphasis of the Scriptures, but some have a specific priestly role (preaching, sacraments, pastoral care) toward other priests.

Tom McCall engages a vital theological issue in Hebrews—the submission and obedience of Christ to the Father—in conversation with Thomas Aquinas and Karl Barth. Surprisingly, he says, Hebrews 5:8 (Jesus "learned obedience from the things that he suffered") has not featured prominently in conversations about Christ's submission—but it ought to! Barth, says McCall, argued for an eternal (ontological) subordination of the Son: the Son *as eternal Son* is subordinated; there is a hierarchy in the Trinity (pp. 136–37). Aquinas, on the other hand, argued for the Son's "missional obedience"—"it is the *incarnate* Son who is subordinate" because he "has *the form of a servant*" (137–38). Against Barth, McCall argues that Jesus's obedience is presented as a surprise in light of his sonship (Heb 5:8), and so it is unlikely that his sonship is (eternally) constituted by his obedience (p. 145). Digging deeper into Aquinas, McCall notes the disconnect between Aquinas's claim that the incarnate Son possessed the beatific vision throughout his earthly life and those who see in the cry of dereliction a separation of Father and Son. McCall, as those familiar with his marvelous book *Forsaken* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2012) will know, sides with Aquinas. "It is because [Jesus] is the one who is both human and divine—and thus the one who enjoys ... unbroken loving communion shared with the Father (the beatific vision)—that he is able to fully sympathize with us in our weaknesses while also uniting us to God" (p. 149).

Chris Bounds presents a survey of early (1800–1840) Methodist readings of Hebrews; it does not offer a single thesis, as many of the essays in this collection do, but as one unschooled in Wesleyan theology and commentary I found it extraordinarily informative. The dominant themes will not be surprising: the person of Jesus, the Wesleyan "synergistic understanding of salvation" (p. 162), the possibility of apostasy, and the pursuit of Christian perfection. Among the more interesting points were the following: (1) affirmation of Pauline authorship of Hebrews, (2) rejection of the doctrine of eternal generation of the Son, (3) insistence that apostasy is willful rejection and not mere backsliding (I'm reminded of the unfortunate joke about the Arminian daisy to counter the Calvinist TULIP: "he loves

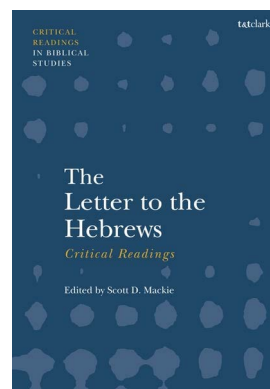
me, he loves me not ...”), and (4) Wesley’s own suggestion that God raised up the Methodist church for the chief end of “propagating” the doctrine of perfection (p. 166).

This is a fine collection of essays and a fitting tribute to Gary Cockerill, a man whom all of us who study Hebrews count as a mentor and model of faithfulness to God and His Word.

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Scott D. Mackie, ed. *The Letter to the Hebrews: Critical Readings*. T&T Clark Critical Readings in Biblical Studies. London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2018. xv + 514 pp. £150.00/\$202.00.

This volume is, first of all, a collection of twenty-three essays on Hebrews that fit the following qualifications: (1) recognized significance among Hebrews specialists, (2) written in English, (3) published since 1950, and (4) generally inaccessible to non-specialists. I might have subtracted one or two essays and added one or two others that also meet these qualifications, but on the whole I judge the choices to be sound. My only quibble in terms of these particular goals concerns the last—that these important publications would be made more readily available. For \$200+, the non-specialist is hardly likely to take the plunge! And if you have access to the kind of library that will purchase this volume, the chances are good that you can already access all the essays it contains. Having them all in one place is obviously useful, but at what price?



The essays are divided into six sections: (1) Theology, Christology, and Pneumatology, (2) Eschatology, (3) The Author and the Addressed Community, (4) Structure, Greco-Roman Rhetoric, and Hortatory Strategy, (5) The Old Testament and the Relationship with Contemporaneous Judaism, and (6) Soteriology. Each section includes an introduction, the pertinent essays, and suggestions for further reading.

I can hardly do justice to all the essays in this short review; more profitable, perhaps, will be an overview of major points addressed at various points. First, debate continues concerning the implied cosmology of Hebrews—particularly whether it depends primarily on an apocalyptic or a Platonic framework; for significant voices in this discussion see the essays by C. K. Barrett (“The Christology of Hebrews,” pp. 31–46; “The Eschatology of the Epistle to the Hebrews,” pp. 146–70), Ken Schenck (“Philo and the Epistle to the Hebrews: Ronald Williamson’s Study after Thirty Years,” pp. 184–205), and Scott Mackie (“Ancient Jewish Mystical Motifs in Hebrews’ Theology of Access and Entry Exhortations,” pp. 460–76).

Second, the “structure” of Hebrews provides unceasing grist for the scholarly mill—Schenck’s comment that “it is very difficult to capture the sophisticated nature of Hebrews’ rhetorical structure in a straightforward outline” (“A Celebration of the Enthroned Son,” p. 49) has proved true, but it has not prevented us from trying to do precisely that! The classic studies of Hebrews’s structure are of those of Vanhoye and Guthrie (Guthrie’s monograph is noted as a suggestion for further reading on p. 335), but those interested in the next phase of the discussion will want to read the essay by Michael Martin and Jason Whitlark (“Choosing What Is Advantageous: The Relationship between Epideictic and

Deliberative Syncretism in Hebrews,” pp. 314–34). Martin and Whitlark have expanded their discussion in numerous other essays and now in a new monograph *Inventing Hebrews: Design and Purpose in Ancient Rhetoric* (SNTSMS 171 [Cambridge: CUP, 2018]).

Third, it goes without saying that the use of the Old Testament is a major issue in Hebrews; for an overview of that discussion, see George Guthrie’s “Hebrews’ Use of the Old Testament: Recent Trends in Research” (pp. 355–75). For a provocative (both in terms of OT exegesis and in terms of Christology) reading of Hebrews 1–2 that has proved quite influential vis-à-vis recent debates on the atonement in Hebrews, see George Caird, “The Exegetical Method of the Epistle to the Hebrews” (pp. 347–54), as well as (tangentially related to Caird’s work but particularly interested in the resurrection vis-à-vis Christ’s high priesthood in Hebrews) David Moffitt’s “‘If Another Priest Arises’: Jesus’ Resurrection and the High Priestly Christology of Hebrews” (124–35).

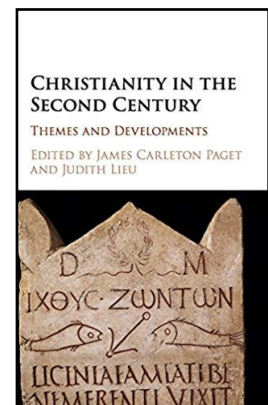
Finally, the “traditional” view that Hebrews is written to a group of Christians who are considering abandoning their faith and returning to Judaism (I note the anachronistic nature of this description, but it is frequently put in precisely these terms) finds support in Barnabas Lindars’s “The Rhetorical Structure of Hebrews” (pp. 218–38) and opposition in Eric Mason’s “The Epistle (Not Necessarily) to the ‘Hebrews’: A Call to Renunciation of Judaism or Encouragement to Christian Commitment?” (pp. 389–403). In his introduction Mackie acknowledges the growing abandonment of the traditional view in current scholarship, so I applaud the inclusion of both of these essays in order to represent the variety of perspectives that have existed in the academy and in the church in the past several decades even if current trends are firmly in one direction over the other.

In all, this is a great collection of recent and important studies of Hebrews. As I said earlier, its price makes the value-added questionable in terms of who concretely benefits from its availability, but in terms of the content itself I highly recommend it.

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J. C. Paget and J. Lieu, eds. *Christianity in the Second Century: Themes and Developments*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017. xi + 354 pp. £21.99/\$32.99.

Studies on second century Christianity are drawing greater attention. This time period is recognized as one in which Christian identity was being defined. The apostles were gone, persecution had increased, and the Christian faith was distinguishing itself from a much larger Judaism. Frequently, the second century has been viewed to be a time when the church moves to being more institutionalized and strengthens itself against heretics. New research, however, has argued that there was a greater diversity within this period than was previously thought. New questions about this century include whether there was a predominant Christian narrative or no narrative, whether Christianity represented a distinct voice or was an expression of wider movements in the second century, what texts describe it best, what role do texts like those from Nag Hammadi have, and what characteristics define Christian identity. These



can be added to traditional concerns such as the relationship between Judaism and Christianity and the development of institutionalization.

Christianity in the Second Century is a compilation of papers that were presented at a conference called “The Christian Second Century” which was held at the Centre for Research in the Arts, Social Sciences and Humanities at the University of Cambridge in 2013. The book is composed of 18 different articles which are divided into the following different sections: (1) contexts, (2) discerning continuity and discontinuity in early Christianity, (3) interpreting texts and engaging in practice, and (4) modelling identities. The authors include a large number of established international scholars largely from the United Kingdom but also from Norway, Belgium, and the United States.

The first section contains four articles regarding the context of the second century. In “Empires, Diasporas and the Emergence of Religions,” Greg Woolf identifies the second century as being an age of empires. He draws attention to the changing political structures at this time, which influence one’s evaluation of Christianity in that time period. Instead of seeing Christianity and other religions forcing their way into history against the social climate, Woolf views religions as fitting into the changing power dynamic. His article also challenges the viewpoint that Christianity is exceptional. He advocates for an evolutionary approach to religious change happening at the time.

The remainder of this section about context concerns Judaism in the second century. Tesa Rajak writes about the status of Judaism in “The Mediterranean Jewish Diaspora in the Second Century.” She supports the complexity and vibrancy of the Jewish faith in the second century and encourages one not to “Christianize” Judaism of the time. In “The Rabbis and Their Rivals in the Second Century CE,” Philip Alexander outlines the dominant part of Judaism in the second century, which is Rabbinic Judaism. William Horbury writes about the relationship between the church and the synagogue in “Church and Synagogue vis-à-vis Roman rule in the Second Century.” These essays on Judaism present significant contributions for evaluating Christianity in relation to Judaism at the time.

Five articles comprise the second section, which focuses on continuity and discontinuity in early Christianity. This is the most diverse section of the volume with essays providing contradictory conclusions about continuity and diversity within early Christianity.

Several articles support a greater sense of continuity within early Christianity. James Carleton Paget evaluates the second century from the perspective of the New Testament. He rightly points to how this time period can date the New Testament documents and define the narrative of Christian history. He also discusses the terms trajectory and reception that have been used in the understanding of second century Christianity. Rather than separating the first and second centuries from each other, Paget supports viewing these centuries together. In his article, “Continuity and Change in Second-Century Christianity: A Narrative Against the Trend,” Lewis Ayres supports continuity between the two centuries. He advocates for one late second-century tradition, the tradition of the “proto-orthodox.” This is in contrast to Sethian or Valentinian Gnostic traditions. He effectively counters the trend to find more diversity rather than unity within the life of the early church, advocating for unity of thought over a core amount of ideas in early Christianity.

In contrast to Paget and Ayres, the final essay in the section, Winrich Löhr’s “Modelling Second-Century Christian Theology: Christian Theology as *Philosophia*,” proposes the contrary. Löhr advocates for more diversity within early Christianity. He bases his conclusion on the parallels with the concept and practice of second century *philosophia*. He believes that this should be the starting point for evaluating Christian theology.

Two articles within the second section provide fresh viewpoints about Gnosticism. In “The Gnostic Myth: How Does Its Demise Impact Twenty-first Century Historiography of Christianity’s Second Century,” Karen King advocates for a complex mapping of second century Christian texts. She finds early Christianity more dynamic and multi-faceted. Mark Edwards, in “The Gnostic Myth,” addresses false views of the character of Gnosticism which have emerged from a failure to grasp the allegorical mood of Gnostic myth.

This second section of *Christianity in the Second Century* illustrates the diverse perspectives in the field. These articles will provide a good beginning point for those wishing to explore the aspects of unity and diversity within early Christendom.

The third section contains four articles focused on the theme “Interpreting Texts and Engaging in Practice.” Rebecca Fleming, in “Galen and the Christians: Texts and Authority in the Second Century AD,” provides a fresh look at one of the secular sources that refers to Christians in the second century the most. Galen viewed Christians as being a philosophical school, and Fleming argues for understanding this in relation to his understanding of authority, ideas, and identity. She concludes that Christianity is not a unified and homogeneous movement as may be expected from Galen’s comments.

In “Authoritative Texts’ and How to Handle Them: Some Reflections on an Ambiguous Concept and Its Use in Second-Century Christian Literature,” Joseph Verheyden looks at four groups of authors who arrived at authoritative texts: Greco-Roman, Jewish, Early Christian, and Second-Century Christian authors. After completing his survey, he arrives at the conclusion that texts could become authoritative by several different routes.

The final two articles in the section look at Graeco-Roman religious experience. Teresa Morgan argues, in “Belief and Practice in Graeco-Roman Religiosity: Plutarch, *De Iside and Osiride* 379c,” that it mattered what Greek and Roman worshippers believed more than what has normally been assumed. With a focus on content, her article provides an intriguing parallel between Christianity and Greco-Roman religion in the second century. She argues that Christian understanding of belief should be seen along a shared spectrum of religious thinking instead of a drastic departure from Graeco-Roman religious expression. The final article in this section, by Laura Salah Nasrallah and entitled, “Lot Oracles and Fate: On Early Christianity among Others in the Second Century,” looks at the lot oracle found at Kremna in southwest Asia Minor. She finds that the content of this oracle allows one to reflect further on the relationship between doctrine and practice and the characterization of the second century as an “age of anxiety.”

Five articles are found in the final section entitled “Modelling Identities.” The first two articles concern ethnic identity. In “Christians as a ‘Third Race’: Is Ethnicity at Issue?” Erich Gruen examines whether ethnicity can be applied to Christians as a third race between Jew and Greek. Oskar Skarsaune in “Ethnic Discourse in Early Christianity” examines the same topic. Both articles look at an extensive number of sources that are Greaco-Roman, first century Christian sources like Colossians and 1 Peter, and then second century sources such as the *Epistle to Diognetus*, the *Kerygmata Petrou*, the *Apology of Aristides*, writings from Nag Hammadi, *Martyrdom of Polycarp*, Justine Martyr’s *Dialogue with Trypho*, Tertullian’s *Ad Nationes*, and Origen’s *Homilies*. Gruen and Skarsaune conclude that Christianity as a “third race” cannot be supported.

John North, in “Pagan Attitudes,” and Tim Whitmarsh, in “Away with the Atheists! Christianity and Militant Atheism in the Early Empire,” examine secular attitudes towards Christianity in the second century. North evaluates Lucian’s *Peregrinus* as displaying pagan attitudes to Christianity. Whitmarsh

argues convincingly that it was highly unlikely that non-Christians spoke of Christians as atheists prior to the age of Constantine. Such a misunderstanding may emerge from a misreading of *Martyrdom of Polycarp* 9. Instead, it was Christians who were occupied in a project of redefining atheism as the opposite of Christian faith.

The final essay by Judith Lieu, “Modelling the Second Century as the Age of the Laboratory,” functions well as a concluding essay to this section but also to the book as a whole. Lieu looks at ways of explaining the phenomenon of Second Century Christianity. Rather than considering it to be a “parting of the ways” with Judaism, a struggle between proto-orthodoxy and heterodoxy, Lieu advocates for the model of a laboratory. Such a metaphor allows for exploration and experimentation of Christian ideas. She finds that ideas such as biblical theology, pagan mythology, and contemporary philosophy are mixing together within this century which is leading to various outcomes. She sees second century Christianity similar to modern ways that African and Indian cultures are challenging western presuppositions and lead to new and creative ways for truth to be expressed in vastly different environments. Instead of being institutional and fixed, Lieu views Christianity as developing more democratically as a result rather than being a linear progression. By viewing second century Christianity as a laboratory, Lieu promotes thinking about this period more different than the expression of one grand narrative. With this laboratory model, she advocates for a renewed focus on the recovery of particular individuals rather than institutions.

Lieu’s article is an effective conclusion for these articles. She rightly encourages further exploration of different voices within the second century and rightly minimizes the effect of institutions at the time. Her focus on the expression of Christian ideas in different cultures will also help further research. Evangelicals, however, will struggle with her minimizing a grand narrative and downplaying particular truths which can be seen as constant through the second century.

Christianity in the Second Century: Themes and Developments provides top quality scholarly essays in the emerging field of second century Christianity. It is an important reference for scholars working in the field. The nearly forty-page bibliography at the end is a valuable resource for the scholar as well. Some readers may be frustrated with some of the contrary opinions expressed in the book, particularly regarding unity and diversity of Christianity during this time period. These essays, however, do illustrate the diversity present within this field of study which is ripe for further research. Those who are new to the field of second century Christianity will need to have sufficient background from an introductory textbook like Michael Kruger’s *Christianity at the Crossroads: How the Second Century Shaped the Future of the Church* (London: SPCK, 2017) before reading this book.

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James B. Prothro. *Both Judge and Justifier: Biblical Legal Language and the Act of Justifying in Paul*. WUNT 2/461. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2018. xiv + 280 pp. \$118.00.

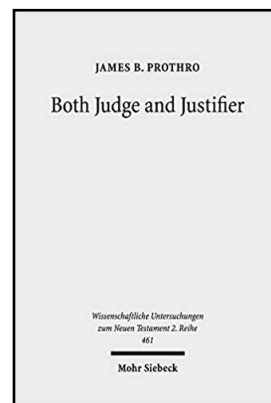
James B. Prothro currently serves as Assistant Professor of Theology at Ave Maria University. *Both Judge and Justifier* is the published version of his PhD thesis completed under the supervision of Simon Gathercole at Cambridge University. As is well known, the issue of justification in Paul's letters is hotly debated, and Prothro's monograph attempts to contribute to this discussion by addressing the basic lexical question: what does Paul mean when he uses the verb "justify" (δικαίω)?

After introducing this issue, Prothro begins his work by staking the claim that Paul's use of the verb "justify" is biblical legal language. This is clear, Prothro suggests, by virtue of the fact that both Paul and the Septuagint use the Greek term for "justify" exclusively for positive judgment in contrast to its typical usage as a term for negative judgement (pp. 3–5). In the remainder of the first chapter, Prothro surveys the variety of recent scholarly views about the meaning of "justify" in Paul, and he then suggests that the distinctive meaning that Paul attributes to this verb indicates that Paul's employment of it should be examined in the context of its use in pre-Pauline Jewish literature written in Greek.

The following four chapters then examine the use of "justify" within this literature. Prothro surveys the use of "justify" first in contexts that involve only human actors and then in those that involve God in some capacity. Prothro subdivides the material on the basis of whether the scene in view involves only two parties in contention ("bilateral" scenarios), or two parties along with a judge ("trilateral" scenarios).

These chapters include several interesting conclusions. Prothro argues that, in trilateral scenarios, the verb "justify" likely never refers to the bare pronouncement of a verdict but rather to the judge's siding with and enacting justice for one of the parties (pp. 57–60). He also finds a number of instances within bilateral contentions involving God in which the term is applied to a person or group who have done wrong but confessed or repented. Prothro concludes that in these passages "justify" must mean something along the lines of forgiveness and reconciliation (pp. 69–71, 74–76, 78–80). Furthermore, Prothro claims that trilateral scenarios involving God typically depict God as siding with Israel over against oppressors in the wake of the resolution of a bilateral contention between God and Israel (pp. 94–99). Finally, in his examination of the use of "justify" in relation to the Isaianic Servant, Prothro suggests that in the broader passage of Isaiah 40–55 God's trilateral vindication of Israel over the nations merges with the theme of God's bilateral contention against all idolaters (pp. 99–103).

With this background in place, Prothro then devotes one chapter each to 1 Corinthians, Galatians, and Romans. Prothro argues that, in the majority of the passages in which Paul uses the term "justify," Paul has in view the bilateral scenario of God's contention against human sin, and the term "justify" refers to the forgiveness and reconciliation that is extended to those who recognize that God is in the right (cf. pp. 124–26, 140–44, 158–85). In two cases, however, Prothro suggests that Paul uses "justify" for God's vindication of his people over against other parties: Romans 6:7, which he interprets as the vindication of Jesus himself over against sin as a personified power, and Romans 8:33, which he understands as vindication not in relation to the charge of sin but in relation to the challenges of adversaries (pp. 186–205).



The concluding chapter reviews the argument of the book, and then highlights the significance of the study. Prothro suggests that his research largely vindicates and develops proposals made by Mark Seifrid (p. 210), and he points to a few broader theological issues for which his work has relevance.

Prothro's book is in many ways a useful study. His focus on analyzing the verb "justify" is a welcome approach, and he is certainly right to focus on Jewish use of this term as the primary background for Paul. Nevertheless, it seems that in some ways Prothro has overplayed his hand.

Despite the validity of Prothro's point about the proper background for Paul's use of the verb "justify," his assumption that Paul's conception of the divine trial is wholly taken over from ancient Jewish sources underestimates the degree to which the first-century context may have influenced his imagination. For example, in Romans 14:10, Paul depicts the final reckoning as occurring before God's "judgment seat" (βῆμα), a term (and architectural feature) absent from the Septuagint. One wonders if other aspects of first-century jurisprudence may have had an effect on Paul's conception of divine legal proceedings, and the complete neglect of this material in Prothro's work weakens his case.

Additionally, Prothro's division of the theological legal scenarios into the categories of bilateral and trilateral is at times forced. Although God is sometimes a party in contention, a number of these passages also depict him as standing over the contention as judge at the same time. Along similar lines, the claim that a distinctive trilateral conception of justification is in view in Romans 6:7 and 8:33 fails to persuade. Both passages are better understood as referring to God's vindicating judgment in relation to the charge of sin, especially the latter, which provides a retrospective and celebratory summary of where the argument of Romans has gotten thus far.

One also wonders if Prothro's claim that justification at times *means* forgiveness and reconciliation is accurate. Although forgiveness and reconciliation are clearly in view in many of the passages to which Prothro applies this definition, Prothro does not even consider the possibility that justification in these passages is a legal finding rendered *in light of* God's (logically) prior forgiveness of sin rather than being an act of forgiveness *in and of itself*. For a study that is focused on the lexical meaning of the verb "justify," the lack of reflection and explicit argument at this point is disappointing.

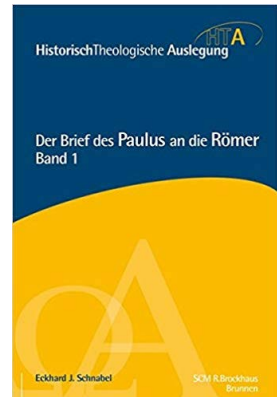
Despite these shortcomings, Prothro has made a significant contribution to the study of justification in Paul, and his work does provide an effective challenge to several misguided interpretations of justification in Paul's writings. His survey of the use of the verb "justify" in pre-Pauline Jewish literature written in Greek is particularly valuable, and his book as a whole is a resource to which discerning readers will be able to turn with much profit for many years to come.

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Eckhard J. Schnabel. *Der Brief des Paulus an die Römer: Kapitel 1–5*. HTA. Witten: SCM R. Brockhaus, 2015. 700 pp. £44.49/\$81.67.

Eckhard J. Schnabel. *Der Brief des Paulus an die Römer: Kapitel 6–16*. HTA. Witten: SCM R. Brockhaus, 2016. 1040 pp. £48.54/\$86.32.

The HTA commentary series aims to probe the texts literarily and within their ancient contexts without neglecting the texts' theological significance for today. The authors engage Scripture with critical minds and with a disposition of trust toward the text and its divine inspiration, attending to meaty exegesis while keeping in view the history and relevance of the theological conversation. Few books have been subject to as much debate as Paul's epistle to the Romans, whose every chapter has given way to mountains of secondary literature and theological controversy. Eckhard J. Schnabel's two-volume contribution on Romans offers almost 1,500 pages of commentary (not including indices or bibliographies) on Paul's letter. This review will briefly sketch his approach to the letter's background and theology.



Volume 1 opens with an introduction to Paul's life and mission (based on Acts and the letters) and the background of this epistle. Schnabel locates Paul's writing in Corinth during the winter of AD 56/57, viewing it as Paul's direct dictation to Tertius. He views the congregations addressed in the letter as having grown up especially out of the synagogues and consisting, by Paul's time, of about five house-churches. Roman Christianity was likely primarily Gentile, probably mostly God-fearers who already worshiped Abraham's God but were uncircumcised before believing the gospel, but also including Jewish believers. Paul wrote only two years or so after Jews returned to Rome after Claudius's expulsion, which affects the letter's background (Schnabel surmises that this affected the availability of kosher butchering, which caused the apparent asceticism addressed in Romans 14). Planning a trip to Spain by way of Rome, Paul lays out and defends his gospel, often against a "typical Jew" (vol. 1, p. 39) addressed singularly as "you." This makes the main body of the gospel proclamation (1:16–11:36) appear somewhat "independent" (vol. 1, p. 38) from the situation of Paul's mostly-Gentile addressees. Schnabel overviews possibilities but does not pronounce definitively on Paul's purpose in writing Romans, noting that Paul does not explicitly name what he hopes to achieve or to get from his audience (cf. Rom 15:24).

The main body of the commentary is formatted thus: each section begins with a fresh translation of a passage, followed by an overview of the passage's place in the book and text-critical issues; next comes a verse by verse explanation. Finally, the commentator reflects on historical or contemporary-theological issues addressed by the passage (e.g., sexual ethics after Rom 1:18–32, a discussion of whether there is any ecological/environmental significance in Rom 8:19–22). Summaries of differing views or academic debates are usually kept to small-print excursions. This format makes the volume easily referenced for teachers and preachers, as theological exposition takes the lion's share of the page. Likewise, Schnabel's German is eminently readable, and his translation is both clear and accurate (translating Χριστός consistently as Messiah ["Messiah"]).

Romans is held dear by most Christian communions for the theology it expresses, even as each disagrees over central topics in the letter. Schnabel's commentary does not treat every differing theological position, but dialogues with many and brings nuance and insight to many debates in which his exposition must participate. He emphasizes that justification—a main theological topic—is God's

righteousness communicated to humans as a gift, and yet is a saving power that grips and justifies believing sinners to free them from sin and draw them into real ethical life in Christ (see the excursuses on the righteousness of God [1:174–80] and the New Perspective [1:65–69]). Schnabel’s treatment of Paul’s soteriology in many commentary passages combines an unrelenting emphasis on the free forgiveness of sins in Christ with an understanding of real transformation as believers are transferred from the reign of sin to become God’s servants. This corresponds to his views on the (debated) passages about the final judgment and keeping the law in Romans 2:7, 10, 13–14 and elsewhere, which he argues are not hypothetical, but pertain to Christians who keep the law according to the new covenant, the law written on the heart (cf. Jer 31:33; see for example 1:299–300). Similarly, he argues that the depiction of the reign of sin in Romans 7:7–25 is about “the past,” a characterization of the pre-conversion human condition, whereas Romans 8:1 begins talk about the believer’s “present,” in which believers are forgiven in Christ and live anew by the Spirit. His discussion of Romans 11 emphasizes the priority and efficacy of grace, while maintaining that human faith empowered by grace is a requisite for which humans will be held accountable. He explains Paul’s hope for Israel according to the flesh with an emphasis on faith in Christ rather than outlining a separate dispensation, and takes “all Israel” in Romans 11:26 to refer to all believers in Christ.

Schnabel is good in the introduction and throughout at noting the way Paul’s diatribe drives his proclamation toward the edge of a logical cliff and then pulls back to counter false conclusions some might draw (e.g., a non-priority to Israel in 3:1–4, cheap grace in 6:1–2). He is attentive to rhetorical devices in the letter. The word studies provided in excursuses are likewise well done and quite helpful, attending to Jewish and Greco-Roman backgrounds for Paul’s terms and their significance.

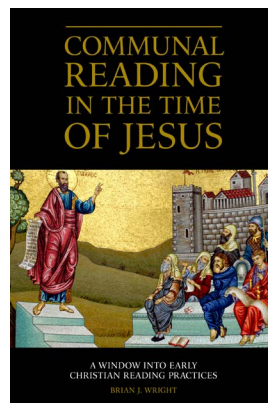
No commentary can say everything, of course, and good ones have their weaknesses. One was surprised to see a considerably long discussion insisting that baptism in Romans 6:1–4 is metaphorical and may only secondarily relate to “water baptism” (2:23–36)—much of which struck one as historically and linguistically unconvincing—with theological reflections following. On the other hand, Paul’s comment about marriage in Romans 7:2 is not compared with similar statements in Paul or the Gospels for its modern relevance in the church. The commentary’s greatest lack, in my view, correlates with its introduction. Schnabel’s view that much of the letter’s argument is somewhat independent of his addressees’ situation is not only debatable, it also affects much of the commentary at the level of theological exposition. Schnabel highlights and expounds Paul’s gospel in Romans very well, and readers who disagree will still benefit from consulting him. But the commentary is often lighter than one might hope regarding potential social situations or effects at which Paul’s arguments might be driving.

This being said, Schnabel has offered very helpful commentary on Paul’s most debated letter. I certainly will be consulting it. It is theologically insightful and clear, and attends well to Paul’s terms and logic. It will repay scholars as well as German-reading pastors and teachers.

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Brian J. Wright. *Communal Reading in the Time of Jesus: A Window into Early Christian Reading Practices*. Minneapolis: Fortress, 2017. 293 pp. £28.99/\$39.00.

This book, the product of Wright's doctoral studies at Ridley College, challenges the current scholarly consensus regarding how early Christians would have interacted with written texts in the first century CE—a consensus to which the author formerly subscribed. In contrast to the prevailing view that reading was an elite phenomenon and that 90% of the population was illiterate, Wright contends that communal reading events were geographically widespread in the Roman Empire and exhibited a staggering diversity of venues, occasions, genres, readers, and audience members. (By “communal,” he means involving two or more persons, whether in a public or private setting—in other words, Wright is not addressing silent or individual reading.) Furthermore, Wright asserts that the earliest Christians centered their communities on such reading events, creating a distinctly bookish culture in which Old Testament, apostolic, and other texts were read aloud, heard, and discussed.



In chapter 1, Wright declares that the “entire subject of communal reading events and their role in controlling literary traditions has been largely neglected in early Christian studies” (p. 4), which he then substantiates by surveying the relevant scholarly literature and the recent discussion of “quality controls” for the transmission of the earliest Jesus traditions. Chapter 2 lays out the limits of his study: Wright will examine literary evidence that can be reasonably dated to the first century, which may or may not include certain key Greek and Latin terms. Chapter 3 argues that economic and political conditions in the first century Roman Empire were favorable for communal reading events and that writing materials and manuscripts were not as cost-prohibitive as previously imagined. Likewise, increased travel and mobility would have fostered the distribution of written texts and their recitation in diverse locations. Chapter 4 describes the social dynamics at work within communal reading events, including audience participation, and claims that these events were “deeply embedded within the social fabric of society” (p. 45). This chapter also explains the Jewish background to early Christian reading practices, particularly the role of synagogues.

With these parameters in place, chapter 5 surveys “a selective and specifically targeted set of literary evidence in order to identify where there is enough evidence to find a plausible context for communal reading events in the Greco-Roman world apart from the New Testament writings” (p. 61). Wright examines 20 Greek, Roman, and Jewish authors—such as Epictetus, Ovid, Martial, Dio Chrysostom, Quintilian, Seneca the Younger, Philo, and Josephus—and concludes that communal reading events are attested in 23 specific locations and several broader regions, spanning the entire reach of the Roman Empire. Then in chapter 6, Wright finds evidence of communal reading events in every single book of the New Testament. While Wright analyzes several passages that directly describe or commend communal reading, much of the evidence he offers is indirect. He concludes that the New Testament refers to communal reading events in 28 specific locations and more than a dozen generalized areas, not all of which were urban. A brief seventh chapter summarizes the findings and contributions of this study and an appendix catalogues another 142 texts from 60 additional authors witnessing to communal reading events in a somewhat expanded time scale (100 BCE–200 CE).

In the opinion of this reviewer, the preponderance of evidence Wright marshals in this book more than establishes his baseline contention that communal reading events were geographically widespread in the Roman Empire of the first century CE. Furthermore, although one might occasionally quibble with the NT evidence that Wright sets forth in chapter 6 and the conclusions drawn from it, it is hard to argue with his cumulative case: communal reading of various texts is well-attested among the earliest Christians throughout the Empire. However, the most interesting and potentially most significant parts of this book can be found around the edges of his central argument, when Wright hints at the implications of his findings for historical Jesus research, orality and literacy, New Testament textual transmission, early Christian social identity, and even canonicity. Throughout the book Wright makes provocative forays into these areas, but then quickly returns to his more limited and judicious focus on mapping the geographical distribution of reading events. (Wright's published articles, reviews, and interviews have begun to fill out his broader perspective on these controversial matters.)

The largest contribution of this book is its careful culling and analysis of literary evidence illuminating a woefully neglected topic. Now that Wright has compiled all this data, the task remains to sort through and debate all the implications. It is a testament to the importance and brilliance of this book that one may wonder, as D. A. Carson does in his endorsement, "why these things have not been brought to light before."

Alexander N. Kirk

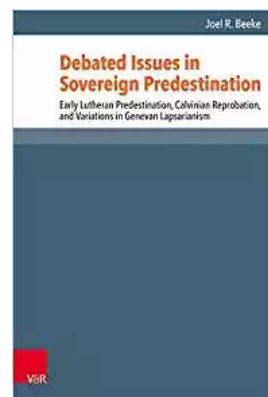
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— HISTORY AND HISTORICAL THEOLOGY —

Joel R. Beeke. *Debated Issues in Sovereign Predestination: Early Lutheran Predestination, Calvinian Reprobation, and Variations in Genevan Lapsarianism*. Reformed Historical Theology 42. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2017. 252 pp. £61.99/\$84.00.

Joel Beeke's *Debated Issues in Sovereign Predestination* may have an intimidating subtitle ("Calvinian Reprobation, and Variations in Genevan Lapsarianism") but this ought not dissuade prospective readers. This book offers a clear, judicious exploration of aspects of predestination that many modern readers are prone to ignore or dismiss as unimportant. In fact, as Beeke ably demonstrates, "lapsarian" issues have unexpected theological and pastoral significance.

The book focuses on three theological questions. First, does God's act of predestination only refer to his positive, saving act wherein he chose individuals for salvation prior to creation (*election*), or does it also include an active predestining of the non-elect to damnation (*reprobation*)? This is the difference between single and double predestination. In single-predestination God passively passes by those not elected to salvation, whereas in double-predestination he actively reprobates them. Second, Did God regard the objects of his predestining act as sinners in his sight (*infralapsarianism*) or as uncreated, non-sinners (*supralapsarianism*)? Stated differently, did God predestine the elect out of a fallen humanity, or did he set out to create two groups of people, those



saved and those condemned, without sin yet being in view? Finally, what are the theological and pastoral consequences of one's answers to these questions?

The book consists of three parts. First, Beeke traces the themes of predestination and reprobation in Lutheranism from Luther to the *Formula of Concord* (1577), before offering historical and theological comparison and evaluation. Second, he expounds Calvin's doctrine of reprobation and follows it through Calvin's theological development. The final section highlights "lapsarian variations" among subsequent Genevan theologians up to the eighteenth century. Each section deals with a disputed historical and theological issue: the nature of early Lutheran views on predestination; the character of Calvin's views on reprobation; and the relative prevalence of infralapsarian and supralapsarian options among Genevan theologians from Beza to Tronchin.

Part one offers a fascinating narrative of the development of early Lutheran attitudes to predestination. Martin Luther (1483–1546) could assert reprobation very strongly, but he often tempered it through appeal to his distinction between the "hidden" and "revealed" God. This allowed him to avoid difficult lapsarian questions by locating them in the mystery of God's undisclosed will. Luther was concerned with the pastoral value of predestination as a source of comfort and assurance. Undergirding the tensions in Lutheran thought on predestination from the start is a Law-Gospel distinction that will only allow doctrines of the gospel to have positive pastoral application. Whilst Luther could use reprobation to a positive pastoral end (e.g. to promote humility and gratitude), later Lutherans would struggle to find any positive use of reprobation and would jettison the concept.

In part two, Beeke engages historical and theological scholarship on the place of reprobation in Calvin's thought. Beeke demonstrates that Calvin taught active reprobation (double-predestination), and that this was at least implicitly present in his earliest work. This section traces the development of Calvin's views on reprobation and offers a valuable explanation of Calvin's distinction between two causes of reprobation: God is the remote cause of reprobation, whilst man's sin is the proximate cause. This distinction is worthy of careful reflection. It simultaneously demonstrates that God's reprobating act is just (sinners deserve condemnation), and yet that human actions in no way cause or influence God's acts, even in the case of reprobation. These are subtle matters and Beeke explains them well.

The final section lays out the lapsarian options among later Genevan theologians, focusing on Theodore Beza (1519–1605) and Francis Turretin (1623–1687). It also makes significant reference to Giovanni Diodati (1576–1649), Theodore Tronchin (1582–1657), Benedict Turretin (1588–1631), Friedrich Spanheim (1600–1649), Louis Tronchin (1629–1705), Benedict Pictet (1655–1724) and Jean-Alphonse Turretin (1671–1737).

Beza has often been mischaracterised in the "Calvin versus the Calvinists" debate as the decisive scholastic distorter of Calvin's theology. Beeke takes two chapters to demonstrate Beza's essential continuity with Calvin and his pastoral sensitivity, which flies in the face of many notions of what "scholastic" theologians were like. Although Beza was supralapsarian, Genevan theology after him was dominated by infralapsarians. Francis Turretin, for example, rejected supralapsarianism largely due what he perceived to be its theological and pastoral implications. Beeke's study repeatedly highlights how these sophisticated Reformed theologians were also profoundly pastorally oriented and possessed a deep concern for the edification the church.

This final section of the book also tells a story of theological decline. Both the older Tronchin and the older two Turretins (Benedict and Francis) were orthodox Reformed theologians. However, the next

generations (Louis Tronchin and Jean-Alphonse Turretin) adopted various modernist and rationalist ideas which severely compromised their theology.

Beeke's study concludes with ten theological implications. Alongside accurately presenting the views of the theologians he covers, Beeke uses his study to argue for what he views as properly Reformed views of predestination. He presents both infralapsarian and supralapsarian positions as legitimately belonging to the Reformed camp. However, he strongly advocates for double-predestination and uses his historical survey to argue that single predestination has unintended negative consequences. "Lutheran history confirms that a monergistic, single predestination is neither a biblical nor rational solution; repressed reprobation must end in repressed election." (p. 74)

This is a bold claim, extending beyond history into biblical exegesis, and theological and pastoral consequences. Readers will need to make up their own mind whether they find Beeke's theological critique convincing, but his study puts the reader in a good position to do just that.

This book invites further study in several directions. How did other early Reformed theologians treat these themes? Did the unintended theological consequences that Beeke observes playing out in Lutheranism and in Geneva develop similarly elsewhere? The theological argument of the book would be significantly bolstered if similar patterns could be observed in other Reformed centers and networks, and in later eras.

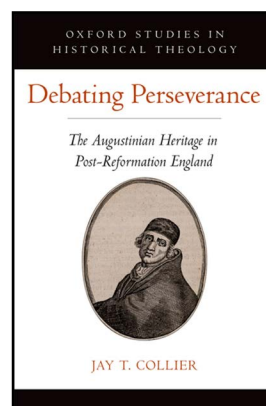
In sum this is a very useful book, not only to theologians, but also to pastors. It is essential reading for anyone interested in early modern Reformed thought.

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Jay T. Collier. *Debating Perseverance: The Augustinian Heritage in Post-Reformation England*. Oxford Studies in Historical Theology. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018. 229 pp. £71.00/\$99.00.

One of two broad stories tends to be told about the nature of the post-Reformation Church of England. The first narrates the early emergence of a distinctive Anglican *via media*, characterized by deep commitment to the theology of the early fathers over that of the continental reformers. This reading, associated with scholars such as H. R. McAdoo and Peter White, perceives a smooth line running from the early Elizabethan bishops, through the Caroline divines, and on to the Restoration—a line along which the puritan movement represents an eccentric disruption. The second story presents the early modern English Church as far more self-consciously reformed in its theology and practice. This more recent view, evident in the work of Patrick Collinson, Peter Lake and others, questions the extent to which an early "Anglicanism" may be discerned, arguing that the Church of England sits quite recognizably within the broad international reformed consensus of the late 16th and early 17th centuries.

Into this debate steps Jay T. Collier with his study *Debating Perseverance: The Augustinian Heritage in Post-Reformation England*. Extending the work of the latter group of scholars in particular, Collier takes the view that, rather than identifying either the fathers or the reformed as *the* primary source of



English theological identity, a more profitable way forward is to take “both the Reformed churches and the early church fathers as confluent sources of identity for the Church of England” (p. 19). Within this approach, Collier examines the way in which a catholic commitment to the writings of one figure from the early Church in particular, Augustine, was determinative in English debates over the key doctrinal distinctive of the reformed tradition—the perseverance of the saints. Collier surveys five episodes from the period in which, he argues, this combination of reformed and catholic commitment served to set the terms of and direct the debate.

First, in the development of the Lambeth Articles of 1595, Collier demonstrates the extent to which perseverance was at issue in the controversy, something underappreciated in earlier studies. He also shows that the Articles’ final form reflected Whitgift’s desire to allow latitude on the issue of perseverance, within the bounds of a commitment to unconditional election, partly on the basis that such views represented valid readings of Augustine—a reformed leniency, enabled by the value placed upon legitimate catholicity.

Collier then turns to the failed attempt of the British delegation at Dort to secure a similar breadth within the Synod’s statement on perseverance. This failure, Collier argues, led to formative pressure being placed upon an English church which had tolerated minority Augustinian positions on perseverance, but which the international reformed consensus had now determined as unacceptable.

The third and fourth episodes are the controversies surrounding Richard Montagu in the 1620s. The disputes with Montagu have been characterized, in both the polemics of the time and in later historiography, as taking place between “Arminians” and “Calvinists.” Collier shows, however that this is an over-simplification. Montagu’s denial of the perseverance of the saints sat alongside an Augustinian view of election and effectual grace, rather than emerging from Arminian convictions.

Lastly, Collier surveys the altercations in the 1650s with the genuinely Arminian John Goodwin. In so doing he demonstrates an on-going disagreement over Augustine that persisted amongst theologians who were pro-Dort and pro-Westminster, not only concerning perseverance, but also on where one should draw the proper bounds of acceptable catholic orthodoxy.

Collier’s study effectively dismantles overly simplistic characterizations of the post-Reformation Church of England, and of the reformed tradition more generally. His attentive reading of primary documents contributes to the picture of an Augustinian Protestantism in England that was more diverse and subtle in its internal distinctions than both popular and some scholarly presentations have suggested, specifically because of the importance to virtually all parties of being recognizably reformed and catholic in doctrine and practice. Of course, Collier maintains that certain boundaries existed. Unconditional election, and the perseverance of the elect at the very least, were non-negotiables for those who sought a unity with both Augustine and the broader reformation. But the sharp lines drawn at times between Calvinist Puritans who looked to the continent and Arminian conformists who looked to the past are effectively shown to be unhelpful and misleading.

Collier’s task is a descriptive one, and he performs it admirably. As such, his book is perfect for anyone with an historical interest in the period he surveys, and it is a model of the kind of historiography that avoids mischaracterizing its subject matter by viewing it through the lens of contemporary concerns. However, having done that work, it would be of benefit to hear what implications—if any—Collier thinks may be drawn from his study for contemporary claims regarding the proper nature, substance, and boundaries of reformed and Anglican identity. Are the events he examines a cautionary tale for those who would draw the lines too narrowly, or too widely, or both? Do they provide a model for

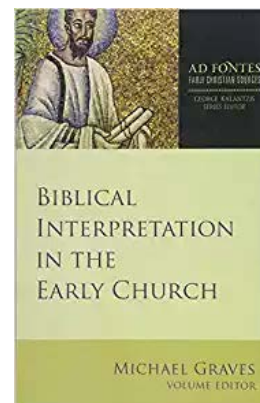
the way in which various ancient and contemporary exegetical practices may or may not legitimately be appealed to in the course of ecclesial debate? Can the “reformed catholic” sensibilities of the early modern English churchmen inform the agenda of recent moves to kindle a similar sensibility in the 21st century church? Collier’s assessment of these questions, in light of his wonderful study, would be warmly welcomed.

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Michael Graves, ed. *Biblical Interpretation in the Early Church*. Ad Fontes: Early Christian Sources. Minneapolis: Fortress, 2017. xxx + 299 pp. £17.99/\$24.00.

Ad fontes! This was the call of the Renaissance humanists, and later the Protestant Reformation, to go back “to the sources.” With this call came a renewed emphasis on the study of Greek and Latin classics, as well as the Christian Scriptures in the original languages. Additionally, this brought about renewed interest in the early voices of Christian history: the Greek and Latin texts of the church fathers. According to the series editor George Kalantzis (Professor of Theology, Wheaton College), the goal of the Ad Fontes series is “to invite readers ‘to return to the sources,’ to discover firsthand the riches of the common Christian tradition and to gain a deeper understanding of the faith and practices of early Christianity” (p. viii). In this volume, Michael Graves (Armerding Professor of Biblical Studies at Wheaton College) seeks to “provide a useful survey of early Christian interpretation of Scripture through primary sources” (p. xi). Graves’s entry to this series includes selections from fifteen sources, ranging from the second through the fifth centuries, in order to provide readers with an introduction to the theory and practice of early Christian biblical interpretation. The reasoning behind the selection of texts is both to “illustrate major features of Christian exegesis, such as christological typology, proofs from prophecy, appeal to the Rule of Faith, salvation-historical paradigms, and use of Scripture to refute heresy” (pp. xi–xii) and to “articulate coherent ideas about how to interpret Scripture and also treat specific biblical texts with enough detail to show how the theoretical ideas work in practice” (p. xii). Thus, Graves illuminates the past for the purpose of helping modern readers to better interpret Scripture for today and the future.

The book begins with an introduction to early Christian interpretation, defining and elaborating the early Christian understanding of the literal and spiritual senses of Scripture. The remainder of the book consists of selection from fifteen different authors in the early Christian period. Leading up to the third century, Graves provides selections from the *Epistle of Barnabas*, Justin Martyr, Irenaeus, Tertullian, and Cyprian. The later selections include works from Origen, Eusebius of Caesarea, Ephrem the Syrian, Diodore of Tarsus, Gregory of Nyssa, Jerome, Theodore of Mopsuestia, John Chrysostom, Augustine, and John Cassian. Graves gives a historical overview of each figure, including how each provides helpful insight into understanding early Christian interpretation. The remainder of each chapter is made up of primary source selections. While Graves mostly provides reading from a single work for each given author, the chapter on Origen includes selections from multiple works.



This is a good resource for those wishing to begin their studies in understanding early Christian biblical interpretation. For the novice, each section provides a different facet of early Christian interpretation, including its theological and practical function. Graves provides a wide range of sources, and his insights help readers advance in their knowledge of early Christian interpretive practices. Even those who have some experience in this area may find something new and helpful given the diverse group of figures examined in this text.

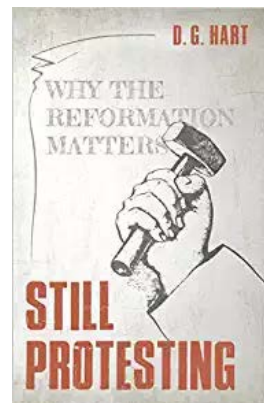
With that said, it is up to the reader to take up Graves's challenge to "facilitate historically informed critical reflection on early Christian biblical interpretation and so provide a useful resource for contemporary theology" (p. xxix). He does not simply spoon feed his audience but sets the table so that readers may decide where and in what ways to enjoy the feast. With this in mind, some may feel that Graves's selection of texts is too limited and consider his historical overview and interpretive comments too brief and cursory. If this is the case, then such readers should look to more specialized texts on early Christian biblical interpretation focusing on specific figures or topics. Based on the book's stated purpose and scope, Graves accomplishes his task of introducing readers who are unfamiliar to this area by providing prominent texts and figures to consider. Thus, it should be seen as a primer and not an encyclopedia.

For those teaching introductory courses in early Christian interpretation, this text would make a great addition to one's syllabus. However, its usefulness extends past the classroom and could easily be used for church-based studies on biblical interpretation, or for equipping lay leaders to understand the history of biblical interpretation. For the reader looking for a primer on early Christian biblical interpretation, may they heed the call of *ad fontes* and return "to the sources" provided in *Biblical Interpretation in the Early Church*.

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D. G. Hart. *Still Protesting: Why the Reformation Matters*. Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage, 2018. 207 pp. £13.78/\$18.00.

Can Protestants and Roman Catholics be allies in the culture wars being waged against the Christian faith and values? This is the question that the historic seminar of "Evangelicals and Catholics Together" gathered to address in the spring of 1994. Leading scholars signed and published a statement that explained the need and "responsibility for Evangelicals and Catholics to be Christians together in a way that helps prepare the world for the coming" of Christ. The advancement of ecumenicism has grown even stronger today, as evidenced in the dramatic decrease of Christians who identified as Protestant in a 2017 Barna poll. In response, D. G. Hart seeks to remind readers of "the enduring strengths of historic Protestantism" and the vital need to recover its teachings, arguing that "debates that divided the two sides of Western Christianity still matter" (p. xiii).



This book stands as a defense of Reformed Protestantism and its teachings on salvation, worship, and the institutional church, in the current context where an increasing number of Protestants are converting to Roman Catholicism. Hart contends that the gulf between the two cannot be bridged if one truly cares about “the holiness of God, the demands of His law, human sinfulness, and the reality of eternal punishment for disobeying Him.” (pp. xii–xiii). In this well-written and at times biting work, Hart unapologetically calls Protestants to stand against Rome’s teachings by holding fast to the historic Protestant biblical teachings, particularly the sufficiency of Christ for salvation.

Published shortly after the 500th anniversary of the Reformation, this book is a timely addition to the corpus of works written on Protestant/Catholic relations in the twenty-first century, which include Christian Smith’s *How to Go from Being a Good Evangelical to a Committed Catholic in Ninety-Five Difficult Steps* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2011) and Mark Noll and Carolyn Nystrom’s *Is the Reformation Over? An Evangelical Assessment of Contemporary Roman Catholicism* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008). In contrast to these works, however, this volume sets out to support historic Protestantism’s relevance for today. Hart is an elder in the Orthodox Presbyterian Church and Distinguished Associate Professor of History at Hillsdale College, and has authored important works on church history and the Reformation tradition, including *Calvinism: A History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2013). In this work, the former dean of academic affairs at Westminster Seminary in California lives up to Barton Swaim’s characterization of him as “a cantankerous conservative, a stalwart Presbyterian and a talented polemicist with a delightfully perverse sense of humor” (“The Eating of Sausages,” *Wall Street Journal*, 19 August 2013, <https://www.wsj.com/articles/the-eating-of-sausages-1376947602>).

In this concise work of 207 pages that includes a helpful index, Hart utilizes Reformed and Catholic documents and reputable secondary sources to make his case for the enduring relevance of historic Protestantism. The introduction opens by positing that the arguments of scholars such as Christian Smith “are not sufficient to overcome the enormous problems in Roman Catholicism” (p. 7). Chapters one through five examine significant aspects of the Reformation including the reason for the Reformation, the authority of Scripture, the doctrine of justification by faith alone, the reforming of church governance, and the doctrine of vocation. In the second half of the book (chs. 6–10), Hart defends Protestantism against major Catholic objections including its newness and divisions, its lack of aesthetics, and its agency of the woes of modernity and liberalism.

This volume is a particularly helpful resource for Protestants considering Catholicism. Chapter three and the conclusion serve as a powerful call to continue to stand firm in the Protestant tradition for the sufficiency of Christ. Hart persuasively demonstrates that “the gospel, truthfulness of Scripture, and danger of idolatry are still as much at stake in Roman Catholicism as they were at the time of the Reformation” (p. 195). Another highlight of the book is chapter five, “Vocation: Spirituality for Ordinary Life.” As Hart adeptly shows, the Protestant doctrine of vocation resolved the daily tension ordinary believers felt regarding holy activities and common ones, enabling everyone to “serve God and love their neighbor in regular activities” (p. 84). Hart helps the reader recognize the spiritual value of worldly vocations and the application of salvation to all areas of life.

In *Still Protesting*, Hart evidences his reformed perspective by focusing on the flaws of Roman Catholicism, building his defense of Protestantism primarily on the defects of Catholicism. The author offers an excellent reminder of the enduring theological truths of historic Protestantism. He, however, shies away from acknowledging some of its missteps, tending to see it through rose-colored lenses. While a concise book such as this cannot cover every issue that has divided Protestants and Catholics,

it is surprising that Hart does not give a more extended treatment to the key theological concerns of papal infallibility and the sacraments, particularly transubstantiation. It is also interesting that Hart, being trained as a historian, relies heavily on secondary sources, including Thomas Bokenkotter, Brian Kelly and Mark Noll, to explain the historical and theological context. Yet, this is appropriate for a book aimed more at the layperson than the academy. Hart's words can be biting at times. For example, calling contemporary Roman Catholicism "incoherent if not schizophrenic" (p. 165) may cause some readers to dismiss him. In this, Hart has taken to heart not only Luther's theological views but also his polemical voice. This tone may best serve a Protestant audience already convinced that Rome "erred about the things of God" (p. 196).

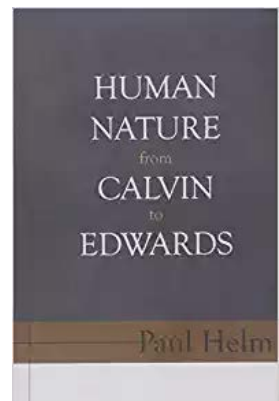
For Protestants exploring Catholicism or the question of whether Catholics and Protestants can be allies for the gospel, this is an excellent resource. It offers a robust historical and theological critique of Rome, arguing that the differences between Roman Catholics and Protestants extend beyond ecclesiastical matters to the central issue of salvation.

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Paul Helm. *Human Nature from Calvin to Edwards*. Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage, 2018. xxi + 282 pp. £23.30/\$30.00.

In *Human Nature from Calvin to Edwards*, Helm examines the neglected topic of the Reformed perspective on human nature in and of itself (not the well-researched topic of human nature as created, fallen, redeemed, and glorified) by detailing perspectives of the soul according to representative theologians between 1550 and 1750. Though their views were diverse, all of these theologians used faculty psychology to make sense of human beings. Helm does not attempt to provide an apologetic for this framework but does claim that their understanding of the whole person—including concepts like consciousness and conscience—went beyond a one-dimensional perspective of a purely physical existence.

Chapters one and two explain the roots of faculty psychology as found in Augustine and Aquinas, and Reformed anthropology as found in Calvin and Vermigli. Augustine, influenced by Plato, believed that memory influenced understanding and emotions were actions of the will. He prioritized the will over the other faculties, defining it as unfree or turned around because of sin yet still being the power by which one chooses. Aquinas, influenced by Aristotle, prioritized the mind, arguing that if sound reason dictated the passions, it would lead to virtuous behavior. Later theologians were deeply influenced by these two figures. Though Calvin was suspicious of philosophical approaches to the soul, worrying that they underplayed sin, he still believed that reason was active after the fall despite its limitations to receive divine truth. On the other hand, Vermigli willingly used Aquinas's approach and promoted the compatibilist view of actions as originally caused by outside forces, though people were responsible for their unforced choices.



Chapter three outlines the Reformed orthodox view of the body and soul in general. Many used hylomorphism—the Aristotelian view that “the soul is the form of certain matter” (p. 12)—and taught that the soul and body are connected (though some like Purnell were more dualistic than others like Flavel), the soul animates the body, and the soul is simple, immaterial, and immortal.

Chapters four–six directly address the faculties. Though some of the Reformed orthodox were voluntarists, most were intellectualists who aligned with Aquinas in believing that the intellect is the superior faculty that directs the will in its action. In fact, many of the orthodox believed that the subordination of the will to the intellect was a metaphysical necessity, saying the intellect provided vision to the blind will. Often, debates regarding the freedom of the will led to connections between freedom and being in a state of grace. There were also various views and definitions of moral ability and inability, such as Owen’s emphasis on the loss of intellectual ability in the fall versus Truman’s on the loss of willingness. The affections were sometimes referred to as a third faculty and other times as an aspect of the will, but either way they were not to be discarded to achieve rationality. Rather, affections were meant to be used in godly ways as directed by reason to achieve virtue.

Chapter seven addresses issues and debates related to the interplay of the faculties. For example, various perspectives on the interconnectedness of the faculties’ powers affected in-group debates about faith and assurance. Further, the Reformed orthodox debated with outside groups about issues related to the faculties, such as their disagreement with the Arminian tendency to lessen the negative effects of the fall on the functioning of the will. Lastly, chapter eight addresses Edwards, showing he argued that the soul of a person not the faculty of the will had the power to choose, and he disagreed with the Reformed orthodox view that affections come from the will and are guided by reason when he stated that sensations move the will to act.

In sum, Helm’s book contributes to scholarship on the Reformed view of human nature, makes antiquated and complicated ideas easier to understand, and presents the Reformed tradition in a nuanced way. The reader will quickly see that the concepts Helm interacts with are steeped in old debates and thus difficult to understand today, but Helm’s use of clear and straight-forward language makes them accessible. Further, Helm’s previous work *Calvin and the Calvinists*, which debunked stereotypes about Calvinism, shines through in his statements related to the Reformed orthodox use of Aristotle (which arise quite frequently in this book), as well as each figure’s uniqueness and connectedness to other figures. Helm does not describe each figure’s perspective of a certain concept in a vacuum but refers to relevant historical and literary information. This is important because many figures used faculty psychology as a method but did not write an anthropology that outlined their method in a systematic way, which means one quote must often be understood in light of other information.

Unfortunately, since several chapters deal with a vast array of figures and topics, it becomes very difficult to synthesize information in order to create a coherent idea of what the Reformed orthodox believed about human nature. This is partly unavoidable given the natural diversity of views even within one theological camp, but perhaps this work could have been helped by adding visual aids like charts or a list of definitions to enable the reader to categorize the many technical terms they will encounter in the context of different figures and debates.

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Marijn de Kroon and Willem van't Spijker. *Martin Bucer (1491–1551): Collected Studies on his Life, Work, Doctrine, and Influence*. Edited by Christa Boerke and Jan C. Klok. Refo500 Academic Studies 44. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2018. 446 pp. £105.75/\$138.

In recent years, an upsurge of interest in Reformation and post-Reformation figures has been seen the continuing stream of monographs on John Calvin, contributions to the study of Luther, and the recent translation of Peter van Mastricht's *magnum opus*, to name a few. Yet, Martin Bucer remains for those less acquainted with Reformation history something of a footnote in the life of John Calvin. As Herman J. Selderhuis notes in the introduction to this volume, "research of the biography and theology of Martin Bucer ... can still be called rather new" (p. 15).

This brings us then to the aim of this book. Recognizing the relative lacuna in Bucer studies, this work offers essays by De Kroon and Van't Spijker, two widely recognized Dutch Bucer scholars, in order "to stimulate Bucer-research" (p. 15). The essays are divided into seven different sections: (1) Bucer and tradition; (2) Bucer compared with Calvin; (3) Bucer involved in dispute; (4) Bucer and justice; (5) Bucer's person; (6) Bucer and city reformation; and (7) Bucer and ethics. Of the twenty-two essays contained in this volume, only eight are translated into English, with three being accessible to an English-speaking readership for the first time and the remaining five bringing together in one volume essays found elsewhere.

The first section consists of three essays touching on Bucer's use of Augustine, his relationship to the church fathers and scholasticism, and a broader essay offering insight into the relationship between the Reformation and Scholasticism.

The fourth essay of this volume, which is mistakenly listed under first section (cf. p. 7 and p. 439), discusses the relationship between Bucer and Calvin regarding predestination. Van't Spijker provides four of the five essays in this section, building a case for a relationship of reciprocity and respect between Bucer and Calvin. Here, we find comparison and analysis of their shared view of the Holy Spirit over against that of Luther and Zwingli as well as other significant points of theological and ecclesial continuity between them. De Kroon's one essay in this section reinforces the findings of Van't Spijker with his exploration of Bucer and Calvin's respective views of Romans 13.

If the second section is characterized by agreement, the third is characterized by theological dispute and contention. The first essay here surveys the controversy between Johannes Marbach and Jerome Zanchi regarding predestination, which is a telling controversy as the latter was clearly in continuity with Bucer both theologically and methodologically. Another essay discusses Luther's infamous rejection of Bucer's attempts at unity, which again highlights the differences that existed between figures in the Reformation period. In two additional essays, Bucer is seen also as a disputant with the Catholic Reformation theologian Ruard Tapper as well as with Konrad Braun on the relationship between church proper and faith, and the role of laymen in "religious talks" (pp. 250–53).

The fourth section consists of two essays dealing with what amounts to the complex yet thoroughly Reformational (i.e., state as protector of the church) approach of Bucer to the question of the church/state relationship. The fifth section explores Bucer's relationship to Pietism and what his wills and testaments demonstrate about him as a person. The sixth discusses Bucer's role in Cologne and details correspondences between Bucer and Gereon Sailers during the Augsburg Reformation. The last section



provides a look at Bucer's approach to ethics, treating such topics as freedom, tolerance, political leadership, and the Lord's Supper.

This collection of essays gives us a fascinating look at the Strasbourg Reformer Martin Bucer from many different perspectives and angles. What emerges then from these essays is the complexity that characterized both the man himself and the times in which he lived. They ably demonstrate that Bucer should not be relegated to a mere footnote in the life of John Calvin. In fact, the second section helps us to see how indebted to Bucer Calvin truly was and moreover how much Bucer shaped and influenced the broader Reformation movement.

We gain the picture of a man who loved Christ, loved the church, and firmly believed in the Reformation. Yet, Bucer was a man that knew great suffering as well, as seen in the essays on his personal life, his correspondences, and his failed attempts to unite with a Luther-lead Wittenberg.

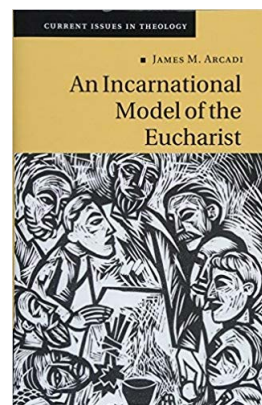
In sum, the aim of this collection of essays to stimulate "Bucer-research" is largely met. Many of the essays are crafted so as to encourage the reader to explore further areas that are only touched on. Also, the relative brevity of the essays leave room for more development. At the same time, these essays are able to hold the interest of both the beginning student and scholar of Reformation studies. One of the greatest challenges to the overall aim is that just over a third of the essays are translated into English thus reducing the usefulness of this volume for those unable to read the remaining fourteen German essays. But for those able to read German *and* English, this is a superb and highly recommended volume of essays characterized by clear writing and historical erudition.

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— SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY —

James M. Arcadi. *An Incarnational Model of the Eucharist*. Current Issues in Theology 10. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018. xiii + 305 pp. £75.00/\$99.00.

James Arcadi's published Ph.D. thesis provides an argument for what he calls "sacramental impanation." In particular, he employs a rich discussion of linguistic and metaphysical realities at work according to the various views of the Eucharist on offer, and advances a coherent account that is grounded in the words of Christ and the liturgy of the church. Arcadi begins by mapping the options available to explain the "mode of presence," or, in other words, the mode by which God is uniquely (or not) present in the eucharistic elements. He articulates three broad modes of presence: the "corporeal mode," the "pneumatic mode," and the "no non-normal mode." In the first instance, corporeal modes affirm that the body and blood of Christ become substantially present. Pneumatic mode adherents argue that Christ is present in the elements in a non-substantial way, and in the no non-normal family of views, there is no special presence in the elements beyond God's general omnipresence.



Arcadi's categorization helpfully focuses on the real differences between traditional views, only then turning to differing streams of thought within each category. Within the corporeal mode, he distinguishes between the Capernite manner, two different Roman manners, and the German manner, which also has two species, what he calls the German-Wittenberg and the German-Nuremberg. What differentiates the German manner from the Roman, is that the presence of the substance of bread and wine are maintained. According to the German manner, Christ and the bread/wine are substantially present; the difference between them lies in how they conceive of the relation between the substantially present bread/wine and the body/blood of Christ.

Arcadi reflects on the linguistic realities at work in Christ's claims, "This is my body," and, "This is my blood." In what sense are these claims true? What might it mean for the body and blood of Christ to be, in some sense, connected to the bread and wine of the Eucharist? Developing a close analysis of the various options, and an engagement with Hunsinger's notion of "real predication," Arcadi attends to the implications for these linguistic claims concerning how one conceptualizes God's presence. What does it mean to say that an omnipresent God is *particularly* present in the bread and wine? In keeping with his emphasis on the liturgical aspect of the Eucharist, Arcadi develops a notion of consecration to account for Christ's claims about the bread and the wine, advancing recent discussions in predication to fund his account of impanation.

Arcadi prefers a version of the German-Nuremberg view, which, in contrast with the German-Wittenberg, holds to a union between Christ's body/blood and the bread/wine that is modelled on the incarnation. Under this category there are three options: hypostatic impanation, natural impanation, and sacramental impanation, the last of which is Arcadi's position. In hypostatic impanation, there is another hypostatic union established with the divine Word, now with the bread and wine rather than with the human soul/mind and body. In natural impanation, the soul of Christ simply enters into another kind of natural instrumental relation to the elements that parallels the soul's instrumental relation to the body, in such a way that they can be called "the body and blood of Christ." But for Arcadi, these options fail to give as adequate an account as sacramental impanation, which posits a sacramental union between the elements and the human *body* of Christ. On this view, according to Arcadi, "the body of Christ uses the consecrated bread as an instrument. As such, the bread becomes part of Christ's body in the manner as the human nature becomes part of the composite Christ. Thus, the sacramental union is an instrumental union just as the hypostatic and natural unions are" (p. 209). An advantage to this version of impanation is that it can account, in a much more straight-forward way, how the elements are truly the *body* of Christ and are not *owned* by Christ. By focusing on the sacramental union with the body of Christ, sacramental impanation allows for a tighter connection to the words of consecration.

Arcadi demonstrates well that regardless of theological proclivities, one cannot simply ignore metaphysical judgments, claims about presence, or linguistic predication when talking about eucharist, because one must give an account of what it actually means when Christ says, "This is my body." Furthermore, Arcadi proves to be a balanced reader of a variety of positions, and provides helpful mapping of the various options available for the reader, and whose own position is an intriguing attempt to take the words of consecration and the church's own liturgical acts seriously with linguistic and metaphysical rigor. For that reason, I think that along with scholars who are interested in working in this area, seminary students would find this volume to be a helpful conversation partner in the development of their own thinking about these issues.

In terms of critical remarks, I will only mention one. Though Arcadi did exactly what he claimed he was going to do, I would have liked to see more biblical work done. The mode of argumentation seems to imply that the biblical material is straight-forward and the real work needed is through metaphysics and linguistic analyses. Nonetheless, Arcadi's work proves fruitful and instructive, but broader and more in-depth biblical work would have served his overall project well.

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Hans Boersma. *Seeing God: The Beatific Vision in Christian Tradition*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2018. xx + 429 pp. £45.99/\$55.00.

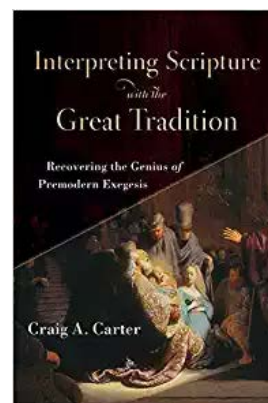
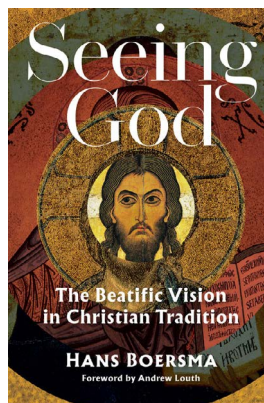
Craig A. Carter. *Interpreting Scripture with the Great Tradition: Recovering the Genius of Premodern Exegesis*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2018. xxi + 254 pp. £18.99/\$27.99.

These books join the current movement to retrieve and revive interest in classical theological resources and seek to counter what the authors see as deleterious effects of modernity. Specifically, both books orient from the authors' view that the patristic and medieval thinkers' mixture of a broadly Neoplatonic metaphysic and biblical theism helps to respond well to modernity's disjointed and purely immanent understandings of history, human experience, and hermeneutics.

This outlook, which both authors refer to as Christian Platonism, holds that the deepest meaning of reality and history lies in the diverse participations of all beings in God's infinite existence. That is, the world is not so many atomized bits of contingent matter but rather a vast hierarchy of creatures who proceed from, and therefore share in, God's transcendent being, and who, for that reason, restlessly ascend back to God (as their telos) through his work in history. These books seek to work out what this metaphysical position entails for the beatific vision and biblical exegesis, respectively.

Hans Boersma, for example, argues that the Christian Platonic notion that all created things participate in, or partake of, God's being supplies the only plausibility structure for his assumption that "the telos of the beatific vision lies embedded in our human nature" (*Seeing God*, p. 11), ordering that nature to the supernatural end of seeing God in Christ after death and even enabling us to experience God's infinite life on earth. Likewise, Craig Carter contends that "the synthesis of Christianity and pagan philosophy in late antiquity" explains how "the Old Testament writings do actually participate in the reality that is Jesus Christ" (*Interpreting Scripture*, pp. 86, 151) and that this ontology of Scripture brings a deep Christological unity to the words of the Bible. Hence, a so-called "synthesis" of Christianity and paganism in Christian Platonism is essential to the proposals of each work.

In *Seeing God*, Boersma argues that a participatory, or as he often puts it, "sacramental" understanding of the beatific vision "points us to the recognition of the real presence of Christ already in this life, in



anticipation of the beatific vision of God in the hereafter” (pp. 14–15). While the opening and concluding chapters of the book directly serve this thesis (see further below), the intervening chapters (chs. 2–12) offer a diachronic survey of various theologians’ views regarding the beatific vision. Part 1 (chs. 2–4) focuses on early Christian thought, Part 2 (chs. 5–8) on medieval theology, and Part 3 (chs. 9–12) on Protestant theology. Chapter two, the exception, traces the influence of Plato and Plotinus on later Christian accounts of the beatific vision. Boersma there lays a philosophical foundation for the themes of participation, ascent, divinization, mysticism, etc., that permeate his ensuing discussions of Gregory of Nyssa, Augustine, Thomas Aquinas and Gregory Palamas, Symeon the New Theologian and John of the Cross, Bonaventure and Nicholas of Cusa, Dante Alighieri, John Calvin, John Donne, various Puritans (Ambrose, Owen, Baxter, Watson), Abraham Kuyper, and Jonathan Edwards. Throughout these studies, Boersma commends the ideas that he believes mesh well with his “sacramental” vision of the world and the Christian life (see, e.g., pp. 94–95, 108–9, 162, 211, 222, 313, 352–53, 383–84). The result is a fascinating survey of primary and secondary sources that traces the doctrinal development and theological disagreements regarding humanity’s final end.

The signal feature of Boersma’s work, however, is his argument that a participatory ontology entails that the *visio Dei* is not only proleptically present to believers today, but also progressively divinizes them throughout this life and beyond. While the notion of the creature’s metaphysical divinization may disturb evangelical readers, Boersma is simply drawing out what is implied in Christian Platonism, i.e., that eternal life is nothing less than a “deifying participation in Christ” (p. 196). That is, just as human beings sacramentally partake of God’s being in their coming from him in creation, so God graciously draws them back into himself as Christ “makes us more than human by uniting us with himself in the incarnation” (p. 221). While Christ, himself, is the deifying *visio Dei*, Boersma argues that even natural phenomena sacramentally contribute to our beatitude, since “everything we see with the eyes of the body today is a theophany of God in Christ” (p. 384). Eventually, the beatific vision will so transform our body and soul that “like God—and in the risen Christ—we take on incorruptibility and immortality” (p. 393).

As these quotes suggest, for Boersma, the believer’s final end is a never-ending assimilation into God’s own interior life in and through Christ. Boersma assures the reader that man’s divinization through the beatific vision “does not mean that we take the place of God” (p. 393), but it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that, for Boersma, the beatific vision will make us part of God. As evidence, Boersma expresses hope that Jonathan Edwards’ treatment of the beatific vision “will prove contagious” (p. 16), even as he agrees with Oliver Crisp that “Jonathan Edwards’ Neoplatonism implies that he was a panentheist” (p. 355, n. 5).

Craig Carter in *Interpreting Scripture with the Great Tradition* explicitly endorses Boersma’s commitment to the “sacramental” ontology of Christian Platonism (see pp. xvi, 34–36), arguing that it is the outlook of the Great Tradition (i.e., classical Christianity). However, instead of arguing for the endless divinization of creatures in the beatific vision, Carter deploys this metaphysic to “recover classical theological interpretation of Scripture for the church’s benefit today” (*Interpreting Scripture*, p. xv). The opening chapter sets the stage by describing a “gulf” between the modern historical-critical theories of the academy and the church’s perception of the Bible as an inspired text, using as a test case their divergent approaches to the messianic prophecy of Isaiah 53. Carter then spends three chapters laying out the theological and metaphysical program (Part 1: Theological Hermeneutics) which he argues can rectify the academy’s failures. The next three chapters (Part 2: Recovering Premodern

Exegesis) build on the prior theological treatment by working out the details of Carter's hermeneutical proposal, addressing the unity and diversity of Scripture, the issue of meaning, and the Old Testament as a Christ-laden text. The concluding chapter revisits Isaiah 53 in light of Carter's prior discussions, assesses contemporary approaches to the text (Goldingay and Payne, Motyer, Childs), and engages with Vanhoozer and Carson regarding the current Theological Interpretation of Scripture movement.

Foundational to Carter's retrieval effort is the idea that the Bible is the Word of God "insofar as it participates in the divine Word of God, the Second Person of the Trinity" (p. 58). By "insofar," Carter does not mean to deny the inspired character of the Bible *per se* (see pp. 37–42). But, for him, inspiration is what opens up the depth of meaning conveyed through Scripture as its human words participate in God's Word, namely, Jesus Christ. For example, Scripture's participation in Christ accounts for the fact that God "speaks His Word through the human words of the inspired text" (p. 32), particularly as God "commandeers those texts and speaks through them" (p. 167). And because of this dynamic, it is possible "to regard what we learn from the Bible as the Word of the almighty God" (p. 36). Throughout these accounts of divine speech, Carter appeals to John Webster (to whom the book is dedicated), who depicts the Spirit's sanctification of the biblical text (see pp. 25–26, 32–36, 58–59), noting that such language is just another way of affirming that "Scripture functions sacramentally," both for Webster and for himself, "just as it does for Hans Boersma" (p. 35).

In other words, Carter finds Christian Platonism amenable to what "all three of us [i.e., Carter, Webster, and Boersma] are referring to when we speak of the context in which the saving self-revelation [of God] occurs to our benefit" (p. 59). That is fascinating, for if Carter is right, one can use the language of metaphysical participation to express a creature's vertical contact with God in more sacramentally incremental (Boersma) or more sacramentally actualistic (Webster) terms. In both cases, created things—human nature for Boersma and the human words of the Bible for Carter—witness to transcendent spiritual realities *precisely because* God makes those created things to participate metaphysically in his own being, especially as that being is revealed in the incarnation of Jesus Christ. Thomas Aquinas and Karl Barth arguably represent the most explicit and refined forms of this kind of Christological participation, but Carter's work, perhaps unintentionally, synthesizes enough strands of thought to weave this common thread.

Carter's intention is, itself, hermeneutical. In line with his Christian Platonism, he argues for biblical interpretation "as a sacramental activity" (p. 131) centered on Jesus Christ. That is, he indicates, just as Christ was sacramentally present in the literal forms of Israel's life prior to the incarnation, so Christ remains sacramentally present in the literal meaning of the text of Scripture. For this reason, one need not pit the literal sense of a text against its deeper, spiritual or allegorical meaning, since, within Carter's participationist framework, the literal meaning includes that deeper meaning within itself, just as God "encloses time within himself and transcends time in the incomprehensible mystery of his unique being" (p. 175). So whether we are dealing with the Old or New Testaments, Christ is "ontologically" present as its participated origin and end, so much so that the text "becomes the sacramental means by which we are united to Christ" (*Interpreting Scripture*, p. 154).

These works by Boersma and Carter have received accolades in the Reformed and evangelical world. *Seeing God* won *Christianity Today's* 2018 award in the category of theology and ethics. *Interpreting Scripture with the Great Tradition* has been hailed as a home run on the topic of hermeneutics. However, upon careful review, it must be concluded that the metaphysical project underpinning each of these works and, therefore, the views these works espouse, conflict with the best of Reformed theology at

central points. For example, though Boersma criticizes Herman Bavinck as “too this-worldly” (*Seeing God*, p. 38), the latter affirms a beatific vision that is firmly fixed on the presence of God and not a warm glow from worldly shalom. But Bavinck makes clear that the hope of seeing God face-to-face is the hope of consummated covenant fellowship with the triune God through a Spirit-wrought, faith-secured, non-deifying union with the risen Christ, whom believers, as creatures, will see with glorified eyes. On this account, the *visio Dei* is not a metaphysical elevation. It rather constitutes an ethical advancement and bodily transformation into the fullness of covenant blessing, the richest and deepest enjoyment of God of which his human image is capable. This is what Christ now enjoys in his non-deified humanity as the eternal Son in glory, and it is what he has secured for his people. Moreover, as the Westminster divines understood, the substance of this covenant blessing was revealed and applied to believers in history prior to the coming of Christ through redemptive prophecy and symbol, and the same hope is revealed in the Old Testament Scriptures thanks to the organic character of biblical typology, not because the Old Testament or its readers metaphysically participate in the person of Christ.

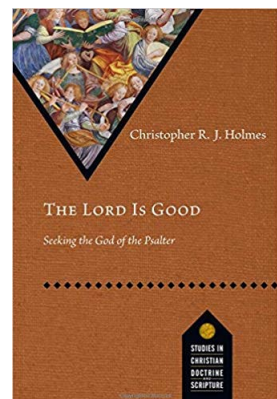
Unfortunately, rather than elucidate these tenets of Reformed theology, Boersma and Carter’s retrievals of patristic and medieval concepts too often obscure and even deny them. As a result, for those who seek to follow the “deeper Protestant conception” (to use the language of Geerhardus Vos), their books should prompt Christians to shun, rather than to embrace, Christian Platonism as harboring unbiblical Neoplatonic influences and to hold firmly to biblical theism as expounded in Reformed confessionalism.

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Christopher R. J. Holmes. *The Lord Is Good: Seeking the God of the Psalter*. Studies in Christian Doctrine and Scripture. London: Apollos, 2018. xii + 198 pp. £20.67/ \$27.00.

The “classical” tradition of Christian theological reflection is often accused of leaving God at arm’s length from his creation, eliding all meaningful discussion of human existence. If one desired to challenge such assessments, a good place to start would be Christopher Holmes’s *The Lord is Good* (dedicated to the late John Webster). Holmes discusses the divine attributes with attention to divine goodness, “the preeminent claim the Psalms make with respect to God” (p. 1). Unlike the christocentric approach to the attributes which has predominated since Karl Barth, Holmes prefers to “think theocentrically,” moving back from God’s outer works to contemplate “how God is ordered to himself apart from the world” (p. 3). In doing so, he joins up Katherine Sonderegger’s “compatibilist” account of the God/world relation with Thomas Aquinas’s effort to utilize the Psalter as a comprehensive resource for theology.

Throughout the study, Holmes pursues two goals. The first is “to follow Scripture’s lead in distinguishing between what is said [of God] in a substantial or essential sense and what is said in a relational sense” (p. 4). Accordingly, Holmes first concentrates on God *in se*. Chapter 1 discusses divine simplicity, which states, among other things, that God alone is one whose essence is to exist. Chapter 2 describes the “unceasingly active goodness” of God, using the language of pure act (p. 33). Here Holmes



establishes that while goodness is predicated of God essentially, considered relatively it is the Spirit to whom are appropriated the works of life-giving and governance on account of which “goodness” is most properly predicated. Chapter 3 follows the Psalter in speaking of *one* goodness. The chapter’s most arresting claim is the idea that all the divine attributes, save the “omnis” and the persons’ relational designations, are *transcendentals*—attributes that “leap across categories,” and are thus “properties that all things possess by virtue of their participation in God’s perfection” (pp. 66–67). Chapter 4 shows that creaturely goodness is good only to the extent that it wills what God wills – namely, God himself. Goodness, then, *is* the God who delights in communicating himself to the created order.

Holmes’s second goal is “to think through how goodness functions as the principle of intelligibility for creation but also the explanation for God’s ongoing presence in and to created things” (p. 6). That work begins in earnest in Chapter 5, which discusses the difference in how goodness is predicated of God and of the world, establishing that “the Creator is not extrinsic to his creation but intimately present to it” (p. 98). Chapter 6 discusses evil as a desire for “being but only in relation to ourselves” (p. 117)—a desire which, on the supposition that God is his own relation to the world, can only result in the creature’s “frenetic ... advance toward nothing” (p. 118). Chapter 7 argues that the law, in inciting the cry to be taught (p. 146), expresses God’s goodness according to its own mode. Chapter 8 shows that there is no diminution of divine goodness in the Son’s incarnation; the incarnation changed the assumed human nature, but in no sense altered the goodness of the Son. Chapter 9 focuses on “the renewal of the Creator/creature distinction.” Earlier in the book, Holmes asserted that it is the task of theology patiently to discern the “implications of divine aseity for faith and practice” (p. 88). The result of that task finds expression in a dense thesis about the creature’s telos: “The last end of every creature is for that creature, in all its fullness, to share in the Lord’s goodness, participant in a manner befitting its mode of being in what is common to the three” (p. 171).

Some readers may regard Holmes’s appropriation of the neo-Thomist tradition as ill-suited to what Michael Horton has called the “covenantal-ethical” dimensions of much Reformed theology, or as liable to collapsing the Creator/creature distinction (though Holmes’s final chapter argues the contrary). Others may find it off-putting for asserting a real distinction between God and creatures, emphasizing God’s transcendence at the cost of denigrating God’s good creation; something like this claim is involved in Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen’s “classical panentheism.” Still others might perceive Holmes as capitulating to Radical Orthodoxy’s criticism of the Reformation as ushering in secular modernity through its rejection of participatory metaphysics; though it is not clear that all Reformed Orthodox theologians did so, or that Radical Orthodoxy’s claim is incontestable. Courtesy might have encouraged a gentler lead for an evangelical readership, perhaps in dialogue with Chapter 4 of Kevin Vanhoozer’s *Remythologizing Theology: Divine Action, Passion, and Authorship* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012). Nevertheless, *The Lord is Good* states its approach clearly and deals with such concerns throughout.

The Psalms “demand a kind of moral and spiritual fitness” (p. 7). So too does Holmes’s deeply theocentric ascetical theology. Holmes contemplates the goodness of God to rouse the affections to desire God. Knowing God requires the pilgrimage of discipleship, “the affective dimension [which] is essential to any treatment of the metaphysics of God’s life” (p. 47). Holmes exhorts the theologian to aspire to become the *kind of person* with the moral and spiritual fitness requisite for inhabiting the Psalter. For him, as for Augustine, it is in the end gastronomy – the belches and shouts of prayer and

praise engendered in and by the Psalter—that provides the mode of theological discourse most befitting the goodness of the Lord.

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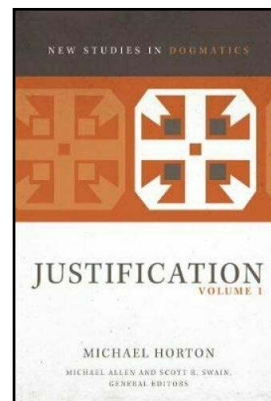
Michael Horton. *Justification*. New Studies in Dogmatics. 2 vols. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2019. 400 + 528 pp. £57.40/\$74.99.

It is difficult to understate the importance of the doctrine of justification. Exegetically, it occupies considerable portions of the correspondence of the apostle Paul. Theologically, it touches upon a wide range of biblical doctrines—covenant theology, the atonement, and sanctification, for example. Historically, it has shaped the last half millennium of the Western church, defining the Protestant and Roman Catholic communions that formed in the wake of the Reformation.

Michael Horton's two-volume *Justification* is an ambitious and panoramic effort to address the doctrine in its exegetical, biblical-theological, systematic, historical, and contemporary significance. The first volume concentrates upon the doctrine in its historical development. Horton argues that the patristic writers' statements concerning justification stand in fundamental continuity with the later doctrine of the Protestant Reformers (1:75–84). It was the ambiguity within Augustine's formulations, however, that both spawned medieval understandings of justification as a transformative grace, and provided the Reformers the resources to restate the biblical doctrine (1:84–91).

Horton tracks the development of the doctrine in the works of Scotus, Ockham, and Biel, arguing that late medieval understandings of justification were not only semi-Pelagian but also wedded to the sacrament of penance (1:162). It was against this doctrine that Luther and the other Reformers protested. In doing so, Horton contends, the Reformers did not capitulate to and extend the nominalism of the late medievals. On the contrary, the Reformers reflected their continuity with the Scripture and the Fathers in expressly setting the doctrine within the context of union with Christ and the law/gospel distinction. If anyone has been responsible for the perpetuation of nominalism, Horton counters, it is the Council of Trent and the post-Tridentine Roman Catholic theologians (1:332). Trent “represents the triumph of the nominalism represented by Ockham and Biel” by rendering the principle *facere quod in se est* (“do what you can”) an “all-controlling thesis” (1:350). Horton concludes his historical survey of justification by responding to the charge that the Reformation doctrine of justification bred antinomianism. While conceding that justification was not designed “to provide an ethic,” Horton insists that justification is the “basis” for sanctification (1:363–64). This state of affairs yields an “extrospective piety” with respect to God and human beings (1:373).

Volume Two addresses justification exegetically and theologically, particularly in response to developments within the last half-century of New Testament studies. Horton begins by perceptively observing that much of modern discussion regarding justification has been marred by false dichotomies—“*historia salutis*” or “*ordo salutis*”; “covenant” or “apocalyptic”; “forensic” or “participatory” (2:37–49).



Horton's discussion of justification then proceeds along four lines. The first attempts to set justification within its biblical context. The law/gospel distinction yields a bicovenantal framework, the covenant of creation (law) and the covenant of grace (gospel). Within redemptive history, the Abrahamic and Sinaitic covenants are two different covenants, corresponding to gospel and law, respectively. Sinai was a "temporary parenthesis" (2:81). For both Sinai and the Covenant of Creation, "personal fulfillment of the stipulations is the *basis* for the promised blessing" (2:76, emphasis original). The apostle Paul devotes his energies to correcting what Horton understands to be a confusion or conflation of the Abrahamic and Sinaitic covenants within the first-century church (2:117). The Judaizers taught that the blessings of the covenant of grace could be secured on the terms that God had set forth under the Sinaitic covenant (2:126). Paul counters by insisting that the blessing of justification could not be secured by "works of the law," but through "faith."

The second line of Horton's analysis of justification concerns the "achievement of justification" (2:149). Horton argues that Paul shared a common Jewish conception of the human condition, namely, that people are in need of "personal salvation" (2:184). In particular, Paul understands humans to be under the divine wrath. To this plight corresponds justification, which is the "realization here and now of what happened objectively in Christ's life, death, and resurrection" (2:195). Christ's death is substitutionary, penal, and propitiatory, and Christ's resurrection means that he is the "source of eschatological justification and life for all who will be united to him" (2:271).

Horton then turns to the "gift of righteousness" (2:281). Justification is both "declaratory" and "judicial" (2:293). Specifically, it is the "courtroom declaration that someone is deemed righteous before God ... that *the demands of the law have been fully met* so that the person is reckoned to be righteous" (2:297, emphasis original). One must neither reduce justification to a mere declaration of membership, nor expand justification to include the grace of transformation (2:302, 299). Horton proceeds to argue that this declaration is based solely upon the "imputation of Christ's meritorious righteousness" (2:325), laudably defending the doctrine of imputation from recent criticism. The verdict of justification is not based upon the good works of the justified person. Good works, rather, are "a consequence" of justification (2:394).

Finally, Horton addresses the way in which the grace of justification is to be received (2:395). "Faith *alone*" is the "*instrumental cause*" of justification (2:402, emphasis original). Reviewing the πίστις Χριστοῦ debate, Horton concludes that the "subjective view" ("the faithfulness of Christ") "is to be faulted not in what it affirms but in what it rejects" (2:443). The objective genitive interpretation ("faith in Christ"), on the other hand, upholds the biblical doctrine of justification along with those legitimate insights of the subjective view. Horton concludes this section and the book by reflecting upon union with Christ. Union with Christ is not an "alternative paradigm" to justification, but its "proper habitat" (2:447). Union with Christ serves to integrate not only *historia salutis* and *ordo salutis*, but also justification and sanctification (2:460, 468). As such, it helps students of Scripture to avoid the distortions and false dichotomies that often attend reflection on justification.

Justification is a thorough and wide-ranging survey of the doctrine that commendably and self-consciously defends the formulations of justification that emerged from the Protestant Reformation. It helpfully and persuasively demonstrates not only that the Tridentine doctrine of justification is not a faithful expression of the theology of the patristic writers, but also that the Reformation stood in basic continuity with the church fathers. Horton also patiently shows that the Reformers did not construct

the edifice of justification upon the foundation of late medieval nominalism, even as they recognized the deficiencies with Augustine's particular formulation of the doctrine (1:222–23, cf. 311–32).

One further virtue of *Justification* is its historical, theological, and exegetical insistence that union with Christ is the necessary context within which the grace of justification is biblically situated. In doing so, Horton shows that the dichotomies often posed between either union with Christ and imputed righteousness or union with Christ and justification are false ones. He further demonstrates that understanding union as the context within which the sinner receives all of Christ's benefits goes some distance to relieving perceived difficulties in relating justification and sanctification. Because each grace is received in union with Christ, justification and sanctification are necessarily inseparable, even as they are necessarily distinguishable.

Horton, however, is not altogether clear in the way in which he relates justification to sanctification. Summarizing his reading of Calvin, Horton speaks of justification as the "foundation for sanctification," its "basis," or (quoting approvingly Herman Selderhuis) its "cause" without further elaboration (1:273, 470; cf. 2:471). Elsewhere in his discussion of Calvin, he speaks of a "logical dependence of sanctification on justification" (1:271). Presumably, Horton intends in each of these statements to communicate a strictly logical or psychological priority of justification to sanctification. If, as appears to be the case, the intent is to rule out an ontological priority or a relationship of efficient causality between the two graces, a clarifying statement to that effect would have helped the reader.

Similarly, *Justification*, at points, speaks of justification, along with sanctification, as a "gift" or "benefit" of union with Christ (2:470–71). This way of putting things suggests a logical priority of union to justification. But elsewhere Horton says that "on the legal basis of the imputation of Christ's righteousness, believers can be united to Christ" (1:209), and "the *act* of justification is logically prior to union" (1:219). Here, union appears to be logically posterior to justification. The reader, then, is left less than clear with respect to how Horton understands union and the grace of justification to relate to one another.

Horton commendably offers a defense of the traditional reading of Paul's phrase "works of the law" as "something to be done in its entirety" (2:126; cf. 97–148). He constructively engages New Perspective readings of this phrase as denoting predominantly or merely "ethnic badges" (2:104). He does so, in part, by rightly questioning such proponents' insistence that Paul and his Jewish contemporaries regarded first-century Judaism to be a "religion of grace" (2:107).

For Horton, Paul understands "works of Torah" to denote "an all-encompassing covenant that one indwells" (1:128). As such, Paul is said to target individuals who misguidedly sought the blessings of the age to come "on the terms of the Sinai Covenant," not "according to the covenant of grace" (2:126). In reality, they, like other Jewish persons, were "transgressors" who found themselves in the "dangerous" position of being "in a covenant based on law" (2:137). In this respect, the Jew under Torah shares the plight of the gentile—each, in different respects, is under the covenant of works (2:136, 139). Therefore, "the only hope of Jews and gentiles alike is the Abrahamic/new covenant with Christ as Mediator" (2:136).

Horton's proffered explanation of Paul's phrase, "works of the law," is internally consistent and mounts a stiff challenge to recent, revisionary interpretation. His developed exposition of the phrase, however, rests upon an understanding of the Mosaic covenant that is controverted even among conservative Reformed federal theologians. Many Reformed interpreters regard Paul's opponents to have fundamentally distorted the Mosaic covenant, which was divinely promulgated as an evangelical

administration of the covenant of grace. The “works of the law,” on this reading, reflect a failure to grasp the proper nature of the Mosaic covenant. As Horton’s argument stands, readers are not adequately apprised of this intramural difference. Were a reader to demur from Horton’s understanding of the Mosaic covenant, he might not know that there is an alternative way to account for the posture of Paul’s opponents towards Torah.

In summary, Horton’s *Justification* is a robust articulation of the doctrine that successfully manages to situate the doctrine historically, articulate its theological importance, reflect upon its biblical foundations, and to engage firmly but charitably its contemporary critics. It will be a valuable resource to students of the doctrine for years to come. To the reader who is willing to persevere to the end of this complex and challenging survey, a rich reward is in store.

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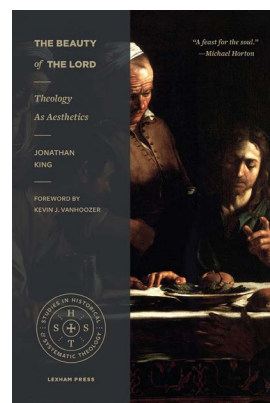
Jonathan King. *The Beauty of the Lord: Theology as Aesthetics*. Studies in Historic and Systematic Theology. Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2019. 400 pp. £21.99.

Eugene Peterson commented during his long years of ministry on the emptiness of great parts of the church. In one of his accounts of a pastoral call he describes a church in “soggy suburbia” where no one read books or discussed ideas. His people, whom he actually shepherded and loved, were characterized by a “stunted imagination” having abandoned the blazing glory of Christian vocation (Eugene Peterson, *Under the Unpredictable Plant* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1992], 156). In the face of such bankruptcy, plus the ugliness of our world, many evangelical Christians are turning to the *beautiful* for renewal. Though hardly altogether absent from theological discourse, Jonathan King argues that beauty has been seriously underplayed, particularly by Protestants.

The Beauty of the Lord contains many virtues. It is deeply learned. The author draws widely and deeply from all kinds of sources, as well as directly from Scripture. Although the writing is dense, his central thesis is easily stated. It is best to quote him directly: “My working hypothesis is twofold: first, beauty corresponds in some way to the attributes of God; second the theodrama of God’s eternal plan in creation, redemption, and consummation entails a consistent and fitting expression and outworking of this divine beauty” (p. 23). Because Jesus Christ is its perfect exhibition, King centers on the incarnation as the “critical lens for seeing God’s beauty” (p. 23).

For the author beauty is a divine attribute, mostly connected to the glory of God. Though a number of Old and New Testament words are translated into beauty, the one that most consistently is concomitant to beauty is *glory*. King argues that glory is both *ad extra*, expressing itself in God’s outward works, and *ad intra*, emanating from God’s own being.

But what is this glory specifically? King most often defines glory, and thus elucidates the nature of beauty, by *fittingness*. We encounter this theme particularly in the writings of Anselm of Canterbury. It is present as well in Thomas Aquinas, Jonathan Edwards, Hans Urs von Balthassar, Bavinck and Barth. More recently we meet the expression in Nicholas Wolterstorff’s book *Art in Action: Toward a Christian*



Aesthetic (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987), which King mentions, among his hundreds of allusions and citations.

King notes the original creation as one of beautiful design, with human beings, the crown of God's work, image-bearers with a royal status. Among the most elegant pages in this text are those describing the ways in which we, as image-bearers, conform to the divine original. Quoting Cornelius Van Til he affirms that we are God's "analogs" (p. 120). This has important ethical implications, such as the complementarity of man and woman and the love of neighbor. It will also have implications for God's judgments, which must in every way "fit" the crime they address.

With this in mind, when King describes the fall, it is mostly in terms of falling short. The image of God is marred. Man's being is perverted (p. 131). Quoting Calvin he asserts we have not lost the image, but we have lost our beauty and dignity (*Institutes*, 3.7.6). We are marred by sin, or "malformed by sin" and thus can no longer properly image God (p. 79). The fall is described in aesthetic terms. Following Jonathan Edwards, he says those who are eternally lost will see all of Christ except his "beauty and his amiableness" (p. 302).

When it comes to the incarnation of Jesus Christ, who is at the center of these thoughts, we are confronted with "beauty condescending" (ch. 4). Christ altogether fittingly becomes man and interacts with us, and then leads us to the place Adam failed to go. King rightly (in my view) avoids the temptation to say his true beauty, that is the glory of his divinity, is somehow veiled by his humanity. King defends the traditional view, bolstered by Chalcedon, that differentiates between his *states* (humiliation followed by exaltation) from his *nature* (always God, then adding human nature to the one Person). The glory of his divine nature was never obscured by his humanity, even at the cross.

King's understanding of beauty centers on "fittingness": harmony, design, shapes, etc. There is a good deal to affirm about these notions, though at times I had the impression that they owe more to Plato than to Scripture. King commends the divine plan for its "symmetrical design" (p. 88). If one means by that the plan evidences a successful beginning and a desired end, there is no quarrel (Romans 11:33–36). Yet a great deal that deserves to be called aesthetic is not so lofty. How did the Book of Judges make it into the canon? Or Psalm 88? It will not do in my judgment simply to fold them into a larger design or look for a silver lining. Indeed there is a strong and well-crafted aesthetic to them, but little beauty.

Missing here is Martin Luther's declaration that true theology is much less about glory than about the cross. I found no references to Luther at all. Nor were there any to Calvin Seerveld, the Reformed philosopher of aesthetics who has contributed so much to these kinds of discussions. Seerveld cautions against the trend to take refuge in "beauty" since although beauty does belong to God, there is so-called beauty which does not. He notes from the visual arts, for example, Mondrian's highly symmetrical primary colors and right-angles which exhibit plenty of harmony, design, etc., but no humanity. There is also skillful but superficial academic beauty (such as William-Adolphe Bouguereau) and there is seductive lustful beauty (such as Francisco Goya's *Maja*), neither of which communicate the realistic, morally pure, but earthy, sometimes messy, strategies of the Lord (see Calvin G. Seerveld, *Bearing Fresh Olive Leaves* (Carlisle: Piquant, 2000), 102–15; also *Rainbows for the Fallen World* (Toronto: Tuppence, 1980), pp. 116–25). Do we not tend to overload the term and lose its usefulness?

I sense here an imbalance in King's elevation of beauty. Moral uprightness is more, though not less, than a return to glorious symmetry. The costly forgiveness of sins acquired at the cross, which was a shameful, bloody, cruel torture, is far more, though not less, than a "due proportionality between

punishment and crime” (p. 231). And redemption is far more, though I suppose not less, than a “theodrama.” It is the stark, in-your-face, deadly serious reality of a God who so loved his people that he mixed it up with sinners, offering them healing and freedom from guilt. His incarnation, eternally human as well as divine, is not just fitting; it is mind-boggling.

Having said these things I do hope for the day when we do more justice to the aesthetic dimension of the Bible and of life itself. Jeremy Begbie has suggested that not only is the Bible our guide to aesthetics, but aesthetics can help us better understand the Bible. Can we practice that without falling into an excess? Perhaps we should simply separate the two words: beauty and aesthetics. Some of those believers described by Eugene Peterson are presently so reacting against the dryness and lack of imagination that they are in danger of over investing in beauty! Let’s put all these issues on the table and discuss them with iron sharpening iron. A word of thanks to Jonathan King for leading the way.

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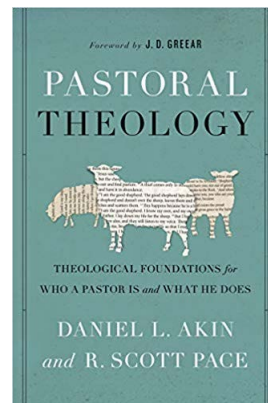
— ETHICS AND PASTORALIA —

Daniel L. Akin and R. Scott Pace. *Pastoral Theology: Theological Foundations for Who a Pastor Is and What He Does*. Nashville: B&H Academic, 2017. ix + 319 pp. £22.97/\$29.99.

“I believe God wants me to be a pastor,” says the young man in his twenties. After a few years of spiritual maturation, making disciples, teaching the Bible, and affirmation from his local church, the young man is certain God wants him to shepherd his flock. “I think God wants me to leave my career and pursue pastoral ministry,” says the man in his forties who has worked tirelessly to reach his current position. After much counsel from trusted friends, the desire to care for God’s people is too compelling to resist. These two men represent the stories of countless men who have contemplated God’s call to pastoral ministry.

Aspiring to the office of overseer is a noble task (1 Tim 3:1). But what exactly is the task, and who does this kind of work? These are the questions that Daniel L. Akin and R. Scott Pace set out to answer in their book, *Pastoral Theology: Theological Foundations for Who A Pastor Is and What He Does*.

Unfortunately, numerous men begin their journeys into pastoral ministry only to discover how difficult the task is. Before they know it, they’re discouraged and sadly, want to quit. While multiple factors contribute to the end of many pastors’ ministries, could it be that properly understanding the theological foundation for pastoral work would increase the likelihood of longevity in ministry? I think so. That is why I find this book incredibly helpful and timely. The authors suggest that the reason “our ministries are destined to collapse” is due to “a poor theological framework” (p. 3). Too many pastors build their framework for ministry on the latest form of pragmatism. Akin and Pace want to remind pastors that their task is fundamentally theological in nature. Consequently, “Ministry that is defined and driven by a theoretical, traditional, or practical basis is ultimately a ministry that is detached from sound theology” (p. 3). The authors’ goal is to give a biblically saturated and theologically robust



framework for pastoral ministry in a systematic fashion. The overarching theme of every chapter is that theology drives methodology. A glimpse into the content may be helpful.

Pastoral Theology offers a systematic theological framework for pastoral ministry by examining three major categories. Section one examines the Trinitarian Foundation for pastoral ministry. In this section, chapters 2–4, Akin and Pace “focus on a different member of the Trinity and the implications of each in establishing the pastoral office” (p. 13). The chapters follow the systematic categories as listed: Theological (ch. 2), Christological (ch. 3), Pneumatological (ch. 4). For example, when answering the question, what kind of men should serve as pastors, chapter 2 assesses the holiness of God the Father. The authors write, “When considering pastoral qualifications, it is necessary to identify their spiritual root. The prerequisites for the office are not to be understood primarily as the ability or aptitude needed to perform certain ministerial tasks. First and foremost, the required characteristics establish the pastor as a representative of the One whom he ultimately serves and to whom he must give an account (Heb 13:17)” (p. 19). Akin and Pace are not, of course, advocating for sinless pastors. Only Christ meets that standard. They argue that the term “above reproach” (1 Tim 3:2; Tit 1:6–7) “does not speak of moral perfection” (p. 27). So what does reflecting the character of God look like in the life of a pastor? It means that “he is devoted to the pursuit of holiness and continues to progress in his sanctification” (p. 27). “This includes demonstrating honesty about his own shortcomings and taking responsibility for his personal and ministerial faults” (p. 27).

The pattern of establishing a theological framework, followed by implications derived from that theology, is a useful tool for the reader. Disciplining the mind to first think theologically, then methodologically, is much needed today given the prevalence of pragmatic, “what works” approaches to ministry. Chapters 3 and 4 follow suit by exploring the nature and work of Jesus and the Holy Spirit, and the implications that follow for pastoral ministry.

Section two explores doctrinal formulation, which gives helpful handles for pastoral ministry. Akin and Pace begin this section with a valuable study of anthropology in chapter 5. The reason this is necessary, they argue, is because a “deep understanding of [God’s] grace will not only facilitate our own spiritual growth, it will also enhance our theological perspective of humanity and enable us to view people accurately and minister to them accordingly” (p. 120). This section serves pastors well by putting ministry among people in proper perspective. Systems, structures, and trellises certainly have a place in the discussion about serving people. Yet, understanding the condition of the human heart is foundational to pastoral ministry.

Chapter 6 sets forth a biblical ecclesiology. Pastors have the unique responsibility of shepherding the church that Jesus died for. Akin and Pace do a superb job of examining the metaphors in Scripture used to describe the church, such as the body of Christ, the bride of Christ, and the building of Christ. What is most helpful about this section is how they explain the pastor’s specific work in relation to each metaphor. For example, pastors are to edify the body, sanctify the bride, and solidify the building, all through loving service and faithful teaching (p. 170).

Section two ends with an important charge to pastors in chapter 7. By understanding the mission of the church, pastors must always keep the mission in the forefront of their flock’s minds, both by personal action and verbal affirmation.

Section three explains the practical facilitation of pastoral ministry. Chapter 8 focuses on the role of the pastor as undershepherd; that is, as one who learns how to care for the sheep by imitating Christ’s example as the Chief Shepherd. “The Lord’s invitation to follow our Shepherd and fellowship with our

King ... is an invitation to follow his example, be conformed to his likeness, and become a Shepherd” (p. 217). The authors follow this chapter by laying down a theological foundation for preaching in chapter 9. Finally, the book concludes with chapter 10 which explains how pastors may need to redefine their priorities, so that leading both family and church are not at odds with each other but are managed well to the glory of God.

I appreciate the attempt of Akin and Pace to follow a systematic approach in defining the who and the what of pastoral ministry. I would contend that *Pastoral Theology* is a must read for any pastor. The arguments are rooted in thorough exegesis and successfully establish the book’s thesis, that a right theology that leads to a right practice. That said, the book does feel a bit structurally rigid at times and, at certain points, the authors’ arguments feel boxed. This does not result in bad exegesis, however. Quite the opposite. Nevertheless, because of the desire to adhere to a systematic approach, there are moments when the argument feels a bit clunky.

Yet, looking at the structure from a positive angle, in each chapter the reader knows what to expect. A theological premise or aim for each chapter is clearly set forth. The premise is then followed by sound biblical theology regarding the particular subject. What is most helpful is how Akin and Pace make sure to conclude each chapter with pastoral principles derived from their theological analysis. This is gold.

The overwhelming strength of the book lies in the commitment of the authors to let theology drive methodology. For this reason, pastors, or soon to be pastors, would be wise to seek counsel from Akin and Pace.

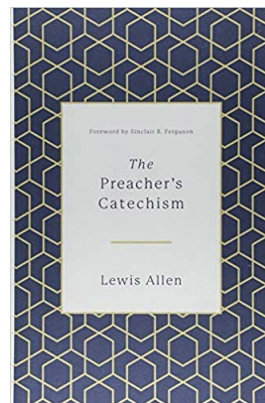
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Lewis Allen. *The Preacher’s Catechism*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2018. 216 pp. £16.99/\$22.99.

Lewis Allen is pastor of a church plant in Huddersfield, West Yorkshire, England. He has previous pastoral experience in London. This book is written by a preacher for preachers. Throughout the volume Allen exemplifies an awareness of pastoral challenges—spiritual, existential, and relational—that evidences years of personal experience.

The book sets out to provide a theological orientation for the preacher’s ministry. The familiar and historic tool of catechesis is employed to engage both the heart and the mind. Working from the foundation of the Westminster Shorter Catechism, Allen appropriates the catechism for application to the preacher. Instead of 107 questions, there are 43; each being tweaked and tailored to the specific ministry of pulpit proclamation. Though catechisms have had a number of functions through the ages, especially pneumatic, these questions and answers are aimed at character formation as much as anything else. Reading the short chapters—typically 4–5 pages—the questions and answers serve as a springboard into deeper, more probing reflection on every day (or every week) issues.

Each chapter begins with a heading, followed by a question and its answer, followed by a related passage of Scripture. The exposition that follows situates each question in the pastor’s experience,



typically relating the truth to a problem, thereby establishing a tension that requires resolution. Theological truth then serves as the remedy to the issue, as doctrine is applied to the pastoral crisis.

The probing questions asked of the reader are among the most helpful features of the book. They address the preacher head on, engaging issues of motivation, secret and public sins, discouragements, failure, and frailty. More than anything, they keep asking the preacher where his assurance lies. The central theme of the book is that God ought to be the focus of our preaching ministries; we serve him and we proclaim him, to the exclusion of all self-glory and at the expense of self-comfort. Allen reminds readers, “You are not preaching for your kingdom” (p. 200). He works to break the pastor of sinful tendencies like covetousness: “Unbelief tells us that God has withheld the good and sent the bad, and our hearts rebel in covetous desires.... If we don’t have what we want, that is for our good” (p. 159).

Sprinkled throughout the volume are rich quotations from key theologians and pastors of old, most notably the Reformers and the Puritans. Allen demonstrates a great breadth of reading, especially across the 17th century pastoral literature, supplying primary source readings for the benefit of a modern audience. Situated in the development of his theological arguments, these quotations alone are worth the price of the volume, as they serve as a great encouragement to pastoral piety from brothers who served before us.

The volume will read as familiar to many. The themes treated are akin to John Piper’s *Brothers, We Are Not Professional: A Plea to Pastors for Radical Ministry* (Nashville: B&H, 2013) and Jared C. Wilson’s *The Pastor’s Justification: Applying the Work of Christ to Your Life and Ministry* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2013). Nevertheless, while Allen’s insights aren’t novel, they are necessary. The uniqueness of this volume is that it is structured to align with the framework of the Westminster Shorter Catechism. This provides a more deliberate theological agenda to the volume, addressing central theological truths (e.g., God, Sin, Christ, etc.), moral challenges from the Decalogue, and the goodness and relevance of the sacraments to the preaching ministry.

At some points readers may find the application of the catechism to preaching slightly contrived, particularly in the section on the Decalogue. Consider chapter 22 (“Love’s Choice”):

Q: What does the first commandment teach us?

A: You shall preach as a love expression to the Lord your God), but never in a way that proves theologically irresponsible or practically unwarranted. (p. 119)

While the initial links seem more tenuous, in fact the exposition in the chapter that follows provides ample justification.

If there is a weakness to the volume, it is that the application feels similar after a while. Is your preaching ministry about you or about God? But this repetition, like an expositional sermon series, is because there is a central theme to the book. The author wants God to be the focus of the preacher’s ministry, and he works hard to keep the theme fresh. The repetition of application is perhaps necessary, as the problem being addressed is so real and prevalent. The aforementioned inclusion of Puritan insights, as well as the author’s own practical advice, break the monotony.

In many pastoral contexts, preachers can feel alone in their work. They lack people who will push them, identify sinful blind-spots, and encourage them when they’re disheartened. This volume will serve as a great aid to preachers in these contexts (and in contexts where preachers aren’t alone!), calling them back to vital theological truth that will anchor them in the chaos of their experience. I commend this book as a good example of rich reformed theology applied to the preacher’s ministry. It will serve

theological college students preparing for ministry with a good foundation, but more so it will refresh seasoned pastors by reorienting them to the theological focus of their work. It should be read slowly (a chapter a day), reflectively, and prayerfully.

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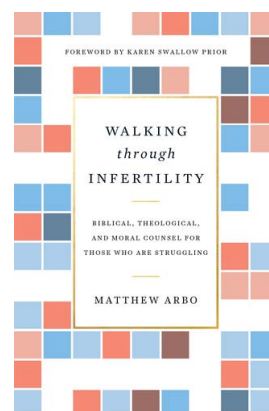
Matthew Arbo. *Walking through Infertility: Biblical, Theological, and Moral Counsel for Those Who Are Struggling*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2018. 116 pp. £12.68/\$15.99.

The aim of Matthew Arbo's *Walking through Infertility* is to address biblical, theological and moral questions surrounding infertility in order to encourage the church generally, and especially couples experiencing infertility. An interview at the end of the book hints that the author, a professor of theological studies, may have been prompted to write in response to family members' experience of infertility. It consciously simplifies the content in order to provide an easily understood message: that God cares about those suffering from infertility, but provides a different way for them to be a "family." In this way they are fully able to participate in the life of the church and the mission of God.

Chapter 1 begins by considering the "propagation mandate" of Genesis 1:28. There is reassurance given to couples that success in conceiving children is not required for obedience to God. In Arbo's words, "Couples who are open to having children and who do what they can to conceive but who have not (yet) succeeded in conceiving are not violating God's command" (p. 24). This is then followed by a brief review of biblical infertility narratives (e.g., Abraham and Sarah, Zechariah and Elizabeth) in which God's covenant faithfulness is emphasized. While children are a gift from God, we are not all promised this particular gift, although we cannot always know why it is withheld.

Chapter 2 expounds the nature of Christian Discipleship, recalling the work of Dietrich Bonhoeffer: "Discipleship consists in faith *and* obedience" (p. 46). This is the way to fulfillment as a follower of Christ, for the childless as well as others. Although it is not sinful to continue to pray for a child, we "must be prepared to repent of desires held too firmly or which cause us either to ignore or reject Jesus's purposes for us" (p. 57). With this reorientation of our affections, contentment and perseverance can prevail, whatever our circumstances. The place of the church in providing comfort, support and relationships is outlined in chapter 3. We meet together as disciples, working together as the body on Christ, where we each belong and have a role.

Chapter 4 provides an ethical critique of some common artificial reproductive technologies (ART)—Intrauterine insemination (IUI), in vitro fertilization (IVF), and embryo adoption and surrogacy, with a brief mention of genetic engineering. Essentially, all ARTs are rejected as unethical, on the grounds that they replace the intimate act of marital intercourse, the natural means of begetting, with an instrumental process controlled by others. However, guidelines are also given for those who choose to go ahead with ART, in order to limit ethical problems. The book ends with an interview with a real-life interview with a couple who discuss their own challenges in experiencing infertility.



Arbo's book is easy to read, with a recurring story of a husband and wife experiencing childlessness woven through the text, helping others understand the road that may be travelled in the quest for a child. The passages on discipleship are the strongest, with multiple references to the scriptural foundations of the author's arguments. However, I was surprised that other parts of the book, which assume a good grasp of the Biblical narrative, lack the scriptural references needed to support the statements made. I suspect that most Christian readers would much prefer to have the scriptural references provided in order to work through a biblical position on ART.

The coverage of ART procedures is brief and, in part, inaccurate. Techniques often recommended for Christian couples, namely gamete intra-fallopian tube transfer (GIFT) and zygote intra-fallopian tube transfer (ZIST) were not mentioned at all. Some procedures were dismissed in anticipation of unethical practices that may occur in the future. I was concerned that genetic engineering was briefly mentioned without a warning of the ethical issues involved in genetic examination of embryos. Costs quoted and adoption procedures refer to an American medical system.

In summary, while I found this book largely encouraging, I am not sure to whom I would recommend it. I can understand why some people would desire a simple explanation of ART, without the confusing acronyms and scientific terms. However, it is inescapably a complex business and I believe we need all the facts to make a valid ethical judgement about whether or not it is ethical for Christians to undergo ART. I say this without arguing for or against the practice. However, I would think that students of theology or a couple seriously considering ART would need more information and, in particular, more scriptural references, to decide what is the correct road to take. This is a challenge for pastors and their congregations. Thankfully, other Christian books are readily available which contain this information. However, the particular strength of Arbo's book is that he encourages us to consider the role of the disciple as we live out God's purposes in our lives.

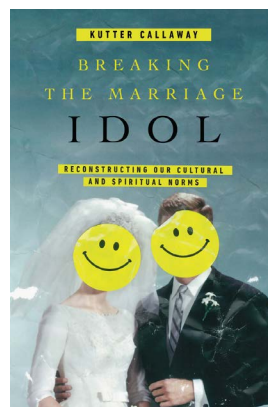
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Kutter Callaway. *Breaking the Marriage Idol: Reconstructing our Cultural and Spiritual Norms*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2018. 268 pp. £13.79/\$18.00.

Iconoclast: a person who attacks cherished beliefs or institutions. Kutter Callaway, professor of theology at Fuller Seminary, fits the definition of an iconoclast. Why? Because he has no qualms about aiming blows at one of the oldest and most established institutions found among human civilizations, marriage.

Now to be clear, Callaway is not against marriage; he is happily married. Nor is he saying that marriage does not benefit society and that people ought not to pursue marriage. In fact, he believes that those who are called to marriage ought to pursue marriage. Rather, the purpose of *Breaking the Marriage Idol* is to challenge Christians to rethink the normalcy of marriage for the Christian community.



Callaway is concerned that too many in evangelical circles have become hyper focused on the normalcy of marriage. His argument is that most churches have an unspoken conviction that every Christian falls into one of two categories: “married” or “not-yet-married.” This leaves people who do not neatly fit into these categories, particularly singles and celibate gay Christians, as outsiders to church culture.

Callaway spends the first few chapters analyzing the “state of the union” of evangelical churches in regard to this problem of “marriage normalcy.” Interestingly, he argues that rather than taking their cues from Scripture’s teaching on sexuality and marriage, many churches have adopted the “marriage normalcy” view and, by association, definitions of marriage and manhood and womanhood that are not drawn from Scripture but from the culture. Showing his skills as a cultural commentator, he notices an intriguing pattern: that a culture of Disney princesses, serial sexual monogamous relationships leading to relational skepticism (as paraded in the lyrics of Taylor Swift), and the “multiple intimate relationship for seeking true love” paradigm (broadcasted on *The Bachelor* and *The Bachelorette*) has leaked into the church and informed its practices of “true love waits” seminars, “kissing dating goodbye” and “women captivating men who are wild at heart.”

Callaway believes that the church has adopted a view of romantic relationships which sees sexual intimacy within marriage as the pinnacle of a fulfilled life. Much Christian literature funneled towards teens contains a baptized version of a Disney fairytale as it promises your “true soulmate” who will complete you and uses sex to sell abstinence: “if you are abstinent now, you will have amazing sex when you are married” (p. 66). Those who are putting off dating relationships as teenagers are still assuming that marriage is in their future. In his own words, “we simply cannot escape the fact that when cast in terms of the princess paradigm, singleness is a state of radical incompleteness, romantic love is a self-justifying good, and marriage is an end in itself” (p. 72).

Callaway then presents an alternative proposal: a radical reformation of church culture in which both singleness and marriage are valued as equally legitimate options for Christians. He argues from Scriptures such as Genesis 1–2 and 1 Corinthians 7 that marriage is never put forward as the normative state for men and women but serves as an assumed cultural practice.

This then enables Callaway and contributor Joshua Beckett (who is the author of chapter 6, “Desire in Singleness”) to advocate for an increasingly popular view known as “spiritual friendship.” Building on the work of Wesley Hill (e.g., *Spiritual Friendship: Finding Love in the Church as a Celibate Gay Christian* [Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2015]), this view not only allows for gay Christians to accept their orientation but also to commit to lifestyles of celibacy lived out within the context of the church. This can lead to gay celibate communities or even covenanted celibate partnerships between gay Christians and blessed by the church. This fits into Callaway’s proposal because the “spiritual friendship” ethos he calls churches to adopt sees both singles and married couples deepening their understanding of community through intentional relationships based on a redefinition of human sexuality. Sexuality is greater than physical expression but encompasses all the ways men and women dwell in relation to one another. “We would do well to reclaim a view of human sexuality that understands something as seemingly mundane as drinking coffee with a friend as a profoundly sexual act” (p. 113).

There are many portions of this book where I would question the author’s reasoning and conclusions. For example, he challenges the normalcy of marriage by arguing that Genesis never says that Adam and Eve were married because it uses the Hebrew words אִישׁ (man) and אִשָּׁה (woman), rather than more explicit terms for ‘husband’ and ‘wife’ (pp. 114–15). Yet Genesis consistently uses אִישׁ and אִשָּׁה

for husband and wife throughout its chapters (Gen 12:18, 16:3; 20:7, 26:8–9; 29:32; 30:15). Callaway's exegetical minimalism can also come back to bite him, for he argues that Genesis 1–3 is not talking about marriage but about human beings being created for relationships within a community. But the same text which (supposedly) does not address marriage also lacks a larger community, since there was only one man and one woman in the garden.

While I would agree that there needs to be reform in how church culture can sometimes exclude those who are unmarried, I cannot follow all of Callaway's conclusions concerning marriage and singleness. Marriage and covenanted partnerships in Scripture are exclusive to monogamous, opposite-sex relationships, and there is a unique and different calling that God has given to those who are married and to those who remain single. Marriage is intrinsic to the covenant which God made with humanity, where marriage and childrearing are tied to humanity's goal of fulfilling the cultural mandate within the order of the first creation. It is true that the new covenant begins a transition from physical ties to spiritual ties for those who are part of the kingdom of God, whereby the eunuch can become the spiritual father of a nation (see Isa 56:4–5; Acts 8:26–38). Nevertheless, one worries that Callaway is compressing the already and not-yet elements of the kingdom of God in order to fit his egalitarian paradigm. While there will be no marriage in the eschaton (Matt 22:30), the cultural mandate which entails marriage and procreation as a means of spreading God's glory throughout the earth remains until Christ returns.

Callaway's work is representative of a larger movement within evangelicalism which is trying to redefine marriage, relationships, and sexuality. This movement is gaining momentum and voicing its dissidence against others within the evangelical tradition. *Breaking the Marriage Idol* is particularly noteworthy because it seeks to provide a cohesive exegetical argument for the "spiritual friendship" proposal which is presenting a compelling option to Christians who find themselves experiencing same-sex attraction or who, for other reasons, believe themselves to be called to a life of celibate singleness.

This is a conversation which is only beginning in an age where gender norms and expectations are consistently being reevaluated and questioned. What is at stake is not only the nature and purpose of marriage and sexuality but how we represent and respond to the gospel message. For the gospel is directly tied to how we live as faithful Christians and how we represent the mystery of Christ's love for his bride, the Church, in our marriages and friendships.

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J. de Waal Dryden. *A Hermeneutic of Wisdom: Recovering the Formative Agency of Scripture*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2018. xxiii + 292 pp. £19.99/\$29.99.

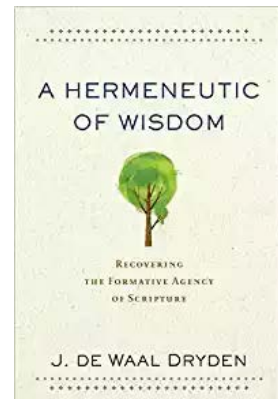
“The central thesis of this book,” writes J. de Waal Dryden, “is at once commonsensical and controversial: the Bible is a wisdom text” (p. xvi). He believes we should take seriously the intentionality of the text, which he says is both discoverable and clear: the Bible was written to shape the people of God, “to cultivate certain devotions, beliefs, desires, and actions—to prize some things and despise others” (p. xiv). Nevertheless, while this was “the majority opinion of the church throughout its history and was uncontroversial in all ages prior to the modern era,” what dominates biblical studies today are critical methodologies that “usually deconstruct this wisdom intentionality” (p. xv)—or, it seems, are simply incapable of seeing it due to various presuppositions.

Dryden, however, wants to reinstate reading the Bible in a certain way which he believes will not only recover the meaning that the text was written to convey, but is theologically responsible as a way of approaching God’s word. He presents a method of reading, with examples of how this method changes the way we might read various New Testament texts, that would show believers how to use Scripture as it is meant to be used—as a formative text for character and community.

For this reason, Dryden (more or less) unapologetically claims that areas generally regarded as part of moral psychology, practical theology and spiritual formation should rightly be included in New Testament studies. He is quite aware that this would be regarded as “unsanctioned infiltrations,” but “their exclusion is a historically conditioned employment of certain beliefs foundational to modernist understandings of anthropology and epistemology, for which I can salvage only a mild allegiance” (pp. xxii–xxiii). One is tempted to applaud. Modern disciplinary boundaries may be useful for organizing payrolls, but they are hardly arbiters of reality, after all.

As a lecturer in ethics, I also like the fact that Dryden similarly rejects a typically modernist understanding of ethics, “moral casuistry within an idealist deontological (Kantian) framework” (p. xxi). If Scripture is written with a formational purpose, then ethics rightly understood becomes not just the study of moral responsibilities, but moral formation—the task of becoming a moral person or (if we might put it more biblically) a godly person. Moral agency and moral formation, he contends, “only make sense in the context of how that agency is directed toward God as the giver of all things and whose glory is the proper *telos* of all human loves and actions” (p. xxiii). In this way, he rejects the distinction between “moral formation” and “spiritual formation,” where they are seen as two different things “because one deals with external moral action and the other deals with internal spiritual experiences” (p. xxiii, n. 17). I am no fan of the phrase “spiritual formation,” and the attempt to distinguish it from moral formation, which is ubiquitous in the literature on spiritual formation, is one of the reasons I don’t like it. Dryden, however, although he keeps the phrase, rightly uses a far more biblical concept to inhabit it.

The book has two distinct sections. Dryden begins with what he calls “tilling the soil”—looking at questions of epistemology and the foundational philosophical assumptions that drive how we read texts. It is all too easy to assume that hermeneutics, how we read, is independent of what we believe about how we know and who we are. These brief chapters contain extremely useful overviews of our philosophical heritage in the Western world, which lie behind both modernist thinking and the reactions to it in postmodernist philosophy. Dryden shows how these two recent moods have different ideas of



how a reader relates to a text—distinctly from it, as the dispassionate objective observer, or as active in the creation of meaning, inevitably situated and partial. Yet both still see the text as the material to be put in the hands of the reader who masters it in one way or the other. Both fail to realize that Scripture, God’s word, is rightly approached in humility and trust.

There is much here that I value, and indeed it reminds me strongly of what the late Mike Ovey built into his master’s module on Epistemology and Hermeneutics, which became compulsory for all postgraduate students at Oak Hill Theological College (Mike died shortly after teaching its first iteration). One of the strongest recommendations I could give this book is that Mike would have really appreciated it—although he would probably have added that the first section could have done with some Martin Buber and his I-thou/I-it distinction.

Dryden’s thesis is that all Scripture is what he broadly terms *wisdom*, that it not only has practical applications, but was written for the purpose of teaching the very practical skill of living wisely. He has captured in a real and worked through sense the truth that theology is never abstract; it is never purely theoretical. God tells us things for a reason, and that reason is not just that we might know more, but that we should become different people, his people. This approach overcomes what Dryden sees as a number of false dichotomies built into many contemporary ways of approaching the Bible. One is the dichotomy between theology and application. In Christian thought, there is no is/ought divide, no naturalistic fallacy. What God *is*—his compassionate, loving, merciful, just character—flows through creation and all he has done in it. His being moulds both who we are and who will become and therefore what is right in our thinking and acting. Wisdom, Dryden says, “operates at the intersection of being and doing”—and so makes sense of how the Bible moves between things that we place in separate categories.

Dryden works his thesis through in his second part, “Planting the Seeds.” Here he has chapters on Gospels and Epistles, with several case-studies from different books in each genre. He gives enough detail to demonstrate that the “wisdom hermeneutic” does overcome various particular exegetical difficulties that have troubled scholars. At the same time, he also suggests fruitful ways forward for taking this approach further.

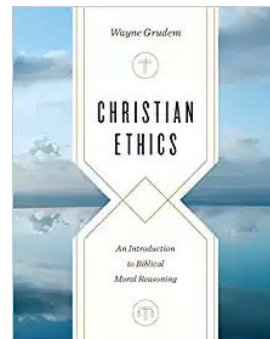
Dryden’s approach is not only useful for biblical studies but also as a way into Christian ethics. Indeed, it could potentially speak into the discussion about what we are doing in theological education as well; we need neither Athens nor Berlin, but a holistic approach to wisdom.

This is an introductory book in many ways, not a comprehensive analysis of hermeneutical approaches (even his own), nor is it a commentary on the Bible texts considered. (Indeed, as Dryden points out, he has not tried to tackle Old Testament texts through this lens at all.) More work needs to be done, therefore, to see how Dryden’s approach bears fruit in other texts, or further in the texts he considers. However, at this stage his approach is very attractive in the way it brings cohesion and wholeness to Scripture understood as God’s saving word.

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Wayne Grudem. *Christian Ethics: An Introduction to Biblical Moral Reasoning*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2018. 1296 pp. £45.80/\$59.99.

This mammoth (4 lb.!) volume applies the methodology of Grudem’s popular *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994) to the discipline of Christian ethics. In his own words, the book offers a comprehensive answer to the question, “What does the whole Bible teach us about which acts, attitudes, and personal character traits receive God’s approval, and which do not?” (p. 37). Fans of the author’s *Systematic Theology* will feel entirely at home with the highly structured treatments, the clear and concise prose, and the continual quoting of Scripture to establish conclusions.



Part 1 introduces the general topic of Christian ethics, explaining why and how Christians ought to study ethics, and establishing some foundational principles: the moral character of God as the “ultimate basis for ethics,” the Bible as the “source of ethical standards,” the glory of God as the “goal of ethics,” and the life-changing consequences of obedience or disobedience toward God. Chapter 6 addresses the question of how to discern God’s will regarding our decisions, including an appendix on Garry Friesen’s influential book, *Decision Making and the Will of God* (Colorado Springs: Multnomah, 2004). Chapter 7 tackles the issue of “moral dilemmas,” arguing that Christians never have to choose “the lesser sin” (Grudem takes as his main foil the “graded absolutism” of Norman Geisler).

Chapter 8 discusses the important (and among evangelicals, much debated) question of what role the Old Testament should play in Christian ethics. Here is Grudem’s answer summarized: The Mosaic Covenant has been terminated by the death of Christ and therefore none of its laws are binding on Christians, at least not in any direct way. The material from Genesis 1 to Exodus 19, however, “predates the Mosaic covenant and therefore teaches ethical principles for all time” (p. 236). Furthermore, most of the Ten Commandments are reaffirmed in the New Testament and are therefore binding on Christians. The rest of the Old Testament can be understood as “containing God’s wisdom for human conduct” (p. 253). This wisdom can be extracted by applying various principles that take into account the major discontinuities between the Old and New Covenants.

In the remaining 34 chapters, Grudem gives his answers to the prominent ethical questions facing Christians today. On most issues he takes a clear position, expressing confidence that Scripture speaks unambiguously on the question. On other issues, where Scripture does not speak directly to the matter and there’s room for reasonable disagreement among Christians committed to the inspiration and authority of the Bible, Grudem expresses his best judgment, explaining his reasoning, and leaves it there. Often this is couched as the “wisest” position, all things considered, but lacking the force of divine command.

Parts 2 through 7 are structured in light of the Ten Commandments, which Grudem takes (with one exception) to express universal moral laws. Part 2 (“Protecting God’s Honor”) covers the first four commandments along with the ninth. (Grudem’s rationale for this relocation is twofold: the topic of lying is closely related to the topic of purity of speech, discussed in connection with the third commandment, and it is preferable to address the ethics of truth-telling early on because “it raises issues that are relevant for many other topics that follow” [p. 310].) Topics treated in this part include idolatry (in its many forms), use of images (and artistry more broadly), use of language (including discussions of obscenity,

vows, and curses), truth-telling, and the Lord's Day (Grudem contends that Sabbath observance expired with the Mosaic Covenant, but it's still wise to set aside one day a week for rest and corporate worship).

Reformed readers may be disappointed to find no acknowledgement that the second commandment presupposes a Regulative Principle of Worship, which has weighty ethical implications. The same readers will likely consider Grudem's arguments against Sabbath observance to be rather superficial; for example, he doesn't reckon with the force of the argument from creation ordinance (Gen 2:3; Exod 20:11) or take note of the fact that Sabbath observance *preceded* the giving of the Ten Commandments. (Exodus 16 surely counts as material from Genesis 1 to Exodus 19!)

Part 3 ("Protecting Human Authority") discusses parental authority, the education of children, equality and leadership in marriage, civil government, and other authorities in human relationships and institutions, all under the rubric of the fifth commandment. Part 4 ("Protecting Human Life") applies the sixth commandment to various issues: capital punishment, just war, self-defense (including the question of gun ownership), abortion, euthanasia, suicide, aging and death, racial discrimination, physical health, and the use of alcohol and drugs. Part 5 ("Protecting Marriage") takes the seventh commandment as a launchpad for discussions of marriage and singleness, birth control, infertility treatments, adoption, pornography, divorce and remarriage, homosexuality, and transgenderism. Those who have followed Grudem's writings over the course of his career can safely predict the positions he defends on all of the above issues. Those who have been critical of his political conservatism in the past may be surprised at how carefully he qualifies and nuances his conclusions at points. Where moral conclusions depend partly on *factual* questions, such as the operation of birth-control methods, Grudem typically provides ample documentation to back up his claims. Indeed, the extensive footnotes may be one of the most useful features of the book.

Part 6 ("Protecting Property") addresses a wide range of issues inspired by the eighth commandment: property rights, work and rest, poverty and wealth, financial stewardship, borrowing and lending, business ethics, and environmental stewardship. Readers familiar with Grudem's previous works on politics and economics will not be surprised at the thoroughness of his treatments. The attention given to these topics undoubtedly distinguishes *Christian Ethics* from other evangelical ethics textbooks. One might wonder, however, whether devoting over a fifth of the book to such matters is excessive. Still, if much of the suffering in the world is due to poverty and a failure to responsibly develop the resources God has made available to us, these are ethical issues that Christians ought to be encouraged to reflect upon more carefully.

Part 7 ("Protecting Purity of Heart") closes the book with a single chapter applying the tenth commandment to issues of coveting and contentment. An appendix reproduces the author's lengthy critical review of William J. Webb's *Slaves, Women & Homosexuals* (originally published in *JETS*).

Grudem's overall approach may be fairly summarized as "applied biblicism." *Christian Ethics*, like his earlier *Systematic Theology*, "seeks to explain 'what the whole Bible teaches' about various specific topics" (p. 24). In his own words, the book attempts, "for each ethical topic, to collect and synthesize the teaching of all the relevant Bible passages about that topic and then to apply that teaching wisely to various life situations" (p. 37). Grudem believes that natural law arguments have some value (p. 96), but his conviction is that ethics "should be explicitly based on the teachings of Scripture" (p. 24). This unadorned biblicist approach has both pros and cons. Positively, it reinforces a high (biblical!) view of Scripture and ensures that the arguments are tightly tethered to the Protestant principles of *Sola Scriptura* and *Tota Scriptura*. Rather than relying—as some Christian ethicists have done—on

a relatively small set of very general biblical teachings, Grudem is committed to mining “the whole counsel of God” for answers.

The downside is that Grudem’s use of Scripture occasionally operates at quite a surface level, without exploring and drawing upon the deeper structures of the biblical canon and the organic relationship between the various biblical covenants. For example, almost no use is made of the notion of *creation ordinances*, which has been a prominent feature of the Reformed theological tradition to which Grudem is deeply indebted. The nomenclature of “creation ordinances” may be dispensable, but the reality of such creational norms is foundational to biblical ethics.

Since Grudem acknowledges the influence of John Frame on his approach to ethics, readers who have benefited from Frame’s *Doctrine of the Christian Life* may be interested to hear how the two books compare. On specific questions, Frame and Grudem are largely in agreement. (The most obvious disagreement concerns the ethics of truth-telling; Grudem argues at length, contra Frame, that lying is *never* morally justifiable.) However, whereas Frame spends considerable time on methodological considerations, surveying major non-Christian approaches to ethics and developing at length a triperspectival biblical model for ethical decision-making, Grudem wastes little time in getting to specific moral issues, which he then treats in great detail. Consequently, Grudem’s book will serve more like a reference work than a user guide. Frame will teach you how to fish and then take you fishing; Grudem will invite you to watch him prepare an extensive seafood buffet.

The amount of autobiographical material in the book may surprise some readers. In many of the chapters Grudem shares how he has wrestled with and applied the principles in his own life, family, and ministry. Indeed, the book is peppered with personal anecdotes. I confess I found this slightly off-putting at first, but by the end of the book I came to see the value of it. It gives the material a warmth and practicality it might otherwise lack. Although this was not his intention, the author’s piety and wisdom frequently shine through the printed words.

One final observation. While reading *Christian Ethics* it struck me forcefully at times that it is a very *American* book. Consider some of the topics that receive attention: watching movies and acting in plays; shopping on Sundays; schooling choices; the role of government in protecting liberties; patriotism; self-defense and gun ownership; cosmetic surgery; birth control options and fertility treatments; living wills; transgenderism; vacations and retirement; free-market economics; financial investment; environmentalism and the debate over climate change. I do not mention this as a criticism of the book. On the contrary: these are all live issues in our (Western, American) society, and Christians need to think responsibly about how God’s Word should inform our judgments about them. It’s a virtue of Grudem’s book that he tackles such topics.

At the same time, however, it’s a convicting reminder of how privileged we are in the West and how different many of our priorities are compared with believers in other parts of the world. What a luxury to have to think through the ethics of school choices and fertility treatments! These are truly “first world problems.” It leads me to wonder: What would a *Christian Ethics* for believers in the Global South look like? And who will write it?

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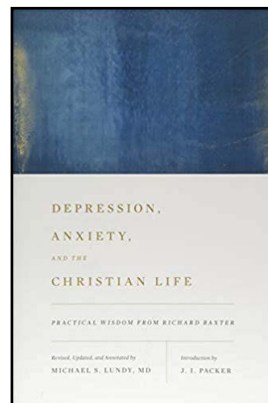
Michael S. Lundy and J. I. Packer. *Depression, Anxiety, and the Christian Life: Practical Wisdom from Richard Baxter*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2018. 194 pp. £11.48/\$14.99.

The heart of this book consists of two treatises on depression written in the seventeenth century by the English Puritan pastor, Richard Baxter (1615–1691). These works from Baxter have been revised, updated and annotated by a twenty-first century physician-psychiatrist, Michael Lundy. Which raises a question: why? Why would a contemporary mental health expert want to publicize advice that pre-dates modern psychiatry and is ignorant of the research findings and treatments that are available today? Lundy's interest is not merely historical; he believes that Baxter's counsel is apt and profitable for the significant number who continue to struggle with the awful affliction of depression and/or anxiety.

Part 1 of the book introduces the reader to Richard Baxter. First, another Baxter admirer, the pastor-theologian J. I. Packer, offers a succinct overview of the nature of Puritanism, Baxter's life, and the foci of Baxter's ministry. Packer highlights that Baxter, like other Puritans, affirmed that fruitful Christian living begins in the mind with thoughtful consideration and engagement with God's truth, and that all of life was to be lived before God and with eyes fixed on eternal realities. For Packer, Baxter's willingness to bring the message of God's grace and love in Christ to those experiencing depression is something that today's pastors could well adopt.

After Packer's chapter, Lundy provides a longer introduction that focuses more directly upon Baxter's methodology in addressing depression as well as offering his own thoughtful reflections on how sin, human responsibility, and suffering should be understood in relation to mental illness. Although the modern-day lifestyle differs markedly from that of the seventeenth century, the nature of psychiatric disorders remains unchanged, and Lundy believes that Baxter offers advice that has stood the test of time. From his medical background, he recognizes the scientific inadequacies that surface in Baxter's work (such as the humoral theory of medicine). But he also appreciates that "recent" does not imply "best," and laments the "unhelpful and often unwarranted segregation of body and soul, medical and pastoral, theological and psychological" (p. 36) that permeates much of the mental health field. He appreciates Baxter's holistic theological anthropology which acknowledges the psychosomatic (soul and body) unity of each individual and the various social and cultural forces that influence behavior. What Lundy finds is a pastor from an earlier generation who draws deeply upon biblically-informed Christian theology and adaptations of Stoic moral philosophy. Baxter uses these insights to produce a forerunner to modern day cognitive-behavior therapy (CBT), while also ensuring "that his readers understand that their problems have somatic as well as emotional and spiritual dimensions" (p. 53).

And this is indeed what emerges in the two Baxter treatises that comprise Part 2 of this work. "Advice to Depressed and Anxious Christians" is a section from his massive pastoral manual, *A Christian Directory*. The thirty-five possible signs that are listed reveal Baxter's familiarity with the illness and his acute powers of observation. Symptoms of anxiety, psychosis and obsessive-compulsive disorder are found in the list, as are various impairments in thought, mood, behavior and associated spiritual consequences. Then, after a few brief comments on the causes of melancholy (the seventeenth century term for "depression"), Baxter sets forth his advice in twenty-one directions. Many of these, along the lines of CBT, seek to adjust unhelpful thought patterns and to encourage behaviors that Baxter had found



by experience were more likely to lift mood. He cautions against ruminating thoughts, introspective spiritual practices, and withdrawing from the company of others. He encourages productive activity, thoughts of God's love and grace, and the value of seeking assistance from a physician.

The final chapter is Lundy's edited and updated version of Baxter's "The Cure of Melancholy and Overmuch Sorrow, by Faith." While there is significant overlap with the previous chapter, this more detailed piece has an even stronger emphasis upon the spiritual dimensions that contribute to low mood and its alleviation. Yet the sophistication of Baxter's approach remains to the fore. For many individuals experiencing "excessive and misguided sorrow and guilt ... much of the cause is to be found in physiological disturbances, physical diseases, and general 'weakness'" (p. 114). For others, Satanic influence, sinful impatience, ignorance of gospel truth, and such like might be at play. For Baxter, relief is best found in thoughts and practices informed and renewed by biblical truth. In particular, he provides thirty-one truths about God's grace that provide consolation for those of tender conscience whose sadness arises from a sense of spiritual insecurity. This work also provides a number of helpful suggestions of how family and friends might assist someone beset with depression.

The book concludes with a short appendix, "The Duty of Physicians," extracted and revised from *A Christian Directory*.

Throughout these works from Baxter we find pastoral sensitivity and kindness. Rather than pressing duties upon those suffering, Baxter is more concerned to offer gospel solace and commend them to the supportive care of others. He steers clear of simplistic explanations and solutions. His approach avoids reductionism in any form, whether that be to overstate the role of biology or to claim that every emotional difficulty is due to spiritual insufficiency.

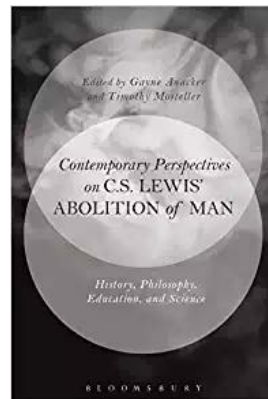
Mental health professionals today tend to function with a bio-psycho-social model of treatment. When it comes to mental health, they recognize that genetic and other biological factors play their part, as do patterns of thought, family background, networks of support, etc. Increasingly, many also affirm the significance of a spiritual dimension to human experience and appreciate that altruistic values and cultivating a sense of meaning and purpose in life contribute to wellbeing. What this book does is foreground this essential spiritual component of human life, not in a general sense, but by directing the reader to the spiritual truths that arise from biblical Christianity. Baxter doesn't have all the answers. But we do indeed find wisdom that stands the test of time, and that will assist both those suffering these afflictions and also those who pastor them.

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Timothy M. Mosteller and Gayne John Anacker, eds. *Contemporary Perspectives on C. S. Lewis' The Abolition of Man: History, Philosophy, Education, and Science*. New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2018. 176 pp. £28.99/\$39.95.

C. S. Lewis's *The Abolition of Man* has been described as perhaps the best place to begin in understanding the main thrust of his public work. The book is an adaption of a series of lectures Lewis gave at the University of Durham during World War II. The topic of those lectures was modern education. However, the lectures serve as a significant critique of the trends in linguistics in the early Twentieth century, an argument against the rejection of a traditional anthropology, and an apology for natural law. That Lewis successfully accomplished all three of those tasks in about one hundred pages, including the appendix, is nothing less than amazing. It is little wonder, therefore, that in 1999 *The Abolition of Man* came in at number seven in *National Review's* top 100 non-fiction books of the century (<https://www.nationalreview.com/1999/05/non-fiction-100/>). It is also not surprising that the book continues to be discussed in diverse audiences today.



A recent multi-authored volume, *Contemporary Perspectives on C. S. Lewis' The Abolition of Man: History, Philosophy, Education, and Science*, offers a collection of essays considering the critique Lewis offered with respect to the current state of various disciplines. After a concise introduction from the editors, the book deals with *The Abolition of Man* in nine chapters (hereafter *Abolition*). In chapter 1, Adam Pesler offers an overview of Lewis's thesis and considers the importance of his argument for the place of emotions in moral reasoning and against subjectivism in philosophy in general. The second chapter, by Micah Watson, delves into the defense of natural law in *Abolition*, including ways that natural law can be misused or corrupted.

In chapter 3, Mark Pike explores how contemporary education might look different if Lewis's advice in *Abolition* was taken seriously, in particular with regard to providing moral education to children. In the fourth chapter, Charlie Starr develops Lewis's ideas into an application for teaching English to students in a world that largely embodies the failures Lewis was attempting to resist in *Abolition*. Francis Beckwith evaluates whether *Abolition* can rightly be called a conservative book in chapter 5, concluding that it supports a conservatism that values the good, the true and the beautiful but not, perhaps, a conservatism that is primarily about libertarian economics.

In the sixth chapter, Judith Wolfe places Lewis's thinking in *Abolition* alongside his expression of "mere Christianity" to show the continuity between his philosophical and theological thinking. Chapter 7, by David Ussery, contains a more personal essay reflecting on the impact of *Abolition* on a scientist. In the eighth chapter, James Herrick looks at the context in which Lewis was writing, giving background to contemporary readers on the subjectivist philosophers whose ideas Lewis was seeking to combat. Finally, in chapter 9, Scott Key shows the ways in which Lewis developed his critique in *Abolition* in his fictional work, *That Hideous Strength*.

Contemporary Perspective on C. S. Lewis' The Abolition of Man is a helpful treatment of a central book in "Lewisiana." (In fact, Walter Hooper, the longtime editor of Lewis's writings, has argued that *Abolition* should be read first among Lewis's many works.) Readers of this volume will be unable to escape the ways that Lewis's prophetic predictions have come to pass, often with remarkable accuracy. It stands

to reason, then, that his proposed remedies would be beneficial, or at least worthy of consideration given his uncanny understanding of the trajectory of modern society.

This book offers a unique perspective on *Abolition*: it is a collection of essays about education by educators in response to a theory about education. While the essays tend to be academic in tone, there is obvious personal wisdom under the surface of their arguments. That many of the contributors are well-known scholars in their respective fields also contributes to its value. This book would make an excellent volume for an interdisciplinary discussion group among faculty in a university setting. Or, it could be useful as a supplementary course text in a class on educational theory at a Christian university.

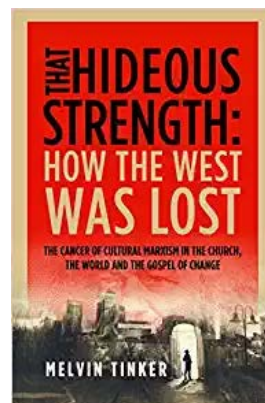
As a new volume in the perpetually expanding field of C. S. Lewis studies, this book adds depth to the discussions of *Abolition*. The contributors have offered well-researched, cogent essays that deal carefully with the text. One weakness of the volume is the amount of repetition between many of the essays. Even given the brevity of the book under discussion and the diversity of the fields of the authors, the volume could have been better constructed to minimize the amount of time summarizing Lewis's arguments in *Abolition* at the beginning of each chapter. That approach would have been challenging for the editors but would have improved the end product. Despite this opportunity for improvement, the volume remains a valuable one.

One of the greatest strengths of this volume is that it presents a critique of modern thought without devolving into apocalyptic ranting. Much like Lewis's own tenor during his prolific public writing career, the contributors of this volume are perfectly clear that there is something wrong, but they offer a constructive solution rather than merely urging a boycott or breaking out the pitchforks. This volume represents the best attributes of public discourse: clarity in logic, consistency in focus, and forcefulness in advocating a solution. It would make a worthy addition to the libraries of educators in particular, as well as benefitting anyone interested in Lewis's non-fiction work. It should certainly find its way into institutional and personal libraries as a helpful resource in understanding *The Abolition of Man*.

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Melvin Tinker. *That Hideous Strength: How the West Was Lost: The Cancer of Cultural Marxism in the Church, the World and the Gospel of Change*. Welwyn Garden City, UK: EP Books, 2018. 127 pp. £6.99/\$8.99.

Melvin Tinker's *That Hideous Strength: How the West was Lost* is a clever little book. I say "little" because it is not much more than 100 pages in length. This not only makes it a quick read but, as it's been well-written by a pastor-preacher with an eye to his flock, an easy read too. I say "clever" because, despite its brevity and accessibility, the book not only covers a wide sweep of complex terrain but also provides a deep and penetrating analysis of how the west was (or is being) lost, as well as a timely admonition to Christians to heed their master's call "to stand against the world in order to win the world" (p. 21). In terms of both purpose and approach, Daniel Strange (who authored the book's Forward)



helpfully describes it as “a creative exercise of looking at the world through the Word and focusing on an ideology at war with God and his life-giving blueprint for life” (p. 14).

As lovers of C. S. Lewis’s writings will be aware, Tinker’s main title is borrowed from the third book in Lewis’s space trilogy—*That Hideous Strength*, first published in 1945. (Interestingly, Lewis’s title was itself drawn from a line in a sixteenth century poem by Sir David Lyndsay which described the Tower of Babel as follows: “The shadow of that hideous strength / Six mile and more it is of length.”) Tinker’s first chapter is, therefore, given over to an exposition and application of Lewis’s book, in order to help us see “the way a new totalitarianism is being introduced into Western society and the way the church has colluded with it” (p. 20).

But Tinker’s deeper concern is that we learn the lessons embedded in the incident that gave rise to Lindsay’s lines—the Tower of Babel itself. This is the burden of chapter 2. For Tinker, the Babel episode functions “as a parabolic lens through which we can view and come to understand what has been happening in our society and how it may be countered by the Gospel of Jesus Christ” (p. 34). Moreover, it illustrates three related ways in which human beings try to unmake and remake the cosmos: *communalism* (i.e., solidarity in rebellion), *constructionism* (i.e., the attempt to de-god God) and *connectivity* (i.e., unity in language and action). The net effect is “a blasphemous human ‘let us’ over and against the Holy ‘let us’ of the Triune God” (p. 43).

In chapter 3, Tinker turns to an exposé of “neo-Marxism, sometimes called cultural Marxism or libertarian Marxism” (p. 45), which he defines (care of the Marxist philosopher, Sidney Hook) as a “philosophy of human liberation” which seeks to “emancipate man from repressive social institutions, especially economic institutions that frustrate his true nature ... so that he can overcome his estrangements and express his true essence through creative freedom” (pp. 45–46). He first takes us back to the Italian Marxist, Antonio Gramsci, and the importance of his idea of cultural “hegemony.” He then turns to the Critical Theory of the Frankfurt School, paying particular attention to writings of Herbert Marcuse—notably, *Eros and Civilization* (1955) and “Repressive Tolerance” (1965).

Tinker’s interest in *Eros and Civilization* is due to the fact that it fuses “neo-Marxism with a version of neo-Freudianism in order to turn the power of the libido into a revolutionary force” (p. 53). Marcuse thus called for “the throwing off of all traditional values and sexual restraints in favour of ‘polymorphous perversity’” (p. 53). Tinker’s interest in “Repressive Tolerance” is due to the fact that the kind of tolerance Marcuse advocates “cannot be indiscriminate and equal with respect to the contents of expression, neither in word nor in deed; it cannot protect false words and wrong deeds which demonstrate that they contradict and counteract the possibilities of liberation” (cited on p. 49). The net result is “a new totalitarian-tolerance” (which is, in fact, profoundly intolerant) and “the all-pervading political correctness of our age” (p. 49).

This naturally leads Tinker to a consideration of “The Gender Agenda” (chapter 4). He begins by outlining the strategic plan articulated in Marshall Kirk and Hunter Madsen’s *After the Ball: How America Will Conquer its Fear and Hatred of Gays in the 90s* (New York: Doubleday, 1989), noting the speed and success with which it has been implemented, and the radical revolution in societal attitudes that has been the result. He then draws attention to the way in which “the main cultural transformers have been brought to bear to achieve this revolution” (p. 67)—e.g., advertising, TV series, social media. As to the latter, he notes that “the revolution has become much easier with a lynch mob mentality being able to be whipped up with ease via Facebook, Twitter and the like” (p. 71). All of this is in the service of

the larger neo-Marxist agenda—to create not merely a classless society but one in which all creational differences are erased, including gender.

However, there are two related institutions that stand in the way of the full flowering of this prospect: the family and the church. Will they be able to provide the resistance necessary? This is the question that drives chapters 5 and 6. As Tinker sees it, “the end game of the neo-Marxist agenda is the destruction of the family” (p. 73). For those who doubt it, Marcuse is explicit on the point. The “polymorphous sexuality” he promotes “would lead to a disintegration of the institutions in which the private interpersonal relations have been reorganized, particularly the monogamic and patriarchal family” (cited on p. 73). But Tinker’s greater concern is with the way in which the church has colluded with this agenda and “increasingly adds its own confused voice to the confusing voices of the Babel culture in which it finds itself” (pp. 83–84).

Is it then too late for the church? And, if not, what needs to be done? This is question of chapter 6. To answer it, Tinker takes us back to the account of the Tower of Babel. The good news of Babel is that “despite humankind’s attempt to redefine and reconfigure reality—to ‘de-god God’—it is God in his glorious omnipotence and infinite wisdom who remains Lord. He subverts all our attempts to subvert, and his great reality, which lies behind all realities, will win out” (p. 91). How then should the church respond to the challenge of that “hideous strength” in its current cultural Marxist form? Tinker’s advice is threefold: by faithfully commending God’s truth, by gospel-centered cultural engagement, and by courageous refusal and refutation. (Those who want to know how Tinker expounds each of these points will just have to buy the book!)

On the final page, Tinker takes us back to Lewis’s novel and reminds those who know it that final victory was accomplished not by clever human maneuvering or a powerful human leader but (as in the case of Babel) “by a special intervention of God” (p. 117). Therefore, it is for this, above all, that he urges us to pray today.

Some readers may question either the validity or helpfulness of invoking the specter of cultural Marxism, particularly as it is a contested category in the minds of some and has been employed in a highly conspiratorial fashion by others (Anders Breivik’s *Manifesto* comes to mind). Nevertheless, in my view, Tinker’s use of the category is more than defensible, and the links and parallels he draws between various twentieth century neo-Marxists proposals and a range of current cultural and political phenomena is difficult to deny.

Is *That Hideous Strength* beyond criticism then? Not quite. I, for one, would have welcomed footnotes, endnotes or some other way of discovering on what page(s) of the various “Works Cited” (which are helpfully listed at the end) the book’s many citations may be found. It also contains the odd misnomer (e.g., “Sex in the City” should be “Sex and the City,” p. 67), typo (e.g., “sapientail” should be “sapiential,” p. 96) and mis-spelling (e.g., “Guinness” should be “Guinness,” p. 117). But these are minor blemishes, which in no way detract from the book’s force and clarity. Tinker’s *That Hideous Strength* thus deserves the many strong commendations it has received and will greatly benefit all who read (and indeed, re-read) it.

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Douglas Wilson. *Why Children Matter*. Moscow, ID: Canon, 2018. 137 pp. \$13.95.

Only a few days before writing this review, my wife got a call from our 23-year-old daughter and her husband. My daughter said, “I’m pregnant!” My wife put the phone on speaker mode and joyous sounds and tears exploded as this was news of our first grandchild!

Reading Douglas Wilson’s *Why Children Matter* naturally raised the question of whether this book would be a good resource for my daughter and her husband? Would it guide them as new parents? Would I send it to them? Or as a pastor, would I encourage families to read it and use it as a source for a study?

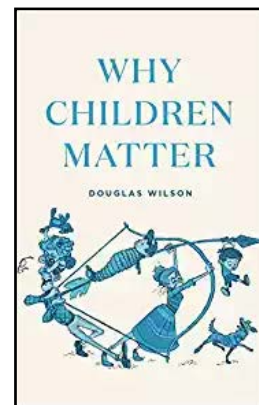
As to readability and approachability, *Why Children Matter* is easily digestible as a parenting theology book. Its starting point is the biblical definition of marriage (one man and one woman), contra the *Obergefell* decision of the United States Supreme Court (2015), and the fact that family “is not something that mere creatures get to define” (p. 3). The confident tone of Scriptural sufficiency pervades this straight-talking book. The fourteen brief chapters of only a few thousand words each are arranged in four sections: (1) Why Children Matter, (2) Discipline Basics, (3) Nurture and Admonition, and (4) More Like Christ. The last section of the book is an appendix of 29 more specific questions and answers with both Douglas and Nancy Wilson (who have three grown, married children and, at this time, sixteen grandchildren).

The book does not address popular parenting concerns, such as vaccinations, allergies/diets, scheduling for breast-feeding, home vs hospital birth, doctor vs midwife, special needs children, ADD, medications, etc. It does not pretend to be either a “Parenting for Dummies” manual or the “Encyclopedia of Parenting” or a self-help book with several magic steps to ideal children. Instead, the book concentrates on presenting the gospel as the foundation of parenting. Some might see this as a deficiency—particularly if they’re assuming the book should be anything like the “Biggest Book Ever on Parenting”—but, arguably, Wilson has taken us to the heart of the matter.

The explicit intention of the book, then, is to provide gospel-shaped counsel. Indeed, Wilson asserts that the book is nothing less than “a proclamation of the gospel as embodied in family life” (p. 5). As such, the theological concepts of adoption, justification, and sanctification are woven into discussions on the atmosphere of the home, parental roles, and discipline. Gospel principles, rather than a specific set of rules, is the refrain.

The appendix, however, is a subtle admission that parents who understand the answer to (say) “What is justification?” nevertheless need specific advice, examples, and practical help. Hence, the appendix addresses questions on (actual) security blankets, television, boys sitting still in church, the “mechanics” of dad not bringing work home, homeschooling vs private schooling, and more. This kind of parental advice comes in the disarming but effective form of an interview, rather than via a definitive methodology presented as dogma or inspired therapy.

Some will still find this book problematic. The explicit message (gospel principles only) may seem incongruent with some of the practical teachings. For example, on the one hand, it eschews methods and specificity, yet, on the other, it advocates such specific actions as spanking. Wilson dismisses “lame theories on the ineffectiveness of spanking that ... circulate on Facebook” (p. 26). However, one can reasonably inquire whether the “rod” passages in Proverbs actually refer to “spanking” young children or to the corporal punishment of mature “fools” who are “beaten” on the “back” as law-breakers. (Think



here of a past era's penal systems with stocks and caning.) To my knowledge, Douglas and Nancy Wilson's several helpful books on family do not provide a thorough examination of the modes of discipline, but rather assume a traditionalist-spanking model for little children.

Wilson emphasizes the gospel-only basis for parenting, but insists that fathers must provide a Christian education (schooling or home-schooling) for their children using Ephesians 6:4. But does the *gospel* require schooling in an organization with an explicit Christian affirmation? Here Wilson seems to be preaching to his own choir (of which I am a tenor) and does provide some rationale for his view ("The Necessity of a Christian *Paideia*," ch. 8). But for a more sustained and persuasive argument, the readers will need to look elsewhere—e.g., to Wilson's, *The Case for Classical Christian Education* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2003).

The answer of the title question may also be jolting. Wilson asserts that "God is after a lineage, and He's been after a lineage from the very beginning. Why did God make them one? He was seeking a 'godly seed' (Mal. 2:15). That's why children matter" (p. 28). Children matter because God's purpose is to raise up a godly seed to inhabit and have dominion in the world. This may be a very unpopular "gospel truth" for the aging, "professional" couple who heartily embraces the gospel, but is intentionally without progeny. Is the normative expression of the gospel in the life a family with father, mother and children? If so, we are seeing many deviations from this norm of the *gospel* in contemporary western culture.

Readers may also find themselves challenged by Wilson's thought that "theology comes out your fingertips" (p. 31). This is a phrase and theme that he has used repeatedly over many years. It characterizes his decades of writing and teaching on family matters. Your theology manifests in your family. Anger, a lack of joy, legalisms, gracelessness, pride, etc. in parenting are the test of one's actual theology. "Regardless of what you say you believe, your theology of justification and sanctification is enacted in microcosm in your relationship to your children" (p. 31).

Back to my opening question: Would I give this book to my own daughter as advice on parenting? Yes. *Why Children Matter* will point parents to Jesus and help them think about parenting in a gospel-centered fashion. Wilson's emphasis is right, even if his treatment lacks comprehensiveness or incisive relevance to a number of current questions. The gospel is to be applied and lived out in our homes. This matters most, beyond methods and specific practices.

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— MISSION AND CULTURE —

Linda Bergquist and Michael D. Crane. *City Shaped Churches: Planting Churches in the Global Era*. Skyforest, CA: Urban Loft Publishers, 2018. 398 pp. £17.06/\$21.95.

Linda Bergquist and Michael Crane have teamed up to address challenges to planting churches in urban settings. They speak from broad ministry experience, including working together in a failed church plant in San Francisco in the 1990s (p. 19). They admit their church planting experience “had a steep learning curve” (p. 19). We are reminded that urban church planting is often more challenging and disappointing than people imagine. Their book is a welcome invitation “to become passionate about sharing the gospel in urban centers” (p. 22). The authors’ unique backgrounds contribute to presenting important insights on the challenges of reaching urbanites with the gospel in our global era. They refrain from “insisting on suburban models for urban settings” (p. 27) and provide sociological studies and valuable statistical data on major urban centers.



Crane begins with a theology of the city (ch. 1), acknowledging that “we are not given a prescriptive command to prioritize cities” (p. 47). Yet cities are considered important because they are “economic powerhouses” (p. 51), “centers of cultural production” (p. 52), and “connectors on a global scale” (p. 53). Bergquist identifies four ways church planters relate to the city – “natives, nomads, sojourners, and settlers” (p. 59) – and implications for ministry. She contrasts the concept of reaching low-hanging fruit with reaching those who are hidden in cities (p. 105); these include night workers, undocumented immigrants, the incarcerated, the disabled, and seniors (pp. 108–13). Connecting with these groups requires strategic, creative, and innovative thinking

Readers will benefit from the emphasis on strategically placed new churches as “points of welcoming urban dwellers [and] pointing them to Christ and the city to come” (p. 45). The authors highlight the need to engage in “demographic and ethnographic research” (p. 100) and the importance of churches seeking “creative ways to open up their buildings in a manner that is inviting to the public” (p. 142). They rightly insist on the priority of the gospel at “the core of every aspect of life. Everything in life is inadequate without being profoundly shaped by the gospel” (p. 241).

Readers will need to evaluate areas of debate. How has sustainability become “a deep moral value to those who care about the future of the planet” (p. 25)? In what way does the Old Testament clearly demonstrate “the church’s responsibility to the alien” (p. 91)? More support is needed for the assertion that the incarnation of Christ “validates and encourages the engagement of the arts in culture” (p. 118). Bergquist proposes novel “multisensory, participatory worship that includes works of art, creative dance, film, photography, and various styles of music” (p. 123). Crane’s claim that “there are almost no nominal Christians in the city” (p. 226) appears unverifiable. The authors conclude their book with two chapters on church planting movements. Bergquist makes several references (ch. 21) to secular social movements (e.g., LGBT, Black Lives Matter) without clearly showing how the success of these movements helps understand church planting movements.

The book’s organization detracts from the reading experience. Its layout with double spacing between paragraphs gives a chopped appearance. The chapters share considerable overlap. At times

the book reads like a patchwork of collected essays. More attention to editing and proofreading would catch inconsistent spacing between sentences and poorly formatted biographical entries. The omission of an index severely limits the ability of church planters to locate areas of particular interest. Mind you, there are many valuable observations, necessary principles, and interesting anecdotes. However, one will need to mine deeply for applicable nuggets due to the global swath of urban centers under discussion. There is not only diversity in cities but among cities. So, moving from global observations to local application might prove challenging.

Frankly, this would not be among the first books I would recommend for those considering urban church planting. The book might be useful as a companion volume to other books specifically focused on particular contexts. It reveals the challenge of multiple authors in different geographical regions to collaborate and produce something cohesive. The authors attempt to cover too much material in twenty-three chapters with little discernable structure. There are better written and more user-friendly books available. These would include Stephen T. Um and Justin Buzzard's *Why Cities Matter: To God, the Culture, and the Church* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2013), Ed Stetzer's *Planting Missional Churches* (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2006), and Scott Moreau's *Contextualizing the Faith* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2018).

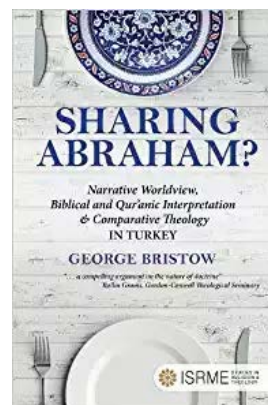
Crane and Bergquist are not novices. They are seasoned church planters sharing their wisdom and burden for cities. We need the reminder that we find in cities the nations of the world gathered in a grand mosaic. We recall that those for whom Christ died come from every tribe, every language, and every people. The diversity of cities and the differences between cities requires study, reflection, wise counsel, and prayer for church planters to determine where to go. If God calls them to minister in the city, they must be aware of the challenges before them.

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George Bristow. *Sharing Abraham? Narrative Worldview, Biblical and Qur'anic Interpretation & Comparative Theology in Turkey*. ISRME Studies in Religion and Theology. Cambridge, MA: Doorlight Academic, 2017. 322 pp. £20.08/\$24.95.

Sharing Abraham? is the published version of George Bristow's well-written Ph.D. dissertation accepted by Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam. Bristow demonstrates competence in both Old and New Testament. The dissertation also bears witness to his mastery of Islamic studies and Turkish culture, though I am less qualified to evaluate his competence in these areas.

Bristow's purpose is to lay "groundwork" for and explore "the possibilities of employing the biblical and Islamic Abraham stories for interfaith encounter and Christian witness in Turkey" (p. 1). This subject was worth exploration because Abraham is important for the narratives and worldviews that undergird both Christianity and Islam. Furthermore, Abraham has special significance in Turkish tradition. Bristow approaches this subject within the context of the overarching narratives presented by both the Bible and the Qur'an.



Chapters 1–2 set the stage for what follows. First, Bristow evaluates various groups who advocate “Abrahamic Dialogue.” Using such dialogue to blur the sharp differences between the Christian and Islamic worldviews is neither accurate nor ethical. If both sides are true to their respective faiths, they must allow for persuasion.

A careful analysis of the Islamic and Christian worldviews highlights sharp differences across three polarities: (1) Creation-Fall/Tawhid, (2) Redemption/Prophethood, and (3) Consummation/Afterlife.

First, Creation-Fall/Tawhid. The complexity and a condescension of the God of the Bible is contrary to the Islamic doctrine of the absolute oneness of God (Tawhid). Allah does not enter his creation. Furthermore, the biblical fall brings a radical disruption of God’s creation that requires redemption. The sin of the qur’anic Adam requires right guidance to counter forgetfulness.

The second polarity, Redemption/Prophethood, corresponds to the above understanding of evil. In the Bible, God *comes* into the world to provide a salvation through one people, the children of Abraham. His coming culminates in Christ and provides redemption for the world. In the Qur’an, God *sends* prophets to various peoples with “right guidance.” Muhammad brings this same “right guidance” for all.

The third polarity, “Consummation/Afterlife,” flows from the second. Both the Bible and Qur’an affirm bodily resurrection and eternal bliss or punishment. In the Bible, however, at the “consummation” of the history of redemption, God demonstrates his faithfulness by returning and establishing a new heaven and earth free from evil. According to the Qur’an, the final judgment fulfills the prophetic word whereby those whose good works outweigh their evil deeds go to God in paradise; others are cast into hell. The biblical emphasis on God’s dwelling among his people in a new creation is distinct.

This analysis of competing worldviews provides a framework to compare the accounts of Abraham in the Bible and the Qur’an. In chapters 3–4, Bristow analyzes Abraham in Genesis and the New Testament. In chapters 5–6, he explores Abraham in the Qur’an and in Turkish tradition. While chapters 3–5 are based on the study of texts, chapter 6 records the results of face-to-face dialogue with nine mainstream Turkish Imams.

In summary, little overlap exists between the biblical and qur’anic Abrahams. The Bible presents a coherent Abraham narrative focusing on God’s faithful fulfilment of his promise. The Qur’an uses Abrahamic stories to illustrate the need to affirm God’s oneness and the day of judgment. The primary Abrahamic events in the Qur’an are (1) disputing with idolaters in Mesopotamia, (2) the angelic visitation, (3) building of the Kaaba, and (4) the offering of Abraham’s son. Bristow’s Turkish dialogue partners refer to fourteen extra-qur’anic Abraham stories that slightly embellish the qur’anic accounts. These dialogue partners focus on the incidents without biblical parallel, the struggle against idolatry and the building of the Kaaba.

Bristow explores the significance of these conflicting Abrahamic accounts in chapter 7. Concerning the Creation-Fall/Tawhid polarity, the qur’anic Abraham is a sinless prophet who discovers the oneness of God through creation and struggles against idolatry. In the Bible, God reveals himself to Abraham, makes a covenant with him, and proves himself faithful by keeping his promises.

Regarding the redemption/prophethood polarity, the biblical God communicates intimately with Abraham as the progenitor of the people through whom he will redeem the world. According to the Qur’an, Abraham is the model prophet who proclaims the absolute oneness of God and provides a perfect example of submission.

With respect to the consummation/afterlife polarity, “Abraham fits into biblical eschatology as the main starting point of the redemptive process that led to the resurrection of Jesus, and will lead to the

resurrection of his people when he returns, and into qur’anic eschatology as an exemplary prophet and believer in God and ‘the Day’” (p. 167).

Chapter 8 draws conclusions concerning the potential of “Abrahamic Dialogue.” Such dialogue has limited use because the two faiths do not offer two versions of the same Abrahamic story but two different, even contradictory, stories. Reducing Abraham to an example of obedient faith, apart from the eschatological significance of the Abrahamic promise, suggests a false sense of commonality with the Islamic picture of Abraham as an example of obedient surrender.

Nevertheless, Bristow’s discussions about Abraham provide an opportunity for interfaith dialogue that produces clarity of understanding. Bristow’s narrative-worldview framework, with its three polarities, proves helpful for comparing “nonoverlapping biblical and qur’anic narratives” (p. 176). Although Abraham does not provide as good a starting place for gospel witness as might be expected, these discussions afford opportunity to present Jesus as the fulfillment of the Abrahamic promise. Bristow’s study underscores the need in Islamic contexts for interpretation that grasps the grand narrative of the Bible with an awareness of the qur’anic challenge to the biblical worldview. However, the divergence of the two worldviews, especially the way one links Abraham closely with Muhammad and the other with Jesus, exposes the flaw of trying to use the Qur’an as an authority in “contextual” Christian witness among Muslims.

This book is well-researched, well-written, and persuasive. My criticisms are minimal. Its repetitiveness is characteristic of dissertations. Footnotes would have been more user-friendly than endnotes. Despite several useful appendices, there is no index.

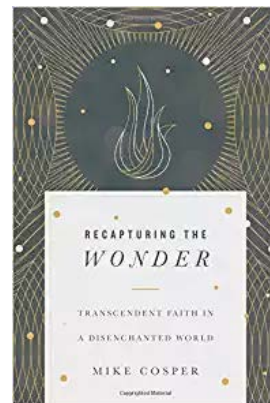
Everyone working within an Islamic context should read *Sharing Abraham?*. It is profitable for anyone wanting to understand differences between Muslim and Christian worldviews. This type of comparative interpretation enriches our understanding of the biblical text.

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Mike Cospers. *Recapturing the Wonder: Transcendent Faith in a Disenchanted World*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2017. 169 pp. £13.07/\$17.00.

When I was first asked to review this slim volume from Mike Cospers, it wasn’t just a new book, it was still forthcoming. The request came in the same month in which brain surgeons opened my skull, so I had a fantastic excuse to offer my regrets and decline. And, to be honest, that was my initial impulse. But instead, for some unknown reason, I begged for an absurd amount of time, and said that I would give the book a read. And now that *Recapturing the Wonder* has been out for more than a year, here I am, fashionably late, but grateful to have been asked and grateful that something, somehow—in the most absurd month of my life—made me say yes.

Before this book, I had never read anything by Cospers beyond the occasional tweet, and those never led me to believe that we would have much affinity. (I promise, that sounds worse than I mean it to.) Yes, we are Christian brothers and yes, we both type



words, but from those few snippets that floated past my eyes on the interwebs, I truly had no accurate sense of the man, which is why the first ninety pages of this book provoked a great deal of surprise and contemplation. I was surprised by how much I wanted to buy him a drink. I grew contemplative about social media, Twitter in particular, and about the strange way it causes us to sample people like tidbits of cheese on toothpicks at Costco before deciding whether or not they are worthy of our consumption. And this, I shouldn't have to explain, is a pretty awful way of assessing people.

While not directly addressed in Cospers's book, this subject of my pondering *does* relate to the mission and purpose of his writing. Cospers is concerned with thickening callouses of unbelief that build up in individual hearts, families, and communities. He hates the accumulating sediment of cynical rationalism that sedates our wonder and makes us all inclined to disbelieve in the miraculous and supernatural and causes us to miss the beauty of even the *simply* natural. Cospers calls us all to take note of those small but glorious moments in our lives, like dew on spider tapestries in the morning, which slap us in all six senses and the soul, shake the dust off our cynicisms, and cause us to marvel in our wondrous Maker.

This book intends to aid Christians who desire to cultivate a healthy sensitivity to wonder and a resistance to apathetic cynicism. While his prose often reaches for the poetic, Cospers also gives quite practical suggestions. His discussions of generosity, feasting, prayer, and a Christian view of sexual intimacy are all excellent. His call to put down the phones and head outside is also greatly needed. If Job, at his most raw, is told to wonder at the animals, how much more should we?

In some places, Cospers and I part ways (some petty, some more substantive), but that is to be expected in the pursuit of something as personal as wonder. The writings of Thomas Merton, the famous Trappist monk, clearly mean a great deal to Cospers, evident by his less than cynical admiration for some of the more ascetic forms of religious expression. When it comes to all things monastic (e.g., Lenten abstention, ashy brows, absurdist vows, etc.), all my impulses are with those old Reformers who saw the essential need to feast, wed, bed, and throw sausage barbecues during Lent. Despite my love for and appreciation of many Catholic writers and thinkers, my hatred for every form of self-flagellation is (as Flannery O'Connor might say) somethin' fierce.

Cospers also holds artists in much higher esteem than I think is healthy. He views them with the all-too-common sentimental respect that has been with us since the Romantics. I mention this not as an essential disagreement but as a quibble. When unpacked, the perspective of artist as uniquely "gifted" is less dangerous to the spiritual health of the average person than it is to the health of artists or aspiring artists. I find it more helpful to think of the best artists as UPS guys (complete with awkward outfits), hustling packages as broadly as they can at Christmas. Imitating that demeanor and attitude as an artist allows an ambitious pursuit of the type of creative generosity Cospers admires. At the same time, it helps kill the "cool kid" temptation of vanity and pride.

Those nits aside, this book provides a great deal of practical edification, for which I am grateful. Consumed slowly, or like a shot tequila after a lick of salt, this book will do readers good. But don't come to it hoping for an intellectual discussion only. These are not gnostic pages. Come willing to contemplate and then imitate. Come ready to pray, butter noodles, host friends, and establish a familial Sabbath feast. If Cospers's suggestions are broadly read and followed, the American church would be a more wholesome and holy place by this time next year.

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Justin Thacker. *Global Poverty: A Theological Guide*. London: SCM Press 2017. 288 pp. £25.00/\$40.00.

It is a truism to say that the world is more globally connected and aware than at any time in its history. Our daily decisions and actions have a significant and often more direct effect on other people, cultures, and the planet in ways we previously have not been aware of. This interconnectedness requires new depths of understanding about how our approach to discipleship can enable and foster others' flourishing yet not demean and limit them. We need well informed and biblically robust resources that inform our thinking and actions as we love God, our neighbor, our enemy, and those within the Christian community.

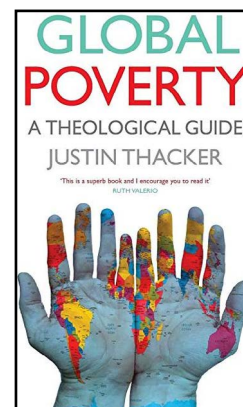
Of course, numerous books, studies, conferences, and policies seek to explore, understand, address, and engage with key issues related to global poverty. Thacker's book brings a fresh and important voice. It makes a significant contribution into the work of public theology and Christian social ethics. His contribution is both unique and thorough as he seeks to develop a systematic theology of global poverty. In addition, he discusses ways that aid is both a help and a challenge. His critique causes the reader to reflect more deeply about whether giving aid is a sustainable approach in a world of 1.2 billion people who live in extreme poverty.

Thacker previously served as a medical doctor in Kenya, where he lived in the context of widespread poverty. He has also written on these issues, e.g., *Micah's Challenge: The Church's Responsibility to the Global Poor* (Bletchley, UK; Paternoster; 2008). As the current Academic Director of Cliff College in Derbyshire, he continues to foster his thinking and influence as lecturer in practical and public theology. This background helps Thacker bring academic and practical theology together in a helpful and symbiotic way.

Thacker uses five key theological categories to frame his theological anthropology. These include creation, fall, Israel, redemption, and consummation. Within each of these, few stones are left unturned as he considers the continuing challenges of inequalities and the social, historical, political and theological underpinnings that form and shape our understandings and engagement. Certainly, other loci are missing from Thacker's systematic theological treatment, e.g., the incarnation. He is aware of these concerns yet acknowledges that this work, like all books, has inherent limitations. Nevertheless, his presentation is coherent and relatively comprehensive.

The strength and weakness of a work like this lie in its range and breath. Thacker is well read and provides substantive and wide-ranging insights that challenge various theological and political stances. Engaging his argument will challenge and inspire readers. Thacker seeks to encourage and provoke. He brings a prophetic, nuanced understanding to the complexities of the issues and the importance to take them seriously. He draws clear inspiration from the late missiologist and church statesman Lesslie Newbigin, whose thought forms the book's missional underpinning.

Thacker's insights in this timely work reflect one of the marks for 21st century discipleship, whereby we intentionally participate in the ongoing challenges that global poverty presents. His book goes a long

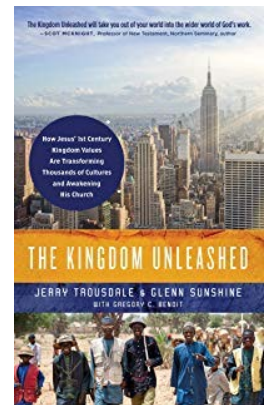


way to aid our thinking and stimulating changes that enable us to express kingdom values in a fresh and timely way.

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Jerry Trousdale and Glenn Sunshine. *The Kingdom Unleashed: How Jesus' 1st-Century Kingdom Values Are Transforming Thousands of Cultures and Awakening His Church*. Murfreesboro, TN: DMM Library, 2018. 398 pp. \$16.99.

The Kingdom Unleashed utilizes narrative accounts of revivals and “kingdom movements” around the world to demonstrate why the Global South is in a season of spiritual flourishing and how the Global North must change their ways to overcome the trends of spiritual decline seen throughout the past several decades. “Kingdom Movements,” often called “Disciple Making Movements” (DMM) or “Church Planting Movements” (CPM), are defined as “a process of disciples making disciples, and churches planting at least 100 churches, with four or more generations of replication” (p. 21). These movements have caught the attention of missions organizations and missionaries around the world, but Trousdale and Sunshine argue that these movements are relevant for any and all who yearn for God’s kingdom to come in the Global North.



The book is divided into two main sections: First, Trousdale and Sunshine’s critique of the Global North by describing the “five categories of spiritual malpractice.” Second, the authors describe practical solutions to these areas of “malpractice” utilizing stories that illustrate how God is using Kingdom Movements around the world for the holistic transformation individuals and communities.

The authors explain the first area of malpractice by saying, “the church is not an end in itself, but the means to build the Kingdom” (p. 48). Their critique of compartmentalized Christianity, which fails to transform lives in a holistic way, is mixed. Certain elements are well founded; other statements are a stretch. Appropriately, however, they address issues such as the fact-value distinction and the bifurcated gospel. The second area of malpractice in the global north is prayer. Trousdale and Sunshine claim that “the church in the Global North does not pray enough” and “when we do pray, our priorities tend to not be the same as God’s priorities” (p. 62).

Third, the authors identify Constantine as a root problem, claiming that after his rule, church leadership became professionalized in a way that crippled the role of the laity. The fourth malpractice is that the church has emphasized knowledge instead of obedience. Again, they go deep enough to tackle some of the historical milestones such as the Reformation’s acknowledgment of grace as well as contemporary extremes like the idea of “cheap grace.” Lastly, Trousdale and Sunshine contrast movements and institutions, concluding that the Global North depends too much on institutions that simply can’t multiply. Though the malpractices addressed were inevitably generalizations, the broad criticisms are both accurate and well thought through.

The second part of the book describes fundamental aspects of Kingdom Movements, which can be taken, by implication, as the authors’ proposed solution to the aforementioned malpractices. For

starters, we should understand and follow Jesus's model for ministry as well as clarify our vision and strategy to accomplish that vision. They illustrate this through W. Allen's story of reworking his vision for India in which he concludes, "I no longer say 'I want to reach India'; I say, 'Lord, I want to see India reached.' I want to put God's Kingdom first, rather than my own personal ministry" (p. 175).

Next, they argue that ordinary people must be equipped to do extraordinary things. A Christian businessman who observed Kingdom Movements in Africa says, "We cannot add disciple making and church planting to what we're already doing. It has to be what we're doing" (p. 211). Trousdale and Sunshine point to other issues as well. These include a concern with "branding," a plethora of resources in the Global North that results in minimal dependence on God's provision, and the need for simple training and resources that anyone can reproduce. This section contains many incredible stories of Kingdom Movements that almost sound too good to be true. Some stories felt squeezed in or forced, but it is clear that Trousdale and Sunshine have done extensive research into what God is doing around the world through these Kingdom Movements.

Trousdale and Sunshine acknowledge that DMM has received its fair share of criticism. Notably, the authors defend against critiques of "obedience-based discipleship" twice (chs. 5, 15). They ask, "Can there be any serious question about how important obedience is to our Christian life?" (p. 317). However, the critique of obedience-based discipleship is partly about the emphasis on obedience and more about the lack of emphasis on grace. The authors fail to respond to that critique, falling in line with many other DMM advocates who seem to gloss over this foundational element.

Finally, they look at the critique that Kingdom Movements don't fit within the paradigms of modern ministry in the Global North. Their response is to point to Scripture: "It is our contention, though, that from the perspective of biblical faithfulness and spiritual fruitfulness, the Disciple Making Movement ministry paradigm is more consistent with Jesus' instructions for His people, more aligned with the earliest church, and more empowering of ordinary people to change their world than the models of ministry that are currently in place in the Global North" (p. 365). The critiques of the Global North that this book puts forth *must* be considered and answered by every Christian in a position of spiritual leadership. The answer may not be DMM, but it is essential for the vitality of global Christianity that leaders answer these questions.

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Charles Van Engen. *Transforming Mission Theology*. Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 2017. 437 pp. £19.21/\$24.99.

This book is a compilation of writings by missiologist Charles Van Engen, who has taught biblical theology of mission at Fuller Theological Seminary for more than twenty-five years. The author offers a rigorous theologizing of mission as well as a candid self-reflection on a variety of issues related to the theologies and praxis of mission. The book is divided into five parts, covering the sources, meaning, methods, goals and samples of mission theology. This book is an unrivaled resource for scholars as well as mission workers. This is largely due its wide scope and deliberate wrestling with particular problems that were rarely theologized, such as the resistant groups and ethics of missionary cooperation.

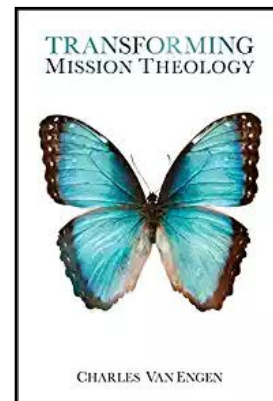
Since the author emphasizes that “there was no one methodology that could encompass doing theology in mission and doing missiology in theology” (p. xvi), he adopts an interdisciplinary approach with a strong biblical emphasis. Every issue of discussion is placed into a cross-disciplinary framework of examination and is brought back to the biblical context.

The author dismisses a totally disenchanting and pessimistic attitude towards mission theology. Instead, he states several affirmations in every section. For example, the four affirmations in the introduction serve to orient later affirmations with regard to specific contextual problems (pp. xvii–xix). He also uses a dialectic discourse in explaining “what mission is not” to further clarify his assumptions (p. xix). For example, the assumptions that mission “is not what we in the Christian church want it to be” or “what our surrounding culture or our world wants it to be” are revealing statements that convey ethical authenticity. In this way, the author also expresses his epistemological and ethical propositions in these guidelines.

If Parts I–II are necessary but largely generic foundational discourses on defining mission theology, Parts III–V are innovative and even boundary-breaking analyses on the methods, goals, and models of mission theology. For example, chapter 7 lays out five paradigms of contextualization, including communication, indigenization, translatability, local theologies, and epistemology. These processes combine to create what the author names “the hermeneutical spiral,” “a tapestry of interaction between gospel and culture” (p. 170). This helps visualize how the Christian message gets integrated from theory to action and then to contextualization.

More innovatively, the author begins with the theological problem of resistance in chapter 10. This is where self-reflection serves best in his theologizing about missional ethics. Often, we tend to discuss “receptive peoples” while leaving out conversation about “resistant peoples.” Mission work becomes what he calls “selective targeting” of the former group (p. 216). As a result, even the communication of the gospel can become “receptor-oriented” (p. 217).

With regard to resistance, there are multiple layers of complexity too. The author lists two possibilities. Either some groups are resistant because of contextual factors or some may be resistant because of factors within the church (p. 247). As the author candidly acknowledges, “the nominalism and secularization of the church itself has been one of the greatest obstacles to world evangelization” (p. 247). Likewise, “our theology of conversion may itself create resistance” (p. 248). He challenges the commonly held view that counter-culturalness is necessarily good, for “strongly counter-cultural”



strategies may contribute to “a sense of strangeness” such that unreached groups lack cultural and spiritual interface with the church and receptor group (p. 249). Japan is an example in this line.

The author’s discussion on mission partnership is also thought-provoking. When he explains “what a global body of Christ image does not mean,” he uses the example of mission “moratorium,” a way to give concrete shape to the oneness of the church in mission. The “three-self” formula of Henry Venn and Rufus Anderson serves a specific case. As he analyzes, “many receiving churches that have been taught that mature, indigenous churches should become ‘three-self’ churches—simply became selfish and self-centered” (p. 277). And “the long-term result of that ‘moratorium’ was an increasing myopia and insularity” for many third-world churches (p. 269). Before reading this part, I wondered about this particularizing theology, such as the “three-self” principles, which were later used by China’s communist regime to co-opt churches. Yet, his analysis makes sense given the biblical catholicity of the church as Christ’s body.

In chapter 12, the author lists faith, love, and hope as the three-fold goals of mission, which are reminiscent of Augustine’s methods in preaching. Van Engen stresses that “mission that is not based on biblical revelation, the text that declares the uniqueness of Jesus Christ and offers a new birth through the Holy Spirit, may be church expansion, or colonialist extension, or sectarian proselytism” (p. 293). This is a very insightful remark. I can relate it to today’s resurging trend of “sectarian proselytism” in China, which in the 1920s created detrimental consequences to churches and strong resistance in China. Sectarianism itself discredits the gospel, but unfortunately, history has repeated itself.

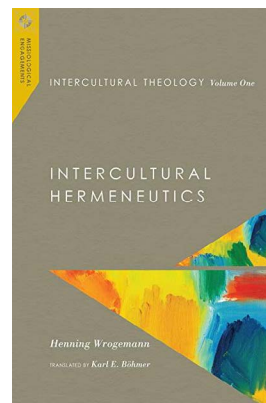
Lastly, the author is keenly conscious of two major contemporary challenges to mission that protestant theologians seldom addressed: urbanization and migration. He devotes two excellent chapters to these facets of postmodern society. Globalization and accelerated urbanization challenge Christians to rethink and reevaluate mission theology. It is in these areas that Christian scholars of different academic disciplines (such as economics, political science, sociology, media culture, etc.) ought to collaborate with missiologists and public theologians in the future.

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Henning Wrogemann. *Intercultural Hermeneutics*. Translated by Karl E. Bohmer. Intercultural Theology 1. Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2016. 457 pp. £34.99/\$45.00.

With the growth of the church in the Majority World and the center of Christianity shifting to the Global South, it has become imperative for scholars to devote more attention to issues of contextual theology and intercultural theological dialogue. Wrogemann’s book attempts to do just that by examining the various ways culture and history affect theological development in a specific context. As the head of the Institute for Intercultural Theology and Interreligious Studies at the Protestant University Wuppertal, Wrogemann is well suited to address this issue.

Wrogemann’s primary thesis in this book is that theology is fleshed out in the everyday issues of life. Thus, the study of intercultural theology is concerned



with examining the media of different cultural settings and how that affects the theology manifested in those contexts. To accomplish this purpose, he defines intercultural theology and intercultural hermeneutics in Part I. He then considers the concept of culture, the history of hermeneutics in the West, and the question of globalization in Part II.

In Part III, he looks at African theology as an example to show how some contextual theologies in Africa relate to their specific cultural milieu. In the fourth section, Wrogemann examines historical approaches to Christian mission. These various approaches illustrate how intercultural interaction has taken place in the past. Finally, in Part V, he answers key questions related to interculturality, including inculturation, syncretism, postcolonialism, and ecumenism.

One strength of this work is its thoroughness. Wrogemann covers a wide range of issues related to culture, contextual theology, and mission studies. For example, his section on Christian mission and intercultural interaction covers five centuries of mission work. Organized into five separate models of intercultural interaction, these models not only recount different historical mission strategies, but they also display the ways that missionaries interpreted and interacted with the worldviews they encountered.

At the same time, though, while Wrogemann covers a wide range of topics, readers might at times find it difficult to discern an overall structure or flow to the book. After defining basic terms in Part I, he deals extensively with the idea of culture and cultural semiotics in Part II. At this point, one would expect him to build on those ideas by showing how culture affects theological development. Instead, he deals with examples of contextual theologies in Africa. More confusing still are Parts IV and V, which seem disconnected from the overall theme of the book as though something of an afterthought.

Another strength of the book is its exploration of the interaction between culture and theology. He explains that a hermeneutics of culture aims to “identify those cultural patterns that members of a certain culture perceive as signs and to interpret them” (p. 153). He goes on to state, “It is an attempt to decode other, foreign cultures using the medium of their own conceptions and terminology” (p. 154). The difficulty here, Wrogemann explains elsewhere, is remaining neutral while one uncovers the cultural issues that lie beneath certain theological distinctives of the church in that specific context. He explains that “the task of intercultural theology is to remain hermeneutically sensitive even (and especially) over against those forms of expression of Christian life and doctrine in a given context which an observer might consider to be offensive” (p. 166). His explanation of these complex issues is incredibly valuable.

When it comes to the book’s overall theme, the strongest section is the one on contextual theology in Africa. In this section, Wrogemann looks at specific manifestations of theology in various African contexts. He examines Pentecostal approaches, more contextual approaches that explain Jesus as ancestor, African women’s theology, and more evangelical approaches. He explains that within this spectrum some groups have allowed context to have more emphasis on theology, while other groups, like evangelical ones, attempt to allow the Scriptures to have more authority in shaping doctrine. This section is a fascinating study of the interplay between text and context, and the specific examples help to flesh out the philosophical arguments of Part II.

The most significant weakness of the book is the fact that when one picks up a book with the word “hermeneutics” in the title, one anticipates that the author will deal with theories for interpreting the Bible. In fact, the book starts off that way by stating that hermeneutics is concerned with answering the question, “What did the author intend to say with the text?” (p. 31). It is only later on that the reader realizes that the “texts” Wrogemann refers to are specific cultural settings around the world. This book

is less about biblical interpretation and more about interpreting the relationship between theology and culture in any given context.

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